

# **Hakim Bey Talks with users of Public Netbase**

Public Netbase

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Hanging out with Morgan Russell, Sebastian, from the Spiral Tribe technopagan Free Party collective (joining in at 4 p.m. from a still ongoing rave), an official from the UN Drug Control Department, a lecturer at University of Vienna WU, artists, writers, tech-heads, political activists, Konrad Becker and some t0 crew. Names withheld to protect the innocent.

## Media Commodified Ideas

(Start transcript:)

**X:**

There is a position that it's absolutely necessary to commodify our ideas, because this is a way of communicating them beyond the reach of our personal time and presence in space time. The other position is: that's not good, it's better that people meet and come together in person and share space and time together, by talking, touching, dancing, whatever. All commodifications of those things that happen in this specific situation should be banned, and there should be a glass-ball around these temporary events of realness.

**H. BEY :**

There is nobody to ban anything. There is no pope of the Temporary Autonomous Zone to say what's doctrinal or dogmatic. But I don't believe that the best way to communicate ideas is to commodify. I think there is a trend now which is called anti-media and the idea is to even actually reach more people without being recuperated into the medium. There, once you are taken in by the media, yours ideas are no longer alive. They are precisely commodities which are going to be sold by somebody. They are representations of their desires.

I would resist the idea that jumping into the media as if it were just a neutral ocean of discourse, is always the best tactic. Right now it seems to me to be a particular bad tactic, because the mediaworld is eager for false images of dissidence and resistance. I think this is because people everywhere feel disgust with the commodity "deal" and they would like to have something different, but they are still susceptible to believing that a commodity or a lifestyle item, like a T-shirt, is the thing itself instead the representation of the thing. It's in this area that I perceive some danger in promiscuous embrace of media.

**S:**

There is this issue of how do you start to create a change within the system. An important element that has been overlooked. For example a musician, who creates a piece of music and puts it on a record himself, the responsibility is always kind of finished once he got it on record, if he goes up far. He doesn't seem to realize that going from spiritual to material, you must follow the flow of your commodity — if you like — right to the people you wanna give it to. And that is something that is very important to the future of changing the way the creativity is mediated. In particular

when you focus on creative things that have the ability to wake people up, Trance-forms of music for instance. It's the same with creating anything. Am I gonna give it to Sony for a desk job, or am I gonna try to create my own independence? I have seen a lot of people who have been getting a record label together, they get a lot of artists on their label and when they day comes to pay this artists they do not pay these artists. This is happening with Techno, actually a lot of the artists have suddenly realized that, once again a music scene is created of the back of the underground musicians who never got paid for what they did. Bringing music back to what it originally was.

Here we are at this great revolutionary music, where we use crystals and electricity to create sound energy. We have suddenly got this massive change in music, where you can use any sound you want in the world. And you've broken the mould that the piano set up, and you suddenly enter into a realm of pure frequency again – rhythm and frequency, from which to build a new structure. But where is our reference point in the western world? Where is that reference point for why I'm gonna make this kind of music?

And that's why the filter becomes cloudy and that's where it's important to attain an independent network for musicians and creative people.

**X:**

And it has to be commercial in the end!

**H. BEY :**

Let's not be too puritanical about it. There is absolutely nothing wrong with making a honest living as an artist. That's a different proposition than whoring yourself to a big label who's just gone alienate you from the very people that support that creativity. And they will eventually kill you as an artist – we've seen that over and over again. That is the most common story within the music industry.

I totally agree with you, with the idea that you play this by situation, not by some kind of dictate or ideology. And in each case you come up against as a performer and a recorder, you gonna make this decisions all over again new, because every time it's a new situation. So there are no rules, maybe it's even conceivable at a certain point, if everything is perfect. If you've been really, really clever and devised your strategy in the most impeccable way, then you can even enter into the major media and have the effect you're interested in having. But I see very few examples of that, and so I think that very few people have impeccable strategies in this sense. Most of us have to struggle against our own impurities and imperfections as well as the impurities and imperfections that are inherent in any creative activity. So on the whole I support your statement.

## **Space \* Raves \* Music**

**S:**

On that point for me it's interesting living in a communal group. The way that suddenly you realize that the whole process of what you are doing is in fact an ego game, that you are working out amongst all the other people involved — we all come from western society.

It took me psychedelics to wake up to be honest. And it took me being in a situation whereby Britain had an underground movement which lasted for four years solid. And this movement was a Free Party movement. This was coming together thousands of people and all dancing underneath the stars for sometimes periods of two weeks. This were serious nights of partying. This brought us to the edge where we suddenly realized where our freedom lay.

Everyone thinks we are free, we were told that — and I believed it all the way — but suddenly when you push out and find out that by expressing your freedom you got riot police coming in and beating people up, suddenly you find out that your freedom doesn't stretch so far.

There is this issue in Britain of Common Land. I remember when we were in Leeds we were looking for a place to do a party. The traditional place in Britain is Common Land. I went to Leeds to have a look at the maps of Common Land, and all the land that was given to the people, there were only two pieces left. I checked both places. First was a field for a farmer's corn and the second place was an airport... This is land that was given to the people for specific parties and festivals, but it's not there anymore, it's been sold off.

**X:**

This shows us that in the end you need physical space. If you want Immediatism, you want physical space.

**XX:**

Maybe we should go to virtual space.

**X to H. BEY :**

But this is a contradiction to immediacy, cause immediacy claims that you shouldn't use the media to come together but you use physical space. And in the end this is inconsistent.

**H. BEY :**

This is not exactly what I've said. What I said was that there is no Temporary Autonomous Zone without physical space. I didn't say that there is no interrelationship between cyberspace and physical space. Of course there's a relationship — there are many different kinds of relations. But what I'm talking about, how I'm defining freedom for the time being, if it doesn't include the body it is an illusion. If my eyes are free but my nose isn't, so this is not what I call freedom. I say there is no festival inside cyberspace. If it doesn't interpenetrate with the physical world, then it's simply

another form of representation. Everything which was once lived, has now moved away into representation. And if this is felt to be a form of un-freedom, than it is precisely representation which we find ourselves in a struggle against.

In this sense it may be necessary to ultimately take up a very hostile stand toward cyberspace, or we may find it is a useful weapon, but we will not find our freedom in a machine. We won't find our freedom as a representation in a machine. I can turn myself into a cartoon figure going to virtual reality and act all kinds of fantasies but that won't be live, that would be representation. A representation of myself to the space and a representation of the space to myself. In that circularity there is no exit – there is no escape from that kind of viscous circle. So that's why I don't say that there's some dichotomy between the physical and the non physical but the one without the other is not freedom. You see what I'm saying?

**XX:**

No that's not true! Because you can leave this material world. It's not so easy but it's possible – you can go into immaterial, antimaterial world.

**XXX:**

For me that's an interesting point. All live is representational anyway, we are living in a type of illusion or cyberspace reality where we have these meat machines to walk around. Cyberspace doesn't exist yet. In the moment the closest space that we have to cyberspace is innerspace, where creativity – perhaps – ultimately comes from.

**H. BEY :**

Well, we all know, that there is no absolute direct experience – that the body itself is a medium, that proprioception is mediated by the nervous system etc. etc. But I still maintain that it is possible to construct a hierarchy of values in which certain things are more and certain things are less embodied. To simply take some kind of Berkeleyan idealism, which is what I'm getting from you – to say that the body has no reality and therefore there is no difference between virtual reality, whether it be virtual or actual virtual reality, is something that I have to reject.

I don't see this lack of distinction. I know that there is a great platonic, mystical, gnostic dualist tradition, which you guys seem to be here today to represent, which really does believe, that we are going to leave our body, that there's some real eternal entity inside the body, which is going to escape and is going to heaven when you die. I don't know this shit and frankly I don't believe it – it's finished – I might as well go become a Christian.

**XX:**

I can show you this concept mathematically – you can proof it. Matter, antimatter – other forms of energy. The last human chess master – if the computer is better in chess than the best human chess master the same can happen to literature and music.

**H. BEY :**

First of all I've never met anybody from the antimatter world. So I don't have any opinion about the existence of consciousness within the world of antimatter.

Second chess can be reduced to mathematics, we know that this is true, but we don't know that literature or life or flesh can be reduced to mathematics. That has not been shown to my satisfaction and if it's shown to yours I would appreciate some references.

**S:**

On this issue, for me, you would help me if you would clarify the difference between meditation, the psychedelic experience, the trance dance, what happens at rave parties. I think on these lines as a backup to what I'm doing with the techno side and also looking at creativity and the idea of clearing the ego from the process and allowing pure source energy through. What is the difference?

**H. BEY :**

Possibly we're talking about different states of consciousness. My inclination is to think everything is real, which of course means reality becomes a very fuzzy concept. But I have experience of the world of the imagination too. It's on the level that one experiences it. It's of course very very real. It can change your life and through it you can change the world. So the imagination is clearly something which is as real, in this sense, as anything else. Virtual reality is as real, in this sense, as anything else. But I would go back to the idea of a practical hierarchy, which has to be ultimately, subjectively based. Is it doing it for me, or is it not?

On the bases of the only possible values, that we can create for ourselves – this kind of gradation of media, by which I mean language, body, everything, can arrange in some kind of a useful program for oneself, where certain spaces are more liberated. Certain modes of consciousness are more joyful. That's really the best I can say..

**S:**

What about the idea of improvisation, the whole idea of reflecting the moment. How that is necessary to the development of the consciousness, it does seem to have the ability to pull the mind in and take it somewhere. This whole process is very important for culture and has been obliterated in the west for the past few hundred years but does seem to emerge through the subcultures and always has done.

**H. BEY :**

I think improvisation is a good key to this. If you can develop a kind of Zen-approach to this levels, so you need not use a hard and fast religion, ideology or philosophy to prejudge the utility of one level over the other that would be the appropriate modus operandi. The best way to go would be what I call a psychic martial artist.

**XXXX:**

What about the interfacing of creativity and technology?

**H. BEY :**

I think what we need is critical consciousness. Critical consciousness towards the entire construct of technology. Technology is not neutral, it's not God-given, it doesn't come from the burning bush, it doesn't emerge from the world of antimatter. It's something that human society makes. So all of human society is inscribed in the machine in this sense — and then the machine becomes a force to reinscribe something on society. And you can have the negative aspect of this, and you can be truly creative — why not. I'm absolutely not denying anyone's creativity. All I'm asking for, for myself, is critical consciousness about technology.

**X:**

But where is the original critical? If I have to be in tune with everything and this reconciling and peaceful and enjoying... Where comes the critical stuff...?

**H. BEY :**

You trying to force me to be a 1964 hippie — I was a 1964 hippie and so those kind of ideas are very much in my work, but you're only picking on those ideas.

**X:**

When I look at your essay on Immediatism it's an archetype of ideal immediate contact and exchange. This is what you describe. And as kind of an opposite I see the mass-produced gift that one hands over at a potlatch. This is what you suppose in this paper.

**H. BEY :**

But you missed the most important sentence, that this is not a dictate — this is a game. You wanna play the game? Enjoy the game. This is not the Communist party.

**X:**

Sure, but you want something critical, so I wanted to know where is the source of being critical — where is my potential to disagree?

And this body is against something that is just purely abstract and constructed, socially true. And there is a chance to become critical, if there is a difference between what happens in my body and what happens on the street. No? I think we need this tension, this opposition, these dichotomies to create a possibility for freedom.

**H. BEY :**



You do have a dogma. I don't. Your dogma is dichotomy, is conflict. You're saying no progress without conflict.

**X:**

No, I say no progress without distinction. This is the basic stuff and there is always this difference emerging. So I think if we want to create some Immediatism, as an extra capitalist entity, we must have a capitalist skin for that, otherwise it will just come apart.

**S:**

No I disagree — I think if you look at the way youth-culture evolved in the 60's, especially in Britain you had a lot of hippies with seeing a different side to reality, and there reaction was not to get involved with big business. They did not want to become a commercial entity. The next thing that came along was punk. Punk does seem to be impart on commercial entity. But every underground scene learns from the one previously. You will see that the balance of those two polarities there does seem to be a will to go into the commercial zone, cause you know when you get in there you have the reference point to keep you straight.

## **Weather Reports**

**XXXX:**

You have been talking about the weather...

**H. BEY :**

The weather reports are always to me the most charming way of catching up on the massmind. The attitudes which are expressed on the weather channel are apparently neutral. But in fact they are deeply influenced by cultural attitudes. I just noticed last winter, when we had a lot of snow in N.Y. This wonderful kind of manichean mythology of good and evil began developing around the weather. And then I realized, that it has always been that way. It has always been a good day or a bad day. If it's a bad day they tell you with long faces and if it's a good day they are smiling and are happy. But I think the I Ching says: Every day is a good day. Every kind of weather has its beauty and there is certainly a great beauty in a storm. There is a vast dis-ease on the fact, that we have not yet subdued nature; We haven't finished conquering nature. I get this gnostic dualist flavour from the weather report and I can go and take that analysis into the news-report where it is even more apparent

For me the metaphor of the living earth is marvelous, I like all that goddess stuff, whether it is literally true or not does not actually concern me. One could feel so much in tune with material reality that it would take on spirit in a very real and vivid way. One would come to feel the earth as the great goddess on or even inside

we all live. From this point of view the weather is actually the skin of the goddess and we are living inside the skin, not on the surface. The myth of the living earth which has a lot of political use now, a use for struggle.

The ecological and environmental movement has a lot of positive aspects. But we've also seen how it can be coopted by the forces of reaction, even by the forces of corporate hypocrisy — Earth Day is sponsored by Monsanto and Exxon. First of all the concept Earthday sucks, and second if we had an Earth Day, we would never allow Exxon to hijack it. But it's because we don't understand even something simple as the weather, that this things happen. I guess that's my little moral for that fable.

## **Secret Societies**

**K. B. :**

I included your essay on the Chinese secret society the “Tong” on Zero News because I find it relevant in respect with how to work from a heretical, autonomous position. Are you suggesting to have new secret societies?

**H. Bey :**

It's one of my most experimental ideas and I feel on shaky ground, because many secret societies have been used for many different things.

Well, specially Vienna as one of the hot spots of conspiratorial Freemasonry through all history would be a good place to talk about secret societies. It's one of my most experimental ideas and I feel on shaky ground, because obviously many secret societies have been used for many different things not all of which we would approve of.

But actually what kicked me off on thinking about this was William Burroughs in an interview he did with a very small zine called Homocore. They talked about the Tong as a possible model for homosexuals in an age where aids and neopuritanism would cause them to have to disappear tactically from certain areas of society for self-protection if nothing else. But it is also clear that early masonic organizations where mutual aid societies, rather than being run for the profit of an corporation, a genuine non-hierarchical mutual insurance scheme. The Tongs in China were originally revolutionary groups. They were supposed to restore native Han Chinese autonomy against the Mongol invasion which became Djing dynasty. They wanted to restore the Ming. But they were soon historically diverted into crime which is also the fairly useful idea for a secret society because we all know how many nice and enjoyable things are considered to be crime in our modern nations, which are in fact completely harmless. Like smoking pot. In America it's a terrible crime; There's half a million people in jail for smoking pot.

Perhaps, I'm asking, might it be better, instead of going out on the street, smoking a joint to become a martyr and get thrown in jail and make some kind of weird political point out of our own misery, maybe it would be better just to have a little “secret

society” for the production and consumption of marihuana. That just would ignore the state and his hysterical bullshit.

Now extending that metaphor in other activities, social, economic, sexual or creative activities even, where you don’t want, for one reason or another, the incursion of outside powers and forces, which are bigger and stronger and have all the guns and all the money – one way to do it is to disappear. The model for that would be a secret society.

I like to say that I don’t believe in absolute secrecy; Virtual secrecy would be plenty. By which I simply mean, you don’t make an ass out of yourself in the media. The worst example I’ve seen is Waco. Koresh the leader was a media hawk. And he went on television and boasted about the guns he was collecting and dare the Texas police to come and get him. He made a big splash at the local media and that was enough to reach the ears of people in Washington, who thought it would be very convenient to burn up some right winged Christians, right on that point of history, to show that Bill Clinton is the hero of left liberalism. So there was this woman Attorney General take the rap for what was essentially an act of political suppression. It was meant to terrify every autonomous christian right wing group in America, just the way two years before the same tactics were used against a group in Philadelphia called Move – a black nationals group – who put loudspeakers on the roof of their houses and constantly broadcasting their back to Africa message to the whole neighborhood. They were not hurting anybody, they were just being noisy and obstreperous. So the city of Philadelphia came in and burned down 90 square blocks of the city and killed everybody, with one or two exceptions, including women and children who died inside the buildings. The same happened in Waco.

So it’s not a right wing plug or a left wing plug. It’s a plug of power against autonomy. Anyone who behaves an autonomous fashion is the villain. If you go and boast about it in the media, you are asking to be smashed. Cause they have the guns and the have the money. So I’m only suggesting the Tong as a possible model we need to explore. I’m not saying I believe in it. I don’t think it’s the solution to anything but I think it’s a very interesting model which needs to be explored again. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the secret societies were the edge of the revolutionary wedge and we are maybe in a situation like that again now.

## **Conspiracies**

### **K.B.:**

How does this relate to conspiracy theory. It seems to be a very touchy item with liberals but is embraced by highly obscure right wing fanatics.

### **H.Bey:**

I love conspiracy theory. I make some use of it in my work but I try to keep it on a metaphorical level and not to get carried away and become a literal believer in anyone’s conspiracy for a number of reasons.

Because first there is an old problem, with which even Tolstoi was dealing with — is whether history is made by great individual human beings, who act on history, or whether history is made by great unconscious surges of economic and social movements, that are far greater and broader than any individual. So that Napoleon is simply the one who is carried on the front of this wave. Rather than being a leader he is actually pushed forward by the wave of history.

The great-men theory of history is a very dangerous trap and clearly if you believe literally in conspiracy theory, then you are believing in the great-men-theory. You are believing that a very small group of very brilliant individuals who can actually conspire to change history, usually to their advantage.

**XXX:**

Like Bill Gates?

**H.Bey:**

For example. Is he the leader of this thing or is he just pushed forward on the wave of some kind of techno-economic development and if it was not Bill Gates it would be someone else. Robert Anton Wilson likes to quote: “When it is steam engine time it steam engines.” Like when it is time to rain it rains. When it is time for steam engines some vast IT produces the steam engine. In fact we know plenty of examples where the same scientific discovery is made simultaneously by five or six people within minutes around the world. Not because of some Jungian archetypal anima floating around but because science got to that point. And five or six people were smart enough to realise it right away. There is also the point that the first working steam engine was actually built on an incorrect scientific theory, if I am not mistaken. It was made by someone who thought he was doing one thing but actually did something else altogether and it just happened to be a steam engine. That happens plenty of times too.

The problem with conspiracy theory is to believe that there is one particular group of human beings who are in control of my destiny. That’s a philosophical extreme to which I don’t wanna go.

On the other side it’s obvious that people do conspire. That there are conspiracies, secret forces behind outward political shows of power.

It is clear that there is not one single known politician in America who has any real power at all. They are simply working for big corporations and economic interests like oil, or the global market itself. The best model is, that there are many, at least several conspiracies and that they interlock, that they compete, that they melt into each other, that they separate from each other. If we wanna know what’s going on, if we wanna understand history as it is happening we should know something about these conspiracies. Again critical consciousness is a useful tool here.

## Archetypes and Raves

**S.:**

Maybe there could be some common denominator that would create a collective behavioral pattern that people seem to follow. It could show itself materially when it is actually guided by conscious individuals minds.

**H.Bey:**

Absolutely but would it make any difference? I often think it does not matter whether this conspiracies are conscious or unconscious, there could also be an unconscious conspiracy. Consciousness is maybe not always that great a force in this.

**S.:**

The real interest for me again lays in the creative process and its function within the translation from spiritual to material. Because if we are getting into the level that maybe these things are unconsciously orientated. Then that would imply that by opening yourself to whatever these unconscious entities are and building a relationship towards those. Your creative flow can actually increase in its potential to have an effect on the material.

**H.Bey:**

The archetypes obviously do have their real side and their unreal side. I'm not a deep student of C.G. Jung, but I wonder if he didn't come to reify the archetypes and give them a more solid basis in real reality, some categorical reality, then they deserve. Never the less there is an aspect of the archetype which is "real". No one who has worked a spiritual path would ever be able to empirically deny this fact. The point is again surfing — can you serve the archetypes or are you gonna be swamped by the waves. Pardon the California talk. Jung is of limited use for me, because I feel he made these creatures too powerful. It's also necessary to rebel against the archetypes.

**S.:**

To put it into a modern idiom — again to use the Ravescene — surely all of this is something everybody experiences, when they go to a Raveparty. This is something that is the buzz of being at Ravepartys. Suddenly there you are building a much better relationship with whatever this is — this creative flow is. And I think the way that all underground techno music actually is progressing towards the idea of anonymous music for the white label single, which was absolutely the main vehicle for the music in the beginning. I mean recently once again we see the trend towards commercial music, but I think the original vibe of Techno was purely anonymous white label music that was rhythm and frequency based. Now, this came flooding through with the advent of the technology that happened and occurred at that time. And all these

elements coming together to create the individual moment seems to have launched this new vehicle for exploring consciousness. Now the question I have — the best point I can find as an improviser within that medium is to look to these archetypes whatever they are. I don't have any words for them. I am not gonna try and put them into any kind of bracket from any person who came previous to me. Because I learn all of this direct from source at a party. Now this is the point I am trying to get: What was that then? If that wasn't something that helped not only in my creative flow, but also brought me to a deeper understanding of myself.

**H.Bey:**

Well, if I understand the ideal structure of the Rave, if I can put it that way, there's no hard and fast separation between the musicians and the dancers — there's no hard and fast separation between any of the components of the Rave. And yet the structure itself is contained and there is supposed to be a co-creation, which is a slimy word but let's use it in quotes again, that the experience you are discussing arises, is emergent in co-creation. And this would seem to me to be a guaranty against any kind of malign position. And you would have to tell me from your own experience, whether you see people freaking out and getting possessed by the devil or whether you see them joyful and sensual possessed by lets say.. I don't know...aphrodite and the muses.

**S.:**

What about a possible progression into a situation whereby we can actually transcend the necessity for using a psychedelic drug and progress to the level of using music as a means to do the same job?

**H.Bey:**

I just remembered some friend of mine in the 60's who said that he was going through magic and occult meditation, he was gonna recreate the same effect that he got from marihuana. So he could save 5 \$ a week. He did it, he succeeded. But he said it was too much trouble so he went back to smoking pot.

**S.:**

But don't you think that probably came back through the idea of behavioural patterns and the way people react to that kind of situation. Is the western world finding it so hard to kind of attain the same kind of discipline on consciousness that was known through — I suppose — other cultures, you know ?

**H.Bey:**

Clearly there are analogies to be drawn between the Rave and something like the Sufi musical and dance ceremony, or indeed any kind of trance or meditation music,

dance, action theater scenario in any traditional culture. The difference there is that the forms are predetermined to some extent. But the idea is always within those forms is to achieve spontaneity and lift off. Ultimately the goals are not too different. Our position is, we find ourselves distrustful of all those structures, because we know what other baggage came along with them historically. Even the Christians had this at one point and maybe some of them even still do — some of the more ecstatic sects, even the ones that we think of as right winged Bozos. Snakehandlers, protestant wackos in America who handle snakes and drink poison.

**S.:**

Maybe that's why it is so necessary for it to come into a modern day medium like the Rave culture, where the same pieces of information can be picked up direct from source, rather than having to go and check out the history of this situation. This is the interesting element. And if that is the case, that does seem to imply that there is some information that is available to anyone who goes through this process. And if that is the case, then that really does imply that dance dream of material consciousness that is this level, which does seem to have some pretty archaic information. That does seem to be available to anyone who's disciplined enough to push in that direction.

**H.Bey:**

I would say that we don't wanna have to reinvent the wheel every ten years. So it is possible for us to look at these historical models, whatever you wanna call them. At the same time we don't wanna become the slaves of those models. We want our own model — we want a model which is continually not finished, because any model which is finished then you become a slave of your own system. Blake said, that he had to have a system of his own or he would become a slave to somebody else's system. I say, your own system must be unfinished or you become a slave to yourself.

## **Mafia**

**XXXXX:**

And what do you think about the world wide increasing repression from the Mafia that becomes bigger and kills more and more people like us?

**H.Bey:**

I think that's a function of the global market. Up until 1989 there was a dichotomy between communism and capitalism. It might have been a false show, a pseudo spectacular illusion. But never the less it defined the discourse. The evil empire here and the evil empire there in contradiction with each other. Then in 1989 suddenly this discourse collapsed and there's no more dichotomy. Instead there's a false unity built on a — what seems to me to be a multiplicity of misery. And within the ineluctable process of dialectics, the global market will also produce instantly its own negation.

And that negation, you could say, has a positive form and a negative form. The positive form of the negation might be these Zapatista uprising in Mexico. Which I look on as the first true revolutionary action taken against the global market. But the negative result of this – the “negative negative”, if I can put it that way, would be a phenomenon like the mafia, which is moving into the vacuum of power, left by the collapse of the discourse of '89. I don't know whether this is the future we are looking at. If you study certain reports from Russia these days you might think this is actually the future we are looking at.

Again conspiracy theory. I have been fascinated with Mafia related Freemasonic, you know the Italian Propaganda Due lodge and all this kind of thing. It is conceivable that this is in fact the new negation. And we haven't even realized that yet, that we are in a new war and we haven't even seen what the war is. But other than that, I can't answer your question, because I can't read the future.

**XXXXX:**

There are other movements, for example in Japan and Italy that where independent from this, without the phenomena of the Soviet Union collapsing.

**H.Bey:**

Which phenomena are these now? You mean like Yakuza, Camorra, ... various forms of the Mafia? We put too much importance on these different forms. It seems to me that they are fulfilling a very closely similar functions in their various societies, using various cultural matrixes, that is slightly different from Italy to Japan after all. But the functions being the functions being served, seeming very similar to me. Let us not forget, that there are reasons why the Mafia is so popular. The Mafia actually delivers what you want, whereas the government doesn't – the Mafia actually delivers what you want whereas religion doesn't. I think Malcom Mc Larren said: Drugs will always be popular because drugs actually can make you feel like the people on television advertisements appear to be feeling. And precisely this is where the Mafia comes in with the most brilliant commodity strategy in the modern world, possibly, which is that they deliver the drugs. Which is what people want. We can't just cup some moralistic stance here – that's the Mafia and this is us. We are implicated. We have to decide in what way we extricate ourselves from that implication or in what way we make use of it even. Who knows? It's a very mysterious, entangled situation.

## **Free Will and Freedom**

**XXX:**

You seemed to argue almost against free will, you suggested that there's a negative aspect as the result of the outcome of this end of capitalism versus communism. You are saying that perhaps falling into the dualistic gnostic idea that this negative and evil and something else is positive or good and you are suggesting perhaps also that



all these movements, these Mafia antithesis to the free market economy is something which is something beyond the control of the individual human beings. Are you saying we are all caught up in this, we have no free will?

**H.Bey:**

No, absolutely not, although the whole question of free will is very dicy indeed. The son-in-law of the prophet Mohammed, was once asked whether he believed in free will or determination and instead of answering he jumped up and down on one foot and then jumped up and down on the other foot. And so it's like "yes" and "no". And between the "yes" and the "no", that's where heads fly off from their necks and stars fly off from heaven. That's a quote from a sufi poet, Ibn-Arabi. So, "yes" and "no", clearly for the most part we are swept along by these shitstorms of history, but every once in awhile, be it even only a room of this size, some kind of resistance, some kind of area, space of resistance, space of dissidence occurs spontaneously or some crackpot philosophy, it doesn't much matter. So I don't think we are simply the passive victims, by the way I don't necessarily consider the Mafia to be the antithesis of the global market, I think it might be the apotheosis, I'm not sure, but there are some signs in that direction. So, I don't know, I don't think we are the powerless victims of history, not at all.

**XXX:**

But we have already argued that we the powerless victims of the weather. And that human technology hasn't advanced to this stage.

**H.Bey:**

No, I didn't say that we are powerless victims, I said we could be joyful participants with the weather, which is a little different, think. And I also don't believe that there's some kind of morality involved in like not shutting the windows when it rains, if you don't wanna get your etchings wet. we do what we do. And the attempt always to draw a philosophical line to say "yes" on this side and "no" on that side, is to ignore that magical space is between the "yes" and the "no".

**XXX:**

Without wanting to appear a total fascist, isn't this something up to each individual to make judgment ?

**H.Bey:**

No, I don't think so, that's to deny the social. That's to reduce everyone to powerlessness, because there's fairly good evidence that the atomised individual in the modern world is not making it, is not achieving the overcoming of misery.

**XXX:**

So you are arguing against any type of synthesis ..

**H.Bey:**

... of individualism and social , yeah I argue for a new kind of synthesis between the individual and the social. That's what I do.

## **Internet and Virtual War**

**XX:**

What do you think about the internet? Is it possible for you to see the humans using computer technology to organize human knowledge to communicate with each other? Should people have one common understanding of what is true?

**H.Bey:**

The internet works very well on an epistemological level. If we see the internet as an epistemology rather than ontology I think we would be on the right way. The internet is a great tool for knowledge but as a state of being it leaves something to be desired, perhaps. And knowledge after all is something that finally only exists when information is appropriated to the individual or to a group and becomes an actual active part of life. So I would be hesitant to — a modern hesitant, I think I would be distrustful of a global epistemology and that is to say system of knowledge, because that would imply that each and every user of the net must experience the knowledge coming into their body and into their life in a more or less precisely the same way and that would bother me. The internet as a tool or even as a weapon for knowledge strikes me as the — why not — maybe the most exiting and interesting area of discourse that we have going right now this very hot little minute. But I see it as a field of struggle, not as a beautiful gift that we've been given, which has its own inherent perfection in it — in some structural way but just as another kind of technology which has brought about some very very peculiar side effects having to do with chaotic perturbation, with actual — you know — chaos — bringing it to be in a chaos. And within that chaos there's a potential for the most hideous misery as well as the most — you know — amazing freedom and happiness. And it's a curious and interesting fact that the internet derives from military structure to begin with. It's a fact that the structure of the internet is already compromised in this sense. And the task that faces us is, if we can go and consider ourselves netactivists.

**XXX:**

Hold on a moment though, the road system in the US, the federal Highway system was built for military purposes.

**H.Bey:**

Yes, absolutely. Most of civilization is derived from military purposes.

**XXX:**

But if you drive on a road it doesn't mean you buy out to the military philosophy ?!

**H.Bey:**

Does it not ? In a certain indirect way, it does. You know, how many people die in automobiles every year, on the face of the earth ?

**XXX:**

Would you rather walk?

**H.Bey:**

Actually, yes. But that's just my taste.

**XX:**

But the military never do it by themselves, they always use scientists to do it for them.

**H.Bey:**

This is called pure war. We don't have Generals and armies and all that stuff. This is war in virtual space. This is war on a global space. This is war which can be hot or cold or lukewarm.

**XXX:**

So where does that leave room for art?

**H.Bey:**

Resistance.

**XXX:**

Art as the tool of the resistance?

**H.Bey:**

Yeah.

**Wired magazine, Newt Gingrich and Free Will XX:**

What's about to go to these people that you think make all the bad and cooperate and try to establish my communication?

**H.Bey:**

The best of luck to you. Somebody mentioned Wired magazine which is widely known here but Wired magazine is a financial support of the Think Tank, which has some marvelous name like Institute for Peace and Justice or something like that — which is actually run by Newt Gingrich — so that he could have access to the people. So the corporations can get access to mailing lists, where they can sell their products. What I'm saying is, that the cooperation with people, whom I'm not calling evil, put simply inimicable to my interests — o.k.? — is almost bound to involve me in a situation which can only increase my misery. If, for example, I were to believe that Wired magazine represents the hippest, coolest attitude towards the net — and many people believe that because Wired magazine tells them it is, then you will find yourself upshit creek without a paddle, as we say in my homestate. You find yourself in a position where your energy will be coopted in ways that will not result in your increased happiness. It would be like the story that Sebastian's told about certain rockgroups who made certain music, that made that move to cooperate with global market forces and who in fact find themselves in a very sad and miserable situation and that drives some of them to suicide. While the millions of dollars they are making, they have no longer a creative relation with their listeners, they co-creatives. So, I would say: each situation is a new situation — there are no hard and fast rules to be made about these things.

Every offer of a million pounds has to be read on its own merits. Every offer of a smack in the face has to be read on its own merits. But there's no foregone conclusion that will gonna choose the million pounds over the smack in the face. Because sometimes it's necessary to resist. And you know whether this resistance ever comes to an end — I don't know and frankly I don't care. That's not what is important to me. The struggle is probably eternal. But on my small personal level there are definite ups and downs. There is a definite map that I could draw based on experience. If not on the future, which will lead me to make value judgments about who I'm gonna collaborate with — what actions I'm going to perpetrate, what art I'm gonna create — I'm not asking for socialist realism here, I'm not even asking for committed art or political art. I'm simply asking of myself on a critical awareness of these issues. So when Wired magazine comes to me, if it ever does, and offers to buy a piece from me, this is what they get from me. [shows his middle finger] I can't do other. The expense is too great.

**XX:**

Should they go to hell or what?

**H.Bey:**

Yeah, I'd like to blow the bastards up!

**X:**

Wouldn't that be more interesting to offer them a piece that would expose exactly what you think about?

**H.Bey:**

No, it wouldn't necessarily be a good thing. I just did an interview with High Times which is a magazine I have a lot of problems with, but ultimately I felt that the audience — it was going to reach — there might be some interesting things I could say for them. And so I swallow some distaste for High Times as a magazine and I do collaborate. That was a choice I made — might turn out to be a hideous mistake — I don't know. On the other hand I don't collaborate with Newt Gingrich. High Times is independently owned. S. Newhouse or Rupert Murdoch does not own it. S. Newhouse owns half of Wired and the other half is going to Newt Gingrich. There's no space for me, even if they would publish my bitter, vicious critic of them and their politics. Even if they would put it in their magazine it would be contextualized in such a way, that they can say: See how cool we are? We even let this ranter come into our magazine. We can absorb those ideas — we are rich — we are big, we are bigger than he is, we are bigger than you are — we've got it all — baby! This is the only answer. [shows his middle finger again]

## **Strategies to Free Choice**

**X:**

But the virus is more than the cell. The cell has all the productive facilities. Still it is the virus that kills the body.

**S.:**

These people focus on the product and the finished sold thing rather than realizing that the real gratification of going and buying a piece of commodity can actually be doubled when you create it yourself, and not only by the buzz of independence — you start to wake up when you turn your vision into a different direction which might make you poorer in the long run, but it might bring you close that you actually really enjoying that object that comes up.

**H.Bey:**

Anyway, I don't also even use the virus as a symbol of total negativity. I think there is a positive virus too. It's something that goes through a membrane. It penetrates a membrane and crosses a border and a lot of border crossings are very useful.

**X:**

The question is: Are we creative enough to formulate phrases and texts that are subversive enough to value their inclusion in that text we basically oppose? That was basically the Pasolini line of argumentation. [H.Bey groans] And I think if we invest some thinking in what is the basic motivation of people to read Wired? Because they want to feel like being part of something spectacular, and out of the norm and an innovation and so on. Maybe that's it and they want to be part of the community. So if anyone offers an alternative points of entry or points of access for the feeling of the immediate contact — so this might have an effect and it would maybe induce people to adopt the difference stand towards regulation of communications in Cyberspace.

**H.Bey:**

Yeah — maybe that's true. The spirit bloweth where it listeth, as the good book says. The spirit goes where it wants to go. And so if the spirit feels like making an appearance in a Tom and Jerry cartoon — somebody told me the other day on morning television — well the spirit is bloody well going to do it. If somebody wants to read Bugs Bunny as the eternal anarchist, that is in fact a possible reading of Bugs Bunny. And in fact a lot of popular culture is completely infested with subversive memes. And there are plenty people whose first turn on to the idea of resistance actually comes from an area which is theoretically not where that is supposed to happen. After all, if school is supposed to socialize you for a lifetime of consumption and death, never the less some people sometimes inadvertently come across some poem or painting or mathematical formula in school, which has a different effect — and drives them away from the socialization process and education and into a field of resistance — you know, romantic rebellion or selfrealization or journeying to the east or whatever it might be. So far be it from me to dictate to the spirit, where it's going to manifest itself — HOWEVER! Right? There's a big "however". And that "however" is, that we have some brains, we have some taste and we can make decisions. There is absolutely no vast, monstrous force from the unconscious that is preventing us from making these decisions. We can actually make decisions. This is an area of freedom. Even if we get crushed for the decisions we make, we have that moment in which we can act freely. Or at least within the parameters of our whole cultural, social conditioning or whatever you believe in along those lines — I'm not a behaviourist — I think there is a little sneaky area where freedom occurs. On that bases and on that bases alone.

There is ... I think pressing cause to distrust and even to despise certain areas of the media .. now.. today .. here. And on that bases I simply can't accept to be absorbed into every medium. I'm going to resist, because my little area of freedom is valuable to me. And I see it threatened through the media — I really do. Maybe this is because I'm a writer and a media worker and I overvalue the media but I really, literally think this is true for a vast numbers of people. There is such a thing as media trance, which is a negative form, there really is such a thing as brainwashing, as there really is such a thing propaganda. In fact every advertisement is a form of brainwashing and propaganda on some level even if it's very clever and it's very artistic. So — oh God — I'm forced — you know, it's a funny paradox — I'm forced to make these choices about my freedom.

**XXX:**

But is freedom a position?

**H.Bey:**

Well, I said in the paper that freedom is a psychokinetic skill, by which I meant its skill, which is developed through the selftraining of mind and body. Its psychic martial arts. Freedom is a process, it's not closed and can't be defined within closed borders and it's in a constant state of becoming. So there's never an end or beginning to it and there's also never a definition to it. Nevertheless something we taste, something we smell, it's something we make love to.

**XXX:**

Talking about Wired magazine which showed its true colors by wanting to copyright the "@"- sign. I believe that's one of the things that clearly showed them for what they are.

**H.Bey:**

Sure and then everyone on the net who uses the "@" has to pay them and then, you know that's \$5 less freedom for you and me.

**XXX:**

Plus, High Times I think they are a great magazine, after all they encourage gardening.

**H.Bey:**

Yes, and they also encourage their readers to vote for Clinton. Which I thought was a terrible mistake, and they did that on the basis that some of them where at some political convention tabling some marihuana literature and Al Gore — our vice-president. I'm sure you never heard of him.

**XX:**

Yes, we did.

**H.Bey:**

Oh, yes you did? How very surprising.

**XXX:**

He wrote a book once.

**H.Bey:**

Yeah, it was on the environment. He whispered to them over the table: “Give us a chance.” And so on this basis High Times actually urges their — I don’t know, several million readers, as I understand it — to go out and vote for Clinton and Gore. Yeah, and a lot of “gardeners” have ended up in jail since then.

**XXX:**

But another thing I wanted to look at is that you suggested that each and every individual can make a choice through expression of free will. And it seems this can’t be an individual thing, but it has to be social. It has to be media edited in some way. That the individual, now with equipment, technology — which can allow the individual to make music, to make art and to share it with many people without going through the big media machines, like Sony. Now we all have a chance to make a difference to participate in our own expression of art, of our spirituality, of our antimatter world.

**H.Bey:**

Well, after all we always — there is nothing different there — that possibility was always there. Technology doesn’t change that in any deep way.

**X:**

TV. is the most one-way medium there is. But now we have a two way medium.

**S.:**

I really must make the point at this moment. Connected with what happened in Britain with the free party scene. That exactly what you are talking about us now having this new freedom to use this technology, you know for our own independent purposes, let me to be in a situation where thousand Ravers getting threaten up by the riot police for expressing that exact same thing.

**XXX:**

It’s a threat to the establishment, but isn’t that why we should be involved with?

**X:**

You need bandwidth to communicate in the first place, you need high tech to connect the bandwidth and then you need place to come together. So at three points in this life circle you need access to physical space, physical resources, money and competence.

**H.Bey:**



The Republican Party has no monopoly on those items in America . AT&T has no monopoly on those items, the 20<sup>th</sup> century has no monopoly on those items, T.V. has no monopoly on those items. All those things are available through other channels. So there is absolutely no dictatorship of reality that tells me which media I'm going to achieve these goals through.

**X:**

We can talk for free. I just use air and my own body to articulate. If we talk through the media then I need some kind of background of my live, some worklive some heritage or whatever to be able to use these media.

**H.Bey:**

I'd like to make a distinction, and it's only an ad hoc distinction between what I call intimate media and what I would call commercial or mass media. And I've personally made a decision to work within the intimate media. By intimate media I include actually quite a wide range of things, most print although I would make certain political judgments about certain magazines; cable T.V., listener sponsored or public radio, which is different than the European state run radio. I work for a radio station in N.Y. which is supported almost entirely by their listeners. Twice a year we go on the air and make absolute fools of ourselves by begging and pleading for money. And that's the way the station has been kept going for 30 years. As a result the present government despises us. There have been questions asked in the senate recently. They are trying to get a list of everyone in the national public radio who ever worked for our organization so they can purge them. And they are meanwhile trying to cut off every penny that might have gone to us from them.

**S.:**

It doesn't matter what medium you use for creativity. The reason why I'm so into Techno is because it's so easy. But it doesn't stop you doing a guitar and doing a record yourself – it doesn't stop you from doing anything. It's once you have that material piece of creativity – is how you get out to your public. That is the issue that needs to be addressed. Because the artist is forgotten. It is a two way process from spiritual to material and you must follow through all the way. Otherwise you are allowing other people to stamp their vibe on your thing.

**X:**

There are channel captains that control whatever goes down to the customer. But if you want to own the media, own the channel at least for some enough packets to transfer your tune, then it is the question of what is the background to act your generating the cash. Is it just created by serving in the military all day saluting and then sponsoring a private radio that says military is shit?

**S.:**

No. No. No. — What it is, is using the medium and it is fortunately backed up by youth culture for one example. You have many individuals thrown into a backdrop of the youth culture. Now all these individuals are approaching creativity in whatever way they can. And there are all these different options as to which way they can put their music out. Now the thing about the individual moment of the music called the creativity is that we have a scene. And in that scene you have a particular style of music that gets born. And if it gets born you counteract the commercialization of the one mechanism that came previously. Now what you have is a situation whereby the musicians at that point have got what Sony needs. And it's whether they give it to them or not — the point is it takes the musician to wake up to that whole thing on a big level before you can put a plug on that thing. And you can actually reverse the process by having musician or creative person run outfits, in whatever means you like, from cooperatives to tribal situations. But the point is that you are changing the way in which that former creativity goes out. And you doing at in a time when you are nipping it in the butt. And that's an important issue to get across to the creative people. Because we do have at this time a revolution in music, in technology, in internet, in all those different things. And they make it very easy for us to go up, but actually we don't wanna give it to them H.Bey: I think we gonna wrap it up in a few minutes. So in case anyone was saving up a different topic for the end run here — now is the time to bring it up.

## **Rich People**

**XXX:**

The idea is, there are so many rich people supporting capitalist ideas. Do you have experience in trying to have access to some rich person?

**H.Bey:**

Charles Fourier, the socialist utopian thinker, used to stay in his house everyday at twelve noon, just to be home in case a millionaire would come and wanted to see him — never happened. He died a disappointed man. Then we've been talking actually a lot this week about Gyorgy Soros — he finances a lot of internet development in Eastern Europe and Africa and he is promoting a number of think tanks on drug legalization — but I haven't met him, either and I don't know whether what would happen if I did. No — the simple answer is no. I've never gotten any high finance from those directions. It's kind of a socialist tradition to accept help from millionaires. Robert Owen, the great English socialist reformer was himself an industrialist millionaire. Lenin had private help hand. It was a mysterious German millionaire who financed his return to Russia. There are many interesting historical examples of a play between millionaires and rebels. But myself can't add any story.

**XXX:**

You don't have to attain millionaires to develop the bandwidth that is necessary to reach people.

**H.Bey:**

That's what I said earlier. I feel the internet is still on this chaotic stage where it is very much worth while struggling for it. But I also don't accept it as a given. I think it began in war and it will continue in war and it's we are in the struggle, if we are on the net we're in that struggle.

**X:**

Fight for peace!

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