

Yin-Ju Chen, James T. Hong  
**The Fruitarian  
Dilemma: A  
Dialogue about  
Kissing Ass,  
Corruption, and  
Compromise**

e-flux journal #65 SUPERCOMMUNITY — may–august 2015 Yin-Ju Chen, James T. Hong  
The Fruitarian Dilemma: A Dialogue about Kissing Ass, Corruption, and Compromise

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*This dialogue begins in anger, but ends abruptly in surrender. It is about mundane and trivial issues when compared to the grand scheme of things. It is about the typical slights that happen every day within a local socio-geographical structure. It is about some of the things we only talk about at friendly dinner parties or when drunk in bars. It is based on the solid evidence of rumors, mixed metaphors, gossip, knowing looks, insults, movies, astrology, intoxicants, and guilty confessions. It is also an exercise in restraint.*

**The Resentful Artist:** It makes me so furious when I hear of their shortcuts to money, and then they even brag about it! My blood boils as I write a grant proposal for \$3,000 a year, and they go through some back door and get \$300,000 while sipping lattes with the idiots from the Ministry of Culture. They are brownnosers brownnosing, so they succeed. That is the primary reason – not because of the strength of whatever poor ideas they might have. I’ve become so angry I now believe that human nature is essentially immoral, greedy, and unjust. I hope someday to have my revenge, watch them fail, and then step over them while I joyfully piss on their faces.

**The Embattled Narcissist:** Maybe their proposals were good, or at the very least better than the others. Did you actually read them? I apply for a lot of grants, and I get some. I’ve also won awards, some of which were grand prizes, which helps. I believe that I have acted ethically and morally, despite having a few misgivings or the occasional corrupted thought. And, don’t forget, I was alone. I did not have the advantage of having a partner to help me out.

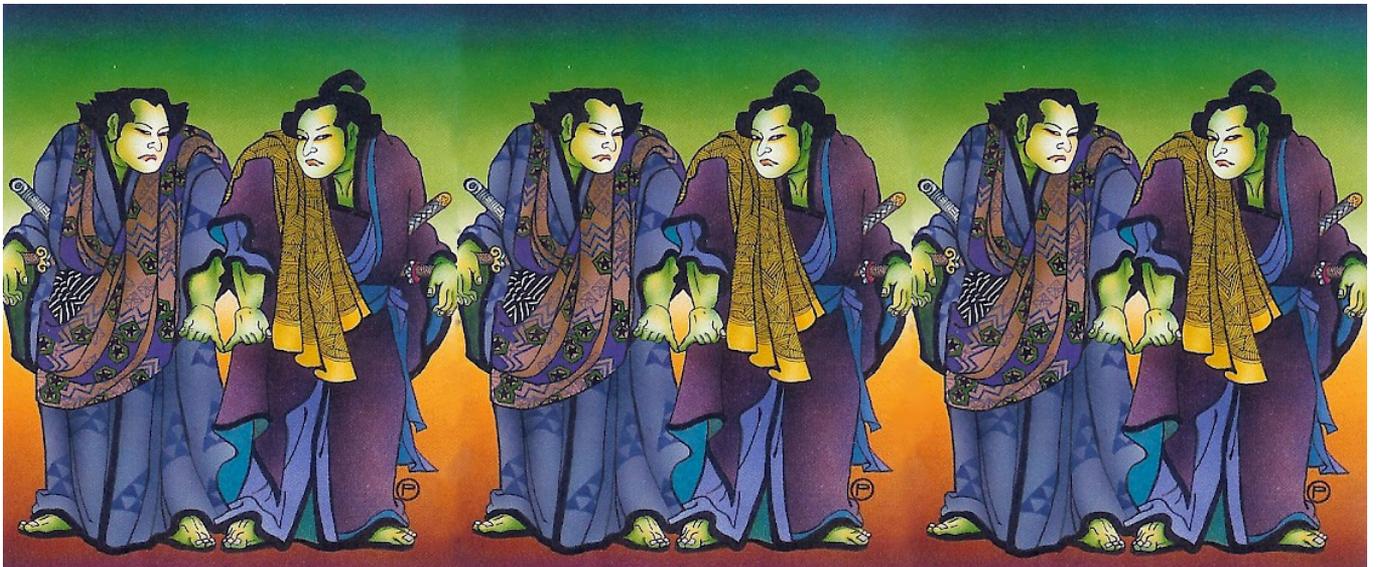
**The Compromised Drunk:** Nietzsche wrote quite a bit about corruption. A fan site even dubs one of his sentences a “quotable quote”:

“The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike than those who think differently.”<sup>1</sup>

I have long been guilty of this type of corruption. But for corruption to exist, there must be some kind of uncorrupt state, some kind of moral purity. What one *should* be like.

**The New Age Guru:** How about what one *will* be like? Astrologically, Hades, the god of the underworld, also known as “Pluto,” represents hidden treasure, secrets, manipulation, revenge, obsessive desire for power and control, fraud, destruction, sex, death, taboo, transformation, and rebuilding. Hades manipulates any situation to his own advantage, regardless of the cost to others – a corruption of power at its mythologically purest.

Despite representing beauty, luxury,



"Compromise" is symbolized in this *Osho Zen Tarot: The Transcendental Game Of Zen* illustration by the touching pinkies of the Japanese characters.

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egocentrism, and jealously, Aphrodite, aka “Venus,” signifies love and money. A combination of Aphrodite and Hades would be the decisive metaphysical arrangement of obsession, power, and wealth. This coupling would attract like-minded and unpleasant people cut from the same greediness, jealously, mercilessness, and chaos. Those attracted to or “incarnated” by Hades and Aphrodite will crave ever more fortune and control.

**The Compromised Drunk:** Quoting Christ: “Let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone.”<sup>2</sup>

**The Resentful Artist:** What do the political scandals matter to me when I know that politicians are all morally rotten? I don’t need to be able to recite the top ten most corrupt countries in the world. I don’t see much hope in governmental politics when people are already so degraded on such a smaller scale.

**The Embattled Narcissist:** We are also struggling against an internationalist masculine regime. It is more difficult to be respected as a woman, and I know that behind my back, people called me a “slave” or a “turd.” I needed to be in a different country, a place where I could earn respect.

**The Resentful Artist:** You are a brownnosing turd. Actually, “brownnosing” is too euphemistic. I have seen how you always size people up – analyzing them as potential “opportunities” – and then ignore the “powerless.” Once you sniffed out the right tastemakers or marks, you

became more than a best friend, if necessary. Does “sucking up” really earn respect?

**The Compromised Drunk:** Meaningful scent molecules and pheromones can be detected by the “vomeronasal organ,” a special sense organ that can smell social power, health, diet, state of mind, etc. Dogs utilize this organ when sniffing asses.

**The Resentful Artist:** As whiners and gossipmongers, we are the bloody losers. Nietzsche was a loser with a trust fund. I want to enjoy the fruits of my labor while I am still sane. According to the soap operas, if I want retribution, I must become corrupted.

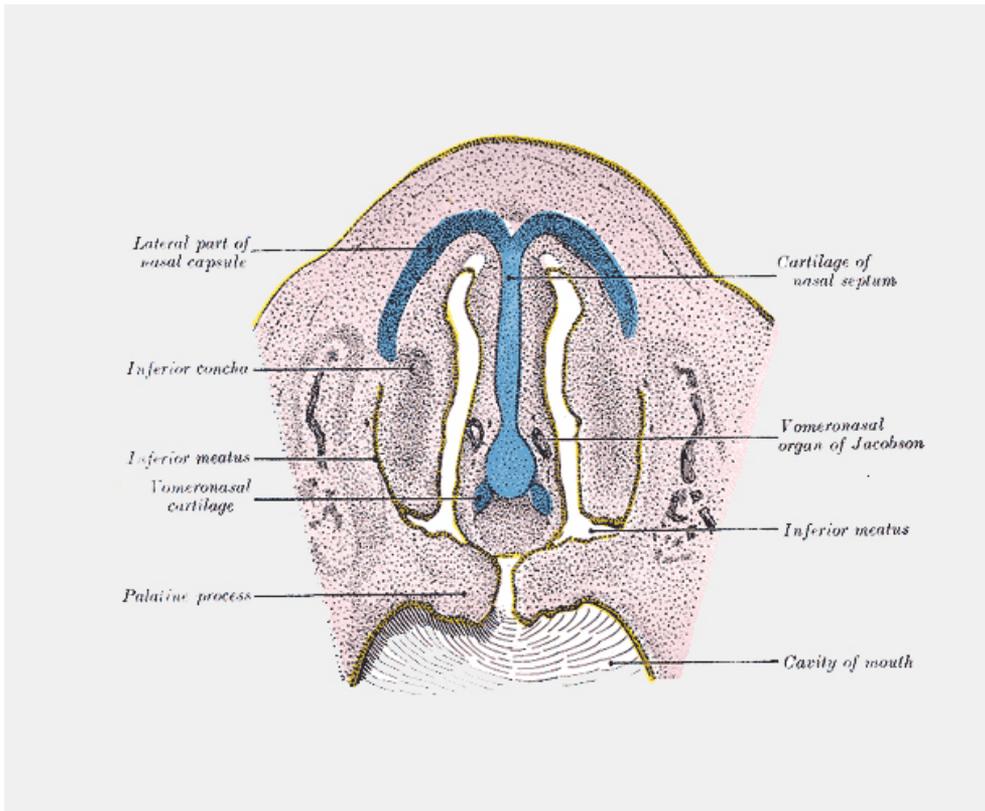
**The Compromised Drunk:** I have absolutely no ability (e.g., power or money) to be politically corrupted. But it is easy for me to be a hypocrite. I can also easily maneuver on the moral high ground (slave morality).

**The New Age Guru:** This morning I drew an *Osho Zen* tarot card and found myself squinting at two ancient and insincere-looking Japanese attendants. Looking closely, I saw that instead of shaking hands, their little fingers were touching each other, as if they had settled upon something. Because of their expressions, I assumed that whatever they had agreed upon must have been secret or unjust. Their hidden swords indicated that they did not trust each other.

**The Compromised Drunk:** Ancient Chinese custom formally introduced the idea of the kowtow – prostration and the ritualized placing



A corrupted and an uncorrupted orange lay side by side. Photo: Bios



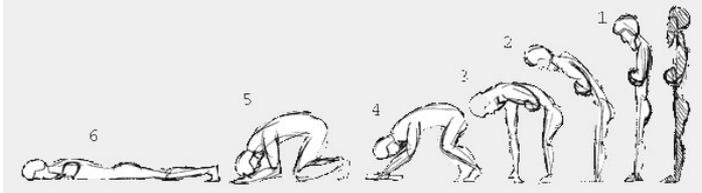
Henry Vandyke Carter and Henry Grey's 1918 drawing of a "special sense organ" at the end of the mouth's cavity.



Package of Swedish armed forces lip balm as photographed in 2007. Photo: Riggwelter.

of one's head in contact with the ground – utterly humiliating as a thought to us now. But the action itself has become euphemized, corrupted into something more palatable, namely “kissing ass.” The archaic notion of putting your head on the ground has been replaced by the far more time-consuming scheme of actually showing care and thus caring.<sup>3</sup>

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Kowtow – prostration and the ritualized placing of one's head in contact with the ground – is one of various kinds of bows in Eastern Orthodoxy portrayed here.

**The Embattled Narcissist:** You're just complaining about your misanthropy and lack of social skills. I have a lot of selfless friends, because I am willing to take care of them.

**The Resentful Artist:** I just finished the 1999 Alexander Payne movie *Election*, which tells the story of the unbearable Tracy Flick, played by Reese Witherspoon. Tracy is a self-absorbed, annoying attention whore who fucks one of her high school teachers, frames her competitors, and manipulates everyone around her. She is a prototype rooted in social truth. Does she remind you of anyone?

**The Compromised Drunk:** I am ashamed. I have half-assedly tried ass-kissing. But I want to do it with gusto, because I have seen the returns. How do I let people know that I am smart and talented? Do I always need to be noticed and heard? Kissing ass seems to be an advanced but learnable social skill. Because of the lowly status of my parents, nepotism won't help me out. But favoritism looks favorable. Or perhaps I can become a toady, or even better, a crony.

**The Embattled Narcissist:** You simply don't understand the terrible things I had to go through in childhood and the profound schisms in my family. I was never totally accepted by any society because of what I am. Being multicultural and multiethnic forever places me outside the mainstream. It is a total hybridity; there is never a kind of simple acceptance.

**The Compromised Drunk:** Some military units utilize high-impact kneepads and industrial strength lip balm.

**The New Age Guru:** The word “COMPROMISE” was printed on the card I drew. I knew this word very well. Deva Padma explains the card's meaning:

“The two figures on this card remind us of the sleazy and conspiratorial situations we

can get into when we compromise our own truth. It is one thing to meet another halfway, to understand a point of view different from our own and work towards a harmony of the opposing forces. It is quite another to “cave in” and betray our own truth. If we look deeply into it, we usually find that we are trying to gain something – whether it is power or the approval of others. If you are tempted, beware: the rewards of this kind of compromise always leave a bitter taste in the mouth.”<sup>4</sup>

**The Compromised Drunk:** Misquoting Sharon Stone: “You can only suck your way to the middle.”

**The Embattled Narcissist:** I know for a fact that love exists!

**The New Age Guru:** Corruption always involves victims, some of them willing. As an underworld abductee, Persephone was the perfect victim. She compromised herself, her mother Demeter, and humanity by eating the underworld pomegranate. All it took was one piece of fruit from the tree. Does this not say something about your social lives?



Photo: Klaus Beyer

**The Resentful Artist:** According to Tracy Flick, “you can't interfere with destiny.”<sup>5</sup> This is the lesson of astrology and Genesis. Even Zeus is powerless to bring Persephone back from the underworld. My intention is to become a monster.

**The Embattled Narcissist:** I have worked my ass off for years! I was never lazy or corrupt. You

will never understand just how exhausting it was for me. I was also involved in an accident that took years of recovery. I have succeeded despite my “destiny.” How have I compromised anything?

**The Compromised Drunk:** As Confucius said, “The fruits of your labor are sweeter to the flattered than to the worms.”

**The Resentful Artist:** I remember a fable about a group of young people who lived in the sewer, where the brown water was up to their necks. At first, it was understandably uncomfortable and disgusting, but they had no choice but to tolerate it. Eventually, they learned to love it and would even defend their way of life to the others above ground. I’m testing the waters.

**The New Age Guru:** The victim can also become the greatest monster. Corruption is not something you just write or talk about; it is about *doing*.

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Yin-Ju Chen is an artist based in Taiwan. Her primary medium is video, but her works also include photos, installations and drawings.

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1  
Friedrich Nietzsche.  
See <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/18645-the-surest-way-to-corrupt-a-youth-is-to-instruct>

2  
John 8:7 (New International Version)

3  
See "Licking Curators Ass," by Ondrej Brody and Kristofer Paetau, 2005 <http://www.paetau.com/downloads/LickingCuratorsAss/LickingCuratorsAss.html>

4  
Osho and Deva Padma, *Osho Zen Tarot: The Transcendental Game Of Zen* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 149.

5  
*Election*, dir. Alexander Payne (Los Angeles: MTV Films, 1999).

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