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Essay #3

*Zombies-Ahoy! 1000 Zombies in every Paper!**

**Offer void on Prime Material Plane and Arizona.*

You know they are out there, you can hear them. You watch in horror, as they slowly meander over to one of the windows, hastily barricaded with various wooden things in a futile attempt to keep them away. You try to count how many there are out there, you see ten, twenty, thirty, there seems to be no end to them! You hear them scraping and bashing away at the little amount of defenses you have. You quickly reach for your holstered Colt .45, for it is the only thing that may save you from the ravenous hordes of zombies outside, whose only goal is to make you their dinner.

That is what it would be like to be in the world of George Romero. He created a series of films about the dead rising from the grave and attacking the living, the first of which is called "Night of the Living Dead". He based his films off of an idea in Voodoo witchcraft, where witchdoctors used spells and medicines to create a will-less creature from a human being's corpse (supposedly).

These things that rise from the dead are called Zombies. What is a zombie? In case you've been under a rock or have lived a very sheltered life, I'll let you know. A zombie is the body of a dead person given the semblance of life, but mute and will-less, by a supernatural force, usually for some evil purpose (Infoplease, definition of a zombie). There are also many other types of Zombies: the Haitian Zombie, which is created by Voodoo

magic, the Philosophical Zombie, representing a creature without a soul, and many other types including Alcoholic drinks and Unix processes.

Why did I select the topic of zombies? That probably stems from my old career as a parapsychologist some time ago. During that time, I witnessed things I cannot explain in any logical manner, and have seen things that would scare the hell out of you. I would love to share some of my experiences, but because they have nothing to do with zombies and the fact that you would probably think me insane, I will not.

I'm sure you're probably wondering what a parapsychologist is. It is a person who studies the paranormal, such as ghosts, psychic phenomena, U.F.O's, Sasquatch, and the like. I investigated Ghosts or more technically, Afterlife (Ghosts and the soul). So, because Zombies deal with Afterlife and the Soul, I seem to have an interest in them. As I mentioned before there are several types of zombies. According to *Zombies on the Web*, "There are three main kinds of Zombies. The Hollywood Zombie, or the zombies that are portrayed in Movies and Video Games, Philosophical Zombies, which are physically and behaviorally identical to a conscious human, but lack any conscious experience, and finally the Haitian Zombies, or the zombies made by Voodoo magic and created by either a houngan or bokor (a voodoo master)" (Chalmers, *Zombies on the Web*). Unfortunately, I only have enough space to discuss the first two.

I'll start off discussing the Philosophical zombie. I find the idea of a philosophical zombie really interesting, mostly because my other major is Philosophy. This topic is extremely abstract though, and I will try to describe this the best way that I can. The whole idea of conscious thought and experience is called "Qualia". This is what the Philosophical

Zombies lack. The problem with the idea of a philosophical zombie is that they can't exist, at least according to several other major philosophers such as Armstrong, Dennett, Shoemaker to name a few, because of the idea that they have no qualia (Chalmers, Self).

Without going too far into philosophy, I will explain why I find this idea so interesting. I am currently investigating some of the "classic" philosophers (Plato and Descartes to name a few). They wondered how they know if people around them are actually thinking and have conscious thought. According to Descartes, nothing exists except my (your) mind and an Evil genius whose only goal is to deceive me (you) (Descartes, pgs 16-17). The fact that you do not know whether anything around you is actually thinking and has conscious thought (or even exists, for that matter) plays right into the philosophical zombie. Now, I haven't completed the books on the classic philosophers, but I assume that they somehow prove the existence of other people and their consciousness. I guess that this is why the above philosophers say that Philosophical zombies might exist.

But do Zombies actually exist? I'm sure you have seen at least ONE zombie movie in your life. The most critically acclaimed (at least for a B movie anyway) zombie movie out there is Night of the Living Dead, which was created by George Romero. It depicted dead people rising to life and attacking the living, trying to eat them. Be warned though, there is lots of violence and most of those movies are just about as gory as they sound. But it's not like it's real gore or anything though, they're B-movies for a reason. The zombies that are depicted in such films have been dubbed by some as "Hollywood Zombies", however, there are those who believe that such zombies truly exist.

One such person is a local Zombologist by the name of David Schmidt. The things that he revealed to me are too great and interesting to paraphrase, so in order to give you the full effect of the interview, I give you the whole conversation*:

Greetings Dave, It's been a while, hasn't it?

Indeed, it's been many moons since my last interview.

Uh, I interviewed you three weeks ago, but that doesn't matter. So, you are the local zombie researcher, correct?

I prefer the term Zombologist.

Does that mean you have a degree in "Zombology"?

No, it's a title I've given myself. Academia, in their ignorance, refuses to acknowledge my expertise.

How did you come to gain expertise in "Zombology"?

Well, I believe that there is a line between fantasy and reality, and I have crossed that line many times. In fact, the only time I spend in reality is a blur, which I call sleep. But during these momentary lapses back into reality, I have discovered my abilities to transcend time and space, and journey to the future. During which, as you might guess, I gain glimpses into what will be!

(I scratch my chin) I see, but what does this have to do with zombies? Can you even tell me something about Zombies I don't already know?

I'm glad you asked! You see, I have discovered why zombies only attack the living, and not each other!

Really?

Yes. I have discovered during one of my transcendental journeys to the future, that there is such a thing as an "Alpha Zombie".

Tell me more of this "Alpha Zombie"

Certainly. For one thing, as opposed to the average zombie, the Alpha Zombie is sentient.

Interesting

Yes, yes please do not interrupt.

Sorry

It is all right, if I may continue?

* Before I begin, I want to point out that this person DOES indeed exist. I am not making him up. The conversation is completely verbatim, with minor edits for space and "Explicit Language".

Please do.... Ass.

Not only is the Alpha zombie sentient, it is also psychic and controls the other zombies by means of telepathy.

Telepathy, you say?

Indeed, it is through this telepathic control that the Alpha-zombie directs the average zombies or "Drone Zombies" to eat the living.

It makes sense now! Can you tell me what this "Alpha-Zombie" looks like, so my readers and I may keep a watchful eye? Does he look like a normal zombie, or is he something more sinister?

Well, unfortunately I was unable to get a good view of the Alpha-Zombie's face. All I can tell you is that it wears a cape and swings it around like a Spanish matador.

What challenges do you think the human race will encounter when fighting the zombie menace?

Well, there are three things that I can think of. First, the Alpha Zombie must be found and destroyed. Second, the sheer mass of zombies will also be a problem. But the greatest threat is what I call the Zombie sympathizers. I feel that there will be a certain amount of people who would rather want to show the zombies love and compassion, rather than a barrel of a gun. They will undoubtedly listen to bands like Phish and/or the Grateful Dead. These pansies could be the ultimate downfall of the human race, if they fall for the propaganda of the Alpha Zombie.

Right... I've been thinking, these transcendental journeys you speak of, are they what an average person would call a dream, perchance?

(Standing up) Silence Infidel! You dare try to undermine my authority as the leading zombologist in the country! (Schmidt, 2002)

At this point, my roommate emerged from his domicile and said quote "Shut the hell up before I shut you both up!" This was a good place to end the interview, because it seemed like things were coming to an end, and my roommate was becoming rather irate. But, before David left, he handed me a recently declassified document from a local militant (and assuredly harmless) organization.

As I looked this document over, several things caught my attention. This document is a series of memos and such, explaining the Z.D.I, or Zombie Defense Initiative. Reportedly, a "Prophet of Doom" prophesied, "a plague of the undead would soon envelop the treasure valley."

After hearing this, they created several “procedures and rules of engagement for zombie encounters and zombie hunting” Here are some excerpts from the Rules of Engagement*:

1 - No members may enter a zombie-infected area alone. Teams of three are mandatory.

2 - No whining will be allowed.

3 - No sniveling will be allowed

5 – Ammo is to be conserved; shooting a zombie in the chest is futile and may result in a zombie gaining the upper hand. A single shot to the head is all that is necessary. Firing in short, controlled bursts will only be tolerated only when dealing with multiple zombies.

7 – For the sake of comedy, smacking a zombie in the face with a cream pie will be allowed.

9 – For any further questions, please consult your zombie handbook (DSFC Zombie Readiness Memo).

As well as the rules of engagement, there was also list of supplies needed for their “Fortified Compound”, mentioned in an also recently declassified letter to one of their high standing members. This compound, as far as I can tell, is roughly 99% zombie-proof. They also provided “Zombie Insurance” to members for an extra fee, just incase a friend or loved one becomes a zombie and tries to eat them. Zombie Insurance also covers Flaming Zombie attacks and other zombie-related mishaps (DSFC Zombie Readiness Memo).

* Once again, I want to point out that this document does in-fact, exist. Good luck finding it though. While it was made available to the public, its distribution is limited and only a few people have it. I included.

In my research, I realized just how not prepared for zombie attacks this generation is. This is truly a great problem! Do you know how to defend yourself from a zombie effectively? Good portions of the people don't know how. If Zombies did, in fact, rise from the grave, that the human race would be doomed. The one exception is the backwater hillbilly people, because of their massive amount of guns, as depicted by Dawn of the Dead. I hope to change this. Those aren't the people we want re-populating the earth once the Zombie fiasco settles down. I will instruct you on the art of Zombie removal.

What is the best method of Zombie Removal? Well, seeing as how they are undead, I believe the best method is fragmentation. Area of effect weapons, such as grenades and Rocket Launchers, work wonders against all forms of Zombies, but make sure you're out of range when you use them or you'll regret the consequences. When something is in many chunky pieces of varying sizes, it's hard for it to attack you, especially if it has no mouth or limbs.

Strategies tend to change for different types of Zombies. Let's take the basic George Romero Zombie for instance. According to him, the only way to stop such a zombie is to damage to the brain. Therefore, most damage to the head should put down a basic Romero zombie. Good methods for doing this include all range of guns to some melee weaponry (just incase you run out of ammo!). This brings me to my next point. Guns are the best way to do such a task (assuming you do not have an area of effect weapon), just make sure you get one with a large clip, or else you might end up relying on close quarters combat. Quick reload speed is important too, especially if you are in immediate zombie danger.

I also have a theory. While zombies are carnivores, I wonder if there are a few “rare exceptions” to that rule. The theory goes that vegans, who are eaten by normal zombies and rise themselves as zombies, do NOT crave the flesh of living things. They instead crave the subtle, earthy taste of grains and plant matter. These vegan zombies can be found “milling” around places like bakeries, granaries, supermarkets, Co-ops, and National Parks during times of zombie crisis.

These Zombies are FAR less dangerous to us than the normal meat-eating zombies for one reason: we are made of meat. That is not to say that these zombies don’t pose threats. In the long run, they are quite dangerous. If left to their own devices, they will consume all the oxygen producing plants in the world, given enough time. This is bad, because we ourselves cannot live without oxygen. However, if we can somehow produce oxygen synthetically, these vegan zombies could be used as a very clean method of energy production, as well as transportation*.

I have also discovered that there is a common thread in all the different types of zombies. They are all trying to eat or consume something. The Hollywood and Haitian zombies try to eat the living. The theoretical vegan zombie tries to eat grains and other plant matter. Philosophical zombies try to consume Qualia. A UNIX zombie process consumes precious memory space and CPU cycles. Zombie drinks will, because of the high alcohol content (It’s several 100+ proof drinks mixed together, bleh!), eat away at your stomach lining as well as those precious brain cells (Chalmers, zombweb).

* Made you look

What's my take on all of this? Well, while not completely convinced of the existence of Hollywood zombies, I wonder if they do exist. In my life I have encountered many things that people told me they were absolutely sure didn't exist, like ghosts, witches, vampires (not the Dracula kind) and demons. This is what puts doubt in my mind about zombies. I feel that they don't exist, but then again, I felt ghosts didn't exist either. If zombies do indeed exist, can mankind stand up to them and preserve humanity? I don't want to take any chances, so I know I'll be sleeping with a gun under my pillow! Wait, I forgot, that only works against the devil, so never mind! Besides, I'm not that stupid, I know not to sleep on objects that can cause you grievous bodily harm (or DO I?). Perhaps I'll see if I can join the DSFC for added protection. The Z.D.I sounds like a good method of defense, although, I hear that their Zombie Insurance rates are pretty high these days...

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