

Guilt and Knowledge by Rich Norman

It is said that knowledge is a guilty thing, but I believe that the guilt is added after the fact. It is not the apple which is rotten, but what we choose to accomplish once fueled by the taste of the forbidden, and who owns the tree. That is how it seems to me, after taking a bite.

I had my eureka moment last summer. It was a beautiful summer's day, the heat shimmering off of the green and golden grasses, folded over and nodding in a lazy wind as I lay upon my hammock. This place, this valley, is the thinker's paradise, and I looked up into the arching azure heavens and watched the trees sweep the curve of a perfect day, hot and lazy, a perfect day to hatch a new thought. As a musician I was addicted to many unhealthy things, but now as a thinker and recluse, I am addicted to new thoughts. One rarely finds a new thought in an old place. I had been reading papers on neuroscience, and these papers and their authors had no knowledge of psychology, my specialty, so unsightly and base compared to these fresh theories and the data on brain processes. This thinking was fresh air, and I drank it in. Suddenly it came to me, in a giddy flash I understood the entire of it! The neurological data was a description of the psychological processes, and the implication was obvious and plain! The moment, I must insist, was innocent! The apple itself, tastes of happiness!

Yes! It must be! Now I began to write the theory down and became even more certain, sure and glad to have found this hidden, forbidden truth! By using a particular approach, a certain technique would simplify the complex neurological data and define it even before it is collected. The result was clear: A brain scan could be quickly developed which would diagnose a mental illness in seconds, and even more, it would reveal the unconscious contents of the subject's mind. The thoughts we all have but ourselves do not know we have, our unconscious, our most hidden and forbidden thoughts, the thoughts we will never admit to thinking: these thoughts can be directly observed and known! What would have taken years of psychoanalysis to find, can be disclosed in daylight in seconds!

Soon the rest of the truth, sullied and right, a guilty stain like soot and oil pressed itself into the fabric of my world, a knowledge twice guilty and right. To understand that this work must be funded is to know: who will fund it—the government. I gasp to understand the implications. Yes, the ill will benefit, but the government will own it. Now the scan is applied to the "terrorist." His fingerprints matched on some few points and he is being water-boarded, again and again, suffering and unable to resist, he is scanned. Look here, here in his unconscious, he is not disclosing something! Never mind that it may be his laundry list, put him under the water again!

Oh no! What have I done! Now I am ready to publish the paper in a scientific journal and find the lab which will begin the work. I must confess, I am not sure. Although the apple is sweet, and the fruits of knowledge a seduction as no other, one must ask one's self, who owns the tree upon which this fruit is nourished? He who owns the tree, owns

the truth borne upon its branches. It is this, which is the guilty fact... the tree of knowledge, belongs to Man.

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