

# And God Laughs...

## The Arthur Jones Autobiography

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# 11

**“Sometimes men come by the name of genius in the same way that certain insects come by the name centipede; not because they have a hundred feet, but because most people can’t count above fourteen.”**

**G. G. Lichtenberg**

*SLIDELL, AUGUST 9, 1965 . . .*

“ . . . I’ve been trying to tell him the truth for years, but I can’t tell him a damned thing he’ll believe; the very fact that I tell him makes it a lie, he thinks. But I did manage to convince him that the sun went down in the east, Hell, I proved it to him.”

“How did you manage that?”

“Have you ever been south of the equator?”

“No. But what’s that got to do with it?”

“Absolutely nothing.”

“Now you’ve lost me completely.”

“Well, we were hauling fish from South America, and we were on a flight into Atkinson Field, in British Guiana; we were flying almost exactly straight north, and it was just before dark. I noticed that a cloud formation off to our left was causing an optical illusion, and it looked real, too. There were thunderstorms almost all around us, but off to our left, in the west, there was a long line of thick, black clouds, and they completely blocked off the sun. It was almost dark in the west.

“Somewhere behind us, though, one ray of light was coming through a hole in the clouds, and it was reflecting off another cloud to the right of us, to the east. It looked exactly like the sun was going down in the east. So when I noticed this, I called Herbert up front in the plane, and I asked him if he knew which direction we were flying. Herbert, being Herbert, was suspicious; he said, ‘Why?’

“‘Herbert, I’d like to show you something, something I think you’ll be interested in, and something I don’t think you know. But in order to do it, I’ve got to establish something first. O. K.?’”

“‘I don’t trust you. You’re up to something.’”

“‘Herbert, are you under the impression that there’s nothing I can teach you? Are you so God damned smart that you know everything?’”

“‘No, but I still don’t trust you.’”

“‘What direction are we flying in, Herbert?’

“‘He looked at the compass, he looked at the directional gyro, he looked out the window, then he looked at the compass again, and then he said, ‘Why?’

“‘Herbert, you’re too dumb to even talk to; get your ass in the back and send somebody else up here, anybody.’”

“‘Well, all right, but I still don’t trust you, I think we’re flying north.’

“‘That’s not good enough, Herbert, you know damned well we’re flying north.’

“‘Well, all right, if you say so.’

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“Herbert, you dumb son of a bitch, me saying so has nothing to do with it; either we’re flying north or we’re not, which is it?”

“Well, all right, we’re flying north; so what?”

“All right, if you’re facing north, which you are, then which way is west?”

“Joyce, I won’t bore you with all the related conversation, but it took me at least five minutes to get him to admit that the west was the west, and even then he was still highly suspicious.

“All right, Herbert, what direction does the sun go down in?”

“That set him off again, and it took another five minutes to even get him to admit that the sun sets in the west, and then he didn’t sound any too convinced.

“Now, Herbert, now, after wasting all this time because of your stupidity, now we come to the point. You admit that the sun sets in the west, and you admit that the west is to our left, all right, now look out the right window and tell me what you see.’

“Joyce, you just wouldn’t believe the scene that created. There it was, in plain sight, the sun was going down in the east. He argued, he looked at the compass, and he argued some more. He made maps, he made drawings, he made paper models of the earth and the sun; but every time he paused to catch another breath, I just pointed out the right window.

“There were some other people on the plane, several other people, and I had them all convinced before it was over. They were still convinced the next day, all except my co-pilot, that is, he knew better.”

“But how? Surely you can’t convince an intelligent person that the sun sets in the east?”

“I did.”

“But how?”

“Joyce, you can convince people of almost any damned thing if you go about it right, and if you confuse the issue enough. Most people are pretty confused to start with, so a bit more confusion’s usually easy to add. I told them about water going out of a bathtub clockwise north of the equator, and counter clockwise south of the equator, and I convinced them that the sun sets in the east when you’re south of the equator.”

“What the hell’s the water got to do with it?”

“Nothing, absolutely nothing, neither does the equator; that was just to confuse the issue, and it did, too. They stood right there and watched the sun set in the east, or so they thought, anyway.”

“I don’t blame Herbert for being suspicious of you, if you pull stunts like that on him.”

“Joyce, I was just trying to teach him a lesson; when I first called him up front, I wanted to show him what I considered an interesting optical illusion, which it was, but he acted so damned stupid about it that he made me mad. Not that it did any good, of course, the only thing he understands is a fist up to the side of his head.

“I’ve about broken him of making bets with me, though; I bet him ten dollars that I could do eighteen.”

“Eighteen what?”

“I didn’t say, and he didn’t ask me; he was working out with a set of weights and he had a pair of real heavy dumbbells, so I picked them up, heaved them up to my shoulders, and then bet him ten dollars that I could do eighteen. So when he bet me, I put them down, picked up a much lighter pair and pressed them eighteen times. I made him pay me, too . . . “

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*SLIDELL, AUGUST 11, 1965 . . .*

“ . . . a friend of mine calls them ‘the holier than thou boys,’ and that’s exactly what they are, the priests of the new religion.”

“Dr. Masters, one of the better known, so-called scientists, spent several years filming people in the wildest possible variety of sexual activities, including intercourse between strangers, and women engaging in sexual relations with his ‘fucking machine,’ which is just exactly what it is, no matter what he calls it.”

“But if Dr. Masters really wants to learn something about sex, have him come around and I’ll introduce him to Ray Olive and C. C. McClung. Ray thinks about nothing else, and he’s been to bed with thousands of women, a conservative estimate would be about ten thousand, that’s a rate of over one a day for a period of over twenty years, but Ray usually has five women a night in Mexico, and he’s spent hundreds of nights in Mexican whorehouses, he seldom has less than two wives, and he always has a list of readily available girls. Ray’s never done anything in his entire life except manage his love life, he never had time for anything else.

“But by direct comparison, C. C. McClung makes Ray look like a monk; McClung had eleven young girls living with him at one time, when he was over seventy years old, and by young I don’t mean thirty or forty years old, I mean thirteen to sixteen years old. McClung’s famous throughout outdoor showbusiness circles; he makes Errol Flynn and Casanova look like rank amateurs.

“Get Ray Olive and McClung together and let Dr. Masters question them; then he’ll learn something about sex. If the average man spends five percent of his time in thoughts involved with sex, then men like Ray and McClung probably spend eighty percent of their time in similar activity; but that’s the sort of thing that’s completely impossible to measure, for the simple reason that the attempt to measure thought patterns invalidates the results. The moment such an attempt is made, it results in completely new time factors, and the same result occurs in any research program that involves questions put to people.

“About 1945, an interesting effect was caused by a university’s attempt to get around this invalidity of results produced by questioning people. This started in Kentucky, but spread all over the country. The problem involved the study of the rapidity of the spread of baseless rumors.

“To check the spread of rumors, you can plant a false story and then question a large group of people, but the results are worthless; simply because very few people will tell you the truth, some will confuse the story with something else, and a lot of people will just lie about it, in order to appear better informed. But in all cases, enough of your results will be incorrect to invalidate the entire program.

“So how do you question people without questioning them? The rumor was planted that a piece of plain, white cotton on a screen door would keep flies off the door. A piece of cotton was suggested only because it was plainly visible from a car driving slowly along the street. The rumor was planted, a few days passed with no attempts to spread or stop the rumor, and then a survey was made by counting the pieces of cotton on screen doors.

“But they never could stop it, it spread all over the country like wildfire; when given the facts in the case, people would say, ‘Yes, that’s amusing, but it sure keep flies off the door.’ Which, of course, it does not.

“But the obvious point in this case was completely overlooked; the results were still invalidated by the method, the pieces of cotton caused comments, and caused the rumor to spread faster than it would have normally. In so far as I know, there’s no possible way to conduct anything approaching an accurate survey of what people have heard, believe, or do. What you can do, and about all you can do, is rely upon your own observations from experiences connected with the subject under consideration; then attempt to correlate these experiences, and interpolate them into something approaching a rational conclusion, without permitting your personal bias to influence the results, and that’s impossible to do with complete accuracy.

“Looking back over the years, I have two conflicting impressions of my own life; I seem to have wasted vast periods of time, yet an incident from twenty years ago seems to have occurred a century in the past, simply because I’ve been involved in so many things during that time. But then, how do you measure time? Time, as it’s normally

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measured, is one thing, but time, as it's experienced, is something else, and then there's time as experienced under hypernormal circumstances.

"I was involved in an airplane crash in Texas, and the entire experience seemed to be lived in extreme slow motion. In another case, we actually measured this occurrence; this involved Bill Carpenter and a jaguar. We staked out a goat as bait for a large male jaguar, and concealed a camera some distance away, in order to film the killing of the jaguar when it came for the goat.

"The jaguar came, Bill rushed into the picture, between the jaguar and the camera, and raised his gun. I whispered to him to wait until it started to run away or charge, and I repeated this several times, then he shot and the jaguar was dead. All of this seemed to take about a minute, and I criticized Bill for not waiting longer and giving us more time to film.

"So he said, 'I waited over three minutes, how much longer did you expect me to wait?'

"We settled the argument by measuring the length of the scene as recorded by the camera. From the time the jaguar entered the picture until it was dead was almost exactly twelve seconds, and Bill's total time on camera was just over eight seconds; eight seconds that seemed to me to be over a minute, and that seemed like over three minutes to Bill. We both felt a little foolish.

"But, in fact, how much time did pass? Eight seconds, one minute, or three minutes? Time is normally measured by molecular action, but it's lived, experienced, by action of thought; Bill lived three minutes during that clock time of eight seconds, no matter how you measure it.

"What have I learned from all of these experiences? Practically nothing, and I have very little confidence in the few things I have learned. If I've learned anything at all, it's just that I haven't learned anything worthwhile. But I also feel that the rest of mankind is just as confused.

"I have learned methods that provide the result of getting people to leave me alone, the minimum force necessary. I learned long ago to use people's own weapons against them. Most people judge others by themselves, and they're impressed by the things they attempt to impress other people with; they use a particular method because they think it works, but they believe this only because it works in their own case, and they usually continue to use the same method in the face of repeated failures. Study a man, watch his methods of handling other people, then you can control him by using his methods, changing only the degree.

"Stay ahead of people, but that's easy; simply tell them the exact truth, give them all your plans in advance, then do exactly that. They'll never believe you, not even when experience repeatedly shows that you did exactly what you said you'd do, they'll always distrust your intentions and look elsewhere for hidden plans. It's that simple.

"Joyce, I'm not a philosopher, and I have no great wisdom, I don't think it exists, I've never encountered it; instead, I've encountered jealousy, pettiness, doubt, suspicion, fear, greed and stupidity, all on a vast scale. The first time you met Eliza, you spent half the night talking about philosophy, and we've spent at least a hundred hours talking on the same subject, yet you don't seem to have learned much from it, and the whole thing can be reduced to a few words."

"What you're saying then, if I understand you right, is that you think everybody should just do whatever they please, and to Hell with everybody else. Is that right?"

"No, that's not right. That comes very close to being the exact opposite of what I'm trying to say."

"Then I don't understand."

"Most people never do, or by the time they do, it's too late, they're too old to give a damn. When I was your age, I wanted to do things; but I didn't really know what, I just knew that I wasn't satisfied with things the way they were.

"Right now, you're going through pretty much the same thing; you're not happy with what you've got, but you don't have the slightest idea what you do want. And in your case, there's another factor, one that's usually overlooked;

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you're still trying to please other people, and that's impossible, you'll never please other people, no matter what you do. But that doesn't mean you're free to run over other people; they have the same rights you do.

"If you want to go sit on the beach for twenty years and watch the palm trees grow, then do it, but don't sit on somebody else's beach, and don't expect anybody to approve of what you're doing. But even that's a paradox; you can't find personal satisfaction if you try to please people, and yet nothing's worth a damn if it isn't shared."

"So then what?"

"Well, to begin with, don't look too closely at the people around you, if you do, you may not like what you find; but if you stop to think about it, it is a bit much to expect other people to be perfect, and yet most people seem to expect just that, in spite of their own knowledge of themselves.

"Most people never have the opportunities I had, my father would have given me almost anything I wanted, yet to me, it was less than worthless; so instead, I've done what I wanted to, within reason, and a lot of people would say way beyond reason, and as a result, I've had a lot of problems. But I don't try to kid myself about it, the original cause of those problems goes back to the fact that I created them by going my own way in life.

"Let me give you a specific example; several years ago, in Mexico, I had to kill a man in a bar, or rather, because of an encounter in a bar, and it was my fault; it was my fault in spite of the fact that the other man created the entire situation out of blue sky, for no reason, and in spite of the fact that I killed him in self defense."

"Then why was it your fault?"

"Because I was there in the first place; if I hadn't been there, it wouldn't have happened, it couldn't have happened."

"Then you're blaming yourself for whatever happens, no matter what the circumstances are?"

"No, I'm not; I'm saying that the problem would have been avoided if I hadn't been there, so I'm at least responsible to myself for any problems that resulted from my being there."

"I don't see the distinction."

"Joyce, it's the difference between blame and responsibility, and sometimes that's a mighty fine line . . ."