

## CHAPTER THREE

### HOW TO BE A GENUINE FAKE

THE CAT has already been let out of the bag. The inside information is that yourself as "just little me" who "came into this world" and lives temporarily in a bag of skin is a hoax and a fake. The fact is that because no one thing or feature of this universe is separable from the whole, the only real You, or Self, is the whole. The rest of this book will attempt to make this so clear that you will not only understand the words but *feel* the fact. The first step is to understand, as vividly as possible, how the hoax begins.

We must first look at the form and behavior of the hoax itself. I have long been interested in trying to find out how people experience, or sense, their own existence—for what specific sensations do they use the word "I"?

Few people seem to use the word for their whole physical organism. "I have a body" is more common than "I am a body." We speak of "my" legs as we speak of "my" clothes, and "I" seems to remain intact even if the legs are amputated. We say, "I speak, I walk, I think, and (even) I breathe." But we do not say, "I shape my bones, I grow my nails, and I circulate my blood." We seem to use "I" for something *in* the body but not really *of* the body, for much of what goes on in the body seems to happen to "I" in the same way as external events. "I" is used as the center of voluntary behavior and conscious attention, but not consistently. Breathing is only partially voluntary, and we say "I was sick" or "I dreamed" or "I fell asleep" as if the verbs were not passive but active.

Nevertheless, "I" usually refers to a center in the body, but different peoples feel it in different places. For some cultures, it is in the region of the solar plexus. The Chinese *hsin*, the heart-mind or soul, is found in the center of the chest. But most Westerners locate the ego in the head, from which center the rest of us dangles. The ego is somewhere behind the eyes and between the ears. It is as if there sat beneath the dome of

the skull a controlling officer who wears earphones wired to the ears, and watches a television screen wired to the eyes. Before him stands a great panel of dials and switches connected with all other parts of the body that yield conscious information or respond to the officer's will.

This controlling officer "sees" sight, "hears" sounds, "feels" feelings, and "has" experiences. These are common but redundant ways of talking, for seeing a sight is just seeing, hearing a sound is just hearing, feeling a feeling is just feeling, and having an experience is just experiencing. But that these redundant phrases are so commonly used shows that most people think of themselves as separate from their thoughts and experiences. All this can get marvelously complicated when we begin to wonder whether our officer has another officer inside *his* head, and so *ad infinitum!*

*There was a young man who said, "Though  
It seems that I know that I know,  
What I would like to see  
Is the 'I' that knows 'me'  
When I know that I know that I know."*

One of the most important items in our officer's equipment is his recording and filing system—the memory which he constantly "consults" so as to know how to interpret and respond to his sensory input. Without this equipment, he could have no sensation of constancy—of being the *same* officer as he was seconds ago. Although memory records are much more fluid and elusive than photographic film or magnetic tape, the accumulation of memories is an essential part of the ego-sensation. It gives the impression of oneself, the officer, as something that remains while life goes by—as if the conscious self were a stable mirror reflecting a passing procession. This further exaggerates the feeling of separateness, of oneself changing at a pace so much slower than outside events and inside thoughts that you seem to stand aside from them as an independent observer. But memories persist as the whirlpool persists. Conscious attention seems to scan them as computers scan their ever-cycling tapes or other storage mechanisms. Memory is an enduring pattern of motion, like the whirlpool, rather than

an enduring substance, like a mirror, a wax tablet, or a sheet of paper. If memories are stored in neurons, there is no standing aside from the stream of events, for neurons flow along in the same stream as events outside the skull. After all, your neurons are part of my external world, and mine of yours! All our insides are outside, there in the physical world. But, conversely, the outside world has no color, shape, weight, heat, or motion without "inside" brains. It has these qualities only *in relation* to brains, which are, in turn, members of itself.

Wherever people may feel that the ego is located, and however much, or little, of the physical body is identified with it, almost all agree that "I" am *not* anything outside my skin. As Shakespeare's King John says to Hubert, "Within this wall of flesh there is a soul counts thee her creditor." The skin is always considered as a wall, barrier, or boundary which definitively separates oneself from the world—despite the fact that it is covered with pores breathing air and with nerve-ends relaying information. The skin informs us just as much as it outforms; it is as much a bridge as a barrier. Nevertheless, it is our firm conviction that beyond this "wall of flesh" lies an alien world only slightly concerned with us, so that much energy is required to command or attract its attention, or to change its behavior. It was there before we were born, and it will continue after we die. We live in it temporarily as rather unimportant fragments, disconnected and alone.

This whole illusion has its history in ways of thinking—in the images, models, myths, and language systems which we have used for thousands of years to make sense of the world. These have had an effect on our perceptions which seems to be strictly hypnotic. It is largely by *talking* that a hypnotist produces illusions and strange behavioral changes in his subjects—talking coupled with relaxed fixation of the subject's conscious attention. The stage magician, too, performs most of his illusions by patter and misdirection of attention. Hypnotic illusions can be vividly sensuous and real to the subject, even after he has come out of the so-called "hypnotic trance."

It is, then, as if the human race had hypnotized or talked itself into the hoax of egocentricity. There is no one to blame but ourselves. We are not victims of a conspiracy arranged by an external God or some secret society of manipulators. If there is any biological foundation for

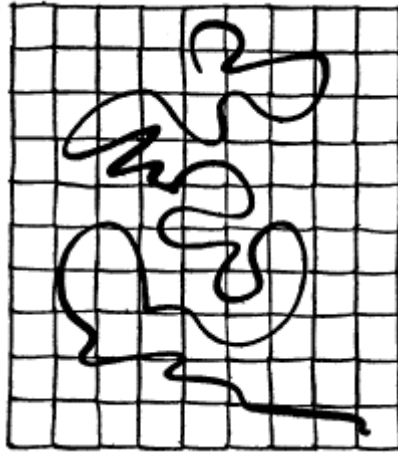
the hoax it lies only in the brain's capacity for narrowed, attentive consciousness hand-in-hand with its power of recognition—of knowing about knowing and thinking about thinking with the use of images and languages. My problem as a writer, using words, is to dispel the illusions of language while employing one of the languages that generates them. I can succeed only on the principle of "a hair of the dog that bit you."

Apart from such human artifacts as buildings and roads (especially Roman and American roads), our universe, including ourselves, is thoroughly wiggly. Its features are wiggly in both shape and conduct. Clouds, mountains, plants, rivers, animals, coastlines—all wiggle. They wiggle so much and in so many different ways that no one can really make out where one wiggle begins and another ends, whether in space or in time. Some French classicist of the eighteenth century complained that the Creator had seriously fallen down on the job by failing to arrange the stars with any elegant symmetry, for they seem to be sprayed through space like the droplets from a breaking wave. Is all this one thing wiggling in many different ways, or many things wiggling on their own? Are there "things" that wiggle, or are the wigglings the same as the things? It depends upon how you figure it.

Millennia ago, some genius discovered that such wiggles as fish and rabbits could be caught in nets. Much later, some other genius thought of catching the world in a net. By itself, the world goes something like this:



But now look at this wiggle through a net:



The net has "cut" the big wiggle into little wiggles, all contained in squares of the same size. Order has been imposed on chaos. We can now say that the wiggle goes so many squares to the left, so many to the right, so many up, or so many down, and at last we have its number. Centuries later, the same image of the net was imposed upon the world as the lines of both celestial and terrestrial latitude and longitude, as graph paper for plotting mathematical wiggles, as pigeonholes for filing, and as the ground plan for cities. The net has thus become one of the presiding images of human thought. But it is always an image, and just as no one can use the equator to tie up a package, the real wiggly world slips like water through our imaginary nets. However much we divide, count, sort, or classify this wiggling into particular things and events, this is no more than a way of thinking about the world: it is never *actually* divided.

Another powerful image is the Ceramic Model of the universe, in which we think of it as so many forms of one or more substances, as pots are forms of clay, and as God is said to have created Adam from the dust. This has been an especially troublesome image, bewildering philosophers and scientists for centuries with such idiotic questions as: "How does form (or energy) influence matter?" "What *is* matter?" "What happens to form (the soul) when it leaves matter (the body)?"