

(The god of our lives.) TBD

A = Mr. Hawthorne

B = Cult Leader

B: Welcome Mr. Hawthorne, I trust my directions were adequate?

A: Just about...

B: Mm good...

A: Uh... Who are they?

B: Oh, do not worry Mr. Hawthorne, those are my disciples. Forgive me if their appearance is disturbing to you in any way, our garbs must look quite ghastly in the darkness.

A: Ah. Hmm--

--well. It's alright; this is an unusual meeting place.

B: Hmm hmm, forgive me Mr. Hawthorne, I understand your unease, however, you must understand that we are quite a small gathering, and we cannot afford a better place of worship at the moment.

A: It's fine, I wouldn't be a good journalist if I scurried away anytime I went somewhere slightly out of the ordinary.

Have you read the Pentangle by any chance?

B: Well... Not before you reached out to us, Mr. Hawthorne

But after your request for an interview, I did read some of your articles.

...Very enlightening.

A: Well, I'm glad you found some use from my articles (chuckle).

B: Hm, hm.

B: What interested you in our little group Mr. Hawthorne?

A: Well, I sort of specialize in "underground" occult philosophy.

B: Aaaaah underground arcane knowledge. The kind only found in dust covered tombs locked away in forgotten crypts and sealed off library sections. well, I'm not sure how much I can help with that...

A: Really? I learned about your beliefs through a veritable third-party and from what I've heard I would consider your beliefs to be... quite unique.

B: Quite so... Quite so...

Ehh well... You see--

--our beliefs aren't occult in the traditional sense of the word.

Our beliefs aren't particularly mystical or religious at least... We don't believe in a god, for example or in the existence of the supernatural in general.

While you could call our beliefs "occult" they are that mostly in the original meaning of the word...

That being something hidden or unusual. But yes, I can accept the term "occult" as our beliefs don't follow the teachings of the church and are slightly religious in nature.

A: Hmmm, interesting.

By the way, could I have your name?

I uh, need it for the article.

B: Oh, I do apologize but I wish to remain anonymous. If you wish to give me a name, just come up with your own. I promise I won't mind.

A: Alright, well that shouldn't be too much trouble.

sniff So, from what I've heard you, well, your group worship the physical world... um or at least from what I gather you worship the uh...

Human body?

Am I getting that right?

B: That is right Mr. Hawthorne, the human body is the one true god of our lives.

A: "True god of our lives" (Muttering)

Now "the one true god of our lives" what exactly do you mean by that, is it some sort of "your body is your temple" sort of belief or?

B: Well, Mr. Hawthorne, what I mean is that the human body is the entity which rules our lives.

We live to feed it and to protect it and in return it gives us all its amazing gifts.

Sight, sound, smell, taste, touch. Every day we nourish it in exchange for its blessings.

A: Alright so you worship the body as the "gateway" into the real world? Am I getting that correct?

B: Not exactly a gateway, Mr. Hawthorne, for you forget we do not believe in the existence of the soul. We believe that we are one with the body.

We are the body and the body is us. You could interpret our beliefs as a narcissistic form of self-worship if you were being uncharitable, but we simply believe in appreciating the gifts the body has to offer us.

A: But you're talking about you, yourself like a separate entity from the body. That seems contradictory.

B: Well, individuality, the self.... is merely a fluke of evolution. A biproduct of our advanced biology. While yes, we are rational and self-aware, a trait that as far as we know is unique to us, there is no evidence that an immaterial soul is the reason for the existence of consciousness nor that it "pilots" our physical bodies.

B: Our personalities are created through the complex interactions of electrochemical synapses. How else would you explain people whose whole personalities have changed due to traumatic brain injuries or strokes. Did their soul also get injured? How and where does the immaterial soul interact with the physical world.

A: Mmm well I'm partial to the existence of a soul myself but no matter.

Umm.

Now that is all well and good but those just sound like fairly standard materialist or well, more physicalist really, philosophy to me how did you end up converting this very materialist philosophy into well.... a type of religion.

B: Yes, Mr. Hawthorne, I'm glad you asked! You see, while the topic of religion is complicated, we modeled our beliefs on the monotheistic religions, or at least one aspect of them. That being the worship of the creator of our universe.

A: I'm not quite sure I follow since you don't believe in a god but go on, I'm interested.

B: Thank you Mr. Hawthorne. Ahem. Now we believe in the worship of that which creates our universe however, we do not worship that which created the physical world the one that you and I exist in rather we believe in the worship of what creates *our* universe. You see the universe as we see it is merely an illusion created from an amalgamation of sensory data that we collect through our sensory organs. We take in vibrations and electromagnetic waves and translate them into sound and sight for example. These instruments that we use to sense the universe are limited as we aren't able to fully see or sense all aspects of reality. For example, we can't hear infrasound, and we can't see ultraviolet light. Again, as these physical processes determine our complete understanding of the universe and are our only way of comprehending it. It is therefore

reasonable to ascribe a sort of divine role to that which allows us to live in our universe, the god of our subjective world; the human body.

A: Alright, so I think I understand where you're coming from, so you worship the arbiter of our perception of the world AKA the human body but why? I know that in your view it creates "our" world but there must be something beyond that right? You wouldn't start a whole religion based on simple philosophical observations uhm, no offense of course.

B: I take no offense, Mr. Hawthorne. Well, as I've said we do worship the human body and the subjective reality it gifts us, and we honor that gift by giving into the subjectivity of reality. Once you realize the subjectivity of reality and fully give in to it, you'll realize that you are the master of your own reality. All the body asks in return is the sacrifice of animal or plant life. From this knowledge you have complete freedom to seize the day! While you know that there is a physical world out there you know that ultimately you are the master of your own reality. Have you ever suffered from neurotic conditions Mr. Hawthorne?

A: -W -what? Uh, I've dealt with grips of panic I'll admit but despite my family's predisposition to such unfortunate illnesses I, myself have never been particularly neurotic at least not for extended periods of time...

B: Well then you should know from first well or maybe second-hand experience the mild delusion that follows such conditions. Do you really think a man gripped with chronic anxiety is only a couple of steps away from death or is that only true to him? See? That's the point. In his subjective world created by his mind he really is always on the verge of death, despite its absurdity. Once you realize this, you're free to set your own boundaries, your own beliefs, the parameters of your world are yours to set and yours alone. In essence you're taking complete control of your life. But this is simply entry level stuff. The next step is manipulation of reality itself.

A: So, would that be manipulation of the actual physical world or just your reality?

B: Manipulation of your own reality Mr. Hawthorne you see, I've only really told you about how the knowledge of realities subjectivity can change your mindset however, what I mean by manipulation of reality is the manipulation of your own senses.

A: L-like hallucinations?

B: To sense things completely isolated within your own mind is to change your perception... Sadly, hallucinations can rarely if ever be controlled but yes, we do various rituals to induce hallucinations, whether it be the consumption of psychedelics or extreme sleep deprivation willingly rejecting reality and dictating your own is the first vital step towards fully dictating your own reality.

A: The first? I thought that would be the last step...

B: No, no no that is just the first step, the second step really involves taking reality into your own hands.

Hallucinations are highly dependent on your brain chemistry and can't always be controlled, while yes you are altering your perception of reality you in reality, have no control over that perception, that's when the next step comes in.

A:

B: And that's control over your sensory organs.

A:!

B: As I've said, our body is our vehicle into this world, we only see that which the body has constructed for us and as a show of gratitude and as a well... a symbolic representation of freedom we willingly sacrifice our senses.

A: S-sacrifice?

B: Yes, we choose to sacrifice our senses. However, this would not be done out of obligation. You have to willingly choose if you want to. As I said, you are the master of your own reality and if you do not wish to see, then you can choose not to. All you need to do...

is push. (She mimics the motion of gouging eyes out.)

Have you ever had that kind of freedom in your life, Mr. Hawthorne? Think of it, a simple move like that and your life is changed forever.

However, removing limbs and organs is relatively simple, at least when you have capable doctors on hand. There are, however, much more complicated procedures that require a bit more finesse.

For example, the primary sensory organ is the one that decodes all the sensory information and constructs our view of reality. The organ that is us. At least our consciousness.

The brain.

Much like with a stroke where certain brain functions permanently falter, we can choose what brain functions we wish to keep. We can choose how we want to see the world. Want to remove object permanence? Want to remove spatial reasoning? Want to remove any sense of identity you have? All it takes is a couple of cuts and they're gone forever.

You can if you want to.

Transcend your human form

(reveal of the "vessel")

(Mr. Hawthorne runs outside)

--TIMESKIP--

MONTAGE THAT STARTS ON A TRAIN AND THEN ENDS ON A BRIDGE, THE FINAL PANEL IS OF THE WATER

NARRATION:

It's been around 3 months since I met with them, those.... people.

And-

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And it's been a tough couple of months. I keep thinking about that poor man (or was it a woman?) who was tied up in their basement. He was.... he wasn't even human anymore I... I just couldn't believe that those people could do something like that to another human being. I mean.... Jesus, it looked like living hell, a punishment worse than death. I didn't see him for long but the image of him is just...burned into my memory. I can't get rid of it. They had sawed off everything from his body, it looked like he was only surviving because he was on life support. Jesus, they're keeping him in that state and if what she was saying was true...about the brain surgery I doubt he's even aware of it...I don't know I can scarcely imagine what his world is like it's awful it's... it's sickening!

You know I like to think of myself as some sort of believer in the esoteric or the occult but in reflection I don't know if I am... When I think of my beliefs, they all seem to align with the teachings of Christianity and the small esoteric elements I adopted didn't really seem to contradict what I used to believe in... It's like maybe I was "slumming" or being a tourist in the occult world, like a small Christian boy who gets his thrills by saying the lord's name in vain under his breath. The truth is I wasn't prepared for this... I... just can't. I'm not sure if a god can exist in a world where that... man is allowed to suffer like that. It....

The awful thing is that at the back of my mind I can feel this itch, this awful, awful feeling that I wish I could just push down forever until it fades away. But the harder I try the worse it seems to get...

I have the feeling that those... people. We're right in some twisted, awful, demented way. Not about mutilating themselves or other people of course that is insanity but even from the most insane people can come a nugget of truth and after the horrors I witnessed there I just can't in good conscience believe that there is a god in this world. Only a cold and uncaring universe can allow such awful horrors to exist... But I- I just don't know if I can live with that I mean if there is no god, no heaven, no hell, no... anything, then why are we here? What's even the point of living? Is there really nothing more to our world than the illusion created by our bodies? Is our sense of purpose really just an illusion created by our mind as a sedative against the cold harsh reality that we're not special in any way? That we're just a fluke? Is that where religion comes from? Something to fill the void? Or can it be filled by something else? Can I find purpose in this new world I see?

Am I the master of my own reality?

I'm not sure if I want to be.