

THE CON GAME

There is an inverse relation between knowing and belief. The more one knows the less one believes. The more ignorant one is, the more one believes. Jack Basuk

I do not want to believe. I want to know. Carl Sagan

I am not willing to die for my beliefs. They might be wrong. Bertrand Russell Paraphrased.

Fool me once. Shame on you! Fool me twice. Shame on me! Proverb

Don't Push the River. (It flows by itself) Title of a novel by Barry Stevens

Angelo is an alien with extraordinary powers. While he cannot really create anything, he is able to manipulate and change just about any existing entity. His knowledge is nearly absolute. However, he is equally ignorant of the reason and origin of existence. Further, he can't have 'death' vanish, despite his ability to time travel. Notwithstanding this limitation, he has been able to live for a very long time, long by human standards.

While visiting this planet, Angelo was struck by the lack of any type of original thinking and by the scarcity of overt emotions such as love, hate, pride, jealousy and anger. Also there was no belief in anything, no passion. He ingratiated himself into a group of so-called leaders. They consisted of a financial tycoon who rose to the top by marrying his boss's daughter who was downright unappealing physically and mentally. Another was a renowned scientist who cleverly had plagiarized other scientists' original research results. A trade union leader who betrayed the labour force he was supposed to safeguard was an additional member of the group. The fourth was an industrial magnate, who by using unethical measures, had risen to the top. Finally there was a leading venal politician. He was controlled by the other members of the group. Despite their exalted positions they had no real power. Things had just evolved without any interference from anyone.

They usually met once every fortnight at a rather exclusive club and pretended to enjoy each others' company and play stud poker. Obviously the money won or lost was not critical, except as a means of determining who the best player was on that occasion. More often than not it was either the trade unionist or the industrialist who won. Angelo managed to participate. He won just often enough to allow him continuous play. The others could not understand how he did it, since he deliberately played like an oaf. He did not want them to be in awe of him. In any case, after a while, he got bored.

Considering how to make the inhabitants of this planet more interesting, he decided to go back in time and change their history by imbuing them with fabled beliefs. In essence he went about creating various religions. Variety was necessary because of the different languages and cultures. For each he authored a dissertation that claimed a supreme being had created existence and had set down a series of behavioural norms which later became laws. Each differed mainly in style but the underlying message was one of unity, love, charity, equity and

most important, not bringing harm to anyone as well as behaving towards all in a manner consistent with reciprocity. To make his imagery more realistic he sought out individuals, long gone, to serve as prophets, and monumental figures advocating these beliefs. His aim was to maintain peace and harmony in a manner that was convincing, zealous, influential and aesthetically overwhelming. Initially, it appeared that he had succeeded. Unfortunately, the love for one another that he had strongly advocated was soon replaced by hate.

It did not take Angelo long to figure out what had occurred. He was one of a small number of aliens with extraordinary powers. Amongst the others was Angelo's nemesis, Diablo who without any compunction whatsoever always undertook to spoil any of Angelo's endeavours. He had managed to inculcate a rather large portion of the world's population with negative beliefs based upon fear, envy, greed, sin, need to dominate by the use of coercive power, win at any cost behaviour, ignorance and a conviction that their beliefs were absolutely right and all others sinful and wrong. Religion, instead of unifying became a divisive force setting one religious sect against others. It also became a tool that the state used to justify its immoral actions. While science and technology were primarily funded to win an arms race, they had some beneficial effects in terms of basic research components and improvements in the fields of medicine, communication and transportation. This gave some credence to their malevolent usages so that the dangers posed by newly invented weapons of mass destruction far outweighed their benevolent results. Diplomacy became a means of hiding hypocrisy and threat. Very frequently, good people had no other recourse but to fight fire with fire to defend themselves.

Finally and perhaps most insidiously, under Diablo's diabolical influence, sex, which had been a natural manner of bonding and reproducing, became for many something obsessive, leading to pornography, bondage, pedophilia, bestiality, and commercial exploitation. Women often became objects of possession and as such were frequently fought over. Men's sexual prowess fed their ego and libido. Sex became an extreme complicating and explosive factor in human relations.

Inevitably, the history of the world grew replete with all sorts of violence, led by monstrous leaders. The amount of blood that was spilled was overwhelming. Something had to be done and Angelo spent some time cogitating about it. Desperate circumstances require equally impetuous responses. Angelo's was quite simple. Any weapon that was being used to inflict harm or death was to be turned against the user. In other words the user would suffer the consequences that he or she intended for his/her victim.

The results were immediate. Violence in the habitual sense disappeared. It was replaced by civil disobedience and by massive amounts of civil tort cases that inundated the courts. Diablo could not stop laughing. The two most prominent civil litigator companies were "The Devil's Associates" and "Angels, For The Defence".

Jack Basuk, April 23, 2010

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