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## Waiting for Gnosis

**“K**nowledge,” it has been said “is power.” We have also heard that “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing” (emphasis on ‘little’). The important question is, it seems to us: what is knowledge anyway? Or—to take a cue from neurotic contemporary thought—does it even exist?

For many great and ancient spiritual traditions, gnosis or knowledge of some sort—self-knowing, truth-knowing, love-knowing, etc.—is ‘a’ goal, if not ‘the’ goal, of the life. And yet Western culture, it seems to us, has come to question the very possibility of knowing anything with certainty, least of all, the answers to ultimate questions of truth—Who are we?..Where did we come from?..What is our purpose? etc. The issue, of course, is not whether there is such a thing as truth, but rather—whatever it may be—how capable are we of apprehending it. In fact, from *Slaughterhouse Five* to *Clockwork Orange*, from *Catcher in the Rye* to *Rebel Without a Cause*, countless contemporary myths have made disputing the capacity of humankind to understand truth into a kind of heroism. From psychoanalysis to existentialism, from situation ethics to political correctness, the main effect of today’s thought has been to undermine the authority that goes with true knowledge. Hamlet-like we are left to wonder if we should ‘be’ or not ‘be.’



James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*

On such issues, science—at least the kind that dominates our civilization today—does us little good. The best an honest empirical method can hope to achieve is an indication of probabilities. Nowhere to be found in the halls of academia is pure knowing, the kind that comes with what philosopher Theodore Roszak once called “rhapsodic declaration.” Present in copious quantities, though, is despair.

When, a few centuries ago, we decided to free ourselves from the corrupt priesthood of the dark ages and to turn to what we thought was a more enlightened way of deciding things, we believed we were getting closer to true knowing. Ironically, what we got in the bargain was ‘doubt,’ and to replace old superstitions came a new kind of fear. Instead of hell-fire we got the void. It has taken a while for the full implications to sink in, but who can question that a widespread hunger for certitude now threatens to overwhelm civilization.

Sadly, that unrequited longing has already taken many beyond the brink of madness and into the abyss. And, into the knowledge vacuum created by our corrupt scientific priesthood has rushed a multitude of false priests and charlatans promising the true wine of spiritual knowledge but delivering—from genocide to jihad—a plethora of poisons instead. Whether Adolph Hitler or Osama Bin Laden, the pied pipers of hell, by exploiting the legitimate human desire for ultimate answers, have continued to ensnare the unwary masses.

Notwithstanding such bitter facts, though, we at *Atlantis Rising* do not believe that the quest for truth can or should ever be abandoned. Far from it. We do suggest, however, that the goal be pursued more sanely, wisely, and less fanatically.

For those lost in the meaningless sea of contemporary life who yet seek to navigate past the pirate coves and into the safe harbor of true gnosis, it is worth remembering that anyone claiming special knowledge of such things, and seeking the authority that goes with it, is subject to challenge and to being required, among other things, to show his real fruits.

Or, to put it another way when it comes to evaluating truth, the proof is in the pudding. Nothing else has quite the flavor of the real thing.

*Douglas Kenner*  
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