

Question Everything. Challenge Everything. 'zine

The Entire Collection of Page-Top Ramble Questions

SIX YEARS OF QUESTIONS (1996-2001)

by Larry Nocella

[vlnl]

If I am lying on my side and I nod my head "yes" do I mean no? How can anyone trust a news source so obviously at the mercy of advertisers as television? And speaking of news, why do news programs inform me of useless crap like a single engine plane crashing half a world away? Do I need to know that? To continue the news bashing, do I become informed if I know some movie actor is getting divorced? Who cares? Enough of that, eh? Doesn't calling a work of art "untitled" defeat the purpose? Why do we have snot? How many times have I told you, don't chew on your nose? Why are meat-eaters repulsed by cannibalism? Shouldn't meat-eaters get hungry at funerals? What is reality? Why aren't taxes rightfully called 'protection money?' Why do I even care? How many ways can people waste their time? What constitutes wasting time anyway? Reading a marginal question arena? Why are people so in love with symbols, like a cross, a flag, a crescent moon, etc.? What is the essence of life? Where do all the letters devoured by the apostrophe go? As we speak (or rather as I write and you read) is a giant apostrophe somewhere growing on the fat of devoured letters, one day to emerge and consume all the alphabet? As well as all New York City? Then what? Why do some fools feel it necessary to use big confusing words? I hate big confusing words, don't you? Don't you get the feeling that people who use such words are trying to obscure the fact they have nothing to say? When will people learn to use sarcasm skillfully? How many people think saying, "Yeah, right." to express doubt is funny? How can we smoothly remove such people from the earth? T.V. sitcoms suck, don't they? Why do I have so much to say all the time, but when the chance comes and I can say it, I go blank? Could it be that my ideas are so brilliant, they even stun me, their creator? What kind of fool thinks a car is a status symbol? How

many kinds of fools are there? What's so appealing about the suffix "ism" that some are compelled to verbally file every event they witness into its proper -ism category?

[v1n2]

If you're one of those people who picks this up in the book store just to read this page-top ramble, why not buy me? I wonder if the number exists to measure how many times I hear, "I liked your magazine, but I disagreed with everything in it..." Why don't they write in? Why don't you write in? Why produce bumper-less cars? Where are you right now? Do you like it there? What if our food started biting back? When will it all end? Why is hockey called hockey? I can understand where basketball got it's name, but hockey? Llew? Sdrawkcab siht si yhw? What does the "third world" call itself? Aren't questions groovy? And challenges too, eh? How do you pronounce "eh?" Do you rhyme it with "day?" What if we could control our hair like a fifth limb? And our nose as a sixth, like elephants? Would mating rituals involve nose-language? Or perhaps sign-language shorthand could be made as nose language? What if our noses communicate to each other in subtle ways unperceivable to us? Why can't noses create smells? Who decides what a news "issue" is? Who are these people that think once you ingest something you instantly gain its powers? Have you heard of the people eating shark bits because sharks don't get cancer? Don't these people realize that your body accepts and rejects certain elements? What makes them think eating the shark is going to make them cancer-proof? Eating a duck doesn't instantly make one able to fly, does it? Eating a potato doesn't make one grow several eyes, does it? Wasn't this silly belief discarded with the cannibalism of one's dead enemies? Time for some light-hearted stuff, yes? Why do so many people mention the page-top ramble as their favorite part of this zine? After I slave away at all the other stuff, how come nobody talks about that, but they always mention what I spend just a few incoherent moments on? A lesson for life, no? Where does a participle dangle from? If I plant bird seed, will a bird grow? What kind of bird? Will a plant grow that's buds open, and a bird flies out? Do you realize this endless parade of questions is what like inside my brain is like? If you tell someone you'll meet them somewhere at a certain time and you're late, does that make you a liar? Why does that question infuriate so many people? Although art resides in the realm of subjectivity, could a painting hated by every

person on the planet be proven to be lousy art? Meaning, would it become fact that his painting was awful? What fool thinks facts are determined by the majority? If this is your idea of fun, what is your idea of pain? If this is your idea of pain what is your idea of fun? If pain is your idea of fun, what is your fun ideas for pain? If? Who will stop the rise of the posers? Who determines who is a poser and who is sincere? Where can I write this person? When will it end? Did you know that every song sounds the same? What do I mean by that? Did you ever think that perhaps I don't know? What purpose can asking a question that's meaning you fail to comprehend have? If I ask something in a subject that I do not understand, do I accomplish anything? For instance, if I ask, "Why are the lungs connected to the fibia?" What have I accomplished? Is it possible to answer a question that makes no sense? Will it serve any purpose? Will anything?

[v1n3]

Did you look up here first? Why? If our bodies are over seventy percent water, why don't we nearly freeze solid in below zero temperature? Why do people get enraged when you challenge what they learned in high school or college? Since when was what was taught in a classroom absolutely true without a doubt? Since when was what was taught in any place the whole story at all? Do you know what I'm saying? Why do people get uptight and passionately angry about stupid stuff? Why does a story about millions killed elicit no reaction, but two men holding hands or wearing dresses throws people into crazed-eyed spittle-projection madness? How can anyone be labelled paranoid after humanity's long history of petty, vicious betrayal? Why have these questions been so bleak? Could it be gas? Why is it that the instant you come up with what you feel is your most brilliant thought ever, the first person you tell it to always looks bored and says, "Oh, yes. I've heard that before."? If you think life sucks then why don't you try death? Does anyone really name their dog "Rover" or "Fido?" Why can't things be easier done than said? Why does the USA call events (like sports championships) that happen almost exclusively within its borders, "World" events? For example, how can baseball's championship be called the World Series when the teams are based in only two countries? Pompous, no? Has anyone else noticed that those late night talk shows, in fact most talk shows, are little more than info-mercials? Have you seen through their info-tainment facade? Is fame anything

more than a measure of the number of people who know your name? Where do bugs go in the winter? Why must at least one article of underwear always fall on the scummy laundromat floor just after you've finished making it sparkling clean? Do you realize how painful that is? Doesn't my complaining get on your nerves? Did you ever think that maybe it gets on my nerves too? Why are you looking at me like that? How much worse is it to call someone a "smacked ass" rather than just an "ass?" Don't you get nervous when you see moody people drinking huge containers of coffee? Where do clichés come from? Why are Christian beliefs commonly referred to as "religion" while the beliefs of the ancient Greeks are referred to as "mythology?" I know the answer, do you? Since Shakespeare was right, when he wrote, "The fault is not in the stars, but with ourselves," shouldn't it be equally true that our success is not in the stars, but with ourselves? Why must everything go nuts at the last moment? Is it true that eventually, all things will have wings? What if we all stamped at the same time and knocked the earth out of its orbit? Is it possible that such a disastrous synchronicity could occur by accident? Who would pay for the mess? If we had world-peace, what would we do with all the weapons? I'm for a massive improvised fireworks display, how about you? Wouldn't it be great if just for one day, everyone would just shut up? Wouldn't it be great if that happened every day? What if you met a friendly stranger for only the second time in several years? Would you remember him or her, would you ignore him or her? Would you laugh with recognition? Would you smile, and say, "Hey, in the future, don't be a stranger."?

[vln4]

Why is it so hard to do what is necessary? When staying calm would be the best thing to do, why is it so hard to do so? Does anyone else hear voices whispering in the graveyard? Is death the ultimate cure? Can I drink spring water in the winter? Was that stupid or what? Aren't we all in favor of a death penalty for excessive pun usage? Doesn't it just make sense? Does that person staring at you intend to do you harm? What about that person looking over your shoulder... right now? How true is it that, when it comes to the quality of art, fame equals lame? Were most humans born with an instinctive, primal urge to viciously criticize everything in sight? Do I have to do EVERYTHING? Can anyone tame the spirit of the spaz? Shouldn't it be a law that everyone must wear a beanie with

a propellor on top? Now wouldn't that cure all violence? Wouldn't that make sex even more bizarre? Can any subject generate the passion that discussing sports can? Is there any hope for justice? What exactly is justice? Is imprisonment an appropriate punishment for every crime? What truly defines a crime? What REALLY matters? These days, what fictional character ISN'T being stalked by a serial killer? Shouldn't there be "private speaking" classes as well? Doesn't your sort of behavior warrant a serious eyebrow-raising? So... um... are the eyebrows serious, or is the raising of them serious? Or are they raised seriously? Oh, could you please drop it? But don't drop it there? Why did you have to do that? What am I supposed to do with these enormous, serious-looking eyebrows at my feet? Are classics really classic? Or are they just old? Or did they just have the best public relations? Have you noticed the time between a work of art's debut and it's declaration as a classic is shortening? Or am I just seeing things? Well, of course, I always see things, but you know what I mean don't you? You don't? Aaach then, why don't ya go paint yourself with peanut butter? Why are loony conspiracy theories considered impossible when humans are so famously irrational? Did I already ask that? Who cares? Why should I ever apologize for asking a question? Did you know you're not alone? Just don't think you're the only one who has many strange little neurotic habits, and who thinks terrible thoughts, okay? Why must everything take five times longer to do than I expect? And seven times more effort? Who controls that? What are the instincts of humans? Is one to criticize incessantly? Is another to be perpetually offended? Golly, that about sums up my whole life and the lives of most people I know, how about for you? If I should control my fear, should I control my love? Can the end be so close? Does anyone really know how close it is? Must end on depressing thoughts? Why not be happy? After all, this completes the first YEAR of QECE, and that's good news, isn't it?

[v2n1]

Do you realize QECE is one year old? Wow? When the time has come, where will I go? Who can save you now? Why ribbons on presents, eh? Who will fix the solid black rainbow? Must a rainbow be bright and colorful? Can't we have a depressing rainbow once in a while to liven things up? That almost made less sense than high school, didn't it? Why not print up both sets of rules? Why not print up the ones that everyone is going to ignore, and

print up the ones that really get followed? Cripes, is the news media cowardly or what? They criticize far-off entities and distant people, but when something happens locally, where are they? Sucking on ad dollars, probably, no? There has to be a better way to convey information, but how? Why do some people fear passion? Why do they claim someone is being unreasonable simply because they raise their voice? Does volume have anything to do with truth? Can you tell me a story? Can I tell me a story? What is it about babbling that makes one relax so? Is it the purring of the mind? The random wave-crash symphony of thoughts? The avalanche of analogies? Can this get any more pretentious? Indubitably, you scoff? Well forsooth upon thee and whenfore beseecheth, hey what? After a bout with intelligentsia, don't you just want to cut loose with some dopey fart jokes? Doesn't it seem necessary just to balance things out? Up and down, down and up, does it ever stop? Can we free the heart from fury? Will reading these questions backwards turn them into answers? Where is your brain today? Have you noticed how much we influence each other? How much would you care to bet that you'll be repeating some of these questions later today? And how much would you like to bet that these questions are a mix of my own individual wonderings and the echoing thoughts of others? Deep, eh? Who invented the concept of the end? Shouldn't they be called the greatest liar of all time? There really aren't ends, are there? Okay, maybe there are, but can't you permit me a poetic moment? Diffenbachia? Why does the voice become higher pitched when toward the end of asking a question? Is the mind screaming quietly for help? Or is it the frustration of not knowing? Who invented deadlines? Shouldn't that person suffer at least as much as whoever invented ends? But we invent our own deadlines, don't we? We create our own personal hells, yes? Can we create our own heavens?

[v2n2]

Will the thunder ever stop? What is the significance of a tie? Is it symbolic for a noose around your neck while at work? A throwback to a chain around your neck, to remind you of subservience in the workplace? If you're not happy without money, what makes you think you'll be happy with it? Is there any question our society wants you to ask less? Why do people say "Don't be a statistic"? Aren't we all statistics? Is this really bad? Do I care if someone groups me in their numbers? Why bother to say "Don't Panic" when someone is panicking and isn't listening any-

way? But it's better than standing there doing nothing, yes? Is crying a neglected skill? Since competent artistic expression is considered a gift, shouldn't competent, emotional crying and/or screaming be given equal admiration? Aren't normal people odd? Can you ever truly stop working? Do you realize there are corporate logos, jingles and slogans burned into your memory through sheer repetition? And you will most likely NEVER be able to forget them? Is this programming? How can it be stopped? Can you selectively forget? Should you? Why think you're doomed, why not think you've got it made? And what is up with "Summer Reading?" The annual pre-summer "Summer Reading" book sale blitz seems to imply that many people don't read until the summer, doesn't it? My question then is, "What the hell did they do all winter?" These "summer readers" were pent up inside for weeks at a time, and they didn't read? Amazing how one can get impassioned over a demographic niche marketing attack, eh? Amazing how one can get impassioned over just about anything, if one feels like it, yes? How many movies can you name that end with a wrestling match to see who can be the first to grab the all-important gun? Are reviews anything more than ads? I guess it all depends on how it's done, huh? Are all ads bad? Can you think of an example of a good ad? Come to think of it, the ads are often more interesting than the entertainment they interrupt, aren't they? We need better entertainment, don't we? Or do we need worse ads? Or how about we get the people working on ads to work in entertainment and vice versa? And what's all this "we" business anyway? Maybe you like ads and movies, right? I've fallen into the great trap of most discussions, haven't I? By trying to use rigidly defined labels (whether something is an ad or entertainment) I've created a lot of useless discussion, yes? Then why the hell did you read it? Who will free human understanding from the tyranny of labels? Could it be an upcoming QECE feature? Of course it could -- what couldn't? Okay, so we canned that article on the Norwegian Scratch-N-Sniff speed team, but hey, the Japanese team has them beat hands down, don't they? Besides, that sport hasn't caught on here anyway, has it? Why am I (and others) more creative when feeling depressed? Will I ever want to work at something again, now that I have a bike? What is "high fructose corn syrup" and why is it in nearly every bottled tea one can get? Is gender in the mind or part of the body? Can we just stop the talk about sex for a while? Why do some people still trust the government after its lengthy history of lying and purposeful sacrifice of life? The government lies, okay? Were times really ever simpler? Or was it just that people were more ignorant? That more

was kept hidden? Were "we" ever innocent? Is all the info of today what makes things more complex? Isn't having more to choose from better? Isn't it better to have to wade through a lot of info to choose what you need than simply having only one flavor of info spoon fed to you? Who gives a flying rat's ass? What happened to the rest of the rat? And if there are flying rats, how can I meet and befriend one? Does a rat give a flying human's ass? I wonder what it would be like to watch my own ass fly? Two hairy mongo jelly beans arcing across the sky -- free! free! -- as I, bone-butted, stand watching? What would the neighbors think? Where have all the heads gone? Is there anything more than these trunks I call friends? These uncapped enemies pursuing their ends? Am I alone in the land of no heads? Do I not look the misfit, the only one with a head? But how can I be singled out when no one can see? No one can say? How is it I am the only one with a head? Am I the lone survivor, or the first of the dead?

[v3n1]

Who gave "the authorities" the authority? Why do so few people apply their knowledge? Is it the fate of all who do x to be told y? When will the majority of people realize that they should care about their own actions? Why are many so filled with self-disrespect that they don't care what they do to others and themselves? Is that the big question? Does "easily-excitable" sum up American culture or what? Was Frank Zappa correct when he said, "Everyone in here is wearing a uniform and don't kid yourselves."? Is that necessarily bad? If you broaden your definition of uniform to mean everyone has their own agenda, Zappa's statement takes on a slightly less ominous tone, no? It's similar to saying, "Everyone is looking out for themselves," isn't it? And no one thinks that's too profound or ominous do they? Can the paper in your hands be folded into a deadly weapon? What can't be used as a weapon? Can all things be used positively, too? Hey, anyone in an art class -- are you being taught to appreciate, or programmed to accept garbage? Have you ever seen the personals buried deep in the classifieds of a large-circulation newspaper? Do saints read the newspaper? Isn't there always at least one ad thanking a saint, saying something like, "Thank you, St. Jude, for prayers answered."? Or is that just my own experience? Am I making the common mistake of thinking my observation constitutes a universal truth? Or making the equally common mistake by thinking my experience is entirely unique? Am I mistakenly drawing a conclusion? Did I turn that thing off? Isn't it time we

executed everyone who pronounces "coincidence" like this: "co-inky-dink?" You're not one of those people who thinks that just because I ask a question that's on my mind that I've got some sort of prejudice, are you? How can the sincere questioner ask a question without being accused of being evil in some capacity? The defensive way many people respond to questions is a testament to the power of the question, isn't it? Aren't I being a bit pre-defensive here, myself? Who can you trust? How important is trust? Why doesn't the news ever report about a movie or rock music influencing someone positively? Such as providing them with inspiration? Why do movies and books and music only lead people to do wrong things? Why not a story about a kid, all alone, who hates school, who suddenly discovers a rock band that openly damns school? Then, this kid realizes he's not alone, that others see school for the garbage it is and ends up starting a zine about it? More or less? Too dull, you say? Yeah, I guess you're right? Who has time to call talk radio? If the Green Lantern® has no power over anything yellow, how does he keep from wetting his pants? Uh-oh, here comes an original idea, but without a category and a label, how will I understand it? Isn't that how most folk think? Is it necessarily a bad thing? What's wrong with having a name to grasp onto something in your mind? When are you going to get in touch? What can I do about this fear that I am repeating myself in these questions? You know something about revolutionaries that I find really unattractive? Don't they too often think that they aren't brainwashed, and everyone else is? If I ever give off that aura, forgive me, O.K.? It's an elitist mentality and is equivalent to all other annoying elitisms, isn't it? What if the person who said, "Nobody's Perfect" was mistaken? Ever listen to someone talk in their sleep? It's scary, isn't it? Or am I just a scaredy because my mind desires ordered thoughts too often? Why is the chaos of babbling so terrifying sometimes? And other times laughable? Shouldn't I be scaring myself just writing this gibberish? Yikes? If I could catch all the tears in the world in a pool, and bathe in those tears, would I wash away sadness? Isn't the idea kind of gross? Ever notice how QECE is full of seemingly contradictory thoughts? Is consistency over-rated? Ideas should be fluid...or should they? Is the appearance of self-contradiction the mind struggling with itself? Or is it just that seemingly contradictory thoughts apply in different situations? How can anyone remove the situation, the context of things? Why do so many people try?

[v3n2]

Will the backward swimming fish create an inverted whirlpool which will spit up all the secrets of the sea? Wow, when that's the first question that comes to mind, you know you're riding some sort of funky groove, don't you? Can there be more to this than plays on words and observations about the inaccuracies of language? Can we ride tandem with the electric magic of improvisation? Or must we wallow in delay tactics waiting for the energy to burst forth, whereupon we marvel at its brilliance, so wonderful that the previous tedium of waiting is forgotten? Can this get just one ounce more pretentious? Have we reached a peak of pretentiousness? Can this be kept up, or will it fail? Shall I study the decay of things to see the signs? Why should I want to know the signs? Why not enjoy the ride? Could you spend your life struggling to resist the end, only to find out the end was inevitable, and you caused it prematurely by halting what you were doing in order to prevent it? I suppose, to simplify, one might ask, aw hell, I forget and you weren't listening anyway, were you? I guess there is not much point in dying because you were trying too hard to live, is there? Who dares to deny the mystic? Why are mystics often brats? What is the ecology of the spin? Is money the root of all evil? What if money were annihilated, what would then happen? Would people suddenly stop being cruel? Have you stopped laughing yet? Me neither? Is saying a statement, but putting a question mark at the end of it cheating? So what? Now that the groove has fallen away, so quickly, it seems, what to do? Can you look at the fruit tree and see the potential people in it? The people who will eat it to survive? And in those people, can you see the decay that becomes the plant? Won't all prey one day become the predator? And vice versa, of course? Isn't it a shame that such philosophical questions seem so profound in the realm of thoughts, but who really cares if you are feeding the tree and involved in the spirituality of the universe when you're suffering what could be fatal pain? The puzzle mocks me, and I demand it stop, will you join my chorus? Together we can sing songs of defiant puzzles and the lack of our fulfillment in getting the colored blocks to line up shall worry us no longer, right? Right? Can I twist my tongue, so as to make two mouths for myself and speak twice? Are you trying it now? Are you in a public place? Will you hate me if I say I hope you are? Should we bother to do anything at all about it? Am I trying too hard? Are you? Don't most problems stem from a criminally negligent failure to mellow out? Is there anything more formulaic than pop music? But isn't it such a charming and

fun format? Why are cloudy days so wonderful? Is the sun too bright? If everyone lived free or died, would we all be dead? Why does every damn philosophical question have to involve death? Why not get philosophical about the everyday objects around your room? Are we ever not in a room? Since a balloon filled with hot air flies into the sky, is that why people full of hot air are always talking, so as to prevent themselves from floating away? Maybe if we taped such a person's mouth shut, they would float into the sky, and for one night the sky would be dotted with infinite bullshitters, floating to destinations unknown and wouldn't it be great when they exploded as they exited the atmosphere? Would you pay to see that? Would you? How much? Isn't that the problem with such revolutions, though? How can you select a human to choose between the saved and the damned? Such authorities always end up choosing to serve their whims of the moment, don't they? How much longer? A few inches, that's all? All right, turn the rack, will you please? Did anyone else notice that following the publication of QECE #6 (Trash Wars) there was a Simpsons episode where Homer got uppity after his trash wasn't taken? Coincidence, paranoia, or QECE's growing influence? Why do many people with anti-copyright ideas have no other ideas than that? We all live in the same world, our experiences are similar, isn't some similarity of ideas to be expected and except for the most flagrant of borrowing, shouldn't we enjoy when/if another has similar ideas and/or is influenced by our ideas? Are bicycles a gift from heaven? How can anyone argue that they are not? Is there anything more glorious than biking on a weekend morning with no one else around and the wind whipping past your ears as you coast down a hill in the countryside? If there is any good that mankind has done, is there anything better than the bicycle? Whew, do you need a vacation as bad as I do? Can't we just stop working so? Yes, a vacation while at work, what could be better? Can we just keep on in this good direction? Is there any object that can't be used as a weapon? Did I already ask that? In the harbor, are those lumps waves or... something else? Why do so many people seem to search for signs of doom? And why do so many people live in denial of the signs of doom? Why do so few people seem to strike the proper balance? Isn't doom a little too broad? Wouldn't it apply to certain people and only in certain ways? But those lumps are getting closer and am I afraid?

[v4n1]

Why can't network TV get even remotely beyond the story framework of "Hey dude, I hear you have a crush on that girl"? Why are human rights put aside for profit? Why is this even an issue? If you're not working to be a better person, to make the world a better place, what the hell are you working for? Why is it that the people who are hanging up the "be kind to others" quotations are almost always the ones most in need of such advice? Is any comedy lamer than the obscure cultural and/or celebrity-private-life reference? In the history of the world, has selling-out ever been worth it? So why do people do it? Has music been completely devoured by the Fashion Industry? Of course not, why should one believe the mainstream fluff, when beneath the surface just out of the spotlight, are some truly amazing, original works? Why are so many people drawn to the spotlight, as zombies commanded by their mad scientist overlord? And speaking of mad scientist overlords, what will I do with this beautiful day? What career has a brighter future than the professional misanthrope? Why is hatred and bigotry so easily harvested? What feels better than the end of a long journey when you know you've got it in the bag? When you know that despite it ain't over till it's over, that it really is over and soon you'll be pumpin' your fist in victory? Doesn't that feel good? Why can't people criticize themselves as well as they criticize others, when mirrors and cameras are everywhere? I'll have my cameras meet with your cameras and we'll spy on each other over lunch? Why is anyone puzzled at the shittiness of humanity when there are such rituals as "Spring Break?" Damn, can you imagine living in one of those poor tropical locales where a bunch of drunk, lame, dumb-ass college kids come to barf and fuck all over your home? Wouldn't you become a "communist" or "ultra-nationalist" too? What is college other than a way for parents to send off their biological obligations to make a mess of somewhere else? See how easy it is to fall into a rant of things negative? Why is that? And don't such claims focus only on things negative? After all, there have got to be other college folk who aren't stupid, who find Spring Break as insipid as anyone with a singular functioning braincell, don't there? I often wonder about athletes in obscure sports, don't you? Like, what about the semi-professional running athlete who trains for marathons, wakes up at five in the morning all the time, and the media shows nothing but drunk college dorks? Okay, that's enough, isn't it? From here on out, why can't I be positive? Okay, I accept the challenge, okay? Well, then when will you start? Now? What are you waiting for? What

is the problem? Why so negative? It's promising that there are so many zines, so many independent efforts, yes? Isn't it like wildlife, and all things natural? That the little you see is but a fraction of what is really out there? Has the mainstream media over-extended itself, and like all power, pushed so far as to nearly demand a backlash of cool media? Yes? I think so? Is it cheating to just make a statement, then throw a question at the end? Hey, why don't you try to come up with five billion questions after all I've been through? All right, can we get back to the positive? Technology has assisted in making some awesome bikes, hasn't it? Remember when my flimsy childhood bike weighed more than my larger, adult bike? Now is that cool technology or what? And isn't it promising that there is so much skepticism over the mainstream? Yes, that's a good first step, but wouldn't it be better (this is the next step) when folks start using that skepticism to dismantle the mainstream? Hey, isn't that what we are doing right now? You, the reader, and I the writer? Communicating through unconventional channels? Will you let me know? Are things really ever better or worse, or is it just your perspective? Hey, isn't this fun? This forced positivity can be a hassle, but try it sometime, will you? Could it be that most just don't know how to stop fighting? Now that I've grown bored of positivity as well as negativity, is there nothing left but to speak nonsense? Ah, yes, a career in poetry at last? No? How about fiction? Let me see, according to my checklist here, a story needs conflict, yes? Okay, so in our story, there were these two people that hated each other, I mean a hatred so terrible, they wanted to kill each other... have I got your attention yet? So what stopped them from killing each other? Uh, neither one of them had arms? Sounds good, right? So one day that met in the town square, this is like a Western, okay? Hey, do people in Japan call American Western movies Easterns? Anyway, so these two guys with no arms are standing in this old Western town, right? And, you know, they're both doing the gunfight thing, and staring at each other with the oddly tense music playing, right? And the clock strikes noon and its time to draw, yet no one has any arms, so how can they draw? So their holsters sit there, weighted with revolvers, packed with death, and neither can use them? So they stand there, gnawing at their shoulders, left then right, in complete frustration? Then, they look up, horrified at the other, and realize that they share the others plight? And they approach each other, weeping in mutual sympathy? Aw, isn't that nice? Now what if one of them decided to kick the other in the nuts? Then you'd laugh, right? Why? Why is that so damn funny? Why can't we laugh at two armless guys unable

to kill each other with revolvers embracing in an armless hug and making peace? Why is betrayal so funny? When will I stop obsessing about that? But you know this story makes me think that there's all this concern over nuclear weapons and who's going to push the button, what if we just stole the buttons? Ah yes, the divine inspiration that vomits from improvisation, or is it simply the improvisation that results when you're inches from the goal you thought you had in the bag earlier, but that finish line is on wheels and it just keeps rollin' on and you're saying, oh anything to be done, please, anything? Hey, what happened to staying positive?

[v4n2]

Question for people "politically opposed" to unions: how come you find it permissible for a company to pay as little as they like, but unacceptable that the workers unionize in order to ask for more? Admit that just because it is working for you doesn't mean it's working for everyone and you're ahead of 90% of the people, yes? Why does the refusal to believe the world revolves around oneself come off as radical to so many? How can anyone care about business when the outside world is so beautiful? Why make someone else's life miserable, and make enemies? Why do all that work just to make others upset, make others hate you and make the world a terrible place? Why spend so much time hating? The incense stick of time is burning down, and what is that smell? Why is the beast so scary when it's humans that do all the damage? Isn't it fun to think of ways to tank the economy? What if all consumers stopped buying? What if all women stopped worrying about their weight? What if people were able to afford land to grow their own food? Will I ever understand over-drinking? When you have a serious problem, why impair your brain: the most important tool you have to get you out of the situation? If the economy is so great, how come I'm not getting a raise? Or at least a day off for a job well done? Have those who claim the children are angry, disappointed, confused, underachieving, ever asked them why, and acted on what they said? When they told you school was boring, did you make it more exciting, or just tell them to grow up? What does the pharmaceutical company do with the piss once they've tested it for drugs? Do they use the DNA? Harvest the nitrogen that makes up urine? What is the ultimate destiny of the kidnapped piss? What is the job title for the "piss inspector?" Is this line of questioning uncomfortable? Why are QECE and other zines more useful to their readers than mainstream opinion rags?

Why does the mainstream criticize as if they are above it all? As if they do no wrong? Why do they do nothing more than look around and declare what sucks without looking at themselves? Like a bunch of kids? Why not take the zinester approach and admit you are flawed and uncertain, but this is how you acted and why? Isn't that more in-depth than just repeating, "Oh heavens, Politician X did this bogus thing," yet again? Why do people criticize pop culture so heavily but ignore their government? Pop culture is a good training ground for seeing through government tricks, isn't it? The scams are often identical, aren't they? Who stole the silver whoopee-cushion of Shmedsville? Why does the news media rush to cover every stupid-ass thing that nutty religious leaders say? Why not just ignore accusations of homosexuality directed at cartoon characters, etc.? Why don't said goof-ball religious leaders ever call for a ban of unpopular books? Did I hear someone say "Hitch yourself to a rising star?" We're learning, aren't we? Sounding a bit smug, yes? Shall I apologize? Why don't people apologize more? Isn't "I was having a bad day" something everyone can understand and relate to? Are people really that pridefully petty? Without an extremely narrow theme, how will QECE ever become popular? Without a rigid formula, how can we successfully market to a solid audience? Do you care as much as I do? Isn't it time to drop the heavy themes? What is this with two articles related to death? Isn't writing a pain in the ass? How many times do you write something, then disagree with it the moment you show it to the world? Is anything set in stone? Is more appreciation needed to understand that what was once written doesn't necessarily apply anymore? Will someone tell bible-quoting folk this? Have I given up on understanding why people act so mean, when it's so obvious that cruelty and apathy just leads to more of the same and if someone doesn't stop it, then it's all going to crap? Why are so many adults so immature? Are they just those who wasted their youth and now they are bitter and wasting their adulthood? Well, I guess if I'm unimpressed with most people then it makes sense I'd be unimpressed with so-called adults? Okay, it's time for fun, yes? How about it's time to be serious? Let fun be the default? Can you see with me? A world where resources are channelled into eliminating work, so that robots are made not to fly warplanes, but to do the harvesting, etc.? Where all we need do is maintain the machines that keep us surviving? Working, say, at most two hours a day? Then we can distribute our goods to others, and to such a point where no one has to work? Just have fun? Frisbee, anyone? The only potential problem here is that people might then reproduce abundantly, putting a

strain on the system? Has this already happened? Even if I can't take down some evil entity, I might as well speak the truth so that someone somewhere might see a way to win, right? When was the golden age? Did I miss it? Am I in it? Perhaps this shall be called the Grey Age? Just a blah? I can make myself happy or make myself cry just by looking at the same thing from different angles, so does that mean when someone is cruel to me, I can see it from their view and be happy? Isn't that a bit twisted? Why do I often sound like a jerk to myself? If my doors of perception are cleansed, and I see things as they truly are, infinite, isn't the first thing I see going to block the view of everything else? Is seeing things infinite really that groovy? Because, what if I see your ass? Infinite? Will someone dirty those doors of perception, please? Are you, like myself, addicted to the point of tension, living in the silence, waiting for the snap? And in that awkward silence, what are you feeling?

[v5n1]

Can't most stupid statements be traced back to a lack of direct experience? Did the Greeks recognize their own myths? Just as many people today know of certain historical events and/or religious beliefs as myths, did some Greeks know Zeus and Co. to be just fantasy? Why then, do most historians focus so little on such doubting Greeks? A historical prejudice versus questioning and challenging? I'm sick of people saying, "I'm aware an animal made a sacrifice for my meal," aren't you? Why is the action on the animal, who was captive and not free to choose? Since in this interaction, only the human is free, shouldn't it be correct to place the action on the human? If the person wasn't trying (subconsciously or consciously) to cover up his guilt, he would say, "I'm aware that I chose not to be compassionate."? Are you stronger than your circumstances, or are your circumstances stronger than you? Are nations obsolete? Corporations are multi-national, organizations are multi-national, unions are multi-national, what's left? What exactly is it that nations do other than administer the military? It says a lot about the usage of the word "hero" when you think that there are "heroes" on both sides of a war, doesn't it? Is there any way to success other than locking into a formula and mass-producing it a thousand times? Why does success so often involve industrial-scale repetition? Why can't it more often involve the excitement of constant change? How much time are you wasting thinking about ass-brains acting like ass-brains? If someone goes to a foreign country

on vacation, where say, marijuana is legal, and they smoke some, but then come back to the USA, and their job requires a drug test... they fail and are fired, how is that fair? They have broken no law, have they? What if I drove until I was out of gas, just to see what happens? What if I walked without destination, just to find adventure? What other easy ways can I create a difficult situation that will lead to adventure... or at least an interesting story, something to break the monotony? Should I intensely ponder which gender I should use when referring to a complete stranger? Is there anything mainstream that I won't find out later was some rip-off of an obscure project? Have I asked these questions before? If my questions go unanswered, won't that cause me to ask and ask again, until I sound like a madman, repeating over and over again the same thing, unable to let it go? Is this a tactic of the Keepers of the Flame or shouldn't it be my responsibility to ensure a response? But if there is no response, how can I help but repeat my questions? Then I guess it's time to pressure for an answer in a myriad of ways, yes? Who broke it? You? Where do things forgotten go? If no one is aware, surely that thing still exists, doesn't it? Is that the fear of those who crave attention, that if no one knows of them, they will vanish? What is the sound of one hand back-handing people who ask "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" Aw, come now, is it necessary to get violent? Especially at people questioning and challenging? It's easy to be for questioning and challenging, but when it's directed at you, it becomes a little harder, doesn't it? How cool is this? Nothing to do, how cool is that? If the grass is always greener on the other side, can I just torch the whole damn thing? That will teach that uppity grass, eh? Is this all there is? Of course not, go out and get some more, what are you waiting for? Is it ever enough? If it is, does that mean you're dead? What if you need nothing more, and you achieve perfect zen, what would you do next? What is there left to do but die? Keep exploring, why don't you try that before you just give up and shuffle off this mortal coil? You can always want more, but should you? Always correct the readjustment is the way of life, isn't it? The world can be divided into those who care and those who don't, can't it? Why are people always seeking to binary-think the world? Are humans becoming computers, or are computers simply what humans are at their deepest core? How much more evidence do you need? Independent press isn't allowed into a press conference? Sure, there's a free press, you can say whatever you want, but what can you say if those in power won't even talk to you? I'm noticing more and more the lines being drawn, isn't it damn exciting that a critical

mass is being reached? That an un-ignorable amount of people are speaking up and demanding a share of the wealth they helped create? Crowds and all scare me, but I can't help being encouraged that I am not alone in seeing that there are some out there who would take and take until everyone else is dead and then what? Who knows? Is it their karmic destiny to forever be hungry? What scares me though, is their support base, what of the people who profit from corporate greed? The corporate citizens, the employees? Am I one? Probably? Still, I think I'd rather a better world than a better car, yes? Have the greedy (as they do periodically) finally eroded their support base? What can protect them other than their support base? Would you agree that the problem isn't that there is no alternative press, the problem is that most people don't go looking for it? Isn't the lack of questioning, the lack of curiosity, of vision, the big problem? How to right that? By simply being better, offering more, so when they stand before a mainstream magazine financed by a huge corporation and a tiny zine made by someone in their apartment late at night, the person chooses the little guy? Is that all it will take? Yes, but isn't that easier said than done? Maybe it's not so difficult after all, YOU'VE already done it, and wasn't it so simple you barely realized it? Change doesn't have to be hard, does it?

[v5n2]

Aren't we all making history? Why so much anger and aggression? Do you fear appearing weak? Anyone can spout off about what they hate, but it's a rare courage when someone talks about what they love, yes? Does the world really need another person who says fuck you to everything and who bravely curses things anyone with sense knows are stupid anyway? Why is hatred painted heroic? Why is anger, fury and attacking others (calling them morons) so admired? Not everyone admires those things, do they? In the quiet of a hall, a silent email, the thanks come through, thanks for exposing your heart, it made me feel better, and how do you feel about this? So many commentators come off as if they think they know it all, and are perfect in every way, do they do any wrong? Ever? Are they ever uncertain, afraid? How much can the major media be blamed for terrorism? When the media doesn't cover something until there is violence, isn't that encouraging people to violence to get their message out? If the media spent less time ignoring people, using their power responsibly, how much sorrow might be avoided? How

about this conspiracy theory? That computer viruses were made by large software companies to cover the flaws in their operating systems? They even set up B.S. hackers to pose as virus authors? Ask a computer geek if he's ever hacked into a bank, and he's sure to say yes, isn't he? Cute, but not likely? Has this been mentioned before? How much more fun would our existence be if we could see farts? Can you imagine the increase in juvenile pleasure? Memes are subtle things, aren't they? At first, one might equate them with ideas, but that's as incorrect as equating genes with the traits they make, isn't it? So what is the essential meme behind the idea? Genes are abbreviated as four different letters, can memes be broken up into similar shorthand? That almost hurts my brain to think about, maybe it's best to roughly equate memes with ideas for now, okay? Someone always lets you know when your concept of understanding isn't equal to theirs, and that's all right, but can't we all try to disagree a little more gently? Is that all there is to making discussions more productive? Projecting intent onto other people's actions is a big mistake, isn't it? How about before assessing a person, one should consider all the possible reasons why a person may be acting that way? A reason isn't always sufficient, though, is it? If someone's acting like a jerk, do you really care if they have a reason? Will that change your opinion and make you want to associate with them? Is there anything more frustrating than being hit with a simple lesson that makes you ask, how old am I again? How long have I been alive and I still haven't learned? What price peace? For centuries, humans have been discussing peace, so what's the hold-up? Everyone has to get their shot at vengeance, is that it? How can that cycle be stopped? By people rising above, or by others stepping in and separating them? Are those the only real options? But separating people isn't practical, so does it really all count on people rising above? Didn't I once think I could find the words to make it make sense, and convey them, I could heal the world? Didn't I hope, in my naïve optimism, I could devise a supra-meme, that would be simply irresistible, that would spread across languages, and humans everywhere would stop and think and a new day of peace would arise? And didn't I wonder, even hope, that no one would know it was me who had got the ball rolling? And maybe this is in progress? Isn't the supra-meme what some anonymous person in humanity's distant past created? The word, the concept, "peace?" That's enough about my foolish hopes, isn't it? But if the peace-meme is already present in our culture, and it hasn't completely taken hold, then there must be a piece missing, perhaps a word to describe action? Hell, even if every-

one was taken-over by(?) absorbed by(?) in-the-service-of(?) the peace-meme, would they act peaceful? The ideas may spread, but does action result? Aren't some of the meanest people are those who preach peace? Maybe it's just that people don't know how to act in accordance with the memes they absorb? It always comes down to action, and in the heat of the moment, can't almost anything happen? That's enough profundity for now, yes? What odd pride is it that makes one offended if one were to point out that the memes had taken hold? If someone planted memes in my brain (which I refer to affectionately as my meme farm) then why should I be offended? It's as if someone is saying I'm susceptible to meme programming, but what's wrong with being susceptible to good ideas? After all, I notice what seems to be (or maybe I'm just wishing) a rise in the use of the words question and challenge, and if you use it, you've got good judgment, don't you? I don't hesitate to use or share someone else's great ideas, do I? So why does our odd pride remain?

[v6n1]

Why bother with some opinion-leaders? Why not just have a machine spit out their predictable opinions? Isn't possible that this is how it works? That radio talk-show people are just robots? Shouldn't any thinking person notice the significance of the fact that when indescribable human suffering needs an adequate metaphor, the speaker usually turns to the way non-human animals are treated? He was shot down like a dog? They were slaughtered like cattle? Is there anything more detrimental to the evolution of revolution than a failure to transition from general feelings into specific ideas and action? In other words, how can you expect your revolution to be successful if at some point you don't start getting specific? Do conspiracy theories reveal evil activities, or do they sometimes inspire an idea within the evil? Was there ever a greater oxymoron than "Reality TV?" Ever think of the role of the media in assisting non-violence? Would the famous non-violent protests of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Gandhi have been nearly as effective if there hadn't been photographers, camera operators and journalists present to tell the world and stoke the fire of public opinion? How successful would a non-violent movement devoid of media coverage be? And isn't that a reason for a lot of violence, then? If the major media ignores (as they do) many struggles, then aren't they more or less depriving that struggle of a non-violent option? Or making it that much more diffi-

cult? So, people, will you realize that you've got to LISTEN? That listening can play a huge role in making the world less violent? And for press-folk like me, will you help make what little difference you can and give people a voice? And finally, will you see how important it is to fight media monopolies? How important the alternative press is? Thank you? Should profit and exploitation usually be considered synonymous? Doesn't profit usually seem to involve some kind of deception? Or bureaucratic insertion of oneself between a buyer and a seller? Or withholding of information? Or deprivation of a buyer's ability to achieve independence? I think an excellent case can be built that 90% of the time (or more?) profit is equivalent to exploitation, what do you think? Who is more to blame? The fool who starts a rumor, or the fools who perpetuate it? Rather than get angry at someone who allegedly said something negative about you behind your back, why not get angry at the person who told you this? If it isn't a warning then what is it? What other publication has the guts to trash itself in its own pages? Oh sure, they might print a nasty letter from time to time, but don't they always pair it with a letter defending the magazine? What other magazine has the courage to print the articles of the Devil's Avocado? Is it really so important that everyone knows the nitty-gritty facts? A lot of people have the correct impression that they are being ripped off by the powerful, even if their quoted figures are off, but does that make the overall impression untrue? Facts are important, but they're not always vital, are they? Maybe I should say the PRECISION of facts isn't always vital, is it? This is a dangerous line of thinking, because it can lead to prejudice, but still, sometimes you have to go with your gut, yes? Why is it that the heaviest drinkers are always the most adamant that people should not smoke pot? If a magazine truly cares about the environment, why don't they cram their pages with content? Why do they have huge two-page spreads with nothing but photos? Isn't that a waste of paper? If you subscribe to the notion that a picture is worth a thousand words, the size of the picture does not increase the number of words it is equal to, does it? When you whine about everyone living in the same type of house, are you maybe being a bit elitist? Is this really an example of conscious and willing conformity? Or a matter of circumstance? Maybe others can't afford anything else? Is it necessary that every item you own is the supreme expression of who you are? Do I decorate and paint and color my tools? My car? My home? Just because people don't express themselves in an identical way you do, does that mean they're conforming? No matter what delightful statements made about the home being an exten-

sion of one's self, is it really? Does every aspect of my life, and my every possession reflect my influence or proximity? Who cares if a rolling stone gathers no moss? Isn't this cliché a shameless attempt to make you sit on your butt? And who wants a bunch of moss growing up their ass? What better way to avoid social plaque build-up than to keep moving? Are people apathetic or disgusted? Nobody comes to vote, so who do the pundits blame? Would they blame anyone other than The People? Pointing out what is wrong with the world will certainly not change it, but can you think of a better first step? Doesn't an insistence that there is a reason for everything so often end with the conclusion (however indirect) that the victim must somehow be at fault? Wouldn't an acceptance of things random be more truthful and more beneficial? Can there really be a difference between justice and revenge? Why are people so offended by guilt? What better early-warning system does your soul have? If you don't learn from guilt, then it is just going to get worse, isn't it? Why is everyone so sure their single interpretation is correct? Why not propose different alternatives? Is someone evil? Or are they desperate? Is someone good? Or are they simply acting out of social obligations? Or for show? Or acting in a way that you approve? How to describe the sinister action of helping others with intent to receive praise and reward? Shouldn't sincerity count for something? Surely in some dictionary of government double-speak, there must be an entry explaining that whenever you read the word, "Defense" or "Security," you should understand it to mean, "Aggression," correct? Does a space-based war program have to work? Isn't it sufficient psychological warfare against potential enemies to make them think the USA can attack them with bombs from space?

[v6n2]

Does a bricklayer who assists in making a missile silo share complicity in the deaths resulting from the missile? Can a bricklayer be a murderer? Is, "I needed to feed my family" any more excusable than "I was just following orders?" Is the only way to unity by finding a common enemy? Why not a common friend? Why wait to understand, wait to be curious, until a stranger lashes out? Why do people talk about life as if its some material thing? Save your life? Life was lost? Are these the same memes that manifest in the mental environment as terms and attitudes such as "Human Resources?" A resource is something to be used, then used up, then discarded, and isn't that exactly how

corporations view their "Human Resources?" Nothing lasts forever, but do things have to end so soon? If time flies and money talks, and time is money, then what is this flying, talking thing? If the news reported less on terrorism, more on acts of kindness, would people be compelled to commit acts of kindness to make their cause heard? Could you imagine warring sides competing with one another to be the more kind so as to have their cause heard on the news? Could the news leverage its power so effectively? Are there patterns in the chaos or chaos in the patterns? Why do prayers more often sound like commands and less like requests? If people stopped making demands of their gods, would they achieve their desired results more often? If you were a deity, would you respond to a mortal ordering you to deliver mostly insignificant items? Ever notice that a side effect of questioning and challenging is an ever-present uncertainty? Or do some arrive at a conclusion and are certain of it, refusing to question or challenge it further? So can't questioning and challenging be just another dogma if you ever stop doing it? Once you start, should you commit to doing it always? Or is that dogma, too? Does a hero have to be a human being? Why can't a cat be a hero? Aren't non-humans capable of amazing feats of love and caring? Why do so many think that killing at random will eliminate their troubles? Can one be so twisted that one doesn't care who is murdered? Why does overly sentimental stuff enrage? Is there anything more dangerous than someone who takes their job seriously? Should this end with an answer? Can't a question be the end? Do questions need answers? Why not end with the tension of an unanswered question?

Question Everything. Challenge Everything.