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On the Use of "Paradox" as a Philosophical "Electric Prod" & EmBEDded Ulterior Motives as Trickster of the SubConscious in the Writings of Tim Ore

Inspired by Tim Ore's recent text "Confession in Support of the 1990-1993 ART STRIKE" (printed in YAWN no. 15) & the probable controversy surrounding its seemingly vituperative nature, I've decided to attempt to analyze a few of his writings in order to expose their deviously disguised cON/tENT—since said cON/tENT often seems to go under-noticed or unnoticed altogether.

The above-mentioned text has two key trick statements in the first paragraph written in first person by the author: "I'm useless. Totally worthless." How tricky this is, however, does not become apparent until we delve further into the text. After this seemingly self-effacing beginning of this supposed "confession," the reader is soundly insulted for being as worthless as the author (& in some respects, more so) but the emotionally charged *style* of the writing places the criticism so far beyond reasonableness that the reader seems to be under attack from someone placing himself in a superior, self righteous & indignant position & spitting venomously at the worms beneath him. This is exaggerated by the division between the "I" of the author & the "you" of the reader—never is there a "we" which would make Mr. Ore's implied position of shared culpability believably sincere—despite, e.g., after the longest paragraph of defamation of the reader's character, such statements as: "Not that I'm any better than you are." If the author is so worthless, why does he separate himself from his "worthless" readership & make claim to superior bravery? Why doesn't he mention his own neighborhood (Charles Village) in the same breath that he mentions Bolton Hill & Hollins Market?

The inattentive or easily emotionally manipulated reader may simply write off Ore as a hypocritical shit & completely miss the thoroughness of the "paradoxes" in his text. In the second paragraph, Ore suggests that artists using paper should die & be used as compost to regenerate forests as recompense for having destroyed so many trees for their own petty purposes. But, to the discerning reader, the irony of this should be readily apparent—viz.: Tim Ore is spreading & presenting his text on the very same medium—thusly wasting paper as much as anyone! Could he possibly be oblivious to this? I don't think so—and this article is partially in support of that position.

To digress temporarily to a text recently printed in a *CoBalt* newsletter, I refer to the "C.O.G.S." manifesto &/or petition. In this, Ore claims to represent the "joint N.E.A. (National Endowment for the Arts) & C.C. (Canada Council) Division" of the "Continuity of Government Sponsorship" (i.e.: C.O.G.S.) group. This fictitious group offers to "continue with their/our radical representations of potential utopias after the wholesale rendering of the environment unsuitable for the average person." Such a "generous" offer "only" expects payment from the other survivors for "services" rendered. The pseudo-

humbleness of this offer is one of the clearest cases of Ore's satire—and yet people have been known to've believed it at face value nonetheless.

Accepting that this manifesto/petition is really a parody of one of T. Ore's pet peeves, we begin to approach the obliqueness of his presentation of cON/tENT. I.e.: Ore never says what he means—or, rather, his meaning is not a one-sided answer in a way which, following his own "logic," will lead the reader to realize that the original layer of apparent meaning is not the "real" (or only) meaning at all. In a sense, this creates a "paradox" because if the secondary meaning is reached via the "logic" of the first meaning & the second meaning refutes the "logic" of the first meaning then the first meaning's leading to the second meaning is refuted & the reader is back at the beginning again without the ability to seriously accept either.

SERIOUSLY. Here we are at another key *concept*. As tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE has written (with luminous paint no less) "Seriousness is Death" (more about him & his relation to Tim Ore later). Humor often tends to juxtapose seemingly "unrelated" items to arouse laughter with the unexpected. In a similar way, zen koans tend to juxtapose seemingly contradictory elements to inspire the perceiver to contemplate a possibility transcendent of simplistic pigeon-holing. Humor & zen. Both subvert the quick-draw of presupposition by deliberately "setting up" the perceiver with their all too predictable expectations & then not conforming to them.

How is this done? Through "paradox." As previously mentioned, the "Confession" seems hypocritical. But the "hypocrisy" is actually, as indicated by the last two paragraphs of this analysis, a humorous "I am lying" "paradox." In zen, (to quote Gary Zukav's *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*)

A koan is a puzzle which cannot be answered in ordinary ways because it is paradoxical. *What is the sound of one hand clapping?* is a zen koan. Zen students are told to think unceasingly about a particular koan until they know the answer. There is no single correct answer to a koan. It depends upon the psychological state of the student.

Note the hierarchy of "masters" & "students" in Zukav's (& most people's) presentation of zen. The "paradox" here is that if there is "no single correct answer" then can there be a "master"? I.e.: can there be a "superior" person when typical ideas of "superiority" are rooted in the "superior" teacher's having more "correct answers" than the student?

Tim Ore's "C.O.G.S." statement makes fun of the contradiction "intrinsic" in "revolutionaries" using money extorted from the masses to complain about how the masses are pushed around. It laughs at the

self-servingness of people who pretend to have the interests of “others” in mind without acknowledging that we are all one to begin with. As such, it jokes about the pretense that any hierarchy/elitism can be anything other than a fraud perpetrated on the insecure &/or gullible.

How is the issue of the “master”/“student” hierarchy related to & subverted in the “Confession”? Through what I’ve chosen to call the “Philosophical ‘Electric Prod.’” Ore’s text is obviously addressed to a specific audience. Having been written for the *CoBalt* magazine, it addresses itself to said magazine’s presumed readership. Knowing that the *CoBalt* office is located on the premises of the Maryland Institute of Art, that *CoBalt* meetings occur on the premises, & that the annual *CoBalt* festival is held nearby, Ore is safe in assuming that most *CoBalt* readers will be Maryland Institute students &/or faculty & their friends. Thus his “low blows” are aimed at potentially touchy spots of that particular constituency. Given that it’s common for students to be supported by their parents & given that Bolton Hill is the fairly expensive neighborhood adjacent to the school where many of the students live, Ore writes “are you just going to snivel & complain in that cushy Bolton Hill (or wherever) apartment that your parents pay for because you’re incapable of facing harsh reality long enough to support yourself?” On the surface, this is a total attack on the integrity & courage of the student. No corner is given to the idea that students should have slack from practical responsibility to enable them to concentrate on studying. The text implicitly states that having such slack is an undeserved privilege (usually bought with ill-gained wealth)—further implying that the experiential type of learning that results from a less privileged position in this society is a type of learning much more worthy of respect. A learning approaching a social equality. An anarchistic learning in which experience itself is the teacher rather than another individual higher in an institutionalized hierarchy.

But, once again, we’re confronted with the “I’m lying” “paradox”—in this instance serving fairly clearly as a “Philosophical ‘Electric Prod.’” Knowing that he’s addressing students, Ore shocks & prods their potential ability to philosophize with his electrically charged bludgeoning prose—but, his blows are so low that they miss the genitals & hit the ground harmlessly. The electrical ground. The irony here is that in order for the student to understand that these apparently heated insults are harmless, the student must accept them as being “true” & then reject them as being “false” as the next logical step. Just as in the “I am lying” “paradox” the perceiver can’t logically accept the statement as being either “true” or “false,” so it is that if Ore is sincere in his critique of the hierarchy of privilege then the student can’t logically accept Ore’s apparent opinion base of the “masterful teacher” insulting the “lowly student”—& vice versa. A hint at this irony is contained in the sign-off of “sincerely”—such a signature precursor usually follows an even-tempered text—it’s a politeness. Ore’s text is anything but polite.

Tim Ore is a *con* artist. In his open letter proposing that New York city trade names with BalTimOre, dated Dec. 15, 1982, Ore justifies the desirability of this proposal in various ways. His main thrust is presented as being that NYC’s reputation as a cultural center tends to bias the thoughtless critic unfairly in favor of anything that comes from New York & cause the same critics to completely ignore anything from BalTimOre. Anyone familiar with being an artist in BalTimOre can certainly identify with this. But is such a concern really behind Ore’s motives? Those of us familiar with Ore’s obsession with sex & somewhat secret desire to impregnate one thousand womyn before dying know that what underlies his every action is just strate-

gies for “getting laid.” There are two main reasons why Tim Ore resides in BalTimOre first: the name of the city serves as a constant subliminal stimulus to fuck with him (i.e.: to “Bal(l)” with him) & second: BalTimOre is one of the unwed mother capitals of the world. BalTimOre’s population is too small compared to New York—if they were to exchange names, Ore’s sexual advertising for himself would reach many *millions* more people! Such is the real motive.

Tim Ore is a *con* artist in more ways than one. In the “ART STRIKE” text, he refers to tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE as his “parent set.” A peculiar expression—& one that’s so unobtrusively inserted that I suspect that the average reader would glide over it unnoticingly. This is another key expression. A set is something that contains something—an array of things organized in a particular way—a unified group. If tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE is Tim Ore’s parent set, then Tim Ore is a smaller set *within* tENT-a-cON—Tim Ore is a part of a greater coN/tENT. Does this mean that tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE & Tim Ore are the same person? Ore has called himself “tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE’s post-Frame-of-Reference public relations person.” This obscure reference refers to a box/puppet-theater made by cONVENIENCE as his last act before becoming a self-declared schizophrenic with too personal a language to be comprehensible to anyone outside his own world anymore. tENT, knowing that he faced unbearable loneliness, opted in favor of having multiple personalities to keep each other company. As one of them, Tim Ore chose to stay in touch with the “outer world” as an interface—partially as a survivalistic-measure. Here, another philosophical question appears. Is there an “outer world”? I.e.: IS the perceiver inevitably the center of their own universe—in which all other existence can’t be “proven” to be anything other than a subjective creation? If one answers this question YES, then Ore is no more or less a creature separate from tENTATIVELY than I am. The name tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE, when taken as a self-description, can be easily interpreted to “define” a flexible entity boundary—a boundary which recognizes that everything is interconnected except for that which is not. What any given communicating consciousness declares itself to be depends on the consciousness’s limitations. Localized absence of depth perception. Not willing to expand, for the purposes of brevity, my own lack of depth perception made apparent by the extremely simple-minded treatment of this philosophy, this subject (& paragraph) stops here.

Ore’s interpenetration with tENT’s schizophrenia is hinted at by his tastes in clothing. Always wearing the same “clashing” plaids, most observers typecast Tim as a street person. This is a conscious affectation on Ore’s part—a choosing to be an “outsider artist” rather than associate with & be accepted by a society so inclined to such simple-minded stereotyping.

To return to the zen parallels, I quote John Cage (from *Indeterminacy*) telling a story about his zen teacher D.T. Suzuki,

Before studying zen, men are men & mountains are mountains. While studying zen, things become confused. After studying zen, men are men & mountains are mountains. After telling this, Dr. Suzuki was asked “What is the difference between before & after?” He said, “No difference—only the feet are a little bit off the ground.”

To paraphrase this, I write: Before studying Ore, womyn are womyn & men are men. While studying Ore, things become confused. After studying Ore, men are men & womyn are womyn, only Ore’s dick is pointing up at the sky. [E.G. Head

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