

The Western Book of the Dead

CHAPTER I

In the beginning – i.e., before the beginning – there was NOTHING. And MATTER came out of NOTHING. And MATTER was CHAOS.

CHAPTER II

Strangely, and for no reason whatsoever, CHAOS started to change. Simplicity begat complexity, randomness begat order, most peculiar of all, inanimate MATTER begat organic MATTER.

CHAPTER III

Many, many, many years passed and quite by chance organic MATTER developed in a strange direction. It became more and more complex, and then for no apparent reason at all, it became conscious of itself. It called the consciousness MIND and it gave itself a name and that name was MAN.

CHAPTER IV

Now MAN equipped with MIND found that MIND played peculiar tricks on him. He found that instead of just accepting himself as part of MATTER, he had a longing for significance, a desire to live for a purpose. Instead of being pushed about by blind chance, he wanted to direct his own affairs. He also found that there was a state of being that was entirely satisfactory and he called it LOVE.

CHAPTER V

MAN kept on searching for purpose and meaning and after a while strange rumors began to spread – rumors that spoke of a creator-GOD who was LOVE, who had created MAN in his own image. Many men believed the rumors. It gave their lives meaning; it told them the

universe was not purposeless after all. Inspired by hope, these BELIEVERS started to write, to paint, and to chip away at blocks of stone. Some of these craftsmen were extremely skillful. They seemed to be expressing the longings and aspirations of all men. To these exceptional pieces of craft a name was given, and that name was ART. And the men who wrote them, painted them, or chipped them out were called ARTISTS. And all their ART said: MAN IS SIGNIFICANT.

CHAPTER VI

It was also rumored that the son of LOVE became a MAN, showed men how to live, then died. A legend has it that the son of LOVE came back from the dead then disappeared in a cloud. In some parts of the Western World the BELIEVERS of this legend spread a very influential form of the message: MAN IS SIGNIFICANT.

CHAPTER VII

For many years this state of affairs existed, but MAN became restless. Was it so? Was MAN a creation of LOVE? Why should he simply believe a rumor? Had anyone used his REASON – a very special activity of MIND that had proved to be successful in understanding MATTER – to find out if the rumor was true? Did the rumor correspond to what really was? A thorough investigation began and it lasted many years.

CHAPTER VIII

After an era of investigation MAN came to certain conclusions: (1) The rumors were certainly false. REASON found no EVIDENCE to verify the GOD hypothesis. God, they said, was the result of wishful daydreams, a figment of IMAGINATION – which itself was an early aberration in primitive MAN, now happily under the control of REASON. And if the rumor of GOD was false, so surely was the complex rumor about his son. (2) MAN was not some mysterious higher being who was significant. He was, on the contrary, of no importance at all – simply a complex product of cause and effect. A meaningless piece of MATTER on a large but equally meaningless piece of MATTER called EARTH. He had emerged from primordial slime and was really neither more or less than that.

CHAPTER IX

At first nothing much changed. But a few years passed and a few perceptive men began to notice a difference. Music didn't seem to sound the same, painting didn't look the same, and books didn't read in the same way. Some people started to complain, but the ARTISTS – always very honest transparent people – simply said, "We are interpreting REALITY. If REALITY is meaningless, then we must imitate that meaninglessness. You must not give yourselves airs. You are nothing. You are a conscious bit of protoplasm condemned to death on this planet." At that, the critical group stopped carping and started to say how beautiful the NEW ART was. They didn't want to use the word beautiful because everybody knew it didn't mean anything, but it had been around for so long why not use it anyway?

CHAPTER X

Then, too, a few perceptive men noticed changes in the way men and women behaved. Once they had loved each other. And their LOVE was thought to be a reflection of the LOVE who was GOD. But now there was just SEX – liaisons of the moment. And families began to die as families and children were left to the whim of the courts. And men called these liaisons LOVE, though they knew the word didn't mean anything.

CHAPTER XI

All sorts of startling consequences followed. Some men said, "If MAN is only a machine caught up in the vast mechanism of nature, why not treat him accordingly? So the MANIPULATORS set to work and used men just like objects of nature. And behold there came a very efficient system called UTOPIA, and the occupants were called NECROPHILES. Of course, it was really nothing new, for the MANIPULATORS had picked up their model from the ANTS, a natural group of beings who years previously had attained the perfect state of affairs. Another group of men resisted UTOPIA. They said, "In spite of all that REASON has proved we will continue to believe that our longings and aspirations are meaningful." So they tried to forget their DESPAIR (a feeling that MAN

experienced when he wanted to hope and did hope knowing it was hopeless) by taking chemicals and behaving like animals, living only for each successive moment and trying hard to make each moment pleasurable. Most of them got tired playing these games after a while and disposed of themselves in various ways. Some went to DEATH, some to PSYCHEDELIA (a beautiful country with a synaesthetic landscape), some to NIRVANA. Some even went to UTOPIA. And so nonsense was worshipped instead of sense (they called it the absurd). REASON was abandoned – because, you see, it couldn't give answers to the really big questions after all. In its place came UNREASON (they called it irrationality). And MORALITY was abandoned – because that particular ability to distinguish between THE GOOD and THE BAD was simply regarded as a mere matter of taste or caprice. THE GOOD and THE BAD had been popular once, but that was when rumors of GOD were rife. THE GOOD was GOD's holy character and had to be obeyed. THE BAD was disobedience or revolt against THE GOOD. But THE GOOD and THE BAD departed with REASON and GOD. And now there was no longer TRAGEDY – only MISERY.

CHAPTER XII

So MAN ceased to be MAN – a rational, moral creature, a being who once transcended the causality of nature. Instead he became a meaningless, enigmatic machine-like piece of MATTER. Even the MANIPULATORS who controlled UTOPIA ceased to be MAN in the old sense of the word. After denying their mannishness for so long, they finally lost it and so became the most terrifying animal on the face of the earth.

POSTSCRIPT

The old rumors still persist – found in outlying regions and small cliques of NON – CONFORMISTS in UTOPIA – that LOVE is. Some still say MAN is. But these are the same ones who say no MAN has ever really died, that even the ancients are alive (some well, some not) and living in OTHER WORLD. Such rumors are being suppressed wherever they are found.