

Steve Jobs and the Reality Distortion Field, Mark 2-3

I have been reading the Steve Jobs biography by Walter Isaacson, and I am fascinated by the radical eccentricity of Steve Jobs. I've known a few eccentric unique characters, but this guy was off the chart. Software designer Bud Tribble who worked at Apple for Jobs, came up with a term to describe the strange world that Jobs lived in. You may have told someone that they "lived in a dream world", or you may know people that "play by their own set of rules", but Jobs lived in an alternate universe. Tribble said that to Jobs, reality is malleable, meaning capable of being controlled by Jobs. Tribble was a "Trekkie", and had seen an episode of Star Trek where the aliens created a whole new world through mental force that they called the REALITY DISTORTION FIELD. The reality distortion field required a super strong indomitable will and an eagerness to bend facts. Jobs was always seen with a bottle of organic carrot juice, so the geeks in the Apple office had T-shirts made that said on the front—Reality Distortion Field, and on the back of the shirt—"It's in the Juice". Jobs would create his own history, facts, quotations, or other people's ideas without any reference to the truth. He willfully defied reality not only to others, but to himself. He personally embraced and internalized facts that were not true. Jobs was so successful because he could impose his will so that it would become a self fulfilling distortion. For his employees, the reality distortion field, about what he wanted and what Apple could create, infused a passion to create new products, to do the impossible, and to please the charismatic Steve Jobs. The key to pulling this off was to believe that the rules did not apply to him. He was special, a chosen one, and enlightened like Gandhi, Einstein, or Nietzsche. If reality didn't line up with his will, he would ignore it as he did when his girl friend became pregnant, or when the state actually expected him to buy license plates (he never did), or later with his cancer diagnosis. In 1977, his live in girl friend, Chrisann Brennan got pregnant, but Jobs just disconnected from her and ignored it. He didn't want to be married or to be a father so it simply didn't exist to him. This was particularly strange since Steve Jobs himself was adopted, and he had always been angry that his birth parents didn't want him. Nevertheless, he distorted reality as if he didn't know Chrisann Brennan. Jobs was so certain that he took a paternity test which actually proved he was the father to a certainty of 95%, but he still didn't believe it. The court had to force him to pay child support. Jobs said that 5% of America could be the father, but he wasn't.

The beginning of what would become Apple was a "blue box" which was the first electronic device that Jobs and his friend Steve Wozniak built to cheat the phone company in 1971. They figured out how to replicate the sounds that signaled AT&T to send calls. They bought parts from Radio Shack and built a circuit. Then they actually called the Pope at the Vatican and had a nice conversation with his assistant. Jobs got the idea that they could build these blue boxes for \$40 and sell them for \$150. They built 100 boxes and sold all of them. Jobs later said, "We worked well together, created an electronic device, and made money. If it had not been for the blue boxes, there never would have been an Apple". Never once did it occur to Jobs that this was illegal, immoral, or wrong. His blue collar parents had saved money for years to send him to college, but he was uninterested, dropped out, took up Zen Buddhism, became a Vegan

diet vegetarian, and began taking LSD. All of this was a search for enlightenment for a troubled soul. In his biography, Jobs said that “LSD was one of the most important things in my life”. He so believed in his Vegan diet that he was certain that it would cleanse him so much that he would not have body odor, and therefore would not need to take baths or use deodorant. Everywhere he went people would tell him he stunk, but he would correct them and say that he didn’t. In early 1974, he quit his job at Atari and went to India in search of a guru who could further enlighten him. He wandered around there for 7 months in a “compulsive search for self awareness”. When he got back home, he hooked up with a Zen counselor who taught him “primal scream therapy”. He lived for a while on a commune that was an apple farm. He would eat nothing but apples and carrots, and this apple commune was the source for the name of his computer company he would form with Wozniak. Meanwhile, Wozniak was working at Hewlett Packard where they were making microprocessor chips. An idea just popped into his head that he could take a terminal, a keyboard, and a monitor, and using the microprocessor in the terminal, he could create a “small stand alone computer on a desktop.” Wozniak said that the vision of a personal computer just popped into his head. He worked there for HP during the day, and at night he worked on his creation. Wozniak wrote the software that would get the microprocessor to display images on the screen. On Sunday, June 29, 1975 for the first time ever, he typed letters on a keyboard and saw them show up on a screen on a desk in front of him. Steve Jobs immediately realized the value of what Wozniak had created and wanted to form a company to build and sell these personal computers. Wozniak believed morally he had to offer it to HP first, but Jobs told him he was crazy. Wozniak still took it to HP and offered it to them for free, but the senior executive was not interested, and said there would be no market for it.

Jobs started their little company there in his parent’s garage, while Wozniak continued to work at HP. Jobs initial order was from a hobby shop who offered him \$500 a piece for 50 of them. Jobs got some of the geeks from the apple commune to help him build the first 50 computers in their garage at a cost of less than \$15,000 for all 50. They didn’t think they could meet the deadline Jobs put on them, but he used his “reality distortion field” to get them to work around the clock. One of the guys in the garage was Daniel Kottke, Jobs best friend in college, soul mate in India, and fellow commune liver. Later after Apple Computers was born, Jobs promised Kottke stock in the new company, but after the Initial Public Offering in 1980, Kottke still had nothing, and Jobs started acting like he didn’t know Kottke. Wozniak and another stockholder went to Jobs and said they would match any amount of shares that Jobs would give Kottke. Jobs said, “Alright then I’ll give him...zero.” He simply convinced himself that he hardly knew Kottke and owed him nothing.

After his computer company, Apple, went public in 1980, Jobs became an instant multi millionaire and celebrity, but Jobs was still driven to create a new future for this new industry. He was such a disruptive personality and caused so many problems within the fast growing company that the board of directors hired a strong willed manager to deal with him. They gave him his own division with a handful of employees and stuck him in an office at another location just to get rid of him. That division that Jobs created would develop the Macintosh computer for Apple, but in 1985 Jobs had made so many enemies

in the company that they had a power struggle on the Board of Directors to get rid of Jobs. Steve Jobs was ousted from his own company, sold all his Apple stock for about \$100 million, began his own new company, stole 5 senior people from Apple, and then was sued by the Apple Board of Directors. Jobs' new computer company never did too well, but in 1986 Jobs bought Pixar computer animation from George Lucas for \$5 million. That company went public in 1995 after the success of the Toy Story film, and Jobs made more money off Pixar than he had at Apple. In December of 1996, Apple was losing market share rapidly, and the Board of Apple asked Jobs to come back, which he did, and the rest is history—Ipod, I-phone, Ipad, etc., etc.

Steve Jobs died of cancer in 2011. His strong will, brilliance, charisma, and ability to exert his reality distortion field on his coworkers enabled him to be an enormous success. He created products that have changed the world, but when he got married in 1991, he had no friends to give him a bachelor party, and had no best man in his wedding.

The Reality Distortion Field of the Pharisees in Mark 2-3

Jesus came into a world of structured legalistic religion in the first century Israel. The religious leaders in Israel were totally focused on the letter of the law and not on the spirit of the law. For the prior two to three hundred years they had developed religious traditions that interpreted the Law of Moses to such a degree of minutia that it must have been absurd to God to witness it. The religious leaders had convinced themselves and the people of Israel that they were righteously keeping all this expanded law, and saw themselves as righteous. Of course all they were accomplishing was hypocrisy which is the ultimate “reality distortion field”. The scribes and Pharisees of Jesus day were living in their own dream world that they were righteous and not sinners. I can think of at least five fatal consequences of this kind of self righteousness: 1. They were self satisfied like a dying person who insists he is well, 2. They looked down on others as inferior sinners—thus judgmental, 3. Refusing to believe that they are sinners, they resent the idea of grace and must reject Jesus, 4. They must alter the law of God in order to keep it, and 5. Their great pride in themselves causes a refusal to submit to God.

Mark 2:13-20

Jesus' fame and popularity spread like wildfire, but this section of Mark reveals the opposition to Jesus from the religious establishment. Disputes arose regarding laws and traditions. The Pharisees would pose questions to Jesus which He answered either with truth or proverbial sayings with a result that Jesus kicked butt! In Mark 2:13-15, Jesus was teaching the multitudes, but as He passed by a tax office Jesus did something unexpected. He called a despicable tax collector known for corruption to “Follow Me!” Under Roman rule, the vocation of tax collecting had hit a new low. Romans allowed the tax collectors to collect any amount they could over and above what Rome required. Therefore the tax collectors became extortionists and thieves. Jesus called one of these thieves to follow Him and be His disciple, and amazingly the guy gave up His crooked ways and became one of Jesus' closest disciples. This guy's name in Mark 2 is Levi, but in comparing to the parallel story in Matthew 9:9, we see that he is also called Matthew

who became one of Jesus' original 12 Apostles. This is good news for all of us that a shady reputation and past life is no barrier to being a disciple of Christ. Levi was so excited about his conversion that he called all his "rowdy" friends to dinner with Jesus. This was a cause of much outrage among the Pharisees that caused them to question Jesus about why He was associating with known sinners. Jesus answered with a proverbial saying that left them speechless, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." The beauty of His answer was that He both vindicated His ministry, vindicated the repentant sinners, and at the same time crushed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Since they believed they were righteous (or not sick), Jesus did not come to heal them, but the tax collectors who recognized and confessed their sin (their sickness) had received their physician, Jesus. By the end of the Gospel of Mark it will be clear that everyone is sick in this way and needs the Physician that God has sent. Paul said it well in Romans 5:8, "God demonstrates His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

The religion of the Pharisees was a result of a human reach for God through obedience and good works, but Christ presented Himself as God's search for humans, just like Jesus said when He told the parable of the prodigal son, "I tell you there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over 99 (supposedly) righteous persons who (think) they need no repentance." Anyone who thinks they are self righteous, perfectly keep the law of God, and need no Savior is living in a reality distortion field of their own creation, and Jesus came to pop the bubble of that delusion.

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