

A Manifesto In A-Minor

Kris King – May 21st 2011

<http://www.rantinaminor.co.uk/2011/05/a-manifesto-in-a-minor/>

About two weeks ago I found myself on the receiving end of a minor ticking off from my mum over having used the c-word in a Facebook status update. Ignoring the obvious fact that I'm 37 years old and, if I want to swear, then I bollocking well arsing will, I think I acquitted myself fairly well. I entirely agreed that it is a deeply offensive word to many people (to some, the most offensive) but, ultimately, it is still just a *word* and, as such, its ability to cause harm or offence rests entirely with how, and by whom, it is used ... rather like the bar of soap my mum threatened to wash my mouth out with – it's just a tool, and it can be used for good or evil.

I made the point that, while my updates on Twitter and Facebook may imply otherwise, I was fully aware that swearing is subject to the law of diminishing returns; the more you use it, the less impact and value it has. I've always tried to use language to underscore or support a point, or to create very sharp emphasis; it's also useful for provoking a particular emotional response (whether it's to make someone laugh or to shock them). Regardless of the reasons, I did concede that the immediacy of Facebook and Twitter, and the various limits they impose on message size, can severely blunt the wit, and I had noticeably fallen victim to this; simply calling someone a wanker was often the only option left when one is prevented from writing a long, clever exploration as to exactly why they are one.

Some time later, I was in the office kitchen talking about this to Aerynne, our Kylie-obsessed support diva and card-carrying member of the Wonder Woman fan club. She suggested that I could address this problem by writing a "Statement of Kris-ness" consisting of some of my core ranty principles condensed to handy, bite-sized chunks – a choice collection of statements which best represent me and my opinions, presumably to act as some kind of primer (or warning, if truth be told) for those who have not yet had the privilege of getting to know me. While I liked the idea, I wasn't entirely keen on the name – it sounds a bit too much like "christmas" and, to be fair, I'm not exactly the most festive or jolly of people.

As I started writing it quickly became obvious what the name of this should really be as, in a somewhat small and trivial way, I was creating a manifesto; a statement outlining the fundamental guiding principles of "The Rant Party". We will probably never be elected – not least because ranting doesn't go over too well in civilised political debate (that and we're a party of one) – but, good people [cue inspiring music], I say to you now that that should *never* stop us from trying to bring change, and with it hope, to the disillusioned, the disenfranchised, and all of the other people who could be described using words beginning with "dis".

So, it is with great pride, and an entirely misplaced sense of self-importance, I present to you, "A Manifesto In A-Minor" (for megaphone and soapbox).

There is almost certainly no god and no supernatural

For thousands of years, people have tried, and failed, to demonstrate the existence of god, or any other supernatural entity or phenomenon. Not one single piece of evidence has ever been found that conclusively proves or even, to be fair, heavily supports, any such claims, and almost every argument ever made for these phenomena has been ruthlessly picked apart and left to die after utterly failing to stand up to any kind of proper scrutiny.

Just because it is unexplained, it does not mean it is unexplainable

The religious, and proponents of other types of supernatural woo-woo, frequently seize upon admissions by science that it doesn't know the answer to something as an opportunity to either promote their pet hypotheses (despite invariably being less plausible and less supported by evidence), or to declare by fiat that it is forever beyond our ability to understand. You know, like eclipses were a couple of thousand years ago? There is nothing that cannot, eventually, be explained to a reasonable degree through the application of the scientific method and the accumulation of evidence.

Disbelief is the default position

If you think that one should believe a claim until it is proven false, I invite you to hold unquestioning faith in the cosmic purple hippo that lives in my flat. He can't be seen, heard, touched, or in any way observed or demonstrated to actually exist, but your own logic compels you to believe in the hippo until someone can comprehensively refute my claim. Seriously, don't be silly; believing until it is proven unjustified is insane.

Belief in something for which there is no evidence is NOT a virtue

How is it that when a man believes in god, miracles, resurrection, and an eternal afterlife, it is seen as a virtue, yet, when a man believes that space bats have planted mind-controlling brain worms in his skull it is seen as a mental illness? What's the difference? Both beliefs are equally without foundation, and the only word that should really be used to describe either man is not virtuous, but *credulous*.

It's up to you to prove your claim to me – it's not my job to disprove it to you

The burden of proof lies with the one making the claim, so I don't want to hear any of this "prove god doesn't exist" shit. You're the one claiming that a god exists – I'm simply telling you that, if you want us to believe you, or even take you seriously, it's up to you to convince us. It is not a case that the accused will go to jail unless his defence proves his innocence; it is that he will go free unless a prosecutor can prove his guilt because the claim, and the burden of proof, rests with them.

Evidence: bring some with your claim, or fuck off

Unless you're prepared to back it up with actual, testable, repeatable, falsifiable evidence, you have no right whatsoever to expect me to believe anything you tell me. Even if I've known you forever and trust you implicitly, the best you can reasonably expect is that I am *more likely* to believe you based on my experience of what I know about you, and how reliable I consider you to be. Oh, and personal testimony or anecdotes are NOT evidence, because they're subjective, unreliable, and heavily prone to bias.

Except when used in a scientific context, those who talk about "energy" can be ignored, and their opinions on almost everything dismissed

Unless you understand the meaning and correct usage of scientific words and phrases then you need to stop using them, especially as part of dishonest attempts to legitimise your favourite brand of nonsense by making it sound scientific. "Positive energy", "quantum healing"? What the fuck are you talking about? Oh, and you can stop using them as synonyms for whatever thing you believe in as well. Saying that "god is energy" is as vapid as it is wrong.

People who rail against science should be forced to live like those who existed before the development of the scientific method

No one is saying that science is perfect, or that it always gets it right, but you must remember that, when it does fail, it'll almost always be the scientist, not the science, that's at fault. The method itself is pretty sound and, over the last 900 years, has proven to be the most reliable way of determining fact from fiction that we've ever devised. Without it, your estimated life-span would be a THIRD of what it is now, so remember that the next time you slag off science for contradicting your beliefs.

What consenting adults do in private is none of your fucking business

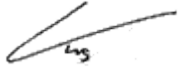
Yeah, here's how the world works, okay? We are all perfectly within our rights to do *whatever the fuck we want*. As long as our actions do not cause harm to, or impinge upon the personal freedoms of, another human being, you don't have **any** right to prevent us from smoking, drinking, reading, snorting, swallowing, watching, injecting, fucking, writing whatever, whenever, wherever, with whoever. So your all-loving hypocrite god hates gays? So what? We don't care because no-one is being harmed, and we don't recognise his, or your, authority.

You have ONE religious right; to believe freely, without fear of discrimination

You don't have the right to tell us how to lead our lives, who we can marry, what someone can and can't do with their body, what we can read, write, say, or even think. You don't have the right to bully others and then hide behind your faith pleading discrimination when someone calls you on your bullshit. You don't get to fleece the credulous, abuse the vulnerable, or give false hope to the desperate and then claim some special "get out of jail" privilege when we start demanding answers. You don't have the right to threaten us with eternal torture for not being part of your club. You don't have the right to impede and debase the scientific enterprise because it's creating fewer and fewer places for your invisible man to hide in.

Well, that was the first performance of "A Manifesto In A-Minor" ... I hope it was okay, although I

expect it will be updated, revised, and re-arranged many times before we finally end up with a definitive symphony of reason. Either that, or it'll just get louder until people have no choice but to listen ...

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive letter 'A' followed by a small, illegible mark.