

Transmogrifiers Only Need Apply

Written by Alex Baer

Friday, 30 November 2012 18:40

Anyone halfway intelligent and alert can pay attention to current events, put the pieces together for themselves, thereby triggering hundreds of emotional responses ranging from idle, bemused concerned to stark terror and utter fear.

It may be that anyone who is completely, fully intelligent never dwells in the vast middle, but operates only at either end of the spectrum -- either completely tuned out and disinterested, or wealthy as all-get out, and out buying their own reality, somewhere pleasant.

The available scenarios here seem pretty unsatisfactory -- well, to be honest, except for the one where you're a billionaire, out buying some white sugar-sanded islands in a warmed, turquoise-y Pacific area, dropping out for a while to simply *enjoy* life, for a change. *Umbrella drinks and all.*

(Yes: The problem with delicious daydreams is doubling back, detouring down to the doldrums. *Hmmm.*

OK -- Let's start again, shall we?)

Workers are always being told by bosses, trying to inspire employees while going cheap on the money and perks -- in order to look good for their own prize-package reviews -- the same dreary, dog-eared thing, over and over: *We need to work smarter, not harder, people -- we need to think outside the box.*

To which I can only say: *Box, schmox.* What we could all really do with is a round of raises, not CEOs pulling down 690 times the median salary. Plus, as an afterthought, we could do with a couple new inventions -- three at least, with the first two being problem-specific, and the third more of an all-purpose tool.

Now, we really *are* out of the box. (Perhaps with no chance the Transmogrifier box will ever let us back in.)

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First, given that global climate change will affect every other thing humans do, and without exception, we should give this one top priority and, as most scientists say, starting 40 or 50 years ago would have been good, you know.

We'll need a national Manhattan-Project-style crash dive into solutions. As an interim name, I'd suggest the Transmogrification Emergency Adaptive Services Bureau, or TEAS-B. For those who easily get their *tangs* all *tongue-eled-up*, maybe just call them the Transmogrifiers, or T-Mogs, maybe.

The name is in honor of a device made in Bill Watterson's legendary and genius comic strip, Calvin and Hobbes, in which 6-year-old Calvin makes a Transmogrifier out of a big, empty cardboard box.

One could then create whatever one wanted, by setting the cardboard pointer to the hand-written spot on the dial to whatever the user wanted to be turned into. The initial dial had settings for bug or babboon or dinosaur, or whatever. One hopped in as a 6-year-old boy, and hopped back out (in one's own mind) as whatever had been selected.

(BTW: This was the first known case where thinking outside the box was anywhere near successful or marginally rewarding, while being happily self-delusional as well.)

The first TEAS-B assignment for T-Mogs would be working on two inventions that would do the most good: One is a machine that can convert all the CO₂ we're pumping into our air. This will help slow the heating trend while we wean ourselves off the oil and gas nozzle.

The conversion machine could even do something helpful with the greenhouse gas -- transforming it into a commodity more precious than gold: fresh drinking water, for example. Or, soil enhancers. *Something helpful, at least -- swim fins, maybe.*

In case this main effort is not fully successful, or not in time to keep the world's coastal cities from becoming de facto aquariums, the second machine would help humans speed up their evolutionary adaptations -- specifically, the ability to breathe water through gills.

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Barring that, helping people learn to successfully breathe CO₂ in some other way could be good, too, if gills are seen as impractical, unworkable, or unfashionable or tacky.

Of course, we could bypass these two inventions if we'd just take the plunge, stop subsidizing and using fossil fuels, and instead throw the whole bundle we'd save into renewable energy systems and designs -- wind, water, wave, geothermal, you name it.

As we'll never do anything that sensible and reasonable for ourselves, the planet, or the species, the next best thing is to admit defeat, straight out of the starting gate, and start working on all this gear to help us function in the radically changed world in which we will very soon find ourselves.

The third invention is much more general in nature, able to operate in any situation or circumstance, changing a really unhelpful, harmful, or worthless thing into something quite helpful, useful, and of real value: *The Transmogrifier 3000* -- for *real*.

All portable, back-packable, point-and-click, WYSIWYG technology -- think Ghostbusters here, initially -- with much larger, rolling-stock, air-sea transportable units for the bigger jobs ahead.

We could test one out right away, and *Bruzzzzz-Zap!* create ourselves a Secretary of State candidate who would not be immediately caught up in a murderous conflict-of-interest situation, approving a pipeline too dangerous to operate, then profiting handsomely from that approval.

We already have way too many people in government and corporations approving their own paychecks, raises, and perks. I mean: *How do you think we got this way in the first place?*

Next, we could go on to House Speaker John Boehner's office, and convert him from an immovable, implacable obstructionist caught up in far too many Merlot moments and crying jags to be of much help to anyone. One little *Bruzzzzz-Zap!* and the nation's on the mend, on the way to moving forward again.

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Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell could be next for a helpful touch-up. So helpful, he'd no longer need those long whispered-about turtle semen injections to help toughen up his thin skin during legislative battles. One little *Bruzzzzz-Zap!* and he'd no longer keep mumbling *Only priority -- one term prez'dent* and get back to work.

While we're in the neighborhood, we'd have to visit Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and get him off his Caspar Milquetoast diet and, with a quick *Bruzzzzz-Zap!* help find him some he-man hormone shots or spinal therapy and repair.

As with any new technology, there will surely be more accidents and unintended consequences as we've already experienced during test trials and lab visits by VIPs. Clint Eastwood, for example, during a visit, caught a test-fired beam ricochet that emptied his mind and had him channeling Barry Goldwater handing out promotional memberships for the John Birch Society, and talking to furniture, for a while.

Actually, we probably shouldn't be speaking of such things, or Arizona Governor Jan Brewer may go ahead with that lawsuit, after she caught a deflected backblast at a test range in the state some time ago. It left her with no ability to think or reason, only the potential to point her fingers and vigorously shake them in people's faces.

Then, as soon as that one got out, the *Wasilla Quitta*, Sarah Palin, would want to cover up her own mishaps at the labs, along with those that have included Sen. John McCain, Rep. Darrell Issa, Rep. Eric Cantor -- in fact, all GOP governors and members of Congress.

In any event, the T-Mogs will keep trying to improve the device, and keep trying to help our wayward world and its politicians find useful solutions.

In the meantime, just a friendly word to the wise: If you smell bacon and ozone, then see a bright, bluish-purple burst of light, and hear a sizzling *Bruzzzzz-Zap!* crackle in the air -- *duck*.

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On background:

Calvin & Hobbes: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvin_and_Hobbes

Hail, Transmogrifier: <http://calvinandhobbes.wikia.com/wiki/Transmogrifier>

C & H sampler (plenty more on the web, too): <http://www.progressiveboink.com/2012/4/21/2912173/calvinhobbes>

WYSIWYG: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WYSIWYG>

Caspar who? http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caspar_Milquetoast

Barry who? http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barry_Goldwater

John what? http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Birch_Society

Mandatory Reading Room:

Two devastating pieces by Michael Klare (just scroll down to find them) on climate change: <http://www.tomdispatch.com/>

Secretary of State COI alert: <http://www.onearth.org/article/susan-rice-obama-secretary-state-tar-sands-finance>

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Speaker Boehner, of the Grand Obstructionist Party, re: fiscal negotiations: <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2012/11/30/boehner-fiscal-talks-at-stalemate/>

and: http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/obama-set-to-make-his-case-to-the-public-for-fiscal-cliff-plan/2012/11/30/f5bf68d0-3b06-11e2-b01f-5f55b193f58f_story.html

Gov. Brewer on the loose: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/nov/29/immigrants-dream-act-lawsuit-arizona-denied>