

Introduction

“Belief is the death of intelligence” - Robert Anton Wilson

“The one place gods indubitably exist is in human minds.” - Alan Moore

The quotations above have served as my touchstones for several years. I came across them when I was still a zealous, true believing member of a fundamentalist Christian cult. They were the perfect little mental bon-bon, just tempting enough to retain and savor, just unassuming enough to not obviously threaten the beliefs I was so assiduously cultivating. But they were also seeds, perhaps *the* seeds, that eventually led me to change my life radically.

Wilson’s point is devilishly simple; the moment we profess ‘belief’, we begin to limit our ability to evaluate new evidence. That is, by ‘accepting’ a belief, we relieve ourselves of the responsibility to *reevaluate* as needed - our thinking becomes rigid. In my case, accepting and then preaching a complex, precise dogma had made me into something of a spiritual automaton; I was prodigiously good at bending every thought - every *thought* - to the service of the dogma and had nearly lost the ability to simply observe and respond.

Wilson also teaches that we all live in ‘reality tunnels’; sets of beliefs that shape and limit what we are able to perceive and, thus, the world that we are able to live in. By systematically examining and surpassing our assumptions about reality, we can experience bigger, more enjoyable realities. If we are to believe Wilson, *we* are the ‘Master Who Makes the Green Grass Green’.

Something in me cracked a little when I read this. A little light came in. Though I spent years extending the insight, even then I could almost see that *my* beliefs were limiting. In

the first paragraph, I used the word 'cultivating' to describe my attitude toward belief, and that's exactly what I was doing. I *had* the belief, and I was doing everything I could to *maintain* it - *rather than changing my beliefs to accommodate new experiences and new learning.*

Moore's observation is also rather simple. He wisely avoids the question of whether gods have any *objective* existence - after millennia, all we can really do is shrug this question off. He simply insists on the irrefutable fact that they *certainly* exist as mental constructs. And this leads to all sorts of delightful - or distressing, depending on your circumstances - speculation about just who is being served: a god, or a *conception* of a god?

The idea extends nicely to constructs like governments, philosophies and corporations; what, really, are we being loyal *to*?

The two together add up to a personal philosophy. Strive relentlessly for *awareness* of one's own set of beliefs in order to transcend them, and more than that, be *wary* of widely held beliefs. I am happy to say that my own experiments with this basic philosophy have been extremely positive and that I have had more love, joy, and prosperity in my life as a result.

If there is a theme weaving through this book, it is that in every essay I am trying to help others to examine and transcend *their* belief systems and, maybe, be a little happier as a result.

Cheers,
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