

Philosophy
in the
Dungeon

The Magic of Sex & Spirit

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The Magic of Sex & Spirit

Jack Rinella

Foreword by Dossie Easton

Unedited Pre-release sample

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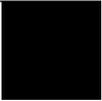
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To Liam and -----

That they may know what their

Grandfather believed

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Author's Note



Before you purchase or read this book there are a few things you ought to know:

This book is neither an introductory volume on being kinky nor a book about SM techniques, but let me quickly assure you that you can still enjoy this book if alternate sexual practices are new territory to you. If you are not an experienced Bondage/Discipline/Domination/Submission/Sadism/Masochism (BDSM) player, then I suggest that you avail yourself of one or two of the titles listed in the appendix under Suggested Reading, before you attempt to have kinky sex.

Philosophy In the Dungeon is filled with ideas that some people consider dangerous, some heretical, some Satanic, and some just down-right foolish. With the exception of the dangerous part, I don't agree with any of those detractors.

As for what's dangerous, I can take no responsibility for your irresponsible behavior. I am not urging you to do anything that I've done. Additionally, no one should attempt any sexual practices without full knowledge of how to do them safely, sanely, and consensually. Some things that kinky folks do should only be done when they have gained the proper expertise.

Cultures that routinely practice "Magic" have developed rather sophisticated safeguards to protect themselves, those who practice it, and those upon whom it is practiced. This is not, then, a complete "How-to" nor a fully-referenced manual. It is the candid telling of my experiences and my beliefs, i.e., the Philosophy I learned in the dungeon. There are many who call themselves

magicians -- and they quite well may be -- who would also have me tell you that practicing magic can be dangerous when done by the ignorant and that like SM you ought to learn from an expert before you attempt it. There are some, in fact, who will condemn this book for telling secrets that they think the average person shouldn't know.

My personal philosophy is that "All will be revealed" and that the "Truth will set you free." You will note as you read this book that I don't have much to hide. In any case I urge you to play safely and act as responsibly.



As you read these pages you'll see symbols in the margin (as on the left) which mark "Key Ideas." I've marked them as such because they reflect the basics of what I believe. Together they add up to the paradigms I hold to be true.

That said, I trust you will enjoy this book.

Jack Rinella

Foreword



What you have just opened is an amazing book about spiritual consciousness, everyday metaphysics, faith - and sex. Author Jack Rinella generously shares with us his path of revelation from his years as an aspiring priest to his coming out as a gay leatherman, still teaching spiritual practice, still seeking spiritual truth.

With utterly no apologies, Rinella takes on the difficult task of reuniting sex and spirituality, which have been so painfully severed over the last few hundred years of European cultural and religious history. He courageously refuses to compartmentalize or to shroud his lifestyle in the closet: after all, how could anyone write a book about the fundamental unity of everything in spirit and leave out sex?

In a society which pathologizes and even criminalizes explorers in the realms of sex and S/M, open discussions of our sexual experience are often considered somehow invalid and unsafe. But I know from experience that the real danger is that when we refuse to speak openly - and proudly - about our sex lives, we consign ourselves and our children to a jungle of unconscious reactivity, where men are taught to steal sex and women to hoard it, and sex is devalued as “worldly” and robbed of the spirit that should be the animating force in our intimate connections.

Jack, on the other hand, turns constantly to his many sexual journeys as the source of luminous truths, including his process of coming out into his own light as a gay man, and into his

S/M life style. He states, brilliantly, that our “lifestyle is always an expression of salvation.” He expands our understanding of faith as an omnipresent force in our everyday lives and simultaneously shows us how faith stretches far beyond our imaginations. He leads us into mystery as he states: “the truth I seek is broader than I will ever comprehend.”

He encourages us to get disillusioned - what good are illusions anyway? He shows us how to live and love rooted firmly in the present, and reminds us that every “voyage is greater than the destination”. As he deconstructs the perils of orthodoxy, he encourages us to increase the flow of energy in our sex lives by recognizing that sex is neither a brainless nor a soulless activity, but a very sweet way of surrendering to spirit.

Ultimately, Jack Rinella charges us with a mission - to live our lives authentically in unity with ourselves and our beliefs, and to let our entire lives, and especially our sex lives, be an expression of our spirit and a constantly renewing source of revelation. Thank you, Jack, you are an inspiration.

Dossie Easton

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

Co-author, with Janet Hardy, of:

The New Bottoming Book

The New Topping Book

The Ethical Slut

When Someone You Love Is Kinky

Radical Ecstasy: S/M Journeys to Transcendence

And a proud and active sex radical since 1961.

Introduction



As I reflect on the content of this book, I can only marvel at the changes I have undergone in life. It was only 25 years ago, for instance, that I was baptized by immersion in the pond of a charismatic Jesus People commune. Then again, only four years earlier I had been a devote Roman Catholic college student studying for ordination as a priest. In the years since then I have found myself attending classes in Transcendental Meditation, researching phallic worship, seeking to learn how to do “sex magic,” and actively writing and speaking nationally in the subculture of alternate sexuality, variously called the “lifestyle,” “Leather,” and “kink.”

What has been consistent has been a search for meaning and the truth of what it means to be fully human, especially within the context of spirituality. This book, then, is an attempt to express what I have experienced and, through those experiences, learned. *Philosophy In the Dungeon* is my reflection on that quest and an attempt to arrive at a meaningful understanding of what it means to be human.

As a kinky and sexually active man who has lived a life filled with spiritual experience and religious study, I am all too aware of the tension between holiness, as defined by mainline contemporary religions, and sexual activity, especially of the radical and promiscuous type. Most religious leaders, after all, spend much more time condemning sexual activity than extolling its virtue and its sacredness. I also understand that for many the world of magic is thought to be either evil or foolish and that it

certainly has no place in one's bedroom.



For me, sexual bliss and religious ecstasy are one and the same experience. The body and its functions are as holy as the soul. Physical love and divine love are identical in nature. What is magical is simply what is. The tensions between flesh and spirit are man-created, not having any reality outside of a guilty and shame-ridden psyche.

I write then to resolve those tensions, attempting to find holiness in wholeness and worship in its fullness. The resolution of all tension is found in harmony, which is the very state to which I hope this book will lead.

About Me

When I wrote a short biography of myself in the fall of 1996 I realized that the one repeating focus in my life was my quest for spiritual understanding. Having had a large assortment of occupations, no one place where I had lived for very long, having been divorced, and having spent most of my life either underemployed or involved in some alternative lifestyle, one could look at me and see a person who was continually discontented. In fact, in 1965 the rector of Mater Christi Seminary, which I was attending at the time, asked me why I seemed so dissatisfied with life.

In the course of my 59 years of living, I have been involved in Roman Catholicism, Pentecostalism, the pastor of a Congregational Church, a New Age student and meditator. I have considered myself Jewish (for one night at least), a neo-Pagan, a Dionysian, a Gnostic, and a man who just didn't have a religious clue. In all of this there are strong indications of a great deal of searching and not a lot of finding. Yet this open-hearted experimentation is the strong evidence of a deep hunger, quest if

you will, to know God and to understand life, thereby being able to live it deeply and fully.

What is added to this mix is my full participation in Gay (though I probably qualify as a bisexual), sadomasochistic, and dominant/submissive sexuality. For the many believers of a wide variety of traditional doctrines, a spiritual life and a sexually active one seem to be at loggerheads. In our culture, penance, fasting, hair shirts, and abstinence are thought to be more akin to holiness than are hedonism and sexual liberation. I, on the other hand, have experienced the deeply moving visitation of divinity in what some would call promiscuity and sexual depravity. The white light that appeared to me while attending Mass as an adolescent (circa 1958) and the white light I experienced in a sadomasochistic leather scene in 1985 were very much one and the same experience.

On other hand, I cannot satisfactorily explain the nature and meaning of those lights. My vocabulary is too limited, my intelligence too small to grasp the width, depth, and height of the infinite, omnipotent, omnipresent, and all-knowing. Take those words as a warning. I'm no expert in divinity, in eternity, nor in much of anything. I am a fallible and culpable human.

I can only attempt to move one small step forward toward more light. This book is my invitation to you to see the sacredness of sex and its spiritual possibilities. It is my attempt to understand why and how sex is holy, beautiful and good-to-experience. Herein I will not show you **the way** but I trust my experiences and insights might help you to "Know, love, and serve God in this world and to be happy with Him in the next" -- as I was taught me in first grade.

An Eclectic Approach

If I were still in grammar school, I'd be accused (OK, diagnosed) as having attention deficit disorder. Happily I graduated from eighth grade long before the social scientists

took over the work of the nuns. The truth is that I prefer to work on several projects at a time and my attention on any one project wanes quickly. That being the case, I'm a natural candidate for being eclectic. You'll find herein all sorts of pieces from various disciplines. My approach to spirituality is a medley, a stew, a mosaic.

I believe that truth exists in many places and is best found through the use of many disciplines and methodologies. There is a way for each of us, but probably not one path for all of us. Our uniqueness, our individuality points each of us in a highly personalized direction. There are many roads and all of them lead to Rome, though not necessarily to Rome in Italy. All disciplines hold and reveal some truth, but none have all of it. For that reason the first four chapters may seem unrelated. The first chapters of this book consider the idea of time and paradigms, the body and the mind, historical theologies, and the body as an energetic entity. Then we'll pause to reflect on how these four topics affect my consideration of sex and spirit. Moving then from general reflection to a discourse on unity and then on human life, we will finally consider the possibility of a spiritual life practiced in a subculture of kink and sex, which leads naturally to the techniques of what many call magic.

So with a bit of this and bit of that I invite you to join me in a search for enlightenment. Let our paths merge for this part of the journey, knowing that each of us has the responsibility to listen not only to the other but especially to the small silent voice of one's own soul, which of course is the most important voice of all.

The Necessity of Wholeness

For whatever reason we only see darkly and do not see the whole. Yes we may know one side of the coin well; still the other is out of sight. We can grasp pieces but never the entirety, hence our understanding is always incomplete. Still there is the necessity

to recognize that wholeness exists, even if the full knowledge of it presently evades us.

This notice, then, serves as a warning that this book is and will be incomplete. No surprise there. It also reminds us that we have to keep in mind that there is a wholeness to be sought. The trap is that we get caught in a perspective, in a limited mode of understanding, and thereby disregard other modes that have something to teach us as well. Our culture thrives on the expertise of specialists and does so for good reason. Yet there is the constant need to approach answers fully in a generalist's sort of way, meaning that we seek the full answer.

This is what is called an holistic approach. The word reminds us to seek wholeness and holiness; true holiness being none other than wholeness itself. Our search, then, is many faceted: physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, communal, solitary, financial, legal, social, familial, interior, outward, etc. I write this to remind us that no one chapter, no one approach is going to satisfy the whole person – and in the end, satisfaction, complete satisfaction, being fully filled, is our goal. As you read, then, the following chapters try to see each of them as part of a whole.



They are separated for good pedagogy and because we can only communicate in categories. It is by dividing the whole into parts that we can comprehend it. The division may kill the lesson, but there is no other way for us to learn. In reality the parts are never separate. They only appear to be such. They are all connected, even when the connections are so fine that we miss them entirely.

How the Book Is Put Together

I tried to take a rather pedagogical approach to the topic

of kinky sex, spirituality, and magic so the book begins with four topics that seem unrelated: paradigms, certain aspects of our physical nature, ancient cultures and their religions, and what we call the power exchange. Though we seldom think of these subjects as related, they are. Unfortunately we seldom consider them when we discuss or ponder what it is that we do in the dungeon.

The paradigms (i.e., the world view) which we hold affect our thoughts, our feelings, and our negotiations about kinky sex. After all, as my Mom would say “I didn’t raise you that way.” Indeed many of our paradigms, that is many of the ways we view the world tell us what the rest of the wants us to think about BDSM: Don’t do it. Effective and satisfactory BDSM then needs to develop its own supportive paradigms.

There are times, of course, when we do consider our bodies, especially when our seminars turn to physical safety. How often, though, do we think about our physical reactions to bondage, impact play, or any scene that leads to “subspace?” Indeed, subspace is just as much a physical experience as any other type.

We fully admit that we kinky folk form a subculture. As such we also think of what we do as being alternative, if not counter-culture. Considering then ancient cultures that significantly differ from the predominant American culture in which we find ourselves is meant to be in some degree liberating, freeing us to more fully consider what it is we do, without the baggage of the primary culture (or at least with less of it) because we realize that other peoples in other times and places were different, just as we are in the here and now.

And lastly, a study of human life as an energy flow begins to explain what it is that we do when we exchange power. The experience of energy is, after all, more than just an euphemism. In any case, I as unfold my Philosophy In the Dungeon, each of these topics will come together, leading to the chapter, A Pause to Reflect.

the philosophical basis that makes this all “work” but also is the overwhelming experience found in any good BDSM scene. Whether we call it floating, bonding, or subspace, it is the strong feeling of oneness with the Universe and often the unstated goal of what it is that we do.

We then turn to Life As a Process in order to develop a paradigm that allows for continued growth and development. The process paradigm gives meaning to being. Discovery of meaning is certainly a goal of Philosophy, even a kinky philosophy. If there is process then there are stages. Understanding this we can better understand how our kink grows and changes as it affects us.

Fundamental to the development of Magic the practitioner has to believe. Doing so, though, is not an easy task for many BDSM players as the paradigms of those of the predominant faiths often condemn, ostracize, and negate our lifestyle. This chapter, then, is meant to give us a new view of faith, one that is supportive of kink and the unique expression of faith that we practice.

But faith can lead to dogmatism, self-righteousness, and intolerance, all of which will eventually destroy our practice of BDSM. Before we proceed therefore it is wise to develop a spirituality that is true and from there to manifest it practically. Having done these things the stage is set for an fuller understanding of the way we create, which leads to Magic, a more intense form of creating.

Read on, then, kinky folks and discover as best you can the deep truths of what it is that we do. Remember though, that I am a fellow traveler and that no book can contain the Universe we discover in the dungeon. With that important caveat let us begin.



In the Beginning

1

Both the Book of Genesis and the Gospel According to John start with the words “In the beginning.” Those words come naturally as an appropriate way to start either the narrative of the creation of the world or the pre-eminence of Christ. Unfortunately, “In the beginning” in itself expresses a paradigm, in this case a particular way of looking at the world. The phrase assumes that there was a beginning to the universe as if at one point in time there was no world and then at some mysterious moment in some inexplicable way the world sprang into existence. The unspoken assumption is that creation had a beginning.

More importantly the phrase implies a linear approach to creation. If there was a beginning, then there is a middle, and will be an end. The New Testament seems to explicitly posit in several different places, and especially in a literal reading of The Book of the Apocalypse also attributed to John, that the world will come to an end. A linear view of history is one of the hallmarks of Western (European) thinking. We see history as a progressive unfolding, a constant improvement, leading to some future state of completion.

Eastern cultures have a different world view, seeing creation as cyclical, as exemplified in the spinning prayer wheels of Tibetan monks. In that view, the world revolves through stages of creation, existence, transformation, and re-creation, much more akin to the cycles of the seasons, ever repetitive, and ever-renewing.

“In the beginning” may not be the best translation nor might it necessarily be anything more than an obvious way to

start a story. In his translation of the first five books of the Old Testament, Robert Alter renders the same phrase as “When God began,”¹ thus emphasizing the eternal nature of God, though still alluding to the linear nature of Hebraic history.

In spite of the above written prose I have no quarrel with the idea of “beginning.” Instead, I wrote those words to point out what seems to be the best starting point for any consideration of spirit: we need to understand that each of us, myself included, perceives, interprets, and acts according to the paradigms that influence our ability to perceive, interpret, and act.

Paradigm means “example, pattern,” and so refers to the patterns that we observe and use as the basis for our comprehension of reality. In this case, Westerners see the pattern of positive change throughout the millennia and conclude that existence is linear, while Easterners see the repetitive nature of life and conclude that there is a cyclical pattern intrinsic to it. In each case the conclusion then leads to fundamental and essentially different ways of thinking.



Paradigms greatly affect our perspective, as they form the basis of our ability to understand and communicate. If we believe that the history of the world is linear, we automatically interpret world events in that light. It is as if each of us wears rose-colored glasses and therefore all that we see has a rose tint to it. The glasses are so fundamental to our perception that we don’t even know we are wearing them. One could make the case that there is no way to remove the tint, that our perceptions are fundamentally and inescapably colored by our experiences, our basic thought processes, and even the limitations of the languages we speak.

Culture, “The totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought,”² transmits its paradigms to its members as it socializes them into itself, a process that begins at birth. Each of

us, then, is indelibly formed by the culture in which we are born and the subcultures in which we live, even if that formation leads to a later rejection of that culture and the creation of an alternative one.

In the same way that culture influences our perceptions it influences “all other products of human work and thought” including any understanding we have of the concept of spirit, the divine, and human existence. Religion, law, our perception of physical reality, prejudice, and even ignorance are all products of one’s culture. There is no escaping its effect. We can only attempt to somehow include a consideration of its effects in our reasoning processes, which are themselves naturally influenced by culture.

Even as I write this book, which many will find espouses beliefs that are contradictory to the Italian-American, Roman Catholic culture of my youth, I am influenced by one of the earliest dogmas I was taught: “Q. Why did God make you? A. God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in heaven.”³ I can not escape that which has made me who I am. The best I can hope for is to understand what makes me who I am and to deal with those influences appropriately.

In the same way, when I write “There is no escaping its effect,” I am reflecting a paradigm, in this case one that could be called agnostic, that is the belief that says that I can not know. Paradoxically as you read further you will find that I espouse the opposite paradigm as well, as I am very much gnostic, that is, I believe that we can know.

Paradigms and BDSM

As I noted in the Introduction I wasn’t raised to be kinky. Chances are you weren’t either. So we come to “the scene” with beliefs that we will, in fact, have to change if we are to become fully developed and well-balanced players. Think for a moment of

the paradigms you once held (and may still) that warn you to stay away from people like us and to never do what it is that we do.

I have a vivid recollection of the night I had to fully face one of those paradigms. I was topping an experienced masochist in my small basement dungeon in Ft. Wayne. We had met a month or so before and his ability to take pain attracted me. I had come to learn that for reasons that still escape me, sadistic activity is a strong turn on for me. Not only does being sadistic stiffen my prick, I find great pleasure in inflicting pain on a willing partner.

I had him tied spread eagle and face down on a mattress on the floor, while I knelt in front of him, his head between my knees. I warmed his back and butt with the strokes of several different floggers and eventually proceeded to use a rather severe buggy whip, raising bright red streaks on his body.

At some point, while I was enjoying the scene immensely, I remembered the nun's teaching me not to hit another person. As the whip struck him, I was blatantly struck by the paradigm of "Thou shalt not kill," and all the moral implications of what I was doing. Then and there, as the whip landed on my partner I had to choose between the paradigm from grade school or a new one. In short order I realized that what I was doing had nothing in common with the nun's proscriptions. My activity was both consensual and non-aggressive.

I continued the beating, knowing that my partner was enduring a rite of passage into a deep and blissful subspace, even as I was experiencing the passage into the deeper understanding of Leather sex and a more BDSM-friendly paradigm.

As the pain I inflicted wrought its magic, he became silent, surrendering to each stroke. In due time I knew that we had created an experience of great depth and feeling. Only later did I learn that he had left his body on the mattress and in his mind's eye risen to rafters of the dungeon to watch what was transpiring. For

him it was an ecstatic experiencing. For me it was the beginning of a way of understanding that would change many paradigms and then my life.

The Many Ways of Knowing

As in the different historical perspectives mentioned above there are many other ways that one develops an understanding of spirit: agnostic or gnostic; Apollonian or Dionysian; hedonistic or puritanical; spiritualistic or materialistic. Each perspective represents a paradigm that likewise tints our views. We may think that we arrive at one or another of these views as a consequence of reason or experience but nevertheless all conclusions are first based on some kind of assumption which is another way of stating that we are wearing rose-colored glasses.

These “glasses” serve as a metaphor for our native inability to fully comprehend divinity and the realm of spirit. Our intellectual capabilities, as of yet, are still under-developed. We, the finite, cannot understand the breath and height of the infinite; we, the temporal, have no way to comprehend the eternal; in our physical and mortal flesh we cannot truly know the everlasting and ever-living.

Yes, faith is a way of knowing each of these aspects of other-than-us, but it is faith, not reasoned or experiential knowledge. This is not to demean faith as it is a necessary and ever-present fact of human existence. It is only to recall that faith is its own kind of surety, neither experiential nor scientific, and that we use faith to prove faith. Still within us is the desire to know and to be known, to embrace the divine and to dwell within its safe embrace, even if the task is daunting and overwhelming.

The glass of water can know, in some way, the water which it holds, yet it can never hold and therefore know the ocean. Such is our fate. Let us try then to know that which we can and trust that in some way, on some day, all will be revealed.

Reflecting on Philosophy In the Dungeon

The French call an orgasm “Le petit mort,” the little death. If your experience of orgasm is anything like mine then you understand why that name is used. In the most intense moments of sexual activity, there is a suspension of the sense of time. We lose all counting of the seconds and our concentration upon everything and anything disappears. Here then is the first event wherein we glimpse our participation in the eternal, the timeless, the ever-present now.

In the afterglow of the orgasm itself there is a less intense form of this experience of eternity, if we but let the ourselves bask in the moment. Too often, of course, we don't. Instead we move to grab a towel, pleasure our partner, smoke a cigarette, or just plain fall asleep. If, instead, we were to allow ourselves and our partners were to do likewise, this glimpse into eternity could be prolonged, perhaps not for very long, but at least long enough to teach us that time as we know it in the mundane world may not be as solid and demanding as we think.

1 Alter, Robert, *The Five Books of Moses*, W W Norton & Company, New York, 2004, page 17.

2 All definitions are taken from *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, G&C Merriam Company, Springfield, MA, 1963.

3 *Baltimore Catechism No. 1*, found at <http://www.catholic.net/rcc/Catechism/download/baltimore1.doc> on September 24, 2005.

The first way that we'll look at sex and spirit is in the physical aspects of the brain, an approach that probably isn't taken very often by theologians, but one which is necessary if our discussion is going to be truly holistic.

I was going to start this chapter with the title that it's all in your brain, but as I began writing it I realized that it's not all in our brain. Rather all of it, whatever "it" might be, may well be found throughout our bodies, the spaces we inhabit, in our histories, our cultures, indeed, throughout the universe. I'll let you decide where it *all* resides. I will though talk some about what's in our brains, as well as what's in the rest of our existence.

I begin by considering the brain because that is where it appears that perception is perceived, though other cultures might posit that it is not in the brain but in the heart. In our Western view what we sense by sight, touch, or any of the other senses is realized in our brains -- or to state it more correctly -- in our minds.

True spirituality needs to be holistic and therefore is a spirituality of the body as well as of the soul, a spirituality as applicable to earth as to heaven, to life as to the afterlife. In fact biological processes are as much a part of the discovery of the divine as are psychology, theology, philosophy, or extrasensory perception. There is as much to be learned about God in the bushes that grow and flower as there is in the burning bush from



which the voice of God spoke to Moses.

If we are to believe the story in Isaiah where God spoke not in the clap of thunder or the roar of the wind but in the soft voice of the quiet breeze, then we can also accept the fact that when our brains are quieted from the chatter of everyday and mundane living, then we can best hear the quiet voice of the divine. Indeed meditation, relaxation, and the “spaces” of a BDSM scene all share the phenomenon of a decrease in brain wave activity. This then points to one way of understanding spiritual experiences and the practice of a spiritual life.

Please note that the word “only” does not appear in the last sentence. Just because I choose to write on a specific topic doesn’t mean that is the last word on the topic, nor that other topics don’t deserve their own chapters as well. After all, I could just as easily be writing about “It’s a Physical Thing,” or a sex thing, or an emotional thing, et cetera.

We all live as a manifestation of many states of being, those many states comprising the unity, the single being that each of us calls “self.” Even naming it thusly belies the fact that there is much to each of us that is hidden, subconscious, so that we don’t even know (in the fullest sense of the word) the “self” that each of us actually is.

That noted, the best way to approach living, to discuss that “self” is holistically. The fact that I am writing about one aspect of living is not meant to imply that it is either the only or even the most important.

The Mind’s Place in All This

Much about effective BDSM occurs (as does everything else) as a result of good mind work, of proper attitude if you like, by the players. For the top that means that he or she guides the scene with good planning, good observation and correct technique, being especially aware of the bottom’s head space while

consciously encouraging the bottom to use his or her mind to control or not control the scene.

For the bottom it's necessary to use the mind to listen to one's inner self and then direct itself and the other aspects of one's being in a manner that reflects one's goals, aspirations, and desires for the scene, even if the only goal is to have fun. That last sentence is filled with a great deal that needs explaining.

For starters, the bit about listening to one's inner self means that any activity ought to be consistent with what one knows to be one's authentic self. There's nothing that ruins a scene faster than pretense. For better or for worse if one can't fully embrace an activity then one is asking for a less than desirable encounter when one allows that activity.

Now there are times, of course, when half a loaf is better than none. There are scenes in which we willingly participate which may not be exactly what we want. There have been things I have done, for instance, which were meant to satisfy my partner but really didn't turn me on. In other cases, such as when I underwent a scene with sounds¹ inserted into my urethra, I only did so for the experience, certainly not for the pleasure. On the other hand it is just simple fact that there are times when the phrase "No thank you," is the best of all safe words.

Going forward then, we need to know what is meant by the word "mind," which for our purposes is best defined as "The totality of conscious and unconscious processes of the brain and central nervous system that directs the mental and physical behavior of a sentient organism." The mind, then, controls, or ought to, the behavior, i.e., actions, reactions, emotions, movements, speech, feelings, etc. of the person whose mind is under consideration. No one, after all, can control another's mind, at least not in the sense used in a consensual BDSM encounter. I'll leave the discussion of "mind control" by others to those who want to go there. I don't.

There certainly is a place, in fact an important one, for tops to aid their bottoms by encouragement, instruction, motivation, distraction, and reinforcement. These activities do not so much control the mind of the other as they support the other's control of their own mind. So, for instance, I may remind the cocksucker who is gagging on my dick to breathe or I may tell my flogged bottom that they are doing a good job and ought to easily take another ten on their red and sore back. The place of the mind in this is to direct the rest of one's being into a space which facilitates the desired result.

Lest the word space not be understood let me suggest that in this case it means the mental process which leads to behavior, even if that behavior is simply one manifested by a good attitude, though even in this case, all behavior is eventually demonstrated by appropriate action. The mind, therefore, may tell the body to relax as that paddle hits the ass cheek for the 237th time, having raised a nice red blister which is about to burst or as that tit clamp bites harder than one likes for the moment. It is the mind that directs one's being to surrender, to receive without complaint, to act in a certain way rather than react in what might be a more expected way.

We naturally expect that our reactions will be reflexive and spontaneous, even though the modus operandi of BDSM is for the mind to overcome "natural" reactions, such as pulling away or resisting, and instead act in ways to enhance the activity. It is the mind that tells the rest of one's being to relax, breathe, loosen up, accept, surrender, trust, and even to deny thoughts and actions that would negate the BDSM activity. This often means that the bottom has to use his or her mind to counteract the effect of fear, overcoming it so as to more fully participate in the event. This is where mind is best suited to foster a good scene.

It also means that our mind needs to be "at work" at times other than in the scene. Mind is needed during negotiations. It takes mind to analyze one's fears in order to understand and

control them, something that may best be done well before the scene or after it in preparation for the next one. Fears are a big factor in failed scenes, as are a lack of full agreement on what the scene is meant to achieve. Only by approaching both fears and negotiations with a fully engaged mind are we able to best enjoy the experience of what it is that we do.

It is therefore imperative that the mind be engaged even at times when there is no scene. This is the value of reflection, of discussion with others after the scene in some kind of review and analysis, and of understanding oneself, one's motivations, and one's expectations. It is especially important that fears be understood and seen as good and necessary or as detracting and irrelevant. Being inhibited by unrealistic fears, for instance, is not helpful; being protected by fully rational ones is.

This understanding implies that we know ourselves and what we want, two other qualities that involve our mind. Therein lies an interesting contradiction. In the best of scenes we use our mind to enter what appears to be a mindless state of ecstasy, one where we drift into a delightful place void of consideration of body, soul, emotion, or mind, a place of such unity that intellectual compartmentalization becomes meaningless, a task of using the mind to lose, for the moment, all thought of mind, entering fully into the experience of one's true unity of self with the universe. There is more to this process than simply the physical activity of the fetish itself.

Entering either subspace or topspace is an important part of what we want to accomplish. Ought we not, then, to know what it is, how it works, and the ways that the process itself can be enhanced? I'd also like to note that top space, a subject much less mentioned, is probably the same phenomenon, though the physical aspects of its attainment are probably less known and even less understood.

It is in the sub and topspace experience that we find the most obvious and direct connection between the physical and the

mental, the body and the spirit, the sexual and the spiritual. The space that one experiences in the best of BDSM activity is very much like the sublime peace of the holiest raptures of religious experience.

Our Bodies & BDSM

This connection, this similarity, is exactly why I begin this book with an exploration of bodily functions such as brain waves and endorphins. There is no denying that the similarity of “religious” ecstasy and sexual orgasm is obvious. In fact only the most anti-religious or anti-sexual minds would insist on there being a fundamental difference between them. Understanding, then, the physical aspects of ecstasy is the first step in understanding the emotional, spiritual, and theological aspects of the same, even if differently-labeled, experience.

In any case, knowing what physically happens in the brain during a scene is a part of understanding the process in all its dimensions. Remember, please, that the value I place on understanding is not simply that we understand but rather that increased understanding enhances the experience itself. My opinion is that if we know what’s going on we can then encourage the process with appropriate responses.

Brain Waves

Let me begin, then, with an elementary presentation on brain waves. Electroencephalograph machines are used by biologists and physicians to study and measure brain wave activity. The waves themselves are measured in terms of hertz, (cycles per second. A hertz equals one cycle per second.), and are named as beta (14-30 hertz), alpha (9-13 hertz), theta (4-8 hertz), and delta (1-3 hertz).² (See illustration number one).

Beta waves indicate normal brain wave activity such as

when we are thinking, writing, or working. The higher the number of cycles per second, the more active the brain. Frenzied activity would be in the upper 20 hertz range.

As we relax, our brain waves slow down into the alpha range, such as when we are watching television or listening to relaxing music. Increased relaxation decreases brain wave activity into the theta range, which is often a state of reverie, where we find ourselves more creative. It is a day-dreaming state where thoughts flow easily and comfortably, as if we are dreaming. Passing through theta brings us to delta -- sleep.

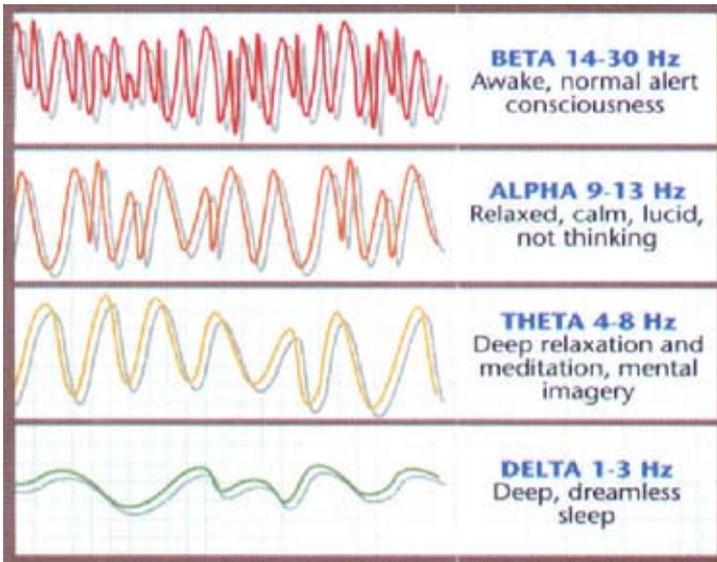


Illustration Number One.³

We can describe a BDSM scene in terms of brain wave activity. In fact I would love to have a neurologist record brain wave activity during a scene to confirm my suspicions. Alas, few scientists venture into our dungeons with their research equipment!

Obviously we are in beta when we negotiate and then begin a scene. The warming up at the beginning of a scene is

meant to move the participants from beta to alpha. Most players, then, spend their time in an alpha state, except when one or both of them is able to move into what is sometimes called “theta reverie.” This seems to be easier for bottoms than for tops, since tops generally have to maintain a level of awareness in order to do what they are doing. Expert tops, of course, can and do enter theta if their technique is such that it is as natural to them as driving a car five miles down a familiar freeway.

What is important here is to see the connections between what we do in the dungeon and what we do everywhere else, therefore being able to use non-BDSM techniques to enhance our kinky experiences. It is my experience that bondage, flogging, whipping, fisting, fucking, needle play, and the like all have the potential of altering our brain wave patterns.

There are, too, other processes that do the same thing. Immersion in any activity, especially an artistic one, will have a similar effect. Meditating, listening to music, and certain breathing exercises are other processes that have a similar effect. Might we not, then, use both kinky and vanilla techniques to double our pleasure?

I think, for instance, of the lessons I learned at Lamaze classes as my wife and I prepared for the birth of our first child. It was there that I learned that certain breathing patterns would reduce the effect of pain. Later at the New Age center where I learned to meditate I was taught that muscle relaxation and/or visualization would do similar things to my brain’s activity.

In the dungeon, in my quiet times, when writing, similar processes are occurring. Lessons learned in one venue can and should be applied in others. A great scene is what we’re seeking, isn’t it? Let’s find all the ways to get there.

The Mind-Body Connection

of time to think about what it is that we do. I strongly suggest that the kind of ruminations about which I write are not appropriate during a scene, as thinking about what is happening is not very conducive to what you really want to happen. This caveat, of course, applies more to the bottom than to the top and is likewise not an entirely appropriate piece of advice since care and thought should always go into what we are doing.

In my quest to become fully human, I have done a lot of thinking about Metaphysics, which was actually a course I took as a Philosophy major in college. For me, the question has usually boiled down to “How does the world work?” The optimistic assumption I am making is that if I knew in which order I should be pushing the universe’s buttons, I could solve all of my problems, becoming handsome, wealthy, healthy, and a fully happy genius with simple pushing of those buttons.

Is it no wonder that I consider myself a dreamer of substantial proportions? Yet the years have shown me a small part of the wisdom of the ages, even if that gives me only enough knowledge to be dangerous. My mom might even say “Too smart for your own good.” Nevertheless there is some satisfaction in having some of the loaf rather than none. That written I will also remind you that my tentative conclusions are highly eclectic and very personal. They work for me and I think that is a good start. It is your responsibility to see if my conclusions will work for you.

I see a tremendous value in our understanding the connections between our minds and our bodies. In other words, what we think and feel has a significant impact on how we act and how our physical bodies respond. Likewise the converse is true. Our physical bodies and the messages they send to our brains greatly impact how we think and what we do. Understanding the connections between mind and body allows us to use them to our benefit.



An important assumption in all of this is that we have the ability to control ourselves. Too often we fail to acknowledge that we are responsible for our how we think and how we feel. That's not to say that fleeting thoughts and immediate emotional reactions spring from our wills but rather that we have the power to decide when and how we will respond to them. For instance, an event may anger me. I then have the opportunity to choose to become violent or to redirect that anger into a more constructive reaction.

One of the things we do when we have a scene is to take advantage of our mind-body feedback loop. As we begin, our mind assents to certain things, such as being bound in rope or a spanking to warm us up. Our body, not detecting anything physically wrong, reacts only mildly to the sensations. Yes it communicates to our minds that "There is a piece of rope on our wrist" or "Something is hitting our ass," but it does so without a major sense of distress. In any case, the mind sends back the message that "All is well; this is a consensual event."

Note a difficulty in this prose. Stating it as I have, it sounds as if the mind and the body are two entities, sharing a proximate space but somehow separate. Such is certainly not the case but you'll have to bear with my language. In any case remember that we are unified beings.

In due time our physical selves will begin to feel that our mental selves have gone mental. "Wait a minute," the body will say, "that hurt." The mind, of course, will continue to try its best to calm the body. It will tell itself to relax, to breathe, not to worry. Additionally it will refuse to send messages to the mouth to yell "Stop. This hurts. I've changed my mind." In that way, then, the mind controls the body. To what end? It wants the body to cooperate with its desire to enter an altered state, either subspace or top space. Entering an altered space isn't the only reason to be doing what it is that we do, but it suffices, I hope, as reason enough for the content of this chapter.

to be placed on the body, our body will then react to the pain by releasing chemicals into the bloodstream, specifically endorphins, that will mitigate, block, and mask the pain. “Ah,” thinks the mind, “the body is doing its job,” since the endorphins have the added effect of giving the brain the good feelings it wanted when it allowed its body to be part of the scene. In actual practice, of course, the body is naturally conditioned to release these endorphins. The mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, chemical, and energetic aspects of what I just described are much more complex than I’ve stated but I hope they make my point.

We often simplify the discussion by referring to what is happening as a power exchange. (More on this later.) More specifically, in a scene we exchange power to move one another into different states of perceiving and feeling, that is, among other things, change the amplitude and frequency of our brain waves.

Once again let me remind you that focusing on brain wave activity is not meant to imply that a scene is merely about changing our brain waves. I don’t think that beginning a negotiation by saying “Let’s alter our brain wave patterns” is a very good place to start, though you may want to try it if your current approach is unsatisfactory.

Negotiation is the act of mutually deciding the hoped-for outcome of a scene or relationship. When it’s successful, what ensues is the use of our minds and bodies to attain those goals. Most of the time, what we want to accomplish is simply to have a good time. We are all about fun, really. Still, over the course of time, there are lessons to be learned about ourselves and the universe while we are having fun.

The trick here, then, is to take the lessons learned on the cross, the bondage table, the bed, or in the dungeon to improve one’s life in general. To that end, I’ve come to the conclusion that living the “lifestyle” really means that one has managed to take those lessons, that fundamental understanding learned through BDSM, and apply them to the rest of one’s life. Living is, after all,

a constant energy exchange.

Endorphins

Although I got a decent grade in high school biology, I haven't seriously studied the subject since then. In any case there was no discussion on endorphins in class. As a matter of fact it wasn't until I read Geoff Mains' remarkable book, *Urban Aborigines*,³ in the mid 80's that I learned of endorphins.⁴ Today we kinky folk use the term rather frequently in our attempt to describe what happens when we do what it is that we do.

Just as we could, with proper equipment, measure brain waves so can we measure the level of various chemicals in our bloodstream. As brain waves affect our attitude, endorphins - - chemicals produced in the brain -- do the same. Endorphins are in the opiate class of hormones and are naturally-produced pain blocker.

By blocking pain they create a sense of euphoria in the body. Depending upon the extent of pain, whether through trauma, injury, physical exertion, or a good sadomasochistic encounter, the rising endorphin levels give rise to sense of peace and wellness, again not unlike that of the reverie of spiritual experience. So to the idea that brain waves affect how we feel, we can add that endorphins have an effect, one not unrelated to brain waves as noted above.

It is no coincidence that meditation such as practiced by Zen masters and Buddhist monks alter both brain wave activity and endorphin levels in the same way as noted previously. Can the connection between body and spirit be more obvious? Likewise sexual activity alters these phenomena, leading us again to the conclusion that there are myriad connections, a complete interrelatedness, in all aspects of what it means to be truly human.

Reflecting on Philosophy In the Dungeon

Although much has been written on the physical aspects of sex, when was the last time you heard about the physicality of sexuality? Permeated as our thinking is with the duality that mankind is composed of body and soul, perhaps it is necessary to appropriate other models, since the word “and” seems to separate rather than join. Let us rather reflect on the physicality of spirituality, that our physical and spiritual natures are intrinsically joined, inseparable for a long as we are living.

Let us consider man as matter, as spirit, as soul, as emotive entity and passion, as ego, as instinct and desire, as intelligent being. Brain waves and endorphins are only two aspects of our physical existence. We could consider ourselves dynamically (How do our muscles move our fingers?), as mass (How does gravity affect us?), as digestive process (How does food become bone, tissue, and hormone? What part of my next meal will become egg or sperm?), and so forth.

What, too, is the spirit of man? If it is some form of energy, how does it differ from light or heat? If it is some form of God, what does that mean? How, then, are the body and the soul connected through spirit? How is, if it is, spirit different from soul? Lastly, how does sex intersect with matter and spirit? Why and how is sex sacred and what does that mean?

1 Medical rods inserted into the urethra to clear or stretch it. An elongated instrument for exploring surgically body cavities.

2 For a fuller explanation see Appendix A.

3 Get reference.

4 Mains, Geoff, *Urban Aboriginals*, Daedalus

Publishing, Los Angeles, 2004.

