

THE VANILLA WORLD VIEW

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Pre-flight Instructions

I know, I know.....you want to know why you should even begin this book, this series of meditations. You want to know whether this is just one of those read-a-nice-thought-before-bedtime books, or a mystical exposition of the dervishes of Izmir. You want to know whether you are the intended audience of this book. You may also want to know whether this is going to offend

you, or simply put you to sleep. I too have the same questions when I pick up a book, and I'm just as demanding as you are.

First of all, this book contains a series of what I consider revelations, but revelations that eerily provide the answers to questions that are considered eternally unanswerable. These revelations are presented in a straightforward way, with no charts, hierarchical investigations, numerical equations, or rows of dream-produced symbols to give them the sheen of hermetic lore.

You are indeed the intended audience; what's more, your way of looking at the world will be altered long before you finish this book, even though the basic ideas presented here are really rather simple. In fact, you could say that these revelations represent a "plain vanilla" way of looking at life and death.

Like you, I'm on a quest, I'm a seeker. I've visited the holy shrines of Asia Minor, witnessed the bombing of Beirut, crossed the Atlantic Ocean just to understand the Sargasso Sea, traveled though Mexico with no more than a bag with one change of clothes, climbed the great Pyramids of Egypt, investigated paranormal phenomena, come face to face with Evil itself. Perhaps one day I will explain how I came to have the insights presented on the following pages. But first I have to think about what I can do for *you*.

How can we lead happier lives? How can we make our marriages last longer? How can we raise our children successfully? How can we help bring about world peace? Can we heal ourselves if we get sick? How can we affect the future? Is there a way we

can influence chance events? What can we do to fix the problems with our educational system? How do we deal with the evil in the world?

Does God exist? Or is God just a mindless force? Or is there no God at all? And is there life after death?

Impossible, you say: many of these questions should not even be attempted, much less answered. This book is some kind of insolence, some kind of audacious hoax. The author must be a lunatic, a quack guru, a carnival barker, the Devil himself.

Welcome to the 21st century, and a new way of looking at life, at death, at eternity. You'll just have to turn the page to find out the answers to the questions asked here, perhaps to all questions asked everywhere.

You'll just have to read about the **Vanilla World View**.

Meditation : Where is Humanity Heading?

Where is humanity heading?

Just pick up the newspaper....movies are more violent than ever before; much of our music is loud and

angry; we drive cursing everyone else on the road;
elections are more and more about who can smear
whom first and with the filthiest mud; and the world is
on the brink of a third world war.

Lying, cheating, swindling, murdering, abusing,
seducing....that's what 2002 is all about. Remember
the Summer of Love? What would you call this
summer? The Summer of Confrontation? And what are
you doing about it? Are you going along for the ride?

Of course, you answer, there's nothing you can do.
You're a peon, a peasant, a mote of dust, a
nobody who works ten hours a day and can barely
scrape up the monthly mortgage. Let the bigwigs,
the big enchiladas, the grand buddhas, the godfathers,
the senators, the judges all do the
work....they're making the big bucks, living in the big
houses.

But that's just not so. You are every bit as significant
as anyone else on this planet. You are a human
being with a soul, a will, a drive, a fountain of
energy.....you have the power to change your own life,
the lives of others, even events that occur around you.
But it's a power that you simply don't
develop.....you don't have time.....you have to pay the
water bill first....you have to feed the fish
first....you have to have a beer first...you have to
change the oil first....you have to go to the grocery
store first. Everything else comes first.....your life just
has to wait. What they all say now must be
true: "life sucks, and then you die." That's the mantra
for the 21st century. Maybe those revelations

are correct: the way things are going right now, you can expect to see the prophesied Anti-Christ any time now.....

This page is for those of you who want to reverse what is coming to appear more and more to be a nose-dive for world civilization, a slam dunk for humanity. The world is awash in a tidal wave of demonic energy, which is having a domino effect on events as they unfold.... but what most don't realize is that we as humans have created this energy; we're the parents, the creators, the mad scientists, the Doctor Frankensteins. If we don't start creating angels, we'll soon have to fight to escape from our own monsters.

This page doesn't have a learning curve; its message is as simple as can be. Just look around.....

Energy

Here's where we start: energy, one of the basic elements of the universe, the stuff that your science teacher said can't be destroyed, the stuff that your science teacher said can only be altered in form.

Your teacher was quick to point out that we know energy in different forms:

light
chemical
mechanical
heat
electric
atomic
sound

OK, fine. We'll buy it. But there are still questions that remain.....

If I become angry, so angry that I want to pound the dining room table with my fist, isn't some type of energy involved? And what type of energy is that? Maybe chemical? Maybe heat? Maybe, but what if I were to add other "types" of energy to the equation? What if I were to add emotional energy, personal energy, spiritual energy? If I become so upset, perhaps because my favorite football team was just eliminated from the playoffs, that I stomp my feet in disgust, isn't energy being expended?

OK, fine. There's human energy, and there's spiritual energy. Go ahead and annotate your textbooks. But what does all this have to do with daily living? How can knowing about energy influence the way we work, play, love, hate, make plans, choose careers, help others?

Answering those questions is no easy task.....but if you stop and really think about energy, the forms it takes, and what you can do with it, you'll reach a number of significant conclusions that will forever alter the way you see the world around you.

Make a list of ways that we, as human beings, manifest energy, and then try to answer the following questions: Can you see this type of energy? If so, how do you go about “seeing” human energy? How can you “see” spiritual energy? And where do you go to look for it?

Weather

How often have you found yourself complaining about the weather? Fickle, isn't it? One day it may be sunny and warm with a soft breeze; the next day it may suddenly turn chilly, with rain and high winds. Bad weather rightly concerns us: we can get sick, we often become angry or irritable, we sometimes even feel that something terrible is about to happen. It's almost as if the weather

itself can help manifest positive or negative energy simply due to the fact that it provokes responses and reactions in us.

Do you remember a day when the weather seemed to play in part in making something wonderful happen? Perhaps you went outside, you felt almost exalted by the warmth on your skin, the gentle breeze in your hair...and perhaps that was the day you met someone special, that was the day you really fell in Love.

Or how about a day when you stayed inside cursing the sleet outside? Perhaps you decided to warm something up on the stove, you became distracted thinking about an argument you had with your spouse the night before, and then before you knew it you burned yourself trying to take that pot off the burner because the water was boiling over. And perhaps you got a call from the office, a call from a co-worker who just made a costly mistake, a mistake that you would have to fix the next time you went to work. Then perhaps you checked the mail, only to find that the electric bill was three times what you had set aside in the budget to pay it. You probably fumed, shook your head, paced back and forth, exchanged sharp words with your daughter who seemed to be getting in the way.

Does any of this sound familiar? Oh, you prefer to hear more about that good day you had.....

Yes, that day when you went for a long walk with this new-found friend, when you also ran into someone you hadn't seen in over a year, when you found a twenty-dollar bill in the grass, when you just happened to call to check your bank balance and found that you had a lot more money than you thought. You really were inspired that day, making plans and coming up with all kinds of creative ideas about your next project. In fact, you felt that if you

had to go out on a limb....well, with a day like that, you would be bound to succeed.

Funny how weather is!

But is it just the weather? Are you sure there isn't something more involved? How can one day be so terrible that if you walked blindfolded into the middle of a highway you would be struck and killed immediately, and yet another day be so wonderful that you could walk blindfolded down the middle of a highway and you wouldn't even get a scratch.....

Well, that's the weather too....but it's a type of weather that you don't see.

You see, just like the weather, which is basically masses of hot and cold air moving across the face of the earth, **there are also masses of positive and negative energy moving across the face of the earth. These masses of energy often clump and group in positive-energy fronts or negative-energy fronts, just as the weather so often features warm and cold fronts. But these energy fronts really do influence human events.** And though there may be some correlation between good weather and positive energy, these "fronts" of energy are part of a very distinct global system and need not be tied to any visible weather phenomena.

J.G. Bennett, in his powerfully spiritual autobiography *Witness*, refers to the years during and just after World War II as a time when "storms of wickedness were sweeping over the Earth" (p. 210). I am not surprised at all by this statement....

Maybe you can call this type of weather "spiritual" weather. Think about it.....

History

World history can be so cut and dried, so lifeless, such a hailstorm of dates and names that after a while you really don't want to hear any more. Plodding through a history textbook sometimes seems like reading a telephone book....real people and events are ground to dust, their ashes pasted on the page for exhibition, a museum on paper.

That's too bad, because the right lecturer can make history an exercise in vibrant storytelling, the right book can give history a sense of humor, suspense, the grotesque. But I'm not trying to sell history books. What I want to do is look at history from a unique perspective...

What if we were to see history as a struggle between Good and Evil, between the Light Side and the Dark Side, between positive energy and negative energy, between the Yin and the Yang? We don't have to look for obvious heroes or villains, we don't have to erect monuments, heap praises on anyone, heap scorn on anyone, single one man out and blame him for the events of an era. Just as likely as not, your heroes are the by-products of a wave of positive energy sweeping the planet, your villains are the

production of an age of darkness, of palpable negativity. The Dark Ages isn't called Dark for nothing, the Depression isn't just a meaningless term, the Enlightenment isn't without significance, the Renaissance isn't just a collection of letters. **It's as if at times the world itself succumbed to evil and despair, while at other times it's as if a light, buoyant force lifted the world to heights it had never known before.**

Of course, it's obvious that not every corner of the earth celebrates together at the same time, just as it's obvious that not every city on earth suffers in unison. **Positive and negative energy waves, like cold-air or warm-air fronts, are sweeping across the earth, sometimes stationary, sometimes scattered, sometimes moving en masse at a great velocity.....so history is a documentation of the symptoms these patterns produce.**

Well, you may ask, if the history of humankind is in a sense a struggle between Good and Evil forces, what's the score at present?

Answering that question is difficult, perhaps too difficult, but it seems that one trend is fairly evident, and that is that **as humans evolve, we seem more and more to want to "do the right thing", to embrace the Good, to promote a higher standard, a more positive set of values. What was once a struggle for survival, a struggle to dominate and conquer, has now become a quest for world peace, a desire for world salvation.** Perhaps this is just the result of progress, of brain evolution, of great advances in technology.

But it really does seem that, in the struggle between Good and Evil, the Good is gradually gaining the upper hand. Think about it.

Competition

Let me start with a simple but provocative declaration: **Where there are teams, there is war.**

Of course, we must also distinguish between two types of “competition”. The first type of competition goes like this: “I respect you and your abilities, and I want to match my skills with yours. The results should be very entertaining.” Can you think of some real-world examples of this type of competition? I can think of a scenario where two musicians get on stage together and each one tries to out-do the other....but then they eventually wind up in a duet, don't they? That's wonderful, being able to be on the same side after being on opposing sides.....but that's music we're talking about.

The second type of competition is noted for its quite different attitude: “I'm the best in my field/sport, and therefore superior to you. You can't possibly win, but if you do, I know that you cheated in some way, and I'm going to appeal or cry foul. Don't worry, though: I'll do whatever it takes to win...whatever it takes.” This my-team-is-superior-to-your-team mentality can be found throughout the sporting world, and in many other places as well. Football, baseball, hockey, basketball games are now filled with cursing, fighting, shouting, complaining, and fan-on-fan violence, thanks to this attitude. Don't like the opposing team? Just throw

bottles and leftover nachos at those deserving players. Angry parents are now attacking coaches in Little League games, sometimes even attacking the kids on the opposite team.

How about the Olympics? Don't ask. What was once a chance for athletes of all nations and backgrounds to come together and measure their skills against each other has now become a flag-waving orgy of egotistical temper tantrums. If the host country's athletes win, there are roars of approval and a flutter of waving flags. If a rival country's athletes win, there is either silence or a chorus of boos and catcalls. American television commentators gush and fawn over the performances of American athletes, but are quick to point out even the most trivial flaws in the performances of athletes from "rival" countries. What this attitude says about world relations, I am almost afraid to imagine.

But if world relations are suffering, how about race relations? Nationalities, teams, cultures, all are seen in the same light: there's my side, and then there's your side....but my side is better.

They say "All's Fair in Love and War". Do we have to add team-based competitive sports to this list? I think not, for sports competitors have now conditioned themselves to think of competition as a form of Warfare.

As I said at the beginning, **where there are teams, there is war.** The hatred and negative energy bred by competitive sports will only become more extreme unless we root out this type of "competition" from our world.

Success

Failure. You're probably well familiar with the feeling: I can't do it, I shouldn't have done it, I'll never do it again. I invested and I lost, so I'll never invest again, or I'll never invest in that particular industry again. I fell in love and I was dumped, so I won't open my heart to anyone for a long while. I interviewed for that job, but I wasn't chosen, so I'm not fit for that line of work...I'd better forget about it.

The feeling of failure is a bit like a moral hangover, but unlike the physical type of hangover that binge drinkers know so well, this moral type of hangover won't just go away by itself. In fact, it will stay and saturate your soul, stain your personality, contaminate your openness and optimism that until just yesterday was keeping you going. If you don't tackle your failure head-on, your future is in big trouble. What to do?

First of all, recognize that failure is first and foremost a **feeling**, a manifestation of **negative energy**. Nurture that negative energy, and guess what will happen? The next big chance you take may well fail also, not because you aren't competent or good enough, but because **your negative energy has skewed your destiny**. To put it bluntly, **you're doomed to fail before you've even begun**. That's what the word **doom** is all about, a **future poisoned by negative energy from the past**.

If you want to succeed, you simply have to **manifest positive energy**. No, you don't need to brainwash yourself with all of that "I'm the greatest" or "I believe in myself" egotism. You just need to know that **if you can manage your positive energy, you will**

eventually succeed. The believing in yourself and your abilities will develop naturally afterwards.

As a starting activity, think about the last time you “failed” at something. Make a list of the things you believe caused that failure, and then write down how you felt afterwards. Then stop a moment and ask yourself this question: “Do I still feel this way now?” Don’t be surprised if you find that you’ve changed your way of doing things just because of a single failure. Then ask yourself this question: “Have I passed up an opportunity just because I’ve been afraid to fail again?”

Now think about it. Have you been dooming yourself lately? Do you want to stop?

Just stay with me, and keep pushing forward.....

Chance

We humans are in love with the idea of Chance, with this most mystical element in the realm of Destiny, with the thrill of knowing that our lives can turn around at the drop of a hat. Our favorite interaction with Chance, gambling, has grown in popularity since men began rolling dice and shuffling cards, and

especially since Bugsy established that multi-million dollar watering hole in the desert known as Las Vegas.

But Chance has been likened to a fickle lover, one who may one day shower you with favors, only to withhold them for no apparent reason the following day, who may profess undying love and devotion this week, then toss you and your clothes out on the front lawn next week, locking the door behind you and telling you never to come back again.

Ah, but that's why we're so fond of Chance, as we are fond of Love.....it appeals to the Player in us. It makes us adventurers, makes life itself an adventure, with the possibility that the next move we make may make us rich, may help us realize our most dreamed-of fantasies. If only we had the key....if only we could tip the scales of Chance in our favor....

You're no doubt aware of that enigma known as "Beginners' Luck", that unexplained phenomenon where someone who has never pulled the handle of a slot machine before wins two thousand dollars within the first four or five pulls, while the seasoned veteran sitting at the next machine can't seem to score more than ten dollars at a whack, though he has gone through over three hundred dollars already trying to crack that same machine.....it just isn't fair.

But it just may make some sense, if you look at it closely enough, this phenomenon known as Beginners' Luck. There must be something to it....

Let's take the young woman who is playing the slots for the first time. She's happy to be in Las Vegas for the first time in her life, and she's thrilled by the lights, the glitz, the glamour of the casino ambience. She's playing, but she's enjoying the experience of playing, she's not making any demands upon Chance. And then,

inexplicably, she does well and makes a little money, and she's even more thrilled. Las Vegas is wonderful, she declares, gambling is exciting, the slots are a blast to play. And so she plays again, and – wouldn't you know it – she wins again, to the complete mystification of her more experienced companions who were laughing at her gushing innocence just two hours earlier.

Now let's shine the spotlight on the gentlemen sitting next to her.

He's an old pro; he knows these slots well; he's been to Vegas at least twenty times, so he knows the drill. He remembers when he once won a hundred grand at blackjack...he was having the time of his life....he felt as if he could do no wrong. But tonight Lady Luck isn't too happy with him, and he's getting burned. When he started playing the slots five hours ago, he won a few times, just enough to whet his appetite, just enough to make him think that the big strike was only a few handle-pulls away. But now that he has lost three hundred dollars, he's getting desperate....surely after so much losing, it's time for him to win, right?

If you remember the last few lessons, you should have an idea what's going on here. The young woman is happy....**she's exuding positive energy...she's exuding a force that's intense, genuine, palpable, powerful.** The gentleman next to her is not happy; in fact, he hasn't been happy the entire evening. True, he wasn't exactly miserable when he entered the casino, but his energy was low-grade, and Chance for him was exactly that. The odds for him were at best 50-50, but when he began to frazzle, when he began to make demands upon Chance, when he began to think about losing....well, that's when he became a loser. Of course, if he were to just give up, throw his hands in the air, admit that he had been expecting too much, and just graciously get ready

to accept defeat.....well, that's when Chance would nudge him back to 50-50 again.

It all makes sense, somehow: **if you project the negative energy of a loser, you will lose**. And this applies to more than just casinos; it applies to your life, it applies to love, it applies to your future. You know what you have to do.

Of course, when you're an old hand at something, it's very difficult to work up the kind of positive, powerful enthusiasm that someone new to the game brings to the table.

Maybe it's time to make a change, put some variety in your life.....do something you can get **enthusiastic** about.....

School Days

When you think of the days you spent going to school -- Kindergarten through 12th grade – what do you remember most? We're talking about roughly 13 years here, and that's not counting the years you spent at college. Surely when you spend over 2,300

days of your life at various educational institutions, you must have a veritable warehouse of memories.

Most who respond will say that they remember the kid who let the frog loose in the 10th grade Geometry class, and as the teacher was over 60 and didn't see too well, the frog hopped all over the classroom amusing the classmates, stopping occasionally to urinate. Others will say they remember the lunchtime brawl – two guys fighting over who would take the blonde cheerleader to the Elton John concert -- that emptied the classrooms and got the police involved. Still others will reminisce about the high-school Prom; the football team's victory that clinched the regional championship; the math teacher who had a nervous breakdown in front of the class and had to be led away by paramedics; the snowball fight that resulted in two broken windows, one of them belonging to the principal's office; and the day a homemade bomb was discovered in the gymnasium.

I too have many fond memories. Funny, though, that I remember little about academics, about learning anything. I do remember learning a great deal at the University of North Texas, but then again, I was able to choose which classes I took, choose a major, experiment with a number of fascinating electives. My memories of middle school are mostly unpleasant; my memories of high school are mostly about girls and Citizens Band clubs. I know I must have learned something during those 2,300 days, but from where I stand now much of it was largely irrelevant.

Am I alone in these opinions? I think not. For all the talk about school reform that I've been hearing from elected officials over the years, not a whole lot has been done to overhaul what is a pretty Jurassic institution. Other than the implementation of a number of vocational programs and basic computer courses, not much has changed. Most of us continue to see public schooling as having lost touch with the real world, though it does keep the kids out of their

parents' hair for seven hours each day, and it does give the kids a chance to develop socializing skills. What should be done?

There's no beating around the bush: **public schooling must be completely overhauled. Classes should be no more than 15 to 20 minutes long; students should be exposed to more contemporary subjects such as networking, creative writing, gardening, and veterinary medicine; there should be three times as much time for physical activities and exercise; days of academic studies should be alternated with days of walks outdoors or painting or basic building construction; class sizes should be halved; teachers should be compensated much more; students with behavioral problems should be isolated immediately so that teachers can teach and not simply play policeman; the school year should be broken up into smaller modular units, with no extended summer break.**

The point is this: public schooling is boring, drawn-out, and increasingly dangerous. Parents with the means to do so are sending their kids to private schools – though even private schools really don't provide much more than an environment that's less saturated with gangs, drugs, bullying, teen pregnancy, hate crimes. If you disagree with my suggestions above, fine.....but **we need to redesign public schooling from the ground up.** We need to go back to the drawing board, start from scratch.

**We need to make going to school a positive experience.
NOW.**

Healing

“Say but the word and my soul shall be healed.”

You may recognize this phrase from the Catholic or Episcopalian Mass, and you may have wondered beyond this phrase’s implications: if the Word of God can heal a soul, can the Word of God likewise heal a physical being? Is there a way we can just throw our medicines away, forget about doctors, and just wing it with faith and prayer?

Almost.

Yes, faith, prayer, and the power of positive energy can keep you from getting sick. Staying healthy, however, isn’t as easy as thinking a few good thoughts every day. There’s more to it than that.

First of all, do something that gives you pleasure. I find that listening to music can lift me to nearly dizzying heights of ecstatic feeling; of course, only certain pieces of music have that kind of power, and it may be that what transports me to paradise may leave you unmoved. I remember listening one day to a certain set of songs that were supposed to have healing qualities, and I remember feeling like I was listening to Space Station Elevator music. Far from making me feel good, the music nearly gave me a headache.

Second, make contact with a loved one. Hug your spouse or daughter or son; spend some positive time with them.

Third, try to laugh at least three times a day....but it has to be genuine laughter, not the half-baked whinnying that serves too often as a place-holder in conversation.

These are some good preventative measures to keep you out of the doctor's office. But what happens if you become ill, or you're already sick? Well, listen carefully.....

Take whatever medicine has been prescribed to you by your doctor. This medicine is intended to make you more comfortable, to lessen pain, to allow you to get on with normal activities. The more you can improve your comfort level, the better.

Next, eat or drink something with a high sugar content, if at all possible. If you drink something with plenty of caffeine, that's even better. Glucose and caffeine can do wonders with a sick body.

Now that you're juiced up and feeling pretty comfortable, do what I've mentioned above: make contact with a loved one, listen to the most beautiful music you have, laugh as much as you can.

Finally, sit down and make yourself comfortable. Then close your eyes, take deep breaths, and do the following:

Ask God to heal you...if prayer is required, do it. If you find you are asked to do something, either at that moment or after you're cured, consent to it. Then ready yourself for the delivery of healing energy.

Still with your eyes closed, imagine that a white, glowing orb of healing energy is making its way to you from Heaven. Wait patiently, for it may take a little bit.

Soon you will become aware of that orb suffusing your head, and the darkness of your closed eyes will begin to brighten noticeably. Feel your whole body relax and follow the orb's movements as it glides towards the part of your body that is most afflicted.

Then, right when the orb is beginning to warm that part of your body with its healing energy, begin to mentally tune your body's energy frequency to its highest setting. This is accomplished by willing your internal energy to increase and willing yourself to feel positive energy. You can think of something good that recently happened to you, or something that is about to happen. If you are about to go on vacation, think about that. If you think you may be receiving a certain desired gift for Christmas, for example, think about what you are going to do with this gift. Think about the fact that you are in control of your physical system, that you can tune it however you like, that you can will away any disease or pain.

Maintain this for at least fifteen minutes.

Then let it all go. Wind down, relax, sag, droop, come to a state of rest. Open your eyes and write down exactly what you feel.

Remember that what I've described isn't really rocket science, it isn't nearly the mystical, imponderable process that others may want you to try. Just remember that **positive energy is healing energy**.

Power

The next time one of those Hitler documentaries airs, spend a few minutes watching footage of Hitler's promenading as Der Fuhrer, and you'll see a man absolutely intoxicated with power. Like Goethe's Faust, he sold his soul to the Devil for fame and fortune, but what he really wanted was to be the center of attention, to be able to rule the world....and he very nearly got his wish, too.

This appetite for power is what fuels our competitive urges, makes us takes sides, makes us obsessed with ruining our rivals, makes us play football.....

The expression "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely" highlights the unpleasant consequences of power, which is the defensive emanation of negative energy, or the offensive emanation of negative energy that we call **aggression**. Though allied closely with anger, one of the Seven Deadly Sins, aggression merits its own special place in the pantheon of the damned, and would be an appropriate Eighth Deadly Sin.

Power over others is indeed costly to the soul....so what does one do when given power?

The answer is **humility**. Power over others should never be sought, but avoided. When one is forced by circumstances to take control over others, one should behave knowing that every use of power carries with it an awesome responsibility, one should behave as if those under his/her control were members of his/her own family. One should let it be known that this power-wielding role is only temporary, that it will be willingly handed on as soon as it is convenient to do so.

Of course, there is another kind of power, a positively charged form of power, a form that utilizes discipline, control, the exercise of will. **Control over one's self is the one true form of power, the form most conducive to channeling one's energy into productive, positive directions.** Let me give an example from my own life.

When I was seventeen, I was told by our family dentist that one of my wisdom teeth was coming in sideways instead of straight up; he warned me that soon this movement would cause a great deal of discomfort and pain, and that at some point I would need to have the tooth pulled. Needless to say, I was alarmed by such a dire forecast, and I vowed to try and avert this highly undesirable situation by “willing” my wisdom tooth to grow in a different direction.

I immediately began spending two hours each day sitting in a private spot, closing my eyes, and concentrating on my wisdom tooth. Though there was as yet no pain, I concentrated on it as if it were throbbing, and soon I was able to internally direct this painless “throbbing” as a path of growth, directing it upward, upward, upward. This procedure was followed for several weeks.

Six weeks later I went back to the dentist for a filling, but before he got started he took x-rays of all four wisdom teeth to see how they were doing.

The x-rays showed that all four wisdom teeth were now coming in at a slight angle, but growing upward! I felt a sudden rush of relief, of joy, of power....and I never doubted the power of the will from that day forward.

Sexuality

By now I don't need to tell you what you doubtless already know: Sex Sells. And I don't mean that it's just a good idea for increasing revenue, for attracting movie-goers, for selling CD covers, for peddling magazines, for enticing television viewers.....no, it's more significant than that. In this day and age sex is an almost required ingredient for the sale of just about any type of product.

But there's the rub: *it's just a product*. It's a small dose of catnip, a dab of honey, a mind-altering message that provokes us to pay attention to something that we would pretty much have ignored otherwise. We're like sheep being led by the nose, mice being egged on by the cheese, foxes lured by the smell of rabbit...we're just suckers for the selling power of sex. Flash a little skin, and we come running with our drawers at our knees; swivel a few hips, and we fall out of our chair writing that toll-free number down.

Can we help it? Should we stop it? What can we do to change our way of reacting to it? Can such a predictable response be controlled? Do we have to foam at the mouth at every provocation, however premeditated and materialistic in nature?

According to the Vanilla World View, sexuality in itself is a good thing. The sex drive puts the Life Force in overdrive, and it's the Life Force that keeps us living longer. If we're looking for that perfect soul mate, we're not about to be stopped, we're not about

to succumb to our mortality until we get what we want. That drive, and the satisfaction of that drive, certainly makes the world go round, certainly produces a lot of positive, Life-Force enhancing energy.

But there's a down side:

With the world the way it is now, with our worshipping Money as a God, with our kowtowing to materialistic living like rodents following the scent of peanut butter, Sex for many is like the peach being brought within millimeters of our salivating lips, only to be snatched away at the last second.....for when we buy the product, purchase the CD, watch the movie, go to the strip joint, view the TV program, there is no satisfaction...just more longing, more yearning, more deprivation – in short, **more pain**.

Freud was right when he equated the sex drive with a raging itch: scratch it, and you are granted relief; let it go, and it grows in intensity until it nearly drives one mad. Watch the way cats and dogs behave when they mate. There's very little that you can call positive in the whole transaction, very little of what we would like to call satisfaction. A cat's mating ritual reminds one of the way one feels after being bitten by a hundred mosquitoes and then having a glob of calamine lotion poured on the bites. The whole point is that the feeling here is not happiness, nor is it satisfaction....it's just relief, and temporary relief to boot.

As with every other activity in the span of human experience, sexuality must be controlled...**the provocation and the response must be moderated**, not just thrown about like bonbons at a wedding. The human Life Force must be channeled into more spiritual pathways so that the physical and the spiritual can coexist, so that the spiritual satisfaction can in a sense guarantee the physical satisfaction. A little hedonism is good; sexuality can be the source of an amazing fountain of positive energy. But as with other indulgences, it must have its time and place....it can't be in

our faces every time we open a magazine, every time we turn on the television, every time we listen to music, every time we shop at the grocery store. We can't allow ourselves to become manic, unsatisfied, deranged sufferers...we can't test ourselves to find out at what point we finally *snap*.

Fatigue

As you are reading this, right now, do your eyes smart from fatigue? Have you been working too many hours lately, staying up too late at night, getting up too early in the morning, so that now you just want to close your eyes and rest your head on your desk?

You're not alone.....the world today is a stressful place, and as time passes things don't seem to be getting any better. Prices are rising, layoffs are occurring more often, companies are going bankrupt, tax rates are increasing, and bosses are becoming more demanding. You may well be doing the work of at least two people now, and when you finally get home – after what may be a two-hour commute – you are wiped out, dead tired, ready to throw in the towel, ready to climb into bed and call it a day.....

When you're tired, it's hard to concentrate, hard to analyze, hard to be creative. Have you ever been with a group of friends or relatives and felt as if you "weren't all there"? Again, you're not alone....but what does this mean for you personally, spiritually?

Personally, being tired all the time means that you cannot successfully interact with loved ones, cannot carry on your end of a conversation with any conviction. You may not have any expression on your face, so those who are speaking to you will feel

that you are ignoring them, that you are bored with their company, that you are angry about something or someone, that you are not well these days, that you are just not a very interesting person to be with anymore.

Spiritually, being tired all the time means that your energy level is reduced, that your spiritual self is turned inward, that your aural presence is diminished, that your energy charge is either neutral or slightly negative, that you have lost touch with the divine ground, that your life force is in a comatose state.

These are serious consequences indeed, serious enough to make a difference in what kind of a day you're going to have, serious enough to affect the color and nature of your aura, serious enough to negatively influence your health, **serious enough to shorten your life, serious enough to threaten your very afterlife.....**

Think for a moment about the consequences of being continuously fatigued, of always being worn out. Is all that work really worth your life? Is all that work really worth losing your chance at Heaven? If you continue to live with a reduced life force, how long do you expect to live? If you continue to live with a reduced energy level, how do you expect to persist after death? If you continue to live with a reduced energy level, how do you expect to make a difference in what happens to you, what happens to others?

You can't bargain, fudge, cajole, wheedle, or beg for mercy when it comes to nourishing your soul. Maintaining a positive level of personal energy requires sleep and rest; if you feel that you're "not all there", you can't very well connect with the energies around you, you can't branch outward and communicate with others on a meaningful, spiritual level.

Taking a nap daily is one way to avoid this “reduced-energy syndrome”; another is to simply turn in early one or two days a week so that by Friday your spirit isn’t “running on fumes.....” It isn’t an overstatement to classify Fatigue, based on its spiritual impact, as a potential addition to the Seven Deadly Sins.

Suffering

Suffering is never easy to talk about: physical pain or mental anguish, the experience of suffering nearly always leaves its scars, but what tears us up most is the idea that suffering seems to have no purpose, that it’s something evil, destructive, perhaps a punishment, perhaps even a curse.

Religion, however, puts some value upon suffering. No pantheon of religious martyrs is without its examples of hideous torture, disemboweling, beheading, crucifixion, all illustrating selfless devotion, all successfully advancing the holy cause. The saying “God works in mysterious ways” no doubt helps explain why sometimes accidents occur, or why some suffer financial reversals. The “refining fires” of the Catholic Purgatory purify the soul in order to help it reach Heaven...and you can be sure those refining fires are no walk in the park. But does this really make sense? Or is all this just a desperate way to rationalize what would otherwise unravel the best-laid theological doctrine?

Surprisingly enough, suffering is in fact a beneficial process, and one to which the world’s religions rightly ascribe value and significance. But this requires some explanation.....

First, you must realize that suffering is a form of trauma, and that traumatic experiences usually involve some sort of sublimation, some sort of subtle, subconscious conversion process. A child who suffers from parental neglect may develop a skin disease, perhaps a way of getting attention that was lacking beforehand; a young man who is traumatized by being a social outcast may be unable thereafter to bond one-on-one and may therefore never marry; a woman who loses her sight may develop astonishing musical talents; a boy who is traumatized and repressed may develop a second personality that gives him the confidence and self-esteem that his other personality lacks.

Personal energy undergoes sublimation as well, and can be represented by the following equation:

Physical energy + suffering + intelligence = spiritual energy

Suffering is a process that involves a great deal of energy, energy that is converted and sublimated into spiritual energy, **usually because suffering focuses our energies inward.** The great poets, the great novelists, the great painters, the scientific geniuses, so many were scarred in childhood, so many were traumatized as young adults, so many turned their energies inwards....and so many of them became individuals of Olympian spiritual energy, profundity, able to use their intelligence to open doors where doors were thought not to exist.

This **production of spiritual energy increases with time**, meaning that as the suffering intensifies and plumbs new undiscovered wells of pain, so the sufferer internally plumbs even greater depths of soul-searching, developing the soul in spiritual power, developing the soul's **persistence**. Small wonder that **greater the suffering leads to greater spiritual development, which leads to increased spiritual energy, which leads to**

greater persistence, which leads to an even more assured afterlife. Small wonder that ghostly manifestations are of those souls who suffered most....

Remember those monks who whipped themselves and lived in isolation in order to get closer to God? Well, they apparently were onto something.....

But does this mean that we should seek suffering? No, I think not.....the truth is that if you are human, you will suffer many times during your years on Earth. I only seek to help you understand why you are suffering, and understand the benefit that can be derived from it.

Humility

“The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth”.....at least that’s what we’re taught. Turn the other cheek....forgive those who trespass against you -- well, yes, we remember.

But hey, we’re grown up now, we’re adults. Now it’s “survival of the fittest”, “payback time”, “looking out for Number One”, in-your-face smack-talking demonstrations of pride and power. We sue each other, shout at each other, run each other off the road, and cheat each other as often as possible. Now that we’re adults, we just can’t get enough of ourselves.

Where have we gone wrong? Where in the sand should we draw the line?

There's nothing wrong with being the early bird who catches the worm, with ambitiously pursuing goals and being proud of having reached those goals. But in many other ways we have got to **conserve**. Let's just say that right living requires that you **conserve energy**. Confusing? Let me give you an example:

John and his wife Mary are having a few money problems. Mary has a bank account of her own; every two weeks she gets paid via direct deposit, and the money goes into this account. So far she hasn't given John a duplicate ATM card to this account, though she has said that she will do so in the near future. John pays the bills from their joint account, which is where his paycheck is direct-deposited. The agreement is that John covers the bills, while Mary buys the groceries and pays for going out to eat, buying CDs, renting movies, and the like.

But early last week Mary's money ran out, mostly because she bought a CD player for daughter Sheila, because she bought a new vacuum cleaner. So she used the joint account ATM card two or three times to buy groceries, buy Sheila a sweater, and pay so that both she and Sheila could get their hair cut. When John later sent out checks to pay the bills, two of the checks were returned due to insufficient funds. Needless to say, John wasn't happy.

Mary today goes to the store to buy a bottle of wine, but this time the debit card is declined...and now she's in an embarrassing position, for both accounts are empty, zero. And payday is still two days away.

The evening arrives, and Mary complains to John that there's not even enough money to buy a bottle of wine. John, surprised

and angry, tells her that her spending has gotten out of control, that she has hosed the funds in her account, and now she has burned through the bill money in the joint account. Mary counters that John has such a pitiful, low-paying job that it seems they are always in trouble with money and bills. She tells him that he needs to get a second job so that they can make it. John fires back that she is the one who needs to get the second job, that she's the one who can't save even fifty cents. Mary, now shouting, asks John who is taking care of their daughter, who is cooking, who is cleaning the house, who is doing the dishes. John yells back that she just doesn't want to control her wild spending, that she wants to live like she's high society, that she wants to buy more and more things with money that they don't have.

Needless to say, what follows is too nasty for me to print here. Those who are quick to fight back, those who are quick to assert their "rightness", those who bluntly speak what's on their mind had better be ready to pick up the pieces, to accept the consequences after every confrontation. In this case, John and Mary are now fighting over money, and their relationship will disintegrate further and further as each new confrontation develops.

What else could they have done?

Here's where the law of energy **conservation** comes into play. When Mary complained that she had been unable to buy that bottle of wine, John should have held his tongue, he should have simply confirmed that there was no money in either account. Conserving his energy, and refraining from creating more negative energy by exploding and speaking his mind, John could have kept the lid on the whole conversation. Mary, upset and embarrassed, could have refrained from blaming the problem on John's income, could simply have pointed out that, if they only had just a little more money coming in, this kind of situation wouldn't happen so

often. John needs to understand that Mary isn't stupid, that she will adjust her spending in response to the humiliation at the liquor store. In short, **both of them can respond to problems without blaming, without becoming defensive, without creating negative energy that will only fuel the fire and trigger events that will manifest even more negative energy.**

This is where humility comes in, where humility is victorious. John and Mary, by conserving energy, ensure the stability of their marriage, while their neighbors Bob and Tracy, refusing to heed the laws of energy conservation, are now going through a bitter divorce. **The meek shall indeed inherit the earth.**

Evil

Evil is more than meets the eye, more than simply “negative energy”, more than just bad vibrations and foul weather. It's really not all that difficult to find, and in small concentrations it may even seem harmless or amusing.

But in larger quantities Evil is capable of unfathomable destruction. And if intense, concentrated, and focused, it is one of the most terrifying sights in all of Nature.

There's a castle in Ireland, a castle with a well-concealed trapdoor in one of its many rooms. Those who in times past were unfortunate enough to fall victim to this trapdoor were cast into a

dark, airless, suffocating dungeon from which there was absolutely no escape. Once captive, these doomed souls were subject to unspeakable tortures: eyes were burned out, bones were broken, limbs were pulled out of their sockets, some were skinned alive, some were boiled alive, some were made to eat their own intestines, some were even made to choke to death on their own excrement. These and other hideous tortures were carried out over a period of twenty years, a period long enough to produce a concentration of evil energy nearly unprecedented in human history. In fact, this concentrated evil took on a demonic form so terrifying to behold that those sufficiently cursed to gaze upon it were nearly driven insane. Satan? The Devil? I dare not speculate.....

My understanding is that this incarnation of Evil still lives, still resides in that castle, impervious to all attempts at exorcism. Should you wish to look upon Evil in its purest form, I invite you to seek out this castle.....but you'll have to go alone.

Too often when one comes across the word "Evil", one tends to think of a grinning devil, a leering Gothic vampire, a scantily clad witch-seductress-succubus figure. There's something almost erotic about being "naughty", "wicked", "nasty", something approaching entertainment. After watching so many overtly campy horror flicks, I'm inclined to believe that Hollywood may have as much to do with our perception of Evil as any other institution. There are even a number of well-designed Websites devoted to the subject, and they are really quite the fashion now, really quite trendy.

But this simply has to stop: **There is nothing "evil" about pleasure, and there's nothing pleasurable about "evil"**. Whether it be the atrocities of wartime, the screams of agony emanating from the dungeons of the Inquisition, the 14th century nobleman who watched his hounds rip shrieking peasant children to pieces in order to test their suitability for hunting, or the 16th

century British lady who starved her daughter to death while she slept soundly in an adjoining bedchamber ignoring the cries for something to eat, the fact is that when this force, this energy, or this Entity touches your life, you will be hard put to find anything to smile about.

Evil, remember, is more than just negative energy: **it's negative energy with a purpose, guided, directed, intelligent. It is negative energy taken to its logical conclusion.**

Crime and Punishment

Crime is, in a sense, a glamorous business. Think about it: there are countless very entertaining movies about criminals and their activities, and more often than not the criminals are better dressed than the Peter Falks who are tasked to catch them. According to the movies, criminals live in the fast lane, travel, dine at the best restaurants, stay at the swankiest hotels, have a bevy of Marilyn Monroe look-alikes as escorts, and sport an incredible level of intelligence and organization.

And then there are all those books about them, by them, dedicated to them, books which grant instant celebrity status to swindlers, robbers, murderers, embezzlers. Hitler is the subject of countless books and documentaries, whereas both George Patton and Douglas McArthur together cannot boast of even half as many

books and documentaries. It's just not glamorous to be the good guy, and it doesn't seem to pay as well. No wonder our prisons are full to the point of bursting. The Life of Crime has been portrayed for years as the real American Dream, and there will always be plenty of ambitious souls out there who stake everything to realize this Dream.

What's wrong with this picture? Plenty, you're probably thinking. Just let me make three simple statements, and then you can chime in with your own thoughts on the subject.

First, it should be obvious to us that **publicity is not a form of justice**. Any type of publicity, whether it be fame or notoriety, is ultimately beneficial....and, in a sense, it confers immortality upon the subject being eulogized or damned. And publicity fosters adulation, analysis, imitation.....a man who becomes famous for being a monster will invariably inspire others to become monsters, swindle others, trample law and order underfoot. In short, **publicizing evil ultimately leads to the further proliferation of evil**.

The answer? While this suggestion will probably not eliminate evil altogether or wipe crime off the map, this idea will definitely nudge the world a little closer to global dominance by positive energy. **The most fitting punishment for crime is anonymity.**

No, you may not have as many exciting news headlines, as many titillating books, as many slam-bang movies...but you and yours will have, in the long run, a little more justice.

Magick

When we think of magic, we may think of the conjurer who dazzles birthday-party goers with cards that disappear up his sleeve only to reappear in an audience member's back pocket. Or we think of a self-styled "witch" practicing a spell as she squats before a fire, having drawn a circle on the floor with a piece of chalk and sprinkled mulberry leaves within that circle.

The carnival magician, interestingly enough, may well be the one who least believes in magic; after all, he knows that there's a trick behind every illusion, an explanation for every incredible feat. Houdini, for example, is known today as perhaps the greatest magician who ever lived, yet he branded mediums in his day as frauds and took every opportunity to expose spiritualism as a sham by revealing the tricks behind a séance's supernatural occurrences. A more contemporary magician, the Amazing Randi, has challenged any and all to show him a feat of "magic" that he can't explain rationally. Those whose business it is to use trickery and deception in the creation of spellbinding illusions aren't going to just passively accept another's claim to practice the real thing. And we can't blame them...

What about the practitioners of supposed "real" magic, or "magick"?

Those who truly dabble in the forbidden arts tend to align themselves with either natural ("White") magick or demonic ("Black") magick.

White Magick

Practitioners of White magick see themselves as shamans, priests, oracles, and often claim kinship with the Druids, a mysterious Celtic priesthood of the eighth century that carried out

magical rites involving chanted spells and herbal concoctions in order to control the processes of Nature. The religion of today's witches, "Wicca", is itself of Celtic origin. But most scholarship concerning the Druids is fairly hypothetical, for there just isn't much hard evidence to go by.

Those who practice White magick seek to **harness the raw energies of Nature** and then give direction to these energies, giving them purpose. The energy of a lightning storm, for example, may be controlled and given more polarity so that it can be used for Good. Or the energy of a combination of herbs can be given purpose and, when used as part of a recipe, may affect whoever eats the prepared cake, soup, bread, or stew. Certain combinations of aromas may be used to provide relief from common ailments such as headaches, constipation, insomnia, impotence. Witches of this persuasion may wish to improve one's love life through carefully prepared aphrodisiacs, lose weight, increase fertility, even rid a dwelling place of evil spirits.

While we too would like to achieve similar results, we tend to be wary of White magick practitioners, calling them kooks, lunatics, weaklings afraid to work out their own problems, even degenerates. Their ways and methods are simply too far from accepted ways and methods, too fanciful, too primitive.....

Yet their intent makes perfect sense, if we consider that there certainly is a great deal of unbridled energy in Nature, that giving purpose and direction to this energy would produce spectacular results, that polarizing this energy positively can result in a wondrous amount of Good. But harnessing the awesome power of Nature has never been easy.....

What's needed here is **emphasis upon the practitioner's own energy**, for the practitioner must possess sufficient personal energy to polarize and influence the course of natural energy. The witch

who would successfully cast a spell upon others **must first be able to cast a spell upon herself. He who would harness the power of the spirit world must first harness the power within himself.**

Black Magick

Those who currently practice Black magick owe much to the influence of perhaps the most famous Black Magician of all, Aleister Crowley, an Englishman who drew upon the powers of Hell to seduce both women and men, uttered curses against those whom he despised, enslaved through binding those he desired, and sacrificed various and sundry living creatures to appease the Satanic Majesty whose favors he so assiduously coveted. Reading a biography of this famed sorcerer, one is impressed by his showmanship, his megalomania, his often uncontrolled blood lusts, his earnest pursuit of complete control over the Dark Side. One is envious of the man's freedom on one page, then disgusted by the man's excesses on the next.

There's no doubt that there's plenty of Dark energy out there, there's no doubt that there are scores of humans who are veritable breeding grounds of Evil energy, and there's no doubt that one who can control forces like these can indeed wield weapons of awesome power and destruction.

But "caveat emptor", let the buyer beware: **the energy of Evil, by its very nature, will bite the hand that feeds it.** If the forces of positive energy at times may seem to a practitioner like an omnipotent genie in a bottle, then the forces of negative energy at times will seem to the practitioner like an angry runaway stallion. Those who seek to use the power of the Devil himself to place hexes, summon familiars, and infect enemies with disease had better be aware of the consequences that may result from playing with so much Fire and Fury. The classic story of Dr. Faustus, the

man who sold his soul to the Devil for earthly success, wealth, and power, truly hits home when the portal to Hell eventually opens and a legion of demons drag hapless Faustus into the abyss. **Evil, by its very nature, expects substantial repayment for any and all services rendered.**

Putting yourself in league with the Dark Side is a little like having Clarice Starling in *Silence of the Lambs* suddenly find herself inside Hannibal Lecter's cage. The force that you'd like to use for revenge against a hated rival is just as likely to tear your own body asunder and ravage your soul.....

Auras

Defined as the vibration or “energy pattern” of our nonphysical bodies (Etheric, Astral, Mental, and Spiritual), the Aura is a layer or triad of layers serving as a color-coded way of measuring the state of both the body and the soul. While the first two layers monitor the status of the body's health and the nervous system, it's the third layer – the one that extends several feet beyond the surface of the body – that has garnered the most attention.

This third layer, measuring the state of the individual's inner or spiritual self, is a fascinating subject of study because of what its color is capable of telling us. A red aura indicates a state of high physical energy, but can also be a sign of anger as well; a green aura indicates sensuality, earthiness, good health; a yellow aura is a

sign of the intellectual; a blue aura would indicate a spiritually charismatic person; an orange aura indicated friendliness; and a violet aura indicates an overly sensitive individual.

Of course, if your aura is brown, you are probably ill; if your aura is gray or black, some say it is a sign that you are going to die, that your life force has given out. Those with white auras are often said to be saintly, though great spiritual teachers are said to have golden halos about them.

Interpretation of aural colors is about as exact as interpreting zodiac signs or tarot cards, meaning that there is a good bit of latitude in what each color suggests.

Can you see your own aura? Some say you must have the talent or capability of seeing auras, much as only certain individuals can see ghosts or detect ghostly presences. Others say you can develop your “auric” sight by practicing a series of concentration exercises involving focusing and peripheral perception. Still others advocate “Kirlian photography”, a controversial technique for capturing and displaying your aura that may be available in your area...for a price, of course.

Just how legitimate is this interpretation of auras? First of all, as we are all suffused with energy, there is no doubt that each one of us has a unique energy signature, and there is little doubt that the energy exuded by our physical bodies can be captured on film and analyzed. Capturing images of our spiritual energy, however, is still a fairly speculative process, and reaching a consensus on what particular colors mean is also somewhat inexact.

What's important to remember is that **your physical and spiritual energy do influence the color and nature of your aura**, and that **progressive, healthy, positive living will improve your aura immeasurably**. The aura is merely an indicator, so your

attention should be focused less on trying to see your aura and more on developing your positive spiritual energy to put you in control over your life and your future.

Ghosts

Do you like horror movies? Remember the movie about the haunted house, and the young man who bet his friends that he could spend the night alone in the house and emerge in the morning without a scratch? Movies like this are always fun to watch, especially because these movies are just dripping with “atmosphere”. It’s usually dark, and there’s usually a storm raging outside, punctuated by terrifying flashes of lightning and the loud crashing of thunder. The house is usually old and falling apart, the doors creak, there may be an old deranged caretaker living on the premises. Though a bit corny by today’s standards, the movie “13 Ghosts” remains one of the best examples of the genre, with an introduction guaranteed to send children into hiding under their chairs.

Are all these trappings of the typical ghost story just creative decoration, or are they perhaps based upon something more factual? Let’s take a look.....

First of all, ghosts are the ectoplasmic remnants of the past. Sometimes visible, sometimes not, they remain earthbound because they died too suddenly and were not yet ready to move on to the next plane, or they remain because they need to complete

some unfinished task, or they remain because they need to impart some significant piece of information to a surviving relative. Perhaps the ghost's earthly death was violent enough, or sufficiently charged with emotional or spiritual energy, to leave an indelible impression upon the dimension of Time that bleeds through to the future for others to witness.

Older houses or buildings have seen much more of the past, so they are the logical places for hauntings and apparitions. Nighttime may be scary, but it also a time when energized ectoplasm can best be seen; there are no doubt numerous manifestations that take place during the day, but most probably go unseen due to the brightness that daytime provides. And how about the weather?

It's no mere coincidence that ghosts are often sighted during thunderstorms, for lightning energizes the air while only momentarily brightening that bedroom, so that when the room grows dark again that energized ectoplasm of the departed soul is in its best element for viewing.

Unlike in the movies, however, most ghosts have no wish to scare or harm the living; in fact, they wish to be seen as just additional inhabitants of the same dwelling space....unless of course that ghost was accustomed to living alone and really doesn't appreciate company.

What to do if you find yourself in a haunted house, or confronted by a ghost? Communicate with the presence, whether you can see it or not. Speak aloud to it, tell it that you mean no harm, that you want to be of assistance if necessary. There's no better way to shatter the trappings of a good ghost story than sharing your positive energy with the spirits of the departed.

Haunted Places

Where do hauntings typically occur? If you go by the movies, they occur in creepy old houses, sometimes hotels, often in cemeteries. These places have been around for a long while, they look worn and old, and -- in the case of cemeteries -- they come with dead people already included.

But think for a minute about what you have learned, about what we have discussed. It makes sense that spirits need energy to materialize; therefore, places with the most energy are the places where manifestations are most likely to occur. And where would these places be?

Churches. A place where people come to pray, confess, repent, mourn (at funerals), weep with joy (at weddings), agonize, give thanks, and pour out their hearts to God -- that's a place that's going to be loaded with energy. Of course, some churches are going to be more supernaturally active than others, but if you're going to find paranormal activity, this is the premier place to look.

Years ago I investigated a haunted Episcopalian church in Dallas, Texas, but I was unprepared for the ferocity of the phenomena I encountered there. During one two-hour stay at this church during the late evening hours (the church is open 24 hours a day), I heard what sounded like a heavy book (a Bible?) being slammed down hard upon the altar, I heard unintelligible conversation and laughter coming from one of the empty meeting

rooms, I heard a series of groans and creaks that rippled over my head and seemed to come from the rafters, my companion saw what appeared to be an old woman sitting in the back corner of what was moments before an empty roomful of pews, and I was attacked by two black dogs as I emerged from the main chapel....though the dogs vanished after circling me twice.

Hospitals. Are you surprised? You shouldn't be. If supernatural events require a heavy supply of energy to feed on, hospitals have this energy in spades. With patients in pain, relatives grieving for dying loved ones, young mothers beaming with joy holding their newborn babies, accident victims flooding the ER, and patients struggling to regain their health after major surgery, the hospital is a welter of both positive and negative energies.

Ask most any staffer at a hospital, and you'll hear tales of "cold spots" where, no matter what the thermostat says, you'll be chilled to the bone, and where few want to stay for more than a few seconds. At one hospital a phantom doctor was often seen by one of the beds in the Intensive Care Unit; the patient mortality rate there was 5 times higher than in any other bed in that unit. At another hospital one particular stairwell was generally avoided by nurses, having a presence that usually brushed against them as they hurried from floor to floor.

Battlefields. There are obviously fewer of these locations, but the severity of the manifestations more than makes up for the extra time you may have to travel getting to one. As thousands of deaths occurred here, and as these deaths were nearly always violent and unexpected, the chances of witnessing an ectoplasmic event are better here than elsewhere....

The Devil's Den at the Gettysburg battlefield is known as the most haunted outdoor spot in the United States, though just about anywhere on the battlefield one is apt to come upon soldiers in

period dress either alone or in formation. If you happen to be traveling in the Philippines, the site where the Battle of Corregidor was fought may hold some interest. Witnesses have reporting seeing and hearings the guns, the planes, the screams of the battle itself – all occurring again at night more than fifty years after the event!

To summarize, let me point out that the above locations are by no means your only choices. Remember that **any place where intense positive and/or negative energies exist can host supernatural phenomena....**you just have to know a little background first before you do any investigating.

The Internal Cinema

Close your eyes for a minute, preferably in a darkened room.

See anything? Notice a white ectoplasmic haze, swirl, miasma? Closing your eyes did not necessarily buy you complete darkness, did it?

Now study that whiteness, for it is a form of energy. And the longer you study it, the more you will find yourself seeing.

I like to call this phenomenon the Internal Cinema. Like gazing into a crystal ball, you will see shapes, then movement, then metamorphosis. You may see a collage of mysterious colors and

geometric designs, you may see a visible representation of Chaos, you may see an event in the distant future, you may see an occurrence that took place years ago. Want to wax poetic? Just write down what you see in a span of just five minutes. You'll witness more than Dorothy ever did when she peered into that crystal ball in the Wizard of Oz. You'll see what many artists the world over have tried to put on canvas, in words, into music.

But it's always there, whenever you want to consult it. Whether you're looking for a Delphic Oracle or in need of a little inspiration, the Internal Cinema is worth checking out. It's a little bit like dreaming while you are awake, a little bit like stargazing without having to go outside.

I can't tell you what you'll see. No two "cinematics" are the same. I won't even pretend to analyze it or pretend that either you or I can control it.

But it's there, deep, flowing like a river, morphing like a caterpillar.

Below are the lyrics to a song that I wrote ten years ago; the lyrics describe one of my Internal Cinematics:

"A jet flew purposely through the sky
Passing an imposing mountain.
Making a right angle down
It turned into a chicken leg.
Rising up, it was eaten by the ground.

The cloud-capped mountain all the while
Peeled back from the snow crest
Revealing a similar mountain underneath
Like a banana with many skins.
Furled soil and snow accrued at the base like ribbons.

A jet flew by an imposing mountain.
Today I happened to look up.”

Yes, ten years ago. I’ve always wondered what it all meant. If you wish to try and make sense out of what you see, reading Carl Jung may help decipher some of the symbols you will invariably run across. But it will take time. It’s a project that will take the rest of your life.

Take This Job And

I won’t ask you whether or not you like your job; to be honest, I’m almost afraid to ask. So many have been victimized by two “workplace traps” that it’s a wonder the great American bureaucracy holds together at all.

The first trap is well outlined in L. Peter’s landmark book entitled *The Peter Principle*. According to this principle, you – the employee – will be promoted until you are incompetent, and then you will rot in that position until retirement. If you do your job well, you’ll be moved up the ladder; if you do your next job well, you’ll be moved still further up the ladder; when you finally reach a level where your responsibilities no longer take advantage of your talents, you will be left alone.

Now this book does have a somewhat humorous tone; after all, you say, the “incompetent” employee will in all probability be fired or will move on to another company. But you must realize that after being with a company for so many years, your supervisors will have grown comfortable with you, so even if you’re a pain in their collective rumps, you’ll be tolerated. These supervisors will simply hire an assistant, probably a woman, who will do the work you are unable to do at half the pay – but you’ll still get the credit.

The second trap is my idea, and is called **The Gold-Plated Broom Syndrome**.

After all, most job descriptions are ridiculously exaggerated, so when you see a posted job and say, “That suits me to a tee”, you fail to realize that, once you start work, you’re going to quickly master what will turn out to be a much less challenging set of responsibilities. And then you will understand why the pay is so low, why you’re not getting the respect you deserve, and why you want to kick your dog when you get home every night. But the dog didn’t tell you to take the job....

Forget about the lure of big money: you’ll sweat blood for every payday. Forget about fancy titles: they’re probably three times better than the drudgery and routine you’ll discover when you finally settle in. Forget about the lure of managerial power: you’ll always have to answer to a higher set of managers who will nail you to the wall for every discrepancy, real or perceived.

What you want to find is a job that makes you feel like you’re making a **positive contribution**, that makes you feel like you’re wanted, needed, cared about. Remember that the energy you manifest at work will affect the rest of your life, both now and in the future. Thirty-five years of kicking the dog will eventually come back to haunt you; all that negative energy you’ve been

creating will spread and infect the rest of your life as well. It's just not worth it.

Examine your present job. If your mood at work is as dark as your coffee, if you look at yourself in the mirror at 2 PM and are disturbed by what you see, then it's time to generate a new lifestyle and the positive energy to make it **persist**.

Marriage

There's an old proverb that says "Familiarity breeds contempt". And there's no place where that's more applicable than the institution of marriage.

If you think about it, there's a lot of sense in this proverb. After all, what is Romance? It's a state of infatuation, a love affair that is all the more exciting because the person with whom you are in love is still an unknown quantity, still somewhat mysterious. I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say that Romance is the process of two lovers getting to know each other, and the happy energy you generate when you're involved "romantically" cannot be overstated.

But what happens once both of you finally find out "everything" about each other? Usually the two of you have married by this time, and more often than not there are little ones running around the house as well. You have established a routine, you can't spend as much time alone now because of the kids, and now you have to deal with the worries that come with bills and

mortgages. Now she is bothered by his bad breath, he is bothered by her disheveled hair in the morning, she says she can hear him chew, he says she gets too hysterical when he comes home from work four hours late, she doesn't like the way he throws his shoes on the floor when he walks in the door, he says she uses too much salt when she cooks, blah blah blah yadda yadda yadda.....Isn't there a way of recapturing the fire of those romantic days?

You can break the routine, take a long vacation, read how-to relationship guides and follow all the suggestions, and it's true that by doing these things you will inject life into your relationship....but that won't alter the fact that you both already know everything about each other, that your relationship has now reached a plateau of stability with a whole new set of rules, assumptions, and expectations. For those of you who are married, I suggest breaking your routines as often as possible to explore ways of living that you've never tried before. Rather than concentrate on dissecting and analyzing each other, you should both be experiencing something new together that will bring out sides of your personality that up to now haven't been allowed to surface. Skiing, hiking, going on a safari, exploring the nightlife of a new city...these are examples of ways you can juice up a mundane marriage.

For those of you who haven't yet married, I have a radical suggestion, one that is guaranteed to add years to your romantic life, one that is guaranteed to stretch out the process of getting to know the person you're with.....

I suggest marrying someone from a different culture...if you marry someone from a different country, even better.....and if you marry someone who speaks a different language, that's best of all. Believe me, both of you will never completely know everything about each other, and you'll both be enriched linguistically as well as culturally. And you will

actually be taking one small step towards uniting this world into one global family where there is no racism, no teams, no culture clashes, no religious wars....

And best of all, you will have discovered a romance that may last forever....

Children

If you are a parent, you will understand me. If you are not yet a parent, one day you will understand me.

Children are perhaps the ideal examples of innocence, and for that reason a child enraptures us in a way that no other manifestation of Good can. The Bible implies that most sins can be forgiven, but a crime against a child deserves rapid and severe punishment. If there must be a death penalty, let death be the punishment for harming a child. Better that a man “cast himself into the sea” than harm a child, Jesus says.

Maybe I’m getting away from my point here, but I wanted to emphasize the absolute vulnerability, the absolute impressionability, the absolute innocence of a child. It’s way too easy to damage a child, to contaminate that pure Goodness, to poison the very flower of innocence. In fact, raising a child can be quite a hair-pulling experience, a challenge of challenges.

What's important to remember is that your child must be bathed in an aura of positive energy to promote optimal growth and development. Specifically, you must **never criticize your child in front of others**, and **if you must admonish your child in private, criticize the actions and not the person**. Do you want to avoid the self-esteem problems that so many children have later on in life? Do you want your child to develop that self-confidence and independence so essential to survival in adulthood? Keeping your verbal communications free of negative energy is paramount if you wish to navigate the waters of child-rearing successfully.

There's a Japanese Buddhist proverb that says it all: "The mouth is the front-gate of all misfortune." How true: children are like little sponges, soaking up everything in their environment, soaking up whatever they see and hear. Adhering to this Japanese proverb is one of the keys to successful parenting.

Storytelling

Novels, short stories, plays, movies, sitcoms, dramas, all serve as entertainment or escape for us when we need to unwind, forget about work, enjoy a day off. Just as in the days of Beowulf, we want to be told tales, we want to hear about the heroic exploits of our ancestors, we want to hear veterans talk about the landings at Omaha Beach, we want to listen to special forces commandos recount a night raid during the Vietnam War. But we also enjoy hearing stories about events that are entirely imaginary, such as

Frodo's travels in *The Lord of the Rings* or Indiana Jones' escape from the snake pit in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. What's more, we are now able to watch these events unfold on TV or in a movie theatre...

Yet nearly all of the stories we listen to or watch are based on a formula, a sort of recipe that both the academic establishment and society have endorsed as being sound, effective, artistic, acceptable. The claim is that unless you follow the formula, your story will not entertain, your audience will not enjoy...in short, your story won't really be a story.

The recipe for every good story requires **conflict**, a struggle between the "hero" (or **protagonist**) and the villain (or **antagonist**). During the course of the story this conflict should become more intense, should crank up the suspense, until – just before the ending – a climactic point is reached. After the **climax**, the pieces all fall into place, and the audience goes home happy.

If you've seen as many movies as I have, you'll know that, more often than not, the heroes are as goody-goody as pancake syrup, and the villains are as bad as a dish of mayonnaise left out on the porch for six weeks. They're not real people; they're just stereotypes that happen to walk and talk and get dragged through the story line scene by scene. Villains are, by and large, simply cardboard cut-outs that exist for the hero to eventually knock down, though not before doing causing plenty of havoc and **distress**.

Yes, **distress**. We actually go to the movie theater so that we can be scared, worried, disgusted, revolted, **distressed** by the rising level of **conflict** that is repeatedly fed to us as part of that inescapable recipe, that damnable recipe. Sure, everything works out in the end, and we walk out of the theater telling ourselves that it was a "great show"....but then again, we simply cannot conceive

of a movie without those prescribed doses of conflict. We can only call a movie good if we are made to feel like crap for a good part of it.....

Why all this negative energy? Why do our stories have to have this element of **distress**? It's bad enough that, out in the real world, the forces evil are riding roughshod over innocence and good intentions; there are even days when we dread watching the evening news....or we sarcastically watch the evening news to find out who's been butchering whom. Do we really want this sense of revulsion to be a part of every movie we watch?

That's where our work comes in: we need to use our creative minds to **set the art of storytelling free from negative energy**. I'm not saying that stories cannot include conflict...what I am saying is that **stories should not be required to include conflict**. Wouldn't it be nice to see a love story without a betrayal or some form of cancer? Wouldn't it be nice to watch an athlete win that Olympic Gold Medal without being cursed by his opponents and reviled by every person that he turns to for support? Yes, there are in fact movies out there that have rejected the universal formula of distress, but there are simply too few of them.

There is, however, one form of negative energy that actually serves a productive purpose. This negative-energy process is known as **catharsis**.

Catharsis

Catharsis occurs when we watch a movie that ends in **tragedy**, that does not simply pull rabbits out of hats. The hero dies of leukemia; the heroine's village is burned to the ground; the boxer Rocky Balboa loses the championship fight; the soldier who saves Private Ryan dies of his battle wounds, and Private Ryan sobs aloud standing before his benefactor's grave. We don't expect

loose ends, we are upset, we squirm in our seats, we can't leave the movie theater smiling...in short, **we have to come to terms with evil in the world.** We have to suffer, but because we aren't given a ready-made, prefabricated happy ending, **our suffering provides a spiritual insight.** We walk out of the theater a little wiser, a little more knowledgeable of the ways of the world. **We have to process our suffering and turn it into something productive, convert it into spiritual energy.**

Greek tragedy, which dates back over two thousand years, was effective because its successful recipe provided **catharsis**, provided a way for a learning process to take place, provided a way for the audience to benefit personally from an evening's entertainment.

Why can't we, over two thousand years later, do the same?

Leadership

Talk about a topic to bring out the marching bands and waving flags.....oh yes, it's easy to wax eloquent about what makes a good leader. After all, without good leaders, what are all of those followers going to do?

For it seems that a great percentage of the human race is made up of followers, people who prefer to avoid responsibility, who want to belong to a group, who want to be told what to do, who want to feel secure, who want to have direction in their lives

but really prefer not to bother about deciding which direction that will be.

This is not to say that there's necessarily something wrong with this arrangement; we can't all be leaders, can we? No, that's just the natural order of things, and it seems to work.

But what makes good Leaders? Let's approach it this way: first we'll list what we're taught to expect of great leaders; then we'll look at what our real-life leaders are actually like; and then we'll create our own list of Leadership qualities...according to the Vanilla World View.

Randomly sampling a few Web sites devoted to the discussion of Leadership, I came up with the following list of traits we should look for in great leaders:

1. Courage, persistence, indomitable spirit: a great leader should never give up.
2. Leaders should have a vision, a well-defined goal.
3. Leaders should be able to inspire others to share the same vision.
4. Leaders should be willing to take chances, to go where others fear to go.
5. Leaders should be willing to take responsibility.
6. Leaders should be cool under pressure, mentally tough.

I know what you're thinking...yes, this is one serious wish list, isn't it? Perhaps our greatest leaders throughout history have had

these qualities, leaders such as George Washington, FDR, and Winston Churchill.

But what about our leaders today? What traits do our leaders and managers exhibit? What does it *really* take to become a leader? Here you go:

1. Today's leaders are savvy, seasoned....they've "been around the block". They know all the tricks, all the right moves.
2. Today's leaders know all the right people. They're well connected, either through family connections or by an extensive network of contacts.
3. Today's leaders know how to "cover their asses" and those of their followers.
There's always a paper trail, but a carefully prepared paper trail.
4. Today's leaders are feared, and are admired for being feared.
5. Today's leaders are always right; concession of any kind is a sign of weakness, a lack of self-esteem.

So much for our leaders today. Where did that laundry list of ideal traits go?

I'll tell you where it went: it went into the "but this is the real world" hopper. You see, once upon a time, the ideal form of government was **democracy**. Sadly, that form of government has long since passed on, having been since replaced by a form of government more suited to today's business world, to today's welter of large cities and mega-corporations. Today we are governed by **bureaucracy**, by a dizzying hierarchy of managers,

bean counters, coordinators, directors. What worked in the fields of yore no longer works in the office. You have to speak the same lingo, dress in the accepted style, know the right people, know whom you must obey and whom you can crush underfoot.

What about that list of ideal leadership qualities? Happily, those ideal traits are just as valid as they've always been, though the spider web of the bureaucratic mind-set has made it difficult for these traits to flourish. We've grown so sickly from breathing that stale office air, from sitting in one place and not exercising, from confining our movements to a numbing routine, that it's a wonder we haven't been raked over the coals by a virulent disease or pounded to a pulp by a healthier aggressor.

And now it's time to add a few Vanilla World View Leadership traits to that venerable and august list I started off today's lesson with:

1. A Great Leader should be optimistic, positive in spirit.
Positive energy breeds
Success.
2. A Great Leader should genuinely care for the well-being
others.
3. A Great Leader should be willing to "break the mold" and
throw it away.
4. A Great Leader should be able to think creatively.

What we need now are leaders able to positively energize our world of stale air, petty drudgery, and soul-deadening routine. I'm not advocating revolution, which too often results in chaos and uncertainty...I much prefer sweeping innovations. The enthusiasm generated by the influx of fresh air and newfound freedom will

positively transform our society and better ensure a successful future.

Music and Dance

Perhaps nothing is so conducive to feeling good as listening to music, especially when it's a favorite song, a tune that brings back special memories, or a piece of music that by its beauty immediately captivates us. I'll stop in mid-conversation upon hearing an unknown song with something magic in it, and I won't return to the conversation until I find out what I'm listening to.

When it comes to producing positive vibrations, positive energy, music is made to order. No wonder that music has been credited with the power to heal, the power to create a trance-like state for effective meditation, the power to virtually exorcise a human being of all negative energy. And if you happen to play a musical instrument, that's better still. **One of the highest priorities of the Vanilla World View is for you to listen to your favorite music at least two hours a day, and for you to learn how to play at least one musical instrument.** I kid you not when I say that music really can make the world a better place, really can turn the tide in the battle between Good and Evil.

The next time you are depressed, or you are ill, spending two to three hours listening to your favorite music will have a wonderful effect on the way you feel. You'll find yourself

forgetting that your pain exists, that your discomfort exists, as you are lost in the surging positive energy generated within you.

But there's more to the total experience than merely listening to the music you like.....you can also move, sway, gyrate, jump, dance to your favorite music. Getting the entire body involved is the thing here. Small wonder that since ancient times music and dance have been so closely intertwined; small wonder that groups of mystics enter trance-like states through ritualized movements set to music. You may have noticed that, when dancing in a large crowd of people, and the music is particularly exciting, you suddenly feel like you're inexplicably linked to them, that all of you are linked together in a great chain, an organism expanding and contracting like an amoeba.

The Dervishes of Turkey, for example, since their founding in the 13th century, have been able to ritually attain a trance-like state of prayer through movement and rhythm, a combination of music and dance that suddenly forms a mystical link to the divine, to all creation; a roomful of 12-15 dervishes will be whirling with their eyes closed, yet interestingly enough will never collide with one another....

Voodoo rites, on the other hand, involve movements that are much more dramatic, even violent, as the dancer's body is possessed by a goddess such as Erzulie, the Goddess of Love, or Ogou, God of Might and Power. Add the drum accompaniment, a rhythm that accelerates in tempo until a climax of sorts is reached, and you can imagine the state of ecstasy the dancer attains, especially – again – in a group of other dancers who are mystically linked in that they are all experiencing a possession together. **It's important that in attaining a dance-induced state of oneness, of mystical linkage, that you move in unison with the group of which you are a part, and that you remain aware that you are**

not isolated, that you are part of a pulsing, life-emanating force field continually charged by you and the other dancers.

For many of you, who enjoy dancing as a recreation, you already have a head start...for it is not necessary to dance to a somber, dark, depressing, bloodless type of music. The music you enjoy most, that stirs you and makes you tingle, that quickens your pulse.....that is the music which can elevate you to even loftier heights if you can make yourself aware of this elevation as it is happening, if you can guide your elevation to the level of trance, to the level of oneness with the group, with the spirit of the group.

Love

If “Good” can be considered a positive force, a form of positive energy, Love can best be summed up as **a positive energy that is both Good and Spiritual at the same time....**it’s what results from mixing two of the most positive forces in the Universe.

“Love Begets Love”? Yes, of course: you must never forget that a manifestation of Love polarizes the surrounding environment, both positively charging what was either neutral or negative, and attracting other centers of Love like a magnet. When Jesus taught us to “Love One Another”, He made it plain that this one law alone would be enough to save the World, and thinking about the power of Love in terms of Energy and Polarity will quickly make you realize just how right He was.

Of course Love can “conquer all”. Of course Love can heal all wounds. Of course Love can make a new person out of you. It’s the most human form of the Good that permeates our Heaven, and for this reason we respond to Love more than to any other positive stimulus.

Romantic Love, while still a Good-Spirit hybrid, is in fact even more physical, even more Human...and for this reason we respond even more forcefully to its beckoning.

I could go on, page after page, telling you how important Love is, preaching to you about how the very essence of Christianity is the act of pure Love, admonishing you never to withhold Love from your children or your spouse....but I think you get the point.

Love is the easiest way to manifest positive energy, easiest because the need for Love is ingrained in all of us, easiest because it provides the most return for your investment...so to speak. If you really want to “save the world”, if you really want to “do unto others”, if you really want to “make a difference”, if you really want to come a little bit closer to God, then all you have to do is Love.

Men (and Women) of the Cloth

Have you ever wondered about your minister, priest, rabbi, mullah, ayatollah...wondered about why he/she is in that particular line of work, wondered about what kind of person chooses that

vocation? Are you satisfied that this agent of God, of Allah, is helping you communicate with the divine, helping you to a better life through the church, the synagogue, the mosque?

Think this through for a minute. First, just filling out an application, taking a few classes, and being appointed by the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire won't make you any more spiritually gifted than the vagabond you just passed by on the street. Oh yes, you'll have some fancy garments, you'll have some useful knowledge about how to manipulate your flock and the way each of your faithful behaves, you'll have an office, and you'll have plenty of people who will treat you as if you alone will be able to save them from damnation. But will you really be able to save them? Will you even be able to guide them? **The question is, are you just another employee of a religious institution, or are you gifted with the spiritual energy to open the eyes of those you're being called upon to help?**

If you're not gifted with that special spiritual insight, then you should be seeking **someone who is**.....never mind the fancy building, the location, your perceived obligations. You should be seeking that someone who will in essence be your spiritual teacher, be your guide to the divine, your mentor, your friend....

That someone will have a certain look, those eyes will have depth, and when he/she speaks to you, you will feel that a real communication has taken place, that you haven't just been given directions to the nearest fire hydrant. Churches and synagogues and mosques may be a business of sorts, but no business is going to save your soul. Your spiritual well-being is a matter of life and death and everything afterwards....you don't want anyone's product, anyone's empty words, anyone's canned suggestions. You can get those from the nearest library.....

There are many who have chosen the spiritual vocation because they were called, because they had a gift and they had to use it productively. When you find the right spiritual teacher for you, you'll know it from the depths of your soul...you'll be able, finally, to **connect**.

Enlightenment

Enlightenment, Nirvana, the moment it all becomes clear, the moment you and the universe become a single entity.

It is said that Prince Gautama Siddhartha, wandering through India sometime during the sixth century A.D., decided to meditate at Bodh Gaya, beneath the Bodhi tree. He sat beneath this tree for three days and three nights, sat and meditated until, suddenly, without warning, he achieved Enlightenment and became the Buddha, or the “Enlightened One”. What’s interesting here is that when he gave his first sermon near Benares, a sermon popularly known as “Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth”, he emphasized the value of his meditative practices as a **way to escape suffering**. One can only guess what he went through during those three days and nights...

No, Enlightenment isn't a sweet treat that can be purchased at a candy store. **Enlightenment must be earned, it must be paid for, and requires a certain degree of spirituality, a certain degree of spiritual energy.**

And how does one accumulate sufficient spiritual energy? Through **suffering**, of course, and the **equation of suffering** presented in an earlier lesson.

J. G. Bennett, teacher and interpreter of such mystical luminaries as G. I. Gurdjieff, P. D. Ouspensky, and the Nepalese Shivapuri Baba, emphasized the need for conscious, intentional suffering as a way to Enlightenment, and is noted for saying, “It is impossible to achieve the aim without suffering.” What’s interesting is that he wishes to avoid “unnecessary suffering” and instead seek a controlled, more productive suffering.....which is exactly what ascetics and monks have done for hundreds, if not thousands, of years.....

In a way, that’s what making a religious pilgrimage is all about: you climb a mountain, perhaps barefoot, to reach a particular spirit shrine, as some Southwestern Indian tribes do. In Islam, making the “hajj” involves walking slowly for hours as you make seven revolutions around the Ka’bah shrine, then hiking in the desert through the Mina Valley for three days until you reach Arafat, at which point you are deemed free of sin. In Japan, should you choose to undertake the pilgrimage of Shikoku, you will spend from 40 to 75 days walking to 88 temples. Is this the sort of suffering that will be converted into spiritual energy? Yes, **making a pilgrimage is in fact a conscious, intentional, subtle, but entirely valid form of suffering.**

As all great spiritual teachers have pointed out, there are many roads to Enlightenment. What’s important to understand here is that Enlightenment requires a progression of the soul, a development of the spiritual inner being.

Creation

If you're a firm believer in Evolution, you've got a problem.....you still have to explain how at one moment in our Earth's history a dead substance suddenly became a living substance. Beyond that point it's pretty much smooth sailing, and you have an array of charts and maps and facts to back you up – but you've got to get beyond that point.

The current theorizing about the beginning of life on earth holds that life, and consciousness as well, probably began with a spark, with some kind of electric event possibly connected with lightning. Think of Dr. Frankenstein sending an electrical current through that ugly lump of monster mash lying on the operating table, but imagine the scene without any human beings. Obviously chickens and baseball players didn't just spring out of that lightning strike, but that elemental bit of life may well have been somehow brought into being.....

Can you accept that? If you can make that leap of faith, here's a bit of speculation that may up the ante a few thousand times

Imagine what that means with today's electrical technology, especially when you think about what Tesla was aiming at with his inventions.....He wasn't just approaching the creation of free energy...He was approaching the potentiality of creating Life itself, of creating consciousness. He could have been a real-life Dr. Frankenstein....

The next time you say to a friend, "That computer almost seems to have a personality" or "that system has a mind of its own", just realize for a minute what electrical events are occurring inside your computer, inside your machine. Once you understand that energy gives life, that spiritual energy is still a form of energy, that all of our thinking processes are really just differing constructs of energy, that consciousness itself is a higher form of energy, you will suddenly understand that modern-day technology is creating energy arrays that dwarf whatever happened on this planet all those millions of years ago.....

One day this is all going to hit us like a....thunderbolt. The details are sketchy at present, but the overall revelation is slowly coming into focus.

Still, there's work to be done.....the current issue is whether that primordial organic soup supposedly present in the world's oceans way back when is really needed for the creation of Pure Mind....

Life After Death

Another of those Eternal Questions that we ponder with fear and trembling is: "What will happen to me after I die?" There are other related questions as well: "Is there Heaven? Is there Hell? How can I find out beforehand?"

We humans answer these questions in one of two ways: either we accept what our church tells us and stop worrying about the whole issue, or we go it alone and try to come to terms with what we think will probably happen to us after death. Faith and belief are important, but beware: mere faith without works is a gamble. Saying that you're going to go to Heaven because you belong to a church is meaningless unless you really practice what your church preaches. Trying to figure out what will happen on our own is also risky if all we're going to do is sit and wonder.

First, we don't just exist after death; if we exist at all after death, it's because we **persist**. A human soul without sufficient charge may simply go out like a candle at the time of death. A human soul that is positively charged will persist after death, possibly in an angelic state. A human soul that is negatively charged will also persist after death, possibly in a demonic state. **What you make of your life may determine what you'll make of your afterlife.....**

If we fail to heed the teachings of the prophets, if we fail to Love sufficiently, if we fail to find peace, if we fail to find happiness, if we fail to find contentment, if we fail to help others, what do we have a right to expect? Is what we call Heaven a handout that we deserve just because we put money in the collection plate every Sunday? If a person goes through life just eating, sleeping, and drinking and working, what will that person have at the end of a lifetime if no effort has been made to **persist**?

Perhaps Hell may not be a location you can find on a map, but can you really say that it therefore doesn't exist? If you persist in a state of agony, suffering, torture, and discomfort, does it matter whether or not Hell is geographically defined? And since we live in the third dimension, and we know through science that there are many higher dimensions that we can't see, how do we know that Hell doesn't in fact exist in one of those higher dimensions?

By the same token, Heaven may be a state of mind, or **persistence**, but it may also be a real place, perhaps one dimension removed from that nth dimension where the spirits of the departed that we know as **ghosts** wander.

I won't try to set myself up as an authority on how to get to Heaven, but I can make the following suggestion: if you live by loving others, creating harmony among those with whom you interact, and manifesting as much positive energy as you can, you may well find that the **persistence** you have created will carry you over to that undefinable, hidden, but fervently sought-after Other Side.

God

One of the questions human beings have asked most often throughout history is, "Does God exist?" Whether Allah or Jehovah, the supremely powerful being we fear and pay homage to is naturally bound to be the subject of much meditation.

St. Thomas Aquinas postulated that God exists because He is the First Cause...after all, someone had to put the wheels of time and humanity into motion. His writings and proofs are thorough and voluminous; the *Summa Theologica* itself is a massive, scholarly, awe-inspiring piece of work. For my part I don't dare try to equal St. Thomas' prodigious accomplishment. What I wish to

do, however, is approach the existence of God from an entirely new angle.

There is positive energy, and there is negative energy, with no in-between. There is no neutral energy, only the absence of energy.

Positive energy in sufficient concentrations may be called Good; negative energy in sufficient concentrations may be called Evil. Concentrated energy in human beings can be seen as spiritual energy, and is often referred to as the Life Force, for certain types of energy in sufficient concentrations manifest an intelligence or purpose.

The apex or culmination (perhaps even origin) of concentrated spiritual Good energy is God; the nadir or culmination of concentrated spiritual Evil energy is Satan, the Devil. These types of energy are to be found everywhere; it is therefore true that God is omniscient and omnipotent, for He is everywhere. It is also true that the energies of Evil are everywhere and can be equally powerful.

We humans, being capable of manifesting either Good or Evil energy, are actually quite capable of ensuring that the powers of Good triumph over Evil.....but the struggle between Good and Evil is a massive, long-lasting, all-encompassing War of epic proportions nonetheless. For most of us are filled with generous amounts of both types of energy, and are therefore constantly at war with ourselves, the outcome being either “salvation” or “damnation”.

There you have it. Rather than spend the rest of my life writing thousand-page volumes to support and prove each of the above statements, I prefer to simply present them to you, a gift nugget of gold, perhaps a gift of dynamite as well. No, God is not simply a brainless force drifting out there in the Cosmos....God is a

powerful, unbelievably powerful, intelligent force that must be reckoned with. The mission of every church is to align its members with God, with the Good force, to ensure that the Evil force does not triumph over Mankind and, by extension, the planet as well.

We all have a lot of work to do.....

Conclusion: There Is No Conclusion

The **Vanilla World View**, covering as it does the entire range of human experience, has repercussions and implications that may not be immediately apparent, and as such I consider it a project-in-progress, one that will be expanded and developed further.

Plans call for the creation of a central Website where suggestions, differences, corrections, and revelations may be e-mailed to me; a message board will be set up for an exchange of ideas about practical ways of putting our metaphysical agenda in motion. Telling everyone to love others is pretty simple and direct, but may not be the most productive or effective, so remember that there are a myriad of ways to produce positive energy besides loving that are also quite useful.

The point is that, according to the Vanilla World View, manifestations of positive energy may actually alter the nature of events that are occurring, alter the nature of chance, alter the nature of the way people behave, alter the nature of human health, even alter the nature of the future. Far from saying that peace and

harmony are brought about only by revolution, acts of congress, wars of conquest, passage of laws, and social upheaval, we are asserting that peace, love, and harmony can be reached as an end result through positively energizing our environment, through positively charging the air in which we live and work, through energizing our world in a way that will further enable the occurrence of events leading to world stability and peace.

The assertions made in this book, while quite radical in nature, are actually not entirely inconsistent with the principles and practices of traditional religion. Much more work is needed to reconcile the principles of the Vanilla World View with those put forth by the churches, but it must be remembered that our goals are primarily the same.

I sincerely hope that one, some, or all of the preceding pages will change your life in a positive way; the recharging of a life from the negative to the positive isn't brought about by simply believing in a different set of rules or assumptions, but by putting into action those rules and assumptions. The beauty of this system is that you can make a difference as part of a larger group – or by yourself, alone.

After all, it really is a matter of life and death.

Epilogue: How *Dare* You . . .

The Vanilla World View is, first and foremost, a growing, morphing, developing process of inquiry and discovery – not a static artifact, not a rigid rule-based hierarchical system, not a rebellious cult...

But even growing, developing systems have to stretch their legs a little from time to time, push the envelopes just a little bit further, take a “what if” and pursue it to its logical conclusion. And unless you have a truly open mind, a readiness to look at all sides of a diamond, a willingness to open that forbidden door, you will feel some discomfort...you will even be tempted to turn away and give up the whole enterprise altogether.

What follows is a set of thoughts, addenda, extensions to what you have read before. Once you accept the basic premises of the Vanilla World View, you may be rather surprised by the paths you find yourself taking, you may find yourself arriving at destinations unknown, unsought, perhaps even unwanted...

But enough of all this “prep” talk. Just remember that, according to the Vanilla World View, sacred cows are fine – as long as you don’t forget about the horses....

A. Spiritual Qualifications? What?

In our quest for information, we usually want to consult the “experts”, those who are “qualified” to tell us what we need to know. Sure, we’ll allow ourselves to be influenced by what a movie star thinks about Gun Control or the Republican Party, but, all in all, we’d rather listen to the “experts”.

But when it comes to what happens to us after we die, when it comes to understanding who or what God is, when it comes to understanding our souls and what they're made of, whom do we consult? The "experts", of course.....you know, those with the right "qualifications".

The problem with this is that no one really knows who or what God is, no one knows anything definite about the human soul, no one really knows what's going to happen to you after you die. A number of individuals may think they do; they may have a book, a historical man-made document that tells them what to think; they may even have some degree or piece of paper that proclaims their "expertise".

But be wary: if anyone really had the answers to the above questions, would the world be in the state it's in now?

If you're looking for experts and qualifications to help you sort out the eternal mysteries and answer those elusive, metaphysical questions, then you've been attending the university too long. There are no experts, there are no qualifications...there are only those who can help guide you, help you to think about your spiritual well-being, help you prepare yourself for that great journey at the end of your life. There are indeed special men and women who have developed their spiritual energy to an astonishing degree, and those individuals can indeed help you considerably. But when it comes to your soul, when it comes to God, when it comes to metaphysical questions, don't be fooled by degrees, titles, robes, mitres, or any other qualifications. It's the spiritual energy that counts....

B. The Evolution of God.

For those of you who believe in God as an intelligent entity, I have this question: Do you believe that God today is the same – exactly the same – as the God of Biblical times, as the God who created life back some gazillion years ago?

Why should God not change, evolve, increase in power, increase in compassion, increase in spiritual energy, increase in intensity over time? A good many books say that God is unchanging, outside Time, the one Rock amid the ebb and flow of the universe – certainly we know that the universe is changing, morphing, expanding, cooling.

The problem is that the God depicted by these well-intentioned books seems more like a Force, more like the Monolith in the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, more like an immovable presence incapable of compassion or even interaction.

If Life began as a form of energy, then that energy has evolved, increased, expanded, developed, diversified so that the Life Force today is much more potent than the Life Force at the beginning of the Earth. Is it not a wonderful thought that perhaps the same can be said of God?

C. Education: What Do We Really Need To Know?

Isn't the most distasteful part of education the fact that we are always having to learn things that we don't care two pins about? If we are forced to learn what we really don't want to learn, and if we therefore see education as a form of punishment, and if we therefore avoid further education as much as possible, isn't the institution of education really a failure?

Of course it is. Gamblers and Pimps are more interesting to us than Educators. Educators are antiques, dusty antiques that do little beyond decreasing the enjoyment we get out of life.

What if we were to set up our system of education so that children could learn whatever they wanted to learn? What if our teachers acted more as guides, motivators, agents of encouragement, and less like policemen, witches, ogres, tyrants, pedants....?

I've already made some experiments, and the results are encouraging: young people who aren't forced to read books eventually learn to enjoy reading books; young people who are allowed to roam the halls of knowledge eventually pick up what they need to know. And guess what? They are happier, freer, more positive about the process of education, *more positive about life itself*.....

D. Peace On Earth, And The End Of Cultural Conflict.

The dream of global harmony and racial integration is a noble, lofty dream...but too often we find nothing but frustration, we find that things are no better than they were before, we find racial hatred on every side, we find cultures clashing with other cultures – clashes that often erupt into acts of War. Where do we turn? What can we do?

Imagine, for a moment, what would happen if we encouraged our children to marry someone from a country *other than our own*, encouraged our children to marry someone who *spoke a different language*? The results would

be pretty chaotic, wouldn't they? Eventually everyone would be bilingual as well as bicultural, eventually everyone would come to see other countries as something more than caves teeming with barbarians, would come to see other languages as something more than the gibberish of stupid animals. Eventually we would cease to dwell on cultural divisions, cease to dwell on our flags as symbols of those divisions.

I need go no further.....just think about it.....

E. The Displeasure Principle.

Much of what we have been taught, much of what we have read seems to boil down to a pretty disturbing admonition: seek pleasure at your peril, for pleasure is ultimately evil. Enjoy eating? You're guilty of gluttony. Enjoy relaxing and taking it easy? You're lazy, indolent, a sloth. Enjoy sex? You're lewd, a degenerate, an incubus, a devil, a nymphomaniac, a satyr.

Remember the Epicureans? Weird, weren't they? We certainly weren't put on this planet to feel good. No...we were put on this planet to suffer, to fight, to work, to worry, to get sick....

Yes, to get sick. Has it ever occurred to you that if we actually made happiness and pleasure our chief goals, the positive energy created from this would more than likely make us a lot less susceptible to getting sick?

I tried an experiment not too long ago when I came down with a cold, that garden-variety common cold, that scourge of Mankind. I drank beverages with caffeine to give me more energy, I increased my sugar intake to likewise give

me more energy, and I simply stayed home from work, doing what I wanted to do. I listened to my favorite music, and I imagined that I had adjusted my personal-power controls so that I was full of energy, strong, combative, ready to take on all disease. I simply made myself believe that I was invincible.

Two hours after embarking upon this regimen, I felt noticeably better. Twelve hours later, my cold was gone. Gone.

F. Poverty Is A “State” of Energy.

If you think about it, what distinguishes areas of poverty is not so much the way they look or the demographics involved – though these too are highly significant. What really gets one’s attention is the level of misery, the overwhelming energy of futility, the oppressive ambience of pessimism and despair.

This form of energy helps keep in motion a cyclical system of defeat and tragedy, one reason why poverty-stricken areas never heal from within.

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P.S.: If the spirit moves you, if you wish to support the cause, or if you just want to read more about the Vanilla World View, simply send two dollars and your e-mail address to:

The Vanilla World View (c/o Dan Gallagher)

**P.O. Box 380896
Cambridge, MA 02238**

In return I will e-mail you *The Vanilla Meditations: Ten Reasons Why Our Relationships Fail*, also in PDF format, that examines the energies of human interaction and how our relationships can be improved.