

BECOMING TRANSHUMAN

“We’ve been in the birth canal of the design process for about eight thousand years now, and we can see light at the end of the tunnel. The French have a notion of “forward escape,” that means when the situation gets so crazy, you then just hit the accelerator, and drive straight up the middle, and that’s the forward escape.”

- Terence McKenna , “Technopagans at the End of History”

BECOMING TRANSHUMAN

**ENTHOGENIC ENTHUSIASMS
WITH MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT**

**WITH A LOT OF MEDIA BORROWED FROM
OTHER SOURCES THANKS TO NAPSTER AND
DECSS**

BY MARK PESCE

**WHEREIN WILL BE EXPLAINED THE MYSTERIES
OF LIFE, AND AFTER, PONDERING THE
PROBLEM OF EXISTENCE, WITH THE
UNANSWERED QUESTION, WHAT IS TO BE
DONE?**

IN THREE PARTS AND TWO INTERREGNA.

**SO SIT BACK, RELAX, FASTEN YOUR SEAT
BELTS, TAKE YOUR DRUGS, AND BE SURE TO
KEEP YOUR MIND INSIDE YOUR BODY UNTIL
TIME HAS COME TO A COMPLETE STOP.**

AFFIRMING

“Scientific American is the most psychedelic publication that crosses my desk.”

- Terence McKenna

The universe begins, not in light, as we have been taught, but in song. A string, ten billion billion billion billionths of a meter in length, turned upon itself as a cosmic loop, struck to sound an annunciation, a birth colored, strange and charming.

This universe, small and tight, reabsorbs its energies, passing them back and forth, emptying and refilling the same endless sea.

This universe, as it expands, becomes different. First gravity, weighed down, drops away, then the forces which bind the atomic nucleus together, then those which carry charge within the atom, then between atoms.

In this universe, these charges come in discrete quantities - 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21 – flowing back and forth between the crowded parts of a universe little bigger than our solar system, growing so fast a beam of light will never cross from one side to the other.

After nearly half a million years comes the light, an incredible cosmic roar across the entire spectrum of possibilities, which soon enough settle down into the raging comfort of black holes, quasars, and galaxies.

This is the age of giants, massive stars composed only of protons with just a touch of helium, which burn brightly but all too brief, then collapse, sending forth waves of hydrogen, helium, carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, sodium, and magnesium, which themselves accumulate into suns so great they too burn through their resources, releasing them again as aluminum, silicon, sulfur, phosphorus, potassium, calcium and iron.

After three or four such generations in rapid succession, the remains of the old gather together again to become something new. Most of the hydrogen remains, and gathers, through its attraction to itself, into a vast, hot center, while the heavier elements are slowly drawn toward it, but, more attracted to each other, these are caught up and collected into their own vortices, drawing down iron and silicon, sodium and oxygen, carbon and nitrogen, into solid spheres of rock, hot and dry. A hurricane of comets, lasting three hundred million years, fills the valleys, creates the oceans, and chills the air.

At the boundary between water and earth, molecules come together in random arrangement, and are just as soon broken apart by the intense flow of ultraviolet light streaming from a newborn sun. Even so, these molecules live a multitude of

to use them as raw material for their own designs, digesting one kind of life to create another. Now some life becomes indigestible, forcing another form to endure the unendurable, reach into the multiverse for an improbability, and develop teeth for its prey, which learns to run away, then to follow, and to disguise, then to see, and so on, endlessly; hunter chases prey and neither can obtain nor flee from the other, the treadmill of evolution. And this a race run by single cells.

In four billion years of fun and games, the archaea gave way to the prokaryotes, and prokaryotes to eukaryotes, thence to the multi-cellular explosion of invertebrates, vertebrates, plants, fish, amphibians, reptiles, dinosaurs, birds, mammals, primates, and man.

Are we the end of this line, or just its middle point, of no more consequence than our distant cousins, who, tiny and lemur-like, scurried about and buried themselves in earthen warrens, the better to survive the occasional and catastrophic asteroid? The smaller the better, the faster the better, the smarter the better, but smart succeeds in ways small and fast could not hope to follow, the better to eat, rather than eaten, and the race is on for intelligence, memory, understanding, and self-awareness.

Somewhere along this line comes another improbable grace: the train of thought speeds up immeasurably, jumps its track from genetic evolution to epigenetic

transmission, first by gestures, then in babble, bubble, bicker, which begins, as with children, in objects identified, actions taken, connections made between subject and object, abstractions into classes of things, the illusions of perfect form – which, ever since, have deluded us – becoming crystallized in shapes etched out in ochre, or molded in clay, significant for the first time **because** of their design, in what they communicate, even down to ourselves.

Communication becomes the defining characteristic of homo sapiens; we are the species that speaks. We utter the words that create our world, and have learned to take our words and translate them into the ethereal play of zeroes and ones, lay them out, at the speed of light, first on a wire, then a radio wave, and lately, on a beam of light, so that the voice, once constrained by mouth and ear, now straddles the entire planet in thirty millionths of a second, messages pinging back and forth, not unlike the meeting points at the synaptic gap, using photons as neurotransmitters, and each network router the equivalent of a synaptic junction, deciding whether to activate or extinguish each message that crosses the continents, connected now in a seamless, endless web of knowledge, more than two billion pages, more than any one of us could ever read or know, the collected and collective intelligence of a species which seems to have made information the central mystery of culture, the project of civilization, and the goal of being.

Are we in the middle of this journey, or near to the climax? It's only been a hundred and fifty years since we learned we are evolution's child, that there is a

mystery, perfectly rational and impossible to fathom, which explains how we came to be. We know the beginning of the story, and the end, some five billion years hence, when the Sun, its hydrogen stores gone, expands to fill the orbit of Jupiter, and, like Chronos, eats its nearer children. Men die; planets die, even stars die. We know all this. Because we know it, we seek something more, a transcendence of transience, translation to an incorruptible form. An escape, if you will, a stop to the Wheel.

We seek, therefore, to bless ourselves with perfect knowledge and perfect will, to become as gods, take the universe in hand, and transform it in our own image, for our own delight. As it is on Earth, so it shall be in the heavens, the inevitable result of incredible improbability, the arrow of evolution lifting us into the Transhuman, an apotheosis through reason, salvation attained by good works.

From the first stone hewn by the australopithecines, to flint and fire, obsidian, copper and bronze, through steam and iron and steel, the engine that drives humanity toward transhumanity is not fueled by the deeds of great men, nor the wars they fought, nor even the goods they amassed, but in the ever increasing ability to speak the word, talk to the hand, and make it so.

The history of man – the history of all life – is that of ephemeralization, of doing more and more with less and less, of using each discovery in the material world as the springboard to the next, an ever-increasing and ever-expanding field of

knowledge, an inverted pyramid, built from the first hypothesis put to the test – will this food poison me? will it eat me? – each proven fact becoming a touchstone, necessary for all the others which rest upon it. It grows from need, the need to know becoming identical with the need to continue, but in our case, the epigenetic genesis of speech, writing, printing, telegraphy, radio, and computer networking has resulted in an explosion of knowledge for its own sake, a transcendence of need into the discovery of **joy in the knowing**. Each fact spawns its own questions, and these their own facts, and so on and so on, until now, at the very edge of the present day, our stone knives cut single atoms.

In this cutting, through endless testing, we finally found ourselves. For we are the same stuff as our tools are made of, the same atoms, raw or cooked, chaotic or orderly, and have discovered the secret bounty of evolution that lurks in every cell, amino acids adenine, thymine, cytosine, guanine, the ones and zeroes of another code, at least as old as the Earth itself, pairing up in a beauty we could not have recognized had we not already understood the power of the word to shape the world.

In these chains of atoms, threading through three dimensions, we discover our past, as ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, see the bacteria-invertebrate-fish-reptile-mammal-primate inside our own codes, and are just now coming to understand how these codes compute into the complex folding and binding of the proteins which are entirely what we are, the output of a program four billion years

and counting, moving beyond ourselves, for once the genome was transcribed, once we knew what made us human, we had, in that moment, passed into the Transhuman.

Knowing our codes, we can recreate them in our so-called synthetic worlds of ones and zeroes: artificial life.

Now that we have discovered the multiverse – where nothing is true, and everything permissible - we will reach into the improbable, resequence ourselves into a new being, debugging the natural state, translating ourselves into supernatural, incorruptible, eternal.

There is no god but Man.

DENYING

“I kiss’d thee ere I kill’d thee. No way but this.”

- Othello

Behold, Babylon the great! Babylon is fallen, is fallen!

IIIEEOUUAA hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger,
and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof.

Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars.

How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed! The stones of
the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.

IIIEEOUUAA hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not
pitied: he hath thrown down in his wrath the strongholds of the daughter of
Judah; he hath brought them down to the ground: he hath polluted the kingdom
and the princes thereof.

And now, after the war, everything, however inconsequential, has been broken
down, so not even one atom sits upon another. Come and gaze upon this
undifferentiated Jerusalem, with ruin’d walls. Come and lament, not just the end
of Man, but the end of Earth. For it is **all** gone, consum’d in a slow fire, spread

by creatures smaller than a virus, and created by the hand of Man, in his final act of folly. He had, in his wisdom, gained the mastery of the universe, but, rich in his hatred, he then put it to the sword. So nothing now remains of the colossus that was Man, not the bones of his cities, nor even his own. Come and see! and call to mind that paragon of animals, that nearest of angels, who hath fallen from grace. To come so near to Heaven, and then, by his imperfections, to lose it, that is tragedy.

So mourn, all ye, and remember: great pride goeth before a Fall.

How easy we are to manipulate, how willing to believe, to follow blindly. How impossible we find it to tolerate ambiguity, to hold love and hate together in our hearts. We have not mastered the *Gita*, the loving battle of Krishna, the compassion of Buddha, nor the agape of Christ, though everything now depends upon it.

The fault, dear friends, lies in our biology, in what we are. It is said of our much-maligned cousins, the Neanderthals, our nearest ancestors in the family of Man, that they could focus themselves on only one task at a time, perform it with perfect intent, and move on. But we have evolved beyond them. Homo Sapiens can think and be divided, we can be of two minds. Even so, our hearts remain as one, made of older stuff, and in either love or hate must do so wholly.

Because we speak, and can communicate lofty and abstract terms, we can assign truth and manufacture meaning, can proselytize and demonize and stir the mind into a frenzy that the heart is sure to follow, can pen *Mein Kampf* or *The Turner Diaries* or *Malleus Malefactorum*, can spew hatred by wire, radio and website, knowing that somewhere, someone will follow, each man following in lockstep the battle drum struck by another. Joined together, we have come to the threshold of eternity, but the echo of goose-steps follow us everywhere, for our greatest strength is also our greatest weakness.

Though the prophets call for it, we can not change what we are.

For this reason, Nietzsche wrote that Man walks a tightrope over an abyss; on one side of the cliff, we bid farewell to our Neanderthal ancestors, to the biology of history, and the glorious accident of our evolution; while on the other, we welcome our Transhuman selves, angelic and perfect in Will. But, in the present moment, we stare into the abyss that lies between what we were and what we would become. The abyss, Nietzsche says, stares back. Our imperfections, our attachments, our pride fill the void below us, and, because we love ourselves too much as we are, we have the habit of leaping into the abyss, yearning to return to its comfortable embrace. This is the tragedy of history, repeated so often we should know it now only as farce: we are the Stooges of History. And this is not a new idea, for two hundred years ago, Shelley wrote:

I met a traveler from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Well, I am Ozymandias, back from the dead, come now to warn you all - and I shall warn you all: no empire lasts; no flesh; no clay. But all ends, and goes on ending, in the same tired, timeless way.

If this is the way we are made

Our Lucifer Principle;

If Hell is other people,

Where is the forward escape

Or the accelerator pedal

To leave behind what we are

Flesh blood sinew bone

Which we must leave behind

Must we lose it all

In order to preserve ourselves?

What offerings might we lay at the altar of Will, and thereby make it perfect?

Must we divorce from each other, create a race of autistics, unable to communicate, to connect in words, thoughts or hearts, each man intent only on himself, that no crowd gather, nor hate destroy, the common project of all? This contradictory sacrifice, a paradox of the soul, could only it be enough? Must we be angels, trapped, each inside his own skin, thinking private thoughts, to prevent the inevitable, unthinkable destiny that awaits us should we dare to remain together: one race, one blood, one land? Is this the only way to become gods – each in his own private universe? It might be safe, to be sure, but it will be lonely, for in the end, our only comfort is each other.

History is divided into a before and after;

Before we had the capacity to annihilate ourselves -

And after, when the ability will be delivered into a child's hands.

In this, the interregnum, we balance on our tightrope, suspecting a final irony:

Our triumph of the Will is our greatest tragedy.

RESOLVING

“It steam-engines when it comes steam-engine time.”

- Charles Fort

Now, at the end, I can be myself: neither blindly optimistic, nor utterly fatalistic. Here, in this place between possibilities, the space between the heavens of the gods and the flames of hell, we can wander together, through the Bardo realms, searching for a vehicle fit for our rebirth.

We are being born; whether into heaven or hell I can not say: if this be the transhuman annunciation, we have not escaped the birth canal, nor uttered the birth-cry. Yet, like human birth, the transhuman is inevitable. There is no going back, no reversal of history into the archaic, and no place to hide. In the twinkling of an eye, we shall all be changed.

Therein lies the terror of the situation, a terror so encompassing we have done everything, both as individuals and as a civilization, to ignore it, like an infant believing that which can not be seen will not be. We have cut ourselves off from the glory and the horror of the world, ignoring the incredible cornucopia of discovery, that promise of the near future, and shield our eyes from the specter of the gun, held forth in a child's hand, spraying out hatred at the speed of sound. Haunted by hungry ghosts, we forget that, in the Bardo, the wrathful demons chase us because they love us, because we are attached to what they represent.

To move forward, we must remove our blinders, think the unthinkable, endure the unendurable. It's an essential requirement for our continued survival. We must trade the careful architecture of culture which keeps us safe and warm, for a more exposed position. The night may be dark and cold, but at least we can look up and see the stars – and any approaching asteroids.

This, I believe, has been the great promise of etheogens. They open our eyes to the reality of the human condition. The psychedelic experience is an intuition of the transhuman state. They allow us, even for a few brief moments, to see beyond ourselves, to enter into the transhuman. But we are imperfect. We can enter, and we always exit. We have not learned to stop the wheel of time, or the cycle of karma, and enter nirvana. Nor do we often return from our highs with bliss-bestowing hands, like a Bodhisattva. Instead, we end up back in Maya, or worse, with attachments to the blissful state, the chemical paradise, which becomes its own Hell. We become addicted to the lie of perpetual rising, the perfect high, the repeated *solve et coagula* of the soul.

I can discern two distinct exit points from the human condition which will allow us to safely pass into the transhuman. Both are technological, for technology is the expression of human will in the material world, and it is only through technology we can make our will perfect, attaining the transhuman. But these technologies differ as night from day.

The first technology is as ancient as the word itself, for its origins lie in the beginnings of human language. Once we moved into the epigenetic space of speech, it became possible to manipulate human behavior through the transmission of ideas. In the same moment, we discovered of the ineffable, that which can not be spoken. Yet even the unspoken can be experienced, directly, a gnostic communion with the forces beyond our ken. And experience within the ineffable, even if it can not be spoken to directly, forces an evolution of language, a linguistic interpretation of things which can not be pronounced. For most humans, this is an unpleasant experience, painful perhaps because it is profoundly asocial. Language is what binds us together, any experience which reshapes our linguistic nature separates us from our companions, forcing those who seek that experience into isolation.

In the communities of the Paleolithic, archeologists often find a single dwelling, isolated from the others, at the boundary between the community and the wilds of the world beyond; this is where we find the shaman, the original technologist. Even today those cultures which have practicing shamans keep them far away from the day-to-day communities. Shaman are weird, scary, reminders of the existential terror of the ineffable, mad with “god-shatter,” the psychological condition of ego-fragmentation caused by repeated exposure to the unadulterated numinous. But if madness is the occupational disease of shaman, consider their function: they take in the raw energies of the transhuman current,

and step them down, so that the common people can retain their connection to that which is beyond them. Shamans stand between the worlds. Like a gnostic Janus, a shaman has one face turned toward the transhuman, while another looks upon humanity.

The transhuman remains within the domain of the ineffable, even to we who are on the edge of it. If we could utter the word, we would be transhuman. Instead, we take our trips and marvel at all we see, then come back and draw or dance or make movies, trying to use all the wordless worlds of communication to return to the transhuman current, taking our brothers and sisters with us. Yet, as in the parable of the elephant and the blind men, we do not recognize that **everything** we encounter in the psychedelic experience is just one place, one mode of being, an infinitely-faceted hyperreality. But the shaman is not confused by this, nor can be seduced by one version of the ineffable; believes in nothing he sees, or rather, believes it all, without judgment, without attachment, without expectation. Thus, the shaman can not be overwhelmed, or surprised, or disappointed; he has thoroughly surrendered himself, and, for as long as he can maintain his presence without lust of result, the shaman becomes a vehicle for transhumanity.

In the typically perceptive words of Terence McKenna:

“A shaman is someone who has been to the end, it's someone who knows how the world really works, and knowing how the world really works means to have risen outside, above, beyond the dimensions of ordinary space,

time, and casuistry, and actually seen the wiring under the board, stepped outside the confines of learned culture and learned and embedded language, into the domain of what Wittgenstein called "the unspeakable," the transcendental presence of the other, which can be absectioned, in various ways, to yield systems of knowledge which can be brought back into ordinary social space for the good of the community. In the context of ninety percent of human culture, the shaman has been the agent of evolution, because the shaman learns the techniques to go between ordinary reality and the domain of the ideas, this higher dimensional continuum that is somehow parallel to us, available to us, and yet ordinarily occluded by cultural convention (out of fear of the mystery, I believe), and shamans are people who have been able to de-condition themselves from the community's instinctual distrust of the mystery, and to go into it, to go into this bewildering higher dimension, and gain knowledge, recover the jewel lost at the beginning of time, to save souls, cure, commune with the ancestors."

It takes a lot of work – and, quite often, a lot of drugs – to become a shaman.

Anyone can do it, can step across the threshold between the human and the transhuman, but not everyone survives the encounter. No one survives it completely intact – that's the nature of the experience, and its price. Despite the staggering costs to our identity, this is a way toward the transhuman, an ancient way which has come down to us in its more modern counterpart, witchcraft.

We could – and perhaps should – become a species of shamans, unafraid of the raw possibility of the numinous. It would take courage, and practice, and whatever guidance we can find along the path. Luckily, we live in an era when much of the knowledge of shamans throughout the world is available to us. We

need not enter into the transhuman blindly; we have a hundred thousand years of experience to guide us.

The legends of the ancient Celts tell of another people who passed into transhumanity. The Tuatha de Dannan, or Faerie Folk, as they're commonly known, once lived upon the Earth, but as humankind evolved and migrated to their lands, these people fled into the hills, somehow translating their substance into something else, creating a private universe where they were unspeakably powerful, utterly content, and endlessly happy. The human encounters with the Faerie Folks – and there are many – bear all the markings of a shamanic encounter with the numinous; time and space are distorted, reason is confounded, and, unless a human being is very careful, he'll never find his way back to the company of humans. I wonder if the Tuatha de Dannan exist; if they're an ancient intimation of our future, or if they'll greet us once we join them in the transhuman.

But enough of the old science, the Way of the Dark. Let's fast forward a hundred thousand years, to 1973, and consider a ten year-old Mark Pesce reading Michael Crichton's recently published novel, *The Terminal Man*. The techno-thriller relates the story of Harry Benson, a man with temporal lobe epilepsy, leading to "seizures of thought," during which he becomes uncontrollably violent. The solution to this problem? Insert electrodes into Benson's cerebral cortex, capable of delivering a counter-stimulus to ward off seizures. Because this is a

thriller, the operation is unsuccessful – or rather, too successful, as his brain learns how to generate seizures in order to receive the pleasurable counter-shock.

Crichton's thesis was based on work done in the 1950's, by neurophysiologist James Olds, who discovered that rats with electrodes implanted in their limbic systems, those ancient reptile brains, would sometimes ignore food and water in favor of a continuous stimulation of those electrodes, stimulating themselves up to five thousand times an hour. Crichton also related the tale of a man off the street, who walks into the neuropsychiatry clinic and asks a doctor for experimental and risky brain surgery, just so he can experience such a continuum of pleasure. That story – and the word the Crichton used to describe such an addict – “elad” – have never left me. They form the foundation of much of my thinking.

Although Crichton's book was touted as science fiction at the time of its publication, the science of electronic brain stimulation had already been fully explored by Mexican neuroscientist Dr. Jose Delgado, who used it as a means to modify violent behavioral traits produced by organic damage to the brain. In 1969 he wrote a popular text, *Physical Control of the Mind: Toward a Psychocivilized Society*, and in it, he laid out the implications of his work in absolute terms:

“The possibility of scientific annihilation of personal identity, or even worse, its purposeful control, has sometimes been considered a future threat more awful than atomic holocaust. Even physicians have expressed doubts about the propriety of physical tampering with the psyche, maintaining that personal identity should be inviolable, that any attempt to modify individual behavior is unethical, and that method and related research – which can influence the human brain should be banned. The prospect of any degree of physical control of the mind provokes a variety of objections: theological objections because it affects free will, moral objections because it affects individual responsibility, ethical objections because it may block self-defense mechanisms, philosophical objections because it threatens personal identity... As science seems to be approaching the possibility of controlling many aspects of behavior electronically and chemically, these questions must be answered.”

Delgado was very nearly hounded out of his field after publishing these words. No one wanted to confront the birth of the deterministic man, the cyborg whose feelings are synthesized stimulations, and who is just a mechanism of a mechanized culture. We moderns consider such thoughts profoundly dehumanizing. And, although Delgado’s work may seem very chilling, are his efforts qualitatively different from the world of psychotropics that have been presented by Big Pharma as the panaceas of psychocivilization? Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft, Atavan, Wellbutrin, Xanax, Valium – the list grows ever longer with each new discovery about the nature of the synaptic gap, the structure of the neuron, and the biological substrate of mind. Erik Davis and many others have written intelligently about the era of designer mind, and we can easily imagine a time when our thoughts and feelings are precisely tuned – by our health-care professionals – the era of “better living through neurochemistry.”

Yet there's an even simpler, and likely more effective mechanism to make us all happy, or at least complacent. The work of Dr. Michael Persinger, of Laurentian University in Quebec, has been widely reported in the media over the last few years, because of his discovery of the "god module," an area of the brain associated with sensations of divine presence and mystical experience. Dr. Persinger has even perfected an apparatus which externally stimulates this region of the brain, using electromagnetic waves in a focused beam.

Before his work became widely known – Dr. Persinger authored a paper titled, "On the Possibility of Directly Accessing every Human Brain by Electromagnetic Induction of Fundamental Algorithms". Here's what he says in the abstract:

"Contemporary neuroscience suggests the existence of fundamental algorithms by which all sensory transduction is translated into the intrinsic, brain-specific code. Direct stimulation of these codes within the human temporal or limbic cortices by applied electromagnetic patterns may require energy levels which are within the range of both geomagnetic activity and contemporary communication networks. A process which is coupled to the narrow band of brain temperature could allow all normal human brains to be affected..."

Given what we know about the brain, and how electromagnetic fields can shape the way we feel, Dr. Persinger believes that a global mechanism can be constructed which would effectively create the same feeling in all of us, everywhere, simultaneously.

With chilling and scientifically supportable statements like these, you could well begin to wonder if the oft-expressed paranoid delusion of mind-control satellites isn't more of a prehension of the future than an unrealistic response to the present. Perhaps we should all be wearing tin-foil helmets.

And now we must ask the inevitable question: are we just machines, ready to be programmed into new states of being? I recall my favorite line from another film about mind control, Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*, "When a man ceases to choose, he ceases to be a man." This is true, as true as anything ever said about Man. But we are not talking about Man, anymore; we are speaking of transhumanity.

The gun is the archetype of violence in our world, it is all of human evil cast into a single object, and the question it asks of us is this: can we choose not to pull the trigger, no matter what the situation, even in our own defense? As long as we do not know the answer to that question, we will inevitably fail at the threshold of the transhuman, for our own hatred – the hatred of even just one of us – will consume all us **and** the entire Earth. The safest course, it would seem, would be to deny ourselves the capacity to act, by ridding ourselves the emotions that would drive us toward the act.

Here, then, are the two possibilities. Both are madness, but then, I judge them from a human perspective. Nietzsche noted that the forms of a new culture are

always seen as demonic by the culture which precedes it. We're getting into regions beyond Good and Evil, and any of the rules we know of no longer apply.

Would that we could travel to the place beyond words, the ineffable, where we could sit in knowing silence, accepting the terror and understanding it. But words are all we have, all I can offer you, here and now. We know this: history has failed us, or rather, left us with no clear path toward the transhuman. Yet it comes just the same. And no solution lies within easy reach.

Do we want to straddle the doorway, and suffer the blindness of unbearable light? Or should we build mind-control satellites, now that this capability is within our grasp: stimulating our brains into constant gnosis, a simulation of God.

Which path to the angels?

When we have gone beyond reason

And logic and goodwill

And accepted the horror of the situation

The terror of the terminus

When we can look at it without flinching

Sorrow or pity

Neither trusting the lie of perpetual rising

Nor the rumors of apocalyptic demise

Without cyborgs or demons

Angels or eschaton

But if it is just us

Only us

Together

In the place where words can not reach

Boundaries dissolved

What then is there

That divides you from me

I and thou?

In my very clearest and highest moments

The ego subdued or inflated beyond all bounds

(being much the same thing)

When the universe accepts me into her bosom

Or rather, I accept her embrace

When this is that

And that this

A condition of utter simplicity

Costing not less than everything

Yet I will not be swept up

In a false Nirvana

Nor in mindlessness

Nor in hatred

Nor in sweet dreams of tomorrow's promise

Nor in the darkening gentle of another good night

For now I lay me down to sleep

And dreams come, into which I must awaken.

*Berkeley, California
2 Ben (26 May 2001)*