

Throwing Shoes Down The Rabbit Hole With Robert Anton Wilson

An Interview by Rev. Dr. Shé D'Monford

Robert Anton Wilson

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NON-GOVERNMENT HEALTH WARNING: This interview is best viewed using the windows of an open mind. Previous reading of “Robert Anton Wilson” material will help with this. Even so, it may seriously affect your vision of the world we live in – resulting in permanent hilarity!

Introduction

Robert Anton Wilson’s legendary books make us laugh at ourselves and our darkest fears and paranoia.

I had a similar feeling recently when some of my friends and I were leaving a seaside pub after a fishing tournament where no one caught anything. The pub finally closed and threw us out, one of our number was so drunk he staggered across the road, narrowly missing being run over on the way, banged rather loudly into the glass of the opposing storefront, then collapsed on his backside to the sound of our cheers. He sat there waving his head slowly back and forth in disbelief at what he had just done and yelled some slurring abuse at us to signal that nothing was hurt but his pride.

Did we run over to him and fuss and pick him up? No! Though we did not understand one word of what he had just yelled at us, we took off our shoes and threw them across the road at him for the mouthful of abuse he had just served us. Once the first superbly thrown rubber thong struck him on the forehead, he sobered up considerably. He jumped to his feet and defended his honour by throwing all of the shoes back at us. We just caught them and threw them back at him again. In the middle of the barrage of returning foot-ware missiles, a visiting young Irish man ducked past us and dryly said, “Er... That’s not quite the way we play it back home!” This reduced us all to laughter at our own impulsive inebriated foot-ware folly. Still laughing we gathered our shoes and dispersed to our own boroughs.

When we laugh at others, we are really laughing at the ludicrous and slightly distorted, carnival mirror reflection of ourselves that we see in them.

Robert Anton Wilson’s books give us a skewed view of the world in much the same way and for the same reasons as these trick mirrors. Robert Anton Wilson loves to laugh at others and at himself. Moreover, his humour makes people think. To him laughter is the key to pushing the “On” button in the thinking mechanism of the mind and a lesson learnt with laughter is a lesson remembered.

Robert Anton Wilson, or Bob to his friends, has been described by his good friend Dr. Timothy Leary, the famous psychedelics proponent of the 1950-70s, as “...one of the most profound and important scientific philosophers of this century, who has written many important works of fiction and non-fiction. His vast intelligence and sharp wit are sufficient to shock and enlighten the most heavily imprinted domesticated primate nervous system.”

And he is probably right! Alternatively, as Mr Wilson says: “Maybe this just proves that we (Wilson and Leary) are crazy in the same way.”

Yet the fame of his wonderful irreverent humour that inspires a change of perspective in the listener outshines all of his glowing accolades.

This humour has lead him to become the self appointed Pope of “The Church of ‘Bob’ The Sub Genius” and to launch a campaign to make everyone in the world a Pope of their own belief system.

He was born on January 18, 1932, he is the author of the some 36 successful works, if you include his soon to be published, Tale of The Tribe. Several of his novels have become cult classics. He began

writing at age twelve and worked as a part-time journalist and a full time engineer until he landed a job as the editor of American Playboy magazine.

His best-known works are The Schrodinger's Cat trilogy, and a complex spoof of conspiracy theories co-authored with Robert Shea, called The Illuminatus trilogy, which spawned the whole "Secret Society" genre of which Dan Brown's The Da Vinci Code is the latest example. These books mix information with fiction so seamlessly it is hard to tell where fact finishes and fiction begins. This engages the reader in what Bob calls "Operation Mindfuck." Ironically, even though Bob has loudly criticised the gullibility of new-age beliefs, his books are often found in the new age section of bookstores.

His alternate philosophies have led his life in some astounding directions. He is a proponent of Timothy Leary's eight-circuit model of neuro-somatic linguistic engineering. With Leary he helped promote the futuristic ideas of Space Migration, Intelligence squared (i.e. intelligence examining intelligence to increase intelligence) and Life Extension, for which they coined the anagram S.M.I.².L.E.

Bob is the American director of the Committee for Surrealist Investigation of Claims of the Normal (CSICON) and has helped popularise such terms as:

- Patapsychology — a field of psychology where nothing is considered normal.
- Fnord — a system of circulating disinformation using trigger words and phrases.
- And an alternative belief system called Discordianism based on chaos and discord.

I would not dream of doing an irreverent, interview with anyone else but from what I have heard of this man, it might be fun to play with him. It might be fun to throw something unusual at a man who tells its that the stay of surviving unhurt is by making outrageous statements that few can understand and often offend. So here I go, tossing the shoe at him to see what will come back to strike me in the forehead.

— **Rev. Dr. Shé D'Monford**

Interview

Rev. Dr. Shé D'Monford: Mister Wilson, your unique writing style moves around in time where it becomes both self-generating and self-dismantling. So perhaps you are in a good position to answer what is possibly the most profound question of all time, being: Which came first the Chicken or the Egg?

Robert Anton Wilson: The sound of one hand clapping.

Ah! So! Is Discordianism just Zen Koans for the science fiction reader?

Wilson: Discordianism is whatever the reader thinks it is to them. For instance, many regarded it as a complicated joke disguised as a new religion, but I regard it as a new religion disguised as a complicated joke, you may regard it as a Zen Koan for sci-fi readers or a pie in the face of the pope, or Krazy Kat's rebuttal to Nietzsche. It doesn't matter, Eris doesn't give a fuck.

Someone once asked me that old Koan, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" The look on his face when I slapped him with one hand and said "Something like that!" was much how I felt the look on my face must have been after reading The Principia Discordia. Sort of shocked, like being struck on the forehead with a shoe, but with a slight increase in the glint of resentment and understanding

in my eyes, laughing at it despite myself. Many people say similar things about their first experience of it. Is that the intended effect of the book?

Wilson: Partially, the major intent is to revive anarchism, nihilism and surrealism, which we badly need. Especially the bozo in the Whitehouse.

So which came first, Discordianism or Robert Anton Wilson? Principia Discordia is said to have been written in 1959 by Greg Hill also called "Malaclypse The Younger," "Mal-2", or occasionally "The Onmibenevolent Polyfather of Virginity in Gold"/"OPOVIG") and Kerry Thornley (also called "Lord Omar Khayyam Ravenhurst") but it has 'you' written in invisible ink all over it and your name is always associated with it. Was it you who secretly wrote it, but fearing reprisals got two of your friends to take the blame? Or were they both really you? Perhaps they were two of the pen-names you were using for freelancing whilst working for Playboy magazine?

Wilson: Greg Hill and Kerry Thornley created Discordianism, the most credit I deserve is that I was an early convert and helped shape early Discordian Atheology but Greg and Kerry deserve credit as the founders definitely.

Do you like apples?

Wilson: Not as much as I like pussy.

Aaaarr... OK! But, I thought you really liked bunnies best became of your time spent as the editor of American Playboy magazine. In addition, you are famous for your discussions on "Pookas," the definition of which is: "A Europe protective house spirit that manifests in the form of an animal, often as a large white rabbit." I fell in love with Pookas the first time I saw Harvey, the 1951 Academy Award winning movie starring Jimmy Stewart, and a talking six-foot tall white rabbit. It highlights the value of politeness rather than intelligence as a superior way to get through life. This also seems to be a theme of your writings. To be humane as this is far more important than being impressed with how clever we are. Another lesson can we learn from large white rabbits, according to your writings, is the "Theory of Poofology," the association of rabbits with UFOs and conspiracies. The pop culture movie Donnie Darko was a remake on the Harvey plot showing a much darker side to the white rabbit phenomenon. In the movie Harvey, Jimmy Stewart starts to see the six-foot rabbit after consuming a lot of alcohol and others start to see him after Jimmy Stewart takes off his shoes. Lewis Carol portrays mind altering substances like psychedelic mushrooms and hookah smoking caterpillars after following a large white rabbit down a hole in Alice in Wonderland. This theme is carried on in the movie The Matrix where Neo is told to "...follow the white rabbit.." and then is invited "...to see how far the rabbit hole goes..." To do this they ask him to choose between two consciousness-altering pills. What do you think of this correlation between psychoactive substances and knowing what is down that rabbit hole?

Wilson: The connection seems real to me, for instance, the psychedelic mushroom of Ireland is called *Pookeen*, which in Gaelic means 'little pookah'. So apparently the ancient Irish thought the mushroom was a relative of the pookah. For details see *The Search For Irish Soma* by Hakim Bey.

So how far down do you think that the rabbit hole might go Alice?

Wilson: At least as far as human imagination. As John Lilly says, "No limits allowed, no limits exist."

So is "Following the Rabbit" a secret subculture metaphor for expanded consciousness and therefore a symbol of the Illuminati?

Wilson: If it wasn't before it is now.

What would you say to the statement that The Illuminatus is eerily predictive, almost as predictive and perplexing as Nostradamus.

Wilson: Since my co-author Bob Shea, is dead, and can't protest, I hereby declare that he was responsible for all prophecy and anything else of a serious nature. I was only kidding around. Honestly.

Yes, people develop very broad shoulders once they die! It is said that T.H.C. residue from long-term use of Cannabis can cause the levels of paranoia reached in the conspiracy theories of The Illuminatus Trilogy. How much of that work can be contributed to the use of that substance?

Wilson: I don't know I never tried it Honestly.

Oh! (Wink!) I see! My grandmother used to say to me: "Never trust a man who says 'Trust me' and count your fingers after a man says 'Honest'"... And you have said "Honest" twice now... hmmm... When Julius Caesar was asked how he controlled his vast empire, he replied, "with Wine, Women, and Song." If the modern equivalent of that is "Drugs, Sex and Rock and Roll," do you feel you may be being used as what you describe as a "Useful Idiot" by the CIA to promote the narcotic aspect of that means of control?

Wilson: Certainly. They pay well too!

An admission! So now we know. We all should have known when you ventured into the Rock and Roll area of control by releasing your own punk rock album called the "Chocolate Biscuit Conspiracy." As a self-confessed chocoholic, I would love to know what inspired that?

Wilson: An Irish rock group called "The Golden Horde" asked me to give them some lyrics and the next thing I knew I was featured on a rock record cover. They never paid me for it either. I'm pretty dumb sometimes.

Ah, the fickle world of rock stardom! How do you feel about the modern Fnords such as "Weapons of Mass Destruction" and "Terrorists" and "Axis of Evil" and what are they distracting us away from?

Wilson: I'm distracted so I can't answer. What do you think they are distracting me away from?

I think all Fnords, ie. trigger words and phrases, and propaganda is designed by spin doctors to distract us away from asking two questions. "Why?" and "Why Not?" Controlling organisations can't have people thinking things through all over the place! If they do that, they would ask even more questions, and when they thought about the repetitive, inane, idiocy of the rhetoric dished out by politicians they would not be able to be controlled. You indicated to me, that you were unaware your fellow Pope, Pope John Paul II, has just kicked the bucket! It is considered a significant thing; they delayed a royal wedding because of the funeral. I am sure you, as the Pope of your own belief system, would have been on the invitation list for the funeral. However, if you did not know this and didn't attend, will this be taken as an inter-religious snub?

Wilson: I don't recognise his papacy. I am the Pope of the Discordian Society and the Church of the Sub Genius and we don't pay attention to the competition.

Did you ever send him a card from the Discordian Church making him a Pope in that organisation as well?

Wilson: Yes. I also sent one to the anti-pope in southern France and he is now a pope and an anti-pope at the same time.

That's very confusing and very Discordian of you. I guess that would make them card carrying "Double Popes" or a "Pope of Popes" or just "Big Poes"! Did the Vatican Pope ever issue an official statement about his double ordination or about your movement to make everyone in the world a

Pope of his or her own belief system?

Wilson: I never read the news from the Vatican.

I guess that's why you didn't know about his illness or death! On a slightly more serious note, I know that you are quite ill now. You are currently suffering from a fractured hip as well as your post polio syndrome. In the past you have cured yourself of polio using the Australian 'Sister Kenny Method.' Will you do it again?

Wilson: Right now I am working on doing it again. Here's a prepared statement about my condition: (This statement was written in the third person; I rendered it into the first person.)

"I think I'm doing very well considering all the circumstances I am facing. I'm pretty candid about my condition. As you may know I have post-polio syndrome. Two years ago I could barely get off the couch because the pain in the muscles of my legs was so extreme, yet through neuro-linguistic programming and an unstoppable spirit of optimism, I have been able to walk round the house and use my electric wheel chair less and less. It's rather amazing I would say, I am actually improving in some ways, but my overall condition is not one that promotes great mobility or a surplus of energy.

"Another symptom of post-polio is a weakening of the throat muscles, making it harder and harder for me to project my voice so public appearances are becoming less and less. This is why some of the answers in this interview are so short. I look about ten years older than my peers and I experience a temperature difference of about 20 degrees Fahrenheit colder than the average person, also due to the post-polio. My progress is due to my optimism. I'm not one for pity, though I appreciate concern. I think I checked my ego at the door a long while ago.

"The Maybe Logic Academy was created by Cody McClintock and Lance Bauscir, who made the *Maybe Logic* film also, as a means for providing me with a means of communicating with my fans, creating a stream of income, and providing me an outlet for my ever productive mind. The M.L.A. has expanded beyond just my classes though they are one of the biggest draws.

"However, you still couldn't wipe the smile off my face if you tried."

So if I invite you to come and dance at my wedding will you?

Wilson: I'm not doing that well yet.

I am a pagan marriage celebrant and I perform many weddings. I can marry anyone, even you if you like! I have actually performed a Discordian wedding with lots of apples for the fairest who was, of course, the bride! In one of your other interviews you said you still feel the presence of Arlen, your deceased wife of 42 years. Will she be your eternal partner or will Robert Anton Wilson ever re-marry?

Wilson: It's more likely that I'll climb Mount Everest.

I wouldn't put it past you to do that or at least create a rumour that you have. However, we can lay one rumour to bed here and that is: 'Robert Anton Wilson is dead'... In fact he is still 'really living!' Apart from living, what are you doing now?

Wilson: Teaching courses online through the Maybe Logic Academy. That's at www.maybelogic.org

What is your aim with the online school?

Wilson: To use Internet to accelerate evolution and of course to annoy people who already think evolution has reached its peak.

I notice that your other old friend, Oberon (Tim) Zell Ravenheart has just opened up a spiritual online academy as well. You once described him as a 'Real' genius. How much influence have you had on each other's work?

Wilson: No funny answer here. I admire him.

Did you ever meet the other legendary Robert A. — Robert A. Heinlein?

Wilson: Met him once very briefly, I love all of his books.

Do you feel that Timothy Leary is the last great Alchemist? Or are there any upcoming contenders or pretenders to his crown?

Wilson: Under present circumstances, all the likely candidates would not enjoy being compared to Leary.

What are your plans for the future?

Wilson: Get rich, get rejuvenated, and then think about getting re-married again.

Ah, so you just might climb up Everest after all. You use the quality of 'Hilaritas,' described by Gemestos Pleythou as being the identifying mark of a God. You are so full of it, hilarity that is, are you a God?

Wilson: Just a Pookah of the O'Lachlan clan.

So if we follow you down that rabbit hole, or just throw our shoes down it, we will be able to tell how far it does go for each of us individually. Do you have a parting profundity or conundrum to share with my readers?

Wilson: A Rabbi and a Priest are walking through the park and they see a young boy, the Priest says 'let's screw him!', the Rabbi says 'out of what?' I love this joke because it offends everybody who has ever offended me.

Even though he is very ill and can barely speak, his eyes smile and glint with mischievousness. Though I have been doing most of the talking and flinging ideas around wildly, it is I who has been struck by a few flying shoes that have sobered me up but I have had a great time. He has worked his magick on me faster than I could say 23! He has shared with me his greatest gift. It is the gift of divine mirth, Hilaratis. He has shown, by the example of his life, that by making fun of yourself and not taking yourself too seriously when the world tries to play jokes on you, you can throw a shoe or two back at whatever system you live in and then the world becomes a saner, more divine place.

I take off my shoes and roll my golden apple to him for he has the fairest mind of our time. Kallistié.

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