

The Cucumber Quotient

Whereby It Is Possible To Determine To What Extent You Have Become A Vegetable Through Work, Study, Politics And Sacrifice

Arnold Washover

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A few years ago on my last job I kept waking up in the morning with big bubbles in my head, eat a bowl of corn chips and go to work, checking out the storm sewers for leaks and patching them with quick-dry when I found one. I was very good and could hold my breath under sludge for seven minutes with my eyes open, but I had these bubbles in my head and that bothered me.

I talked it over with the steward and he said everybody had the bubbles and I should go back to work. I went to the Militant Labor Forum and there was this couple there who said the bubbles would disappear when we all got together to run our own lives collectively and manage our work in councils. They were also real impressed that I was a sewer checker and could hold my breath under sludge for seven minutes.

They said it would be great if I came to work with them and invited me to live in their commune. It was great; I could feel the bubble begin to shrink.

At the commune, life was really great for a while. We had long conversations about working in the sewers and I'd tell 'em stories about storm drains and they'd tell me how horrible it was to work in the sewers with someone yelling at you all the time. I told them no one ever yelled at me, I just held my breath, looked for leaks and got my paycheck.

I told them what was horrible was the shit and the bubbles but none of them would believe me. One guy even showed me a leaflet he'd written that proved that the shit was organic and necessary and that the bubbles would disappear with the bosses and shit would be beautiful with the councils.

We had a long talk and he even showed me a book in French that proved that shit can be beautiful without bosses and that people in France actually fought battles for shit without bosses. None of it made too much sense but I could feel my bubble getting bigger so we quit talking, got stoned, and I decided to think about it for a while, maybe I was just gimpy and shit, was beautiful; but every time I started to think about it the bubble got bigger so I quit and just hung out.

Then one morning a friend of theirs came by to say that the sewer in their house was backed up and they wanted to know when I could get by to clean it out. I laughed and said I was through with shit forever and that all he had to do was get a shovel, hold his breath and heave.

But he said he wasn't in very good shape and he had no experience with shit and how I knew about stuff like that and was good at it and besides he had to prepare for his study group on workers councils. But I told him no. I was through with shit. Then everybody there got real mad at me and started telling me it was very un-hip not to clean this guy's sewer because we all had our contributions to make to the community and mine was shoveling shit.

The bubble in my head was getting so big that I was in severe pain and when I refused again everyone got real quiet and looked real sad. One of the women looked at me and said she was really shocked that I could refuse to shovel shit for my brother. Everyone nodded and finally the first guy says "Well, listen, if you won't do it for free, how 'bout I give you a few bucks and a six-pack."

The bubble in my head blew up and my third eye opened and my glasses fogged up (they always fog up when I get excited) and all I could see were cucumbers...no acid and all these cucumbers. I split the house and still I could see all these cucumbers occasionally a real person, but mostly cucumbers. Then I noticed that if I watched closely, some cucumbers would change back into people and some people would change into cucumbers.

I rushed back to the house and watched for a long time; cucumbers came and cucumbers went; sometimes people would come, be a cucumber for a while and then go back to being a person. I thought all this was very strange and I had to know why it happened. I learned very quickly that you can't just walk up to someone and say, why are you a vegetable, much less why are you a cucumber.

So, I would just go and rap with them; that was easy, most cucumbers like to talk and talk and talk. Sometimes I would catch them in transition and they would be grouchy, irritable and depressed. Sometimes I would feel my bubble coming back, and I'd go find a real person and do something with them until it went away. After a few weeks of work I developed what I am proud to call the

Cucumber Quotient

The cucumber quotient is an easily derived number by which you can tell just how much of a vegetable you or anyone else is: The cucumber quotient is not necessarily static; it can become larger or smaller and can be of such size that the person who bears it seems for all the world to be a terminal vegetable. I recommend putting the big ones in a salad and the little ones in jars. Anyway, what is the Cucumber Quotient.

The Quotient itself is based on the ratio of hours available to live to hours spent vegetating. The base figure for the quotient is 16 (24 hours a day less 8 hours for sleep leaves 16)—that figure goes on the bottom of the ratio (underneath the line like this:

/16

then on top you put the number of hours you vegetate. You vegetate every time you do something for someone else that you don't want to do. A simple one: you have a job that lasts 8 hours, it takes 1 hour to go back and forth, that makes 9 hours, but you get 1 hour for lunch, so that brings you back to 8. Assuming for now that you really live all the rest of the day, your Cucumber Quotient would look like this

8/16

which quickly becomes

1/2

Just going to work makes you half a cucumber. But alas, and alack, it doesn't stop there. No! There is also the adjuster to be applied to the base quotient. The adjuster is a figure which indicates to what extent you cause other people to vegetate. Suppose that you have a job that lasts 8 hours with 1 hour travel and one hour lunch and you live all the rest of the day

but...

During your 8 hour job you supervise one other person, then your adjuster is 2 because you are vegetating and also making someone else do it. But can you just throw that figure in with the rest of the vegetation. Nay! A thousand times nay! For when you fuck with someone else's life, you must multiply the vegetating destruction you wreak and your Quotient now becomes

2 x 8/16 or 16/16 or 1

You are now the complete vegetable, but it doesn't stop there, oh, no. Suppose in addition to the job during which you supervise one other person, you run a marxist study group, or an anarchist study group, or a consciousness-raising session for TEN people for 2 hours, then your Cucumber Quotient becomes

10 x 2/16 + 2 x 8/16 or 22/16 +16/16 or 2-3/8

Needless to say there is no end to size of vegetable you can become. I have only covered the simpler aspects of the Cucumber Quotient in this article. It is a device of great subtlety and to really determine the kind of vegetable you are takes a great deal of interest and effort. And if you have the interest and the effort, why be a vegetable?

After telling one graduate student how big a vegetable she really was, she was so fascinated by vegetation that she is now doing her dissertation on human vegetation. For that I got an adjuster of 2 and hers stabilized in the

ozone at five figures (one typist, one typesetter, one cameraperson, one printer, one folder, one binder and several hundred webegone readers times all those ruined days).

If you would like to learn more about the Cucumber Quotient, write to Arnold Washover in care of this paper. Then give yourself an adjuster of 10 for the time it took to write the letter. You will not receive a reply.

Arnold Washover, LSD, DDT, BO is not sure where he was born or why and blocked out everything prior to receiving his LSD at the Lower East Side in New York in 1962. He got his DDT in a garden apartment in Daly City, Ca. in 1965 and his BO in the sewers of Chicago in 1970. It was in that year that Mr. Washover discovered the principle that was to change his life and he has not worked since; there is just too much else to do.

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