

In February 1912, the philosopher, social reformer, and mystic Rudolf Steiner had an insight that seemed outlandish even to him, who believed that, at the beginning of time, the Sun had been squeezed out of the Earth. “This may appear to be strange, but this is the way it is,” he told an audience in Vienna. “We meet in the middle period of our lives, as a result of karmic guidance, the very people who were once our parents.” According to Steiner, around the age of thirty you will encounter your parents from a past life. Your birth parents in this life are people you’ve met in the previous incarnation at around the same age. And near the end of your life, you will make karmic connections with people who will figure significantly in your next lives.

One hundred years later, I met Conner Habib, a Renaissance man for the twenty-first century: writer, philosopher, scientist, teacher, advice columnist, and gay porn star. Son of a Syrian father and an Irish-American mother, the future Conner Habib spent his childhood in a state of alienation in Catasauqua, a dead suburb of Allentown, Pennsylvania. In his teens, he organized punk shows at a local Syrian fraternal society and plotted his escape.

He studied organismic and evolutionary biology at the University of Massachusetts, pursued an MFA, and taught creative writing for a few years, but found the lack of sex in academia dispiriting. He moved to San Francisco, invented the name “Conner Habib,” and began a successful porn career. One of the few actors of Middle Eastern descent in American porn, he’s made nearly 150 adult scenes, from the Oriental-carpet burner *Tales of the Arabian Nights* to *Man Up* to *Raising the Bar*, and won a 2012 Grabby Award for Best Supporting Actor in the film *Dad Goes to College* (also a porno). He still writes — on science, on time and the nature of consciousness, and on gay rights issues — and is working on a novel as well as a philosophy book about what he learned from pornography. He hosts a weekly sex advice video-column on Logo TV Network’s NewNowNext.com, and tweets @connerhabib.

He’s also a disciple of anthroposophy, the esoteric tradition Rudolf Steiner founded in 1912 to rescue humanity from materialism and secularism. Anthroposophy asserts the existence of an objective spiritual world that can be directly accessed through inner development — thinking about thinking — rather than through obedience to existing moral codes. Steiner had ended his lecture in Vienna with a mantra: “A soul thinking in anthroposophy exclaims, ‘In thy thinking cosmic thoughts are living.’ Lose thyself in cosmic thoughts.”

I met Conner Habib the same way so many of his devoted followers have: beaming into my home on live video. Was he once my father? My mother? Was I his? Perhaps it’s too early to tell...

Anna Della Subin So I hear you’ve written a play?

Conner Habib Yes. It’s called *The Contradiction*. It’s about a guy who has this one little moment in his life that’s sort of off-kilter, and it sends him spiraling. It’s based on a moment in my life when I went to see this band I really love, Lungfish — really loud and ugly music but with these crazy, mystical lyrics. The lead singer, Daniel Higgs, has a giant beard and tattoos up and down his arms and he wears a suit, and he just looks like Walt Whitman, screaming on stage. And they are so intensely occult. People who were

totally secular humanists would go to see them and you could tell something weird was going on inside them. When I went I kept thinking: if Daniel Higgs would just... rise... a centimeter off the stage, in that space between the stage and his feet, all the lawfulness of my life would go away. It would just take a centimeter.

So that's what the play is about. And the main character is in porn. And that's part of it, too — he's having this weird feeling about seeing himself on screen, and knowing who he is, and not being able to connect the two.

Subin Is that a part you wrote for yourself?

Habib [*Laughs*] I have fewer acting aspirations than most people. I'd rather just be in porn. I mostly want to write and talk and have sex. And read.

Subin Which came first, for you — anthroposophy or porn stardom?

Habib Anthroposophy. I was at an environmental and sustainability conference, and I found a brochure for an intensive anthroposophy course at a place called the Nature Institute in upstate New York, and I really wanted to go. I was living in Amherst at the time, studying environmental evolution with Lynn Margulis, taking three courses and teaching. But Lynn said, "If you can get in, you have to go." She was the kind of person you listen to. So I got in, and I ended up living at the Nature Institute and driving back and forth to Amherst. I lived across the street from a Waldorf school and next door to a biodynamic farm, both Steinerian inventions. And every day I learned a bit more about anthroposophy.

Subin How does one know where to start? I read an estimate that the collected works of Steiner would take up four hundred volumes...

Habib Yeah, Steiner gave six thousand lectures and wrote dozens of books on just about everything. He created a system of architecture, of beekeeping, of medicine; he basically invented community-supported agriculture. He's just one of those forces of nature.

Subin Was there one book in particular that drew you in?

Habib The first book I read was called *The Arts and Their Mission*. I didn't really understand it at all. It's kind of like reading Shakespeare, you know? Where it's only at the end that you realize, Oh, that's what's been going on. You suddenly get it. And then your second Shakespeare play, you understand it. But it still takes hard work. With Steiner I just told myself, I'm going to read this again and again until I get it.

Subin And a lot of Steiner's ideas take the form of practical exercises.

Habib Absolutely.

Subin So are there habits in your daily life that developed out of your anthroposophy training?

Habib Yeah — I'm really happy you brought that up. I run a Rudolf Steiner group here in San Francisco and I always try to get the group's members to *enact* anthroposophy, not just talk about it. It makes reading it so much easier. Just because the text is so dense.

I meditate all the time. It's not the kind of *no-mind* tradition associated with Buddhism, where you try to discard all your thinking, empty your mind. Though, I've done that, too. I'm more into the Western esoteric tradition. While I meditate I try to *think about my thinking*. Somehow that just feels appropriate for me, and for this moment in history. I guess I've done some rituals, too, which some anthroposophists might frown on... And I use biodynamic face lotion. [*Laughs*]

Subin Wait, what kind of rituals?

Habib You know, um, well... hmmn. How to talk about this? It's weird, I've never talked about it before.

I guess... I was really into Western esotericism even before I came to anthroposophy, but it was always sort of a jumble. Like, I took a Unitarian approach — oh, this is cool, and that's cool, too — but I had no compass. So I would have really bizarre longings or impulses to just do weird things sometimes. When I was a kid, I would find myself doing automatic writing. I had no idea what was going on. And I would think, What the hell am I doing? When you're a teenager doing this sort of

thing, having these sorts of feelings, you think it's so cool. But then as you get older you start asking yourself, Why am I like this? There's pain there. Loneliness. But then I learned to orient myself. So when I get that sort of really energetic culmination of whatever feeling I have, I try to perform a ritual as a way out of it.

I don't know why I feel odd telling you about this. So for example — two years ago, I kept having one of those strange, overwhelming feelings all day. And I kept thinking about the Virgin Mary. I have no idea why. Nothing especially theological or anything — just like, how she appears to people on a piece of toast or whatever, how they see her face on a boulder. I just kept thinking about it all day. And after a while I started getting this anxious, urgent feeling, and so I thought, Okay, I'm just going to sit down and construct a ritual. To say thanks to this figure who is present in all religions, and see what happens. So I did, and afterward I found out that it was the Feast of the Assumption.

But the weirdest thing about it was that the ritual had this very palpable effect. For weeks afterward, I felt really loving toward the most despicable people. I would see people who almost always get on my nerves, but instead I had this very motherly feeling toward them. I'm more than willing to allow that it may have been a psychological trick — but even then, everyone should be engaging in rituals. [*Laughs*] Because mine made me so much kinder.

Subin What did the ritual consist of? Did it involve automatic writing, like you were saying before? Or was it purely mental?

Habib Well, no. I lit a yellow candle for Guanyin, the bodhisattva of compassion; and I made certain noises for Durga. And in theosophy there's this idea of the Ascended Master so I did something related to one of those. And I did something related to Mary, and something for Isis; something for all these variations on this figure, who are similar but then again utterly different, when you look at them in their traditions. So the parts of the ritual were designed to thank each of them.

But when you construct rituals like this, you find yourself saying all kinds of bizarre things — weird stuff would just pour out of me. And I told myself, It's okay. I'm just going to go with it. I don't understand any of it. I just know that I've had this urgency in me since I was a boy, and it's still there. The worst is when it comes on in a public place. Then I have to run home, because I know I'll go crazy if I just stay there. I'm going to feel claustrophobic in my own feelings.

Subin Did you feel like all those deities began to speak through you? Or to you?

Habib Not *through* me — that's never happened. Well, maybe once. But I'm suspicious of mediums. It was more like, it felt like there was something reciprocal happening. Like, "I hear you speaking through the feeling I am having today." It feels like some sort of echo. And whether an actual spiritual being or a Jungian archetype or my own psychology, *I hear it*. So that ritual was more like a conversation.

Subin But what is the nature of God according to anthroposophy? I've read a bit of Steiner, but I've never figured it out. I know you have Lucifer and Ahriman, the evil spirits, and Christ makes an appearance — though it seems there are two Jesuses? Jesi?

Habib [*Laughs*] I'm laughing as you say this because it's one of the few things Steiner rarely talks about is. There's an anthroposophical joke — there aren't that many, but the main one is, "How many anthroposophists does it take to change a light bulb?" And the answer is: "No one knows, Steiner left no indication."

And it's weird, because he talks about *everything*, but one of the few things he almost never talks about is God. God and sex. Which is interesting to me. In both cases, you get the sense that maybe Steiner thinks we're not really ready for this conversation yet.

And you're right about the two Jesuses. David Ovason wrote a book about it, *The Two Children*, taking an almost archaeological approach in piecing together Biblical fragments. It takes all the contradictions about Jesus in the Gospels and argues that they aren't actually contradictions, because they're talking about two different people.

Subin So one Jesus was crucified and one is... still at large?

Habib I mean, the idea is there were two children named Jesus, born to two different Marys and Josephs. One of the Jesus children had Zoroaster incarnated in him, but he gave this up to the other child who had the Buddha nature in him. The child who had the Buddha nature received the incarnation of Zarathustra and was the Jesus who was baptized and became the Christ. It's like, you couldn't just hold everything that the Christ was in one being, so you had to have this configuration of beings.

And that makes sense to me, in a way — if you read the Bible and all of its endless “X begat Y, and Y begat Z,” and so on, all this begatting that everyone bemoans all the time — if you’re these cosmic forces and you’re trying to create the perfect *being*, you’d have to do it through human incarnations. You couldn’t use material tools, like a wand or a stone. You’d have to do it through the human impulse, through procreation. God made flesh. And so all this begatting in the Bible is like a spell book. Does that make any sense at all?

Subin It reminds me of an idea that came up in that essay you wrote, “Emit Time.” That after death, the soul sees a panorama of all its previous incarnations. So it would make sense that Jesus might also have such an array of selves.

Habib I’ve never thought about that before. But yeah, it’s fascinating. What did Jesus see when he died? And he was only dead for a short time. So he got to see that panorama and come back...

But yeah — Steiner definitely didn’t have a conventional view of Christ. He’s totally radical. And you know, it’s amazing to me because there are all these new church movements that have attracted hundreds of thousands of people, around figures like Rob Bell, and their version of Christianity is based on an idea of radical freedom and respect for the individual. And that’s what Steiner was all about — that’s the whole point of the Christ impulse. That we recognize ourselves as individuals, and we take our society from there, not from a consensus as to how one should act.

If I had to boil down anthroposophy — and it’d be a struggle — I would say, Yes, it’s important to believe in the evolution of human consciousness and in spiritual beings... but, if you don’t want to believe in that, just believe in freedom and compassion. Steiner says, “Humans aren’t free; we’re on the way to becoming free.” Which I feel really nicely resolves the free will versus determinism argument. We want to be free, and act with intention, and think clearly and feel purely. But almost everything in our lives — where we grew up, our parents, the shape of our bodies, our ethnicities, our pasts — are pulling on us to not be free.

We could just live automatically. But we commit free acts every once in a while, when we think and act and feel in free ways. One of the ways you can do that is by being compassionate toward other people. The more compassionate you are, the more free you are. That’s the Christ impulse — what Christ has allowed us to do. To think about thinking and intercept our karma and rise above it.

Subin Which brings us to porn. How does all this intersect with life in the porn industry? [*Laughs*] Is making a porno an act of compassion? Of radical freedom?

Habib I think most people who aren’t in porn view working in the industry as a compulsion. For me, getting involved in porn was a mix of being free and being stuck in compulsive behavior. Which is... how most things are for most people, I’d guess. But compulsive or not, I’ve begun to understand myself much more deeply because of it. And I’ve had to confront things in myself that I normally wouldn’t. It’s like what Osho said: “I don’t teach the Third Way, I teach the Whole Way.” His point was, you have to go deep inside the crazy shit in your life. You have to inhabit it.

I used to explain my choice by saying I’d wanted to fuck up my future. Just throw a wrench in the gears, to prevent me from just floating along like I had been. But then again, I’d always wanted to do it. And I’d always wanted to create confrontation with people when they asked me what I do.

Subin How did you first get into it?

Habib Well, I’d wanted to be in porn since I was twelve years old. Since I became hypersexually awake. It was fascinating to me, the idea that this was something people can choose to do. But I’m glad I didn’t do it until recently. Knowing myself, had I been younger, I probably would have been more messed up about it than I am. I am still a little messed up about it, sometimes.

Subin Sure. But everyone feels conflicted about what they do...

Habib Exactly. I’m more messed up about it in the way, say, when you eat a Twinkie and then you think, Ew, why did I do that? It rarely gets worse than that for me.

Anyway, so I remember my last class with my students in Amherst, they asked, “So what are you going to do?” And I said, I think I’m going to move to San Francisco and be a porn star. [*Laughs*] Which they thought was awesome. And I did.

I didn’t start making porn films right away, though. But then one day I got a call to audition for a commercial — now *that* was something I never thought I would do — for

this bathhouse called Steamworks. And then the people who filmed the commercial owned a porn company, and so I did my first porn for them. Then I didn’t do any for almost a year, and then I got a bigger film and it picked right up.

Subin What was the first shoot like?

Habib Well, I can tell you that on the way to the shoot I called my friend in Massachusetts and I told her, “You know, I’m having mixed feelings about this. I know intellectually that I shouldn’t be ashamed, but I am.” And she said, “That’s because you don’t realize yet that this is really what you want to do. Think about people who are factory workers or managers at

Walmart or Wall Streeters, who do what they do because they feel they have to. And you're about to start doing exactly what you want." And she was right — I realized that I was feeling bad about not doing all the other things that people do and feel bad about, which is just really bizarre. There's so much shame built into everything.

I do still get feelings of guilt or shame every once in a while, but it's manageable. Like, Here you are, Hell-thought. Here you are, Shame. There you are, Guilt. I see that you're there, thanks for showing up, see you later. It doesn't go away, but it becomes something you can read in a calm way. And then there are days when I think, I want to make three hundred more movies this year. I just get really into it. And there are days when it seems really clear to me that my work is helping people. Healing people, in some way. And that anybody who's so opposed to it has really just lost their mind. Or is choosing to dwell in that feeling of shame. I mostly don't understand anymore why people have those feelings. Which is why it's good when the shame pops up. Inhabiting it for a little while helps me understand why other people are feeling it.

Subin So, compassion, after all.

Habib Yeah, totally — even just today, some woman was saying something to me about porn as objectification. I speak at schools sometimes, and I had just sent out some letters, and her response was, "Until you read Linda Lovelace's book, *Ordeal*, we can't have you on campus." It was so offensive. So I wrote back saying, "That's kind of like telling a gay person they have to read an anti-gay book to understand the gay experience. This is my community, I understand it. Instead of reading Linda Lovelace's book, why don't you just ask me a question?" But actually... even in that case, I wrote three angry emails back and deleted them all, until I finally got to the one that was nice, as I realized that this person just doesn't understand. So you really have to cycle through your anger to get to that point.

Subin There's something so strange about the charge of objectification, though. Isn't everything objectified, in a way? It just seems meaningless to me as an accusation.

Habib Totally. I just wrote an essay called "The Virtues of Being an Object," actually. It's in a book called *The Edge Realms of Consciousness*. First of all, it's not self-evident to claim that something is objectification and think that you're making sense to other people. But furthermore — and this does come from esoteric thinking — yes, we are all part object. Why do we have such a hard time coming to terms with that? [*Laughs*] When you say we are denying someone a part of their humanity by objectifying them, what about the part of their humanness that is an object? That is material? Why can't we pay attention to that?

Subin I sometimes feel I'd like to understand myself as an object better. To be more aware of my dimensions in space... the way I walk. To be more fully aware of my material composition, just as a way of self-knowing.

Habib Look at where your hands are right now. Did you put them there? We have all these *things*, and we have no idea what we're doing with them half the time. We forget. There's this Gurdjieff exercise where, the whole day, you just pay attention to your left hand. No matter what you're doing or saying, just be aware of where it is and what it's doing. Now *that* can drive you crazy.

Subin Like if you had slammed that hand in a door, you'd be aware of it all day.

Habib That's how we treat our bodies all the time. You don't notice that you're healthy until you have a stomachache. It's so disrespectful! Everything's going great, so be thankful for it and notice it.

Subin But apparently we have not one body but four? I wanted to ask you about that. About anthroposophy's division between the astral body and the etheric body, and how that ties in with being an object...

Habib The human body is all tangled up. It's not like the four are that distinct; it's an organizing principle. A stone is a physical, mineral body — an object body. It has its own rules and dimensionality; it exists on its own plane. And then a plant has that mineral body, but it also has an etheric body, which causes growth. And an astral body, but the interesting thing about plants is that their astral body is outside of them. Their astral body is the Sun. Whereas the animal has brought the Sun inside itself,

particularly the mammal. This is deeply related to emotional states. The human being has the astral, the etheric, and the mineral, but also an ego body, this extra thing where we can *think* about our feelings.

But the confusing thing is — I don't think Steiner talks about this so much — just like the plant has an astral body outside itself, an animal has an ego body outside itself. And a rock has an etheric body and an ego body and an astral body, which are all outside itself. The human is the only one that has all of them inside.

Now at the same time there are other bodies that we don't have... It's sort of like, a bunch of dimensions intersecting in one place: physical, etheric, ego, astral dimensions, all intersecting within the human. They are present in the other categories, too, but don't intersect. I guess "bodies" is the word that confuses people...

Subin Wait! What are the other bodies that humans don't have?

Habib I don't know how to describe them... They're not like *bodies* as we imagine them. It's the kind of body that spiritual beings have. Once you transcend or stand outside of time, when you get past fifth dimensionality, then you probably would have another body. Like how religious writers or mystics talk about angels being in a thousand places at the same moment. They've transcended space and time. And then, beyond that dimension, we start getting really kooky-crazy, but I think the list goes on. I don't know that physicists would object to the notion that there are things that exist in dimensions beyond our own that we can't perceive. Once you start adding dimensionality, that's where other spiritual beings more firmly reside. And they can see us, but we can't see them...

We can probably interact with the ones that live only one dimension above us, though. Just as animals deeply interact with humans, but they can't understand us when we speak to them beyond simple commands. And then a plant will *feel* our influence very clearly and know our presence, but it can't interact with us in the same way it would interact with an animal. And then a stone is completely different. And then there are beings that are even lower than stones, so it goes the other direction as well...

Subin Have you ever interacted with any of the higher ones?

Habib Are you going to put this in the magazine? [*Laughs*] The answer is yes, but... those are some of the most intimate moments of my life. I try not to talk about those unless I'm sitting down and having a conversation, face to face. Not because I'm trying to protect myself — mostly I just want there to be a bridge between myself and the other person when we're talking about such things.

Subin Yeah, I totally get that. There's also something about speaking about such moments that disenchant them. Unbinds the spell —

Habib It's because our language and our memory are so based on the senses. When you experience things that stand outside the senses it's hard to not weaken or distort them by using a whole system based on that. Which is why I think when people have mystical experiences it's really easy for them to dismiss them as something they just imagined — something fanciful, that didn't really happen. It's because they're so used to relying on memory as a cue for reality. But in fact your memory, which is so sense-based, can't get back to it.

Subin It's like trying to remember a dream you had the night before and put it into words.

Habib Exactly. And why it's so hard to tell people about a dream. And then when you do, it's just boring. Like, "And then it was me — but it wasn't me! And then I was in a pancake house." It's all so seamless and evident when you're having the dream, because it's connected by things you can't describe sensorially to people. The narrative might only be connected by a feeling or a gesture or something you can't even perceive.

No one wants to hear about your dream unless they were in it.

Subin There's this amazing quote from William Burroughs about exactly that. A dream is like a stuffed animal left on the floor of a bank — *no context*. [See *Bidoun* 23!]

Habib So funny. [*Laughs*]

Subin It's one of my favorites. So of course I was excited when I was reading "Emit Time" and it opens with you meeting Burroughs

and Oprah and Timothy Leary one night in a dream. Is dreaming an important part of your anthroposophical daily practice? Or self-reflection?

Habib At various points in my life I've kept journals of my dreams — but then the more you do it, the more you remember and the more you have to write! It gets exhausting. But all my life it's been important to me, especially as a child. In fact, my first memory is of a dream.

Subin Really?

Habib Yes. And the memory of waking up from it, which was really intense. I was eaten by a fox that got eaten by a wolf that got eaten by a bear. That's the first thing I remember. I woke up from it and tottered down the hall to my parents' bedroom.

My whole life I'd have these dreams, not exactly recurring, but with the same places and people. So I'd go to sleep and there would be those people in my dreams, and I would be like, Hey, it's me again! The dream world kept building itself up, to the point where I was afraid to go to sleep because I thought, What if I wake up inside the dream? And then, to this day, when I have nightmares, they're the worst. Really intense. I'll be messed up the whole next day and people will have no idea what's going on. Or if someone in my waking life did something terrible in my dream, I'll be upset with them all day. I know it was my dream, but I can't help it.

But I guess I don't understand how a dream is supposed to lend itself to self-reflection. Find meaning in them is so *dissective*; I don't think those dream-symbolism books are really useful. But beyond that, there are only a few times when I've woken up with any certainty about what a dream means. Certain lines or sayings will come to me in a dream. For instance, I was really angry for like three weeks. And it wasn't a bad anger, but I just felt angry at everything — the world, the president, the way people talk to each other. And then one night, I was like, Can I just have a dream? And I dreamed about a dog that was chained to a post, and every time I tried to feed it it would bark at me. I woke up with a saying in my head, "Anger is a starving dog." I thought, okay, what does that mean? So I brought it into my meditation. Sometimes things are very clear and sometimes — I often have dreams where I meet people and they say, "This is my phone number, make sure you call it when you wake up" and they'll keep repeating the number again and again. And then I'll call the number and it's nobody. So you don't always know...

Subin I find that a really intense dream just gives a different texture to waking life. Like how it lets you question whether everything around you is real or if it's all an illusion. And even thinking it *could* be an illusion is just such a powerful way to, for instance, stop stressing out over some silly thing. Or being angry at the world.

Habib There's an anthroposophical exercise I do before bed that helps improve the quality of dreams. It's called the Rückschau Meditation, or the Backwards Meditation. Before you go to bed, you review your day in reverse. But you don't do it as if you're pressing rewind on a VHS tape and seeing the whole thing go *zzzzzzzzp!* You think — what was the last thing I just did? I walked into the bedroom. So you jump back and think about walking into the bedroom. And how did I get there? You jump back and remember coming up the stairs. You go back and back and back until you are waking up in your bed in the morning. Or wherever you were when you woke up. You do it for like fifteen minutes. And what all this does is, it sort of empties out that vessel, so you tend not to have the sort of dreams that are just replaying things from your day. And it makes it possible for you to think back on your day, your patterns. Sometimes, maybe notice something miraculous that you hadn't seen before. Steiner said that "if you reflect on it, you will see that each day something remarkable has happened."

Subin I was reading in *Everyday Anthroposophy* a lecture Steiner gave on karma where he says that the people you meet in your thirties were your parents in a previous life. And the people you meet at the end of your life are going to figure in the beginning of your next. Is that a terrifying thought for you?

Habib [*Laughs*] It's so weird — I met this guy when I was twenty-nine who became my boyfriend for a short period of time. And at the end of it he beat me up and broke my rib and I had internal bleeding, all kinds of crazy shit. It was a super-intense relationship; I was so in love with him, and he had never hit me before. It was just crazy. I never spoke to him again. But you know, I also don't really speak to my dad at all. So I thought, Is

there some sort of karmic thing happening here?

But really I just have no clue. Steiner will say things like that, but then you have *no* way of verifying it. You just have to let it enter into your thinking as something interesting, and maybe it will reveal itself later as true. Something might happen in your life, and you'll have this guidepost you planted a long time ago. That's how I tend to think about ideas like that.

Subin I just love the language he uses in making the claim. *It has been shown that...* or *It has been demonstrated that...* How does he know this?!

Habib Well, but then there are some things you can investigate and verify. There's one exercise called "Exercise for Karmic Insight" that you can do, and it will reveal to you something about a past life. Though it doesn't work for everybody. That's the thing about spirituality that people don't get — we're individuals. If I lay down my exact spiritual path for you, or if Steiner does it, some exercises might have an intense effect on you and others won't. It frustrates people because it confounds the scientific notion of repeatability.

Subin What was revealed to you when you did it?

Habib You'll just have to look into it yourself and see what happens. [*Laughs*] And then we'll talk about it...

Subin [*Laughs*] Fine.

Habib But there's another simple exercise I'd recommend. Think of all the things you hate in life. Now try to picture a person who would *long* for those things. That's how you'll start to get an idea of who you might have been in a previous life. It can be a really humbling experience.

Subin That is a terrifying thought! So, a last question — in thinking about your overall project, what is it that connects sex and spirituality? Is it some kind of transcendent, orgasmic sense?

Habib My biggest take on it, again, is about individuality. We pretend that sex is some sort of unified animal instinct and that everyone shares it. That's true at some level, obviously, but our desires are our own. And they are little pathways into our consciousness. Like, why should *some* people be attracted to feet, or only to fat guys. Why are some people able to do sex scenes in porn with people of the same sex but in their lives have encounters with people of the opposite sex. Or why at certain moments and not others. These questions are so deeply individual, and there's no answer that a unified theory can present. Maybe it's residue from that one time I sat in Aleister Crowley's chair, but — *we're all universes unto ourselves.*

I think at this point in history, despite the internet, we're more disconnected than ever. Each one of us is this vortex of all these thoughts and desires and imaginations, and all of our worlds are totally different. How do we create a worldview that accounts for that? That's the task of spirituality. And the best way I can think to examine that task is through sex.