

THE BEASTS IN OUR BRAIN



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A NEGOTIATED PEACE, A “POLITICAL SOLUTION”

Our ancestors are now within us

**Always there, reflected in our instincts
and impulses, held in check by our thin
veil of prefrontal cortex ... seething
energy suppressed by the hopeful
“organ of civilization.”** (Luria)

**We are in uneasy alliance with these
barely domesticated beasts within...
we “reason” with them...**

BUT how can you *reason* with “instincts ... eternally hostile and detrimental to reason ...

whatever belongs to the sphere of sensuousness, pleasure, impulse has the connotation of being antagonistic to reason

... something that has to be *subjugated, constrained.*”

Marcuse, *Eros and Instinct*, 1955:145

**Most of them are seen
as beasts ... like
ancestral creatures
ruled by raw instinct
and rabid self-interest**

**Pitted in a “war of all
against all”** (Hobbes)



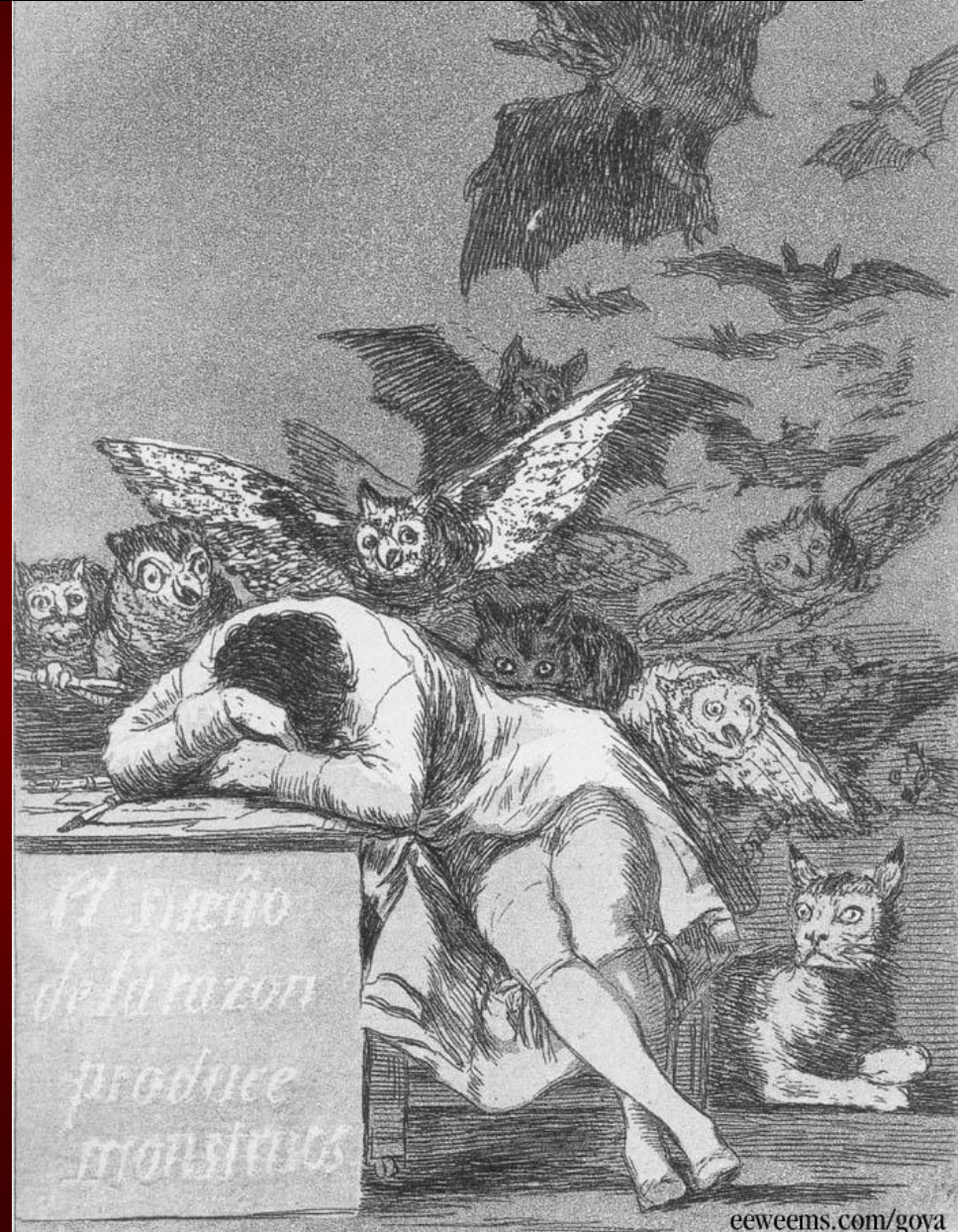
"We are conscious of an animal in us which awakens in proportion as our higher nature slumbers"

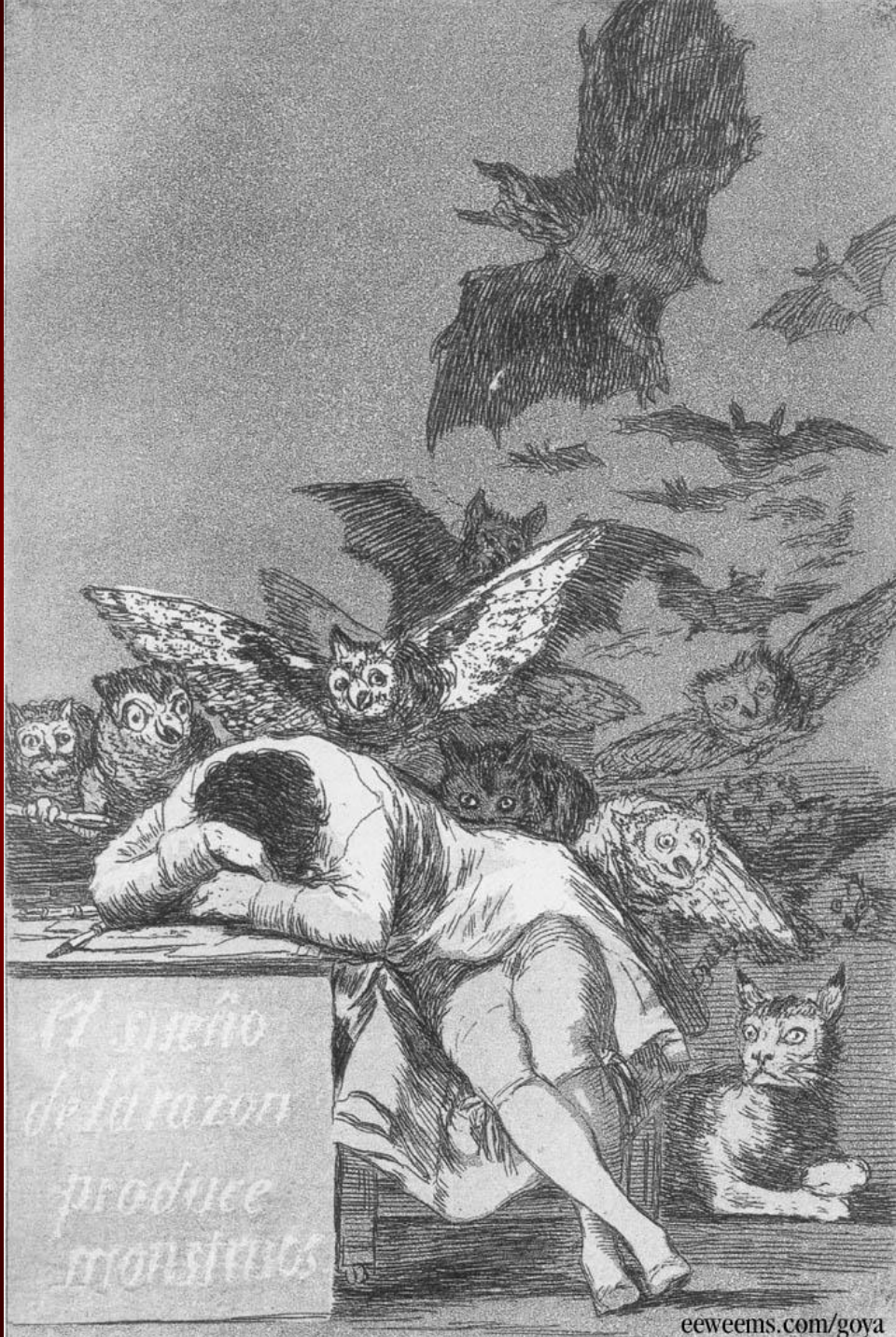
(Henry David Thoreau in *Walden*)

Perhaps we are right to fear the beast

The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters

Goya, *Capricos*, Plate 43 (1799)





El sueño
de la razón
produce
monstruos

"When the gentler part of the soul slumbers and the control of Reason is withdrawn . . . the Wild Beast in us . . . becomes rampant."

(Plato, The Republic)



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www.monsterkid.com

A comment
about critters

“In a world older and more complete than ours they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear.

They are not brethren, they are not underlings, **they are other nations,**

caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendour and travail of the earth.”

(Henry Beston, *The Outermost House*)

So then this is a
story about us
and “the others”

But the OTHERS *are* US

**We are the heirs to a legacy
millions of years old**

**... the sacred protein strand
that once belonged to our
ancestors has been
passed to us at
incalculable cost ...**

**but it is more than their
chemical memory that stirs
within us.**



BRAIN EVOLUTION

excavating the paleopsychology of our species:

"The Brain of Man has not abandoned it's ancient animal foundations, it has built upon them But it has also reconstructed them as the shifting earth beneath dictates

. . . . We have done the best possible in the landscape in which we have found ourselves with the raw materials we have inherited."

(Prolegomena to a Study of Mind, 1973, ch. 42)

THE SCAFFOLD



The foundations are in place ... Feels secure enough...

And so here we build our scaffold, a temporary structure just barely secure enough to help us build something more enduring. ... But is forever a work-in-progress.

THE BEAS



We do what we can
to tame them ...
to make
accommodations...



But we will never be
wholly free ...

Nor would we want
to be ...



This may be the
dream...



Edward Hicks, *The Peaceable Kingdom* 1834



Some cooperative relationships are predictable ...



**But this is the
reality ...**

Time to hide your
eyes ...



**At least
sometimes ...**







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Do we *assimilate* our
competitors or
accommodate them

Usually, peace comes about because battles cannot be won ... WHERE VICTORY COSTS MORE THAN DEFEAT...

CEREBRAL MODULES are no different

Organs, tissues, cells ... all are constrained by limitations on resources needed for growth and function: blood, oxygen ... specific building blocks of critical molecules.

The paths through our brain, from senses to actions, depend on these resources

Suppression of Reason

tyranny of the urgent

. . . the domain of the instincts . . . is highly programmed to enable rapid responses to cope with the most urgent needs . . . and unrestrained by reason . . .

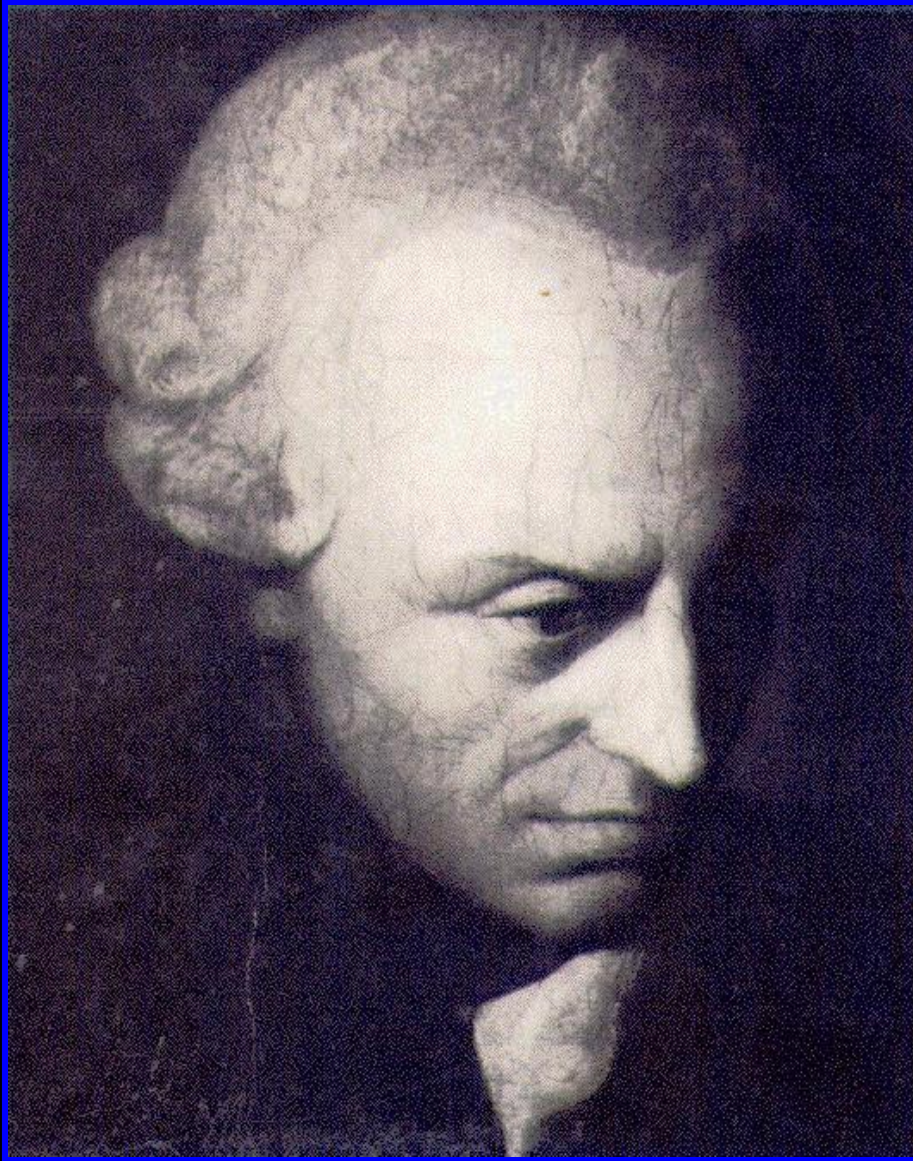
Conscious behavior takes a toll in resources and during mortal emergencies it is something that has to be subjugated, constrained.



**WE ARE CALLED TO RESOLVE
THIS CONFLICT**

**WE CANNOT, but the ATTEMPT
contributes to FITNESS**

**FOR EXAMPLE, Jacob's dream of
free exchange between "higher and
lower referential processes..."**



Immanuel Kant

**"The senses cannot
think.**

**The understanding
cannot see."**

Critique of Pure Reason





Sphinx



Lucifer



Chimera



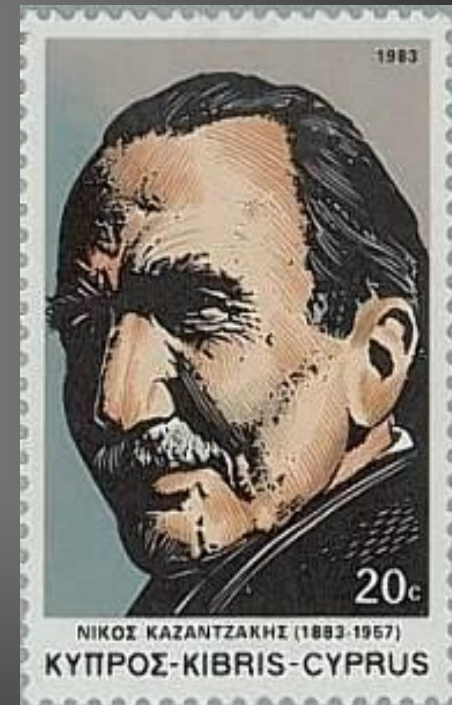
POIUS TEFANVS KATIONI VEST. ARCHEV



PALEOPSYCHOLOGY

**“Is there anything
truer than truth?”**
Asked Kazantzakis,

“Yes, Legend.”

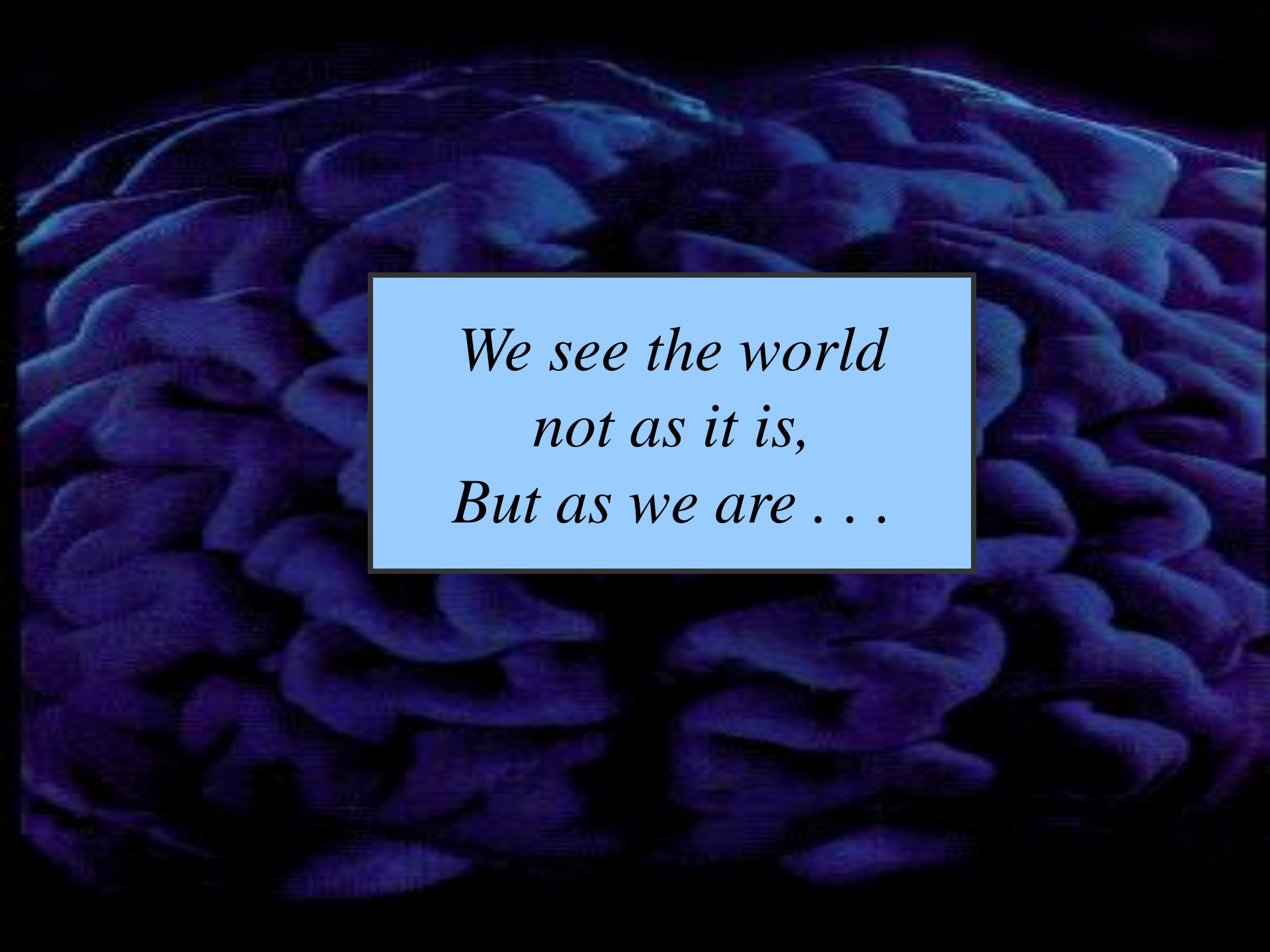


קבלה


*We see the world
not as it is,
But as we are . . .*

(Talmud)





*We see the world
not as it is,
But as we are . . .*



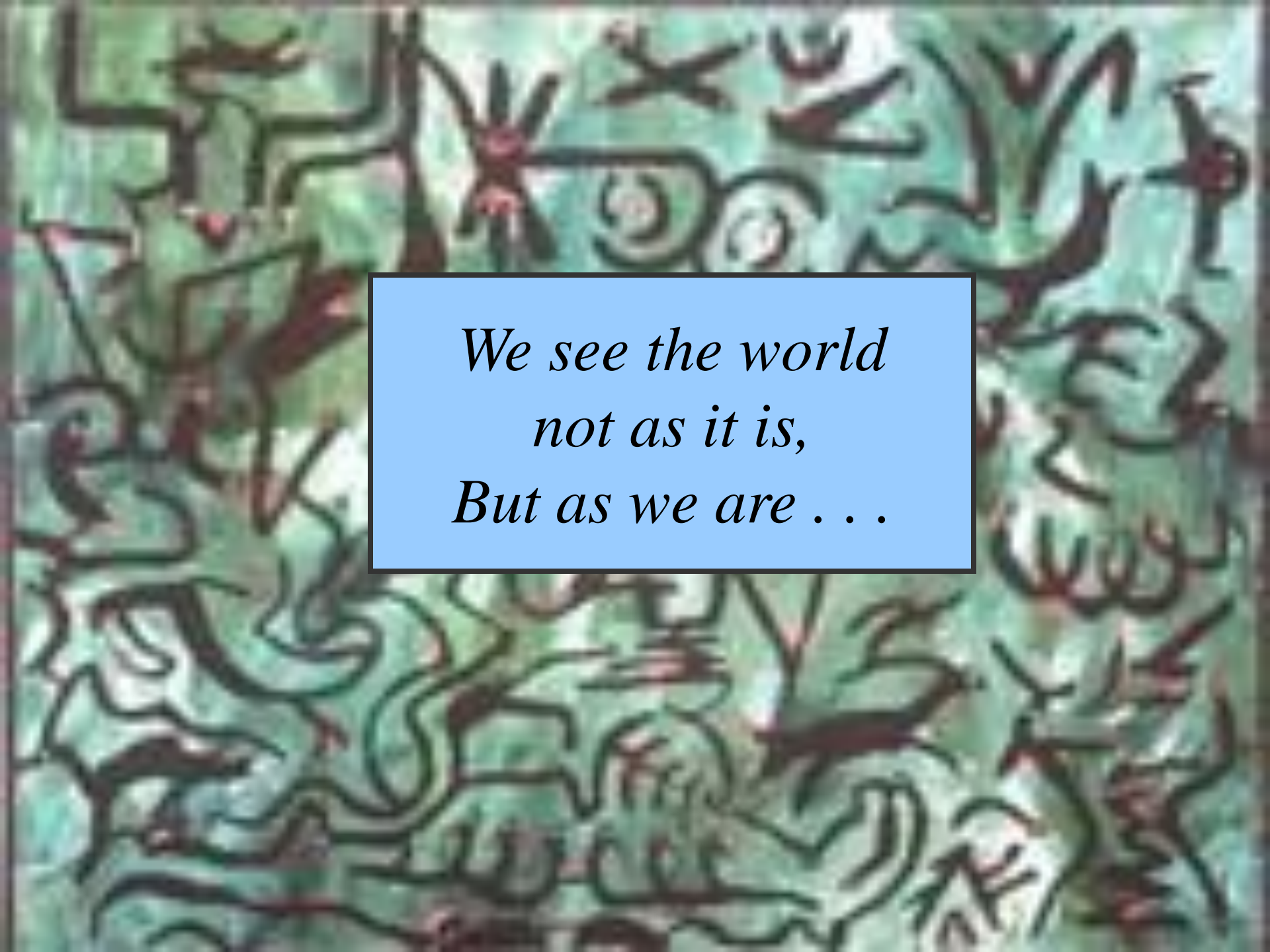
*We see the world
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But as we are . . .*

Dendrites


Axon

Axon

Axon



*We see the world
not as it is,
But as we are . . .*



*We see the world
not as it is,
But as we are . . .*

**So finally,
what can we say of myth?**



(Sallust said it for all of us)

**These things never were,
but always are.**



"Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning, and under every deep a lower deep opens"

--Ralph Waldo Emerson