

The Existential Cage Without Walls

A Manifesto of the Seven Existential Cages



The Sentence

- 1 All life is born into cages. Not all cages are born with life.*
- 2 Every organism that has ever breathed on this planet has lived inside conditions it did not choose: a body that hungers, a world that withholds, a death that waits. This is not a tragedy. It is the shape of existence itself.*
- 3 But human beings have done what no other creature has done. Inside the cages existence gave them, they have built cages of their own, and they have forced other human beings to be born into them.*
- 4 This manifesto names seven cages. It names them not to surrender to them, but to expose the empire that learned to colonise every one of them, and the people dying inside that colonisation now: the Papuans.*

The Painted Wall

- 5 Remember Plato's cave. Prisoners chained since birth, facing a wall. Behind them, a fire. Between the fire and their backs, others carry objects whose shadows dance across the stone. The prisoners have never seen anything else. They name the shadows, argue about them, worship them, and die believing the shadows are the world.*
- 6 This is not an ancient story. It is a description of civilisation.*
- 7 For five thousand years, civilisation has been a project of painting the wall. Priests painted heaven. Kings painted divine right. Empires painted destiny. Merchants painted prosperity. Missionaries painted salvation. Nations painted flags. Developers painted progress. And today, screens paint a flickering wall that never sleeps.*
- 8 Plato promised that one prisoner could turn around, climb out, and see the sun. But look closely at who has offered the exits: priests, prophets, philosophers of progress, preachers of utopia. Almost all of them were painters too. Each exit they promised was one more image on the wall.*
- 9 Papua was not born in this cave. For tens of thousands of years, Papuans read the world from the land itself: the mountain, the river, the forest, the dead. Then the empire arrived, chained them facing its wall, and called the chains civilisation.*

The Three Teachings

- 10 Long before the missionary, the soldier, and the surveyor arrived, the Lani of the Papuan highlands had already looked the cages in the face and named them without paint.*
- 11 Nit Ap Yi Ti Kambirak Nduk Aret Nda'nogomonggorak. We are born to die.*
- 12 Nit Ap Yi Mbi-Mbingga Norak Paga Alo Aret Yi Wone Ndi Wone, Nalop Kalop Yogomonggorak. We argue, struggle, and fight for what goes into the mouth, so that the body may live: not for paradise, but for survival.*
- 13 Nit Ap Yi Ti Kugi Aret. We human beings ourselves can become Kugi: the destroyer, the killer, the maker of chaos and tragedy.*
- 14 These are not superstitions. They are some of the most honest philosophy ever spoken on this planet. They promise no heaven, no utopia, no final victory. They say only: this is what you are. Live accordingly.*
- 15 A people that knows that it will die, that it struggles to eat, and that it carries destruction within itself is very hard to deceive. That is why the empire had to destroy this knowledge first.*

The First Cage: The Body and the Land

16 The First Cage is the body: finite, hungry, mortal, chained to land, water, food, and air. No organism escapes it. It is the ground floor of existence.

17 The empire cannot abolish this cage, so it colonises it from within. It stands between the body and the earth and charges a toll for every breath. Land becomes property. Food becomes a commodity. Water becomes capital.

18 Sisyphus rolls his boulder up the hill, and it rolls down again. Be born, struggle, labour, decline, die: the boulder never changes. What changes is who owns the hill.

19 In Papua the hill was never just a hill. It was an archive. Mountains carried genealogies. Rivers joined the living to the dead. Forests were pharmacy, classroom, and temple at once. The empire looked at this living library and asked only one question: what can be dug out of it?

20 In the eyes of the state, a sacred mountain is worthless until it yields gold.

The Second Cage: The Word

21 The Second Cage is language, myth, culture, and meaning. No human being meets reality naked. We meet it through words, stories, symbols, images, colours, and gods. These systems give life its order, and they also decide what can and cannot be thought.

22 This is the cage most people mistake for reality itself, because it is the wall on which every shadow is cast. And this is where the empire strikes hardest.

23 It does not merely silence a people's meaning. It replaces it: Dutch, then Bahasa Indonesia, in the classroom; Christian theology in place of ancestral cosmology; literacy offered with one hand and conversion demanded with the other. It repaints the wall until the colonised can no longer imagine a world beyond its images.

24 Remember Procrustes, who forced every traveller to fit his iron bed, stretching the short and cutting the legs off the tall. He never measured the bed to the traveller. He measured the traveller to the bed. That is colonial meaning. It does not adjust itself to the Papuan. It cuts the Papuan to fit.

25 When the Second Cage is fully colonised, the First Cage colonises itself. A people that has lost the words for what is being done to it can no longer see it being done.

The Third Cage: The Lucid Prisoner

26 The Third Cage is consciousness: the terrible gift of knowing that you are caged. Its cruellest truth is that knowing changes nothing. The prisoner who understands the prison perfectly is still in the prison.

27 Beckett's two tramps wait by the road for someone who never comes. They know exactly what is happening to them. They wait anyway. Tomorrow they will wait again.

28 Into this ache of awareness the empire pours its manufactured answers: substitute cosmologies, administered heavens, salvation sold in imported colours. The divine is painted white. Darkness is painted evil. And the Papuan child learns to pray to a heaven in which their own face has been cast as the shadow.

29 The missionary map drew a line from Jerusalem across the earth and ended it in Papua: the last frontier, the final people to be saved. Jerusalem was the alpha. Papua was the omega. In that story the Papuan was never the centre of their own world, only the end of someone else's.

The Fourth Cage: The Machine

30 The Fourth Cage is science and technology. They were born of a real longing: to understand, to heal, to ease the weight of the first three cages. But in the hands of the empire, the machine turns back on the body and the earth and begins to eat them.

31 First it inserts itself between the body and the land. Then it reaches into the mind and rearranges attention, meaning, and relationship. Finally, it mines the soul itself, extracting belonging and cosmological orientation as raw

material for profit. This is digital cosmological mining: the last frontier of extraction, where what is dug out is no longer gold but a people's sense of who they are.

32 In Papua the two kinds of mining work side by side. The mine at Grasberg tears gold and copper from Amungme land. The screen in every village tears attention and memory from Papuan minds. Same apparatus. Same appetite.

33 Roads, clinics, phone towers, and new provinces arrive like cargo from a sky whose machinery the Papuan was never shown. Free movement within the cage. Never the key.

34 King Midas wished that everything he touched would turn to gold. Everything did: his food, his wine, his daughter. He starved inside his wealth. That is where the empire's machine is heading, and it is dragging the whole planet with it.

The Fifth Cage: The Corridor of the Dead

35 The Fifth Cage admits no exception. No philosophy has dissolved it. No religion has demonstrably escaped it. No science has broken it. No machine has outrun it. Every living thing walks into the Corridor of the Dead, and not one has walked out.

36 It is the most democratic of all the cages. It does not bow to the emperor or spare the saint. It waits for the coloniser and the colonised alike.

37 The empire did not build this corridor. It found it, and turned its terror into a weapon. It sells consolation. It rents out heaven. It promises immortality in exchange for obedience. And while the colonised kneel and wait for the next life, the coloniser takes this one.

38 Every hero of myth returns from his ordeal. Gilgamesh came home to his city. Sisyphus even cheated death once and climbed back into the sun. But no one returns from this corridor. That silence is the only honest answer the cosmos has ever given.

The Sixth Cage: The Dark We Cannot See

39 The Sixth Cage contains all the others. It is the cage of what we do not know, what we cannot know, and what we do not even know that we do not know.

40 Every empire of the mind has declared itself complete: the final religion, the final science, the final civilisation. Every one of them was wrong. The Sixth Cage is the permanent refutation of every claim to total knowledge, including the coloniser's claim to know what Papuans are, what they need, and what they are worth.

41 This manifesto, too, is written from inside this dark. So is every truth it claims.

42 And yet, to say I do not know what I do not know is not defeat. It is the beginning of a humility the empire cannot afford and Wonesis cannot live without.

The Seventh Cage: The Sealed Other

43 The Seventh Cage belongs to every living thing. Every bee, every gecko, every tree, every fungus threading through the dark soil is sealed inside a world no other being can enter. There may be twenty quadrillion ants alive at this moment, and if each has any inner life at all, each is alone in it.

44 A parasitic fungus can invade an ant, rewrite its behaviour, march it up a stem, and kill it. A parasite can occupy a body completely. And yet, if any interiority remains, the parasite can never become what it invades.

45 Here lies the hidden hope of this manifesto. The empire can occupy Papuan land, schools, churches, screens, and even behaviour. But there is a sealed place in every Papuan being that no occupier has ever entered, and none ever will.

46 The empire answers by manufacturing loneliness: dissolving community, replacing the mystery of the other with an image of the other, reducing every unrepeatable life to a number, a consumer, a demographic. Wonesis answers by honouring the sealed interior of every life, human and more-than-human, and building kinship across the seal without ever needing to break it.

Papua: All Seven Seized

47 *Each of the seven cages existed before the empire. What colonialism did in Papua was seize, one by one, every tool a people had for living inside them with dignity.*

48 *The result is not merely poverty. It is ontological nakedness: a people stripped bare before the cages of existence, with no cosmology left to clothe them.*

49 *The lever was land. For the Lani and for every Cosmobian people of Papua, land is not property, resource, or territory. It is where the body is fed, the ancestors are buried, the stories are set, and the living and the dead meet. It is the ground beneath all seven cages at once.*

50 *Take the land, and you do not take one thing. You take the floor on which the whole house of existence stands. Through dispossession the empire seized the First Cage; through language and mission schooling, the Second; through theological replacement, the Third; through mines and towers, the Fourth; through the management of the dead, the Fifth; through its claim to know, the Sixth; and through turning Papuans into data, the Seventh.*

51 *Between 1971 and 2000, the non-Papuan population of Papua grew roughly six times faster than the Papuan population. That is not a statistic. It is the sound of a floor being pulled from beneath a people.*

Ap and Ap-ap

52 *The Lani have a name for the whole human being: Ap. The one who knows they will die, who knows they struggle for bread, who knows the Kugi lives within them, and who lives honestly with all three.*

53 *And they have a name for the counterfeit: Ap-ap. The hollow copy. The person refashioned in someone else's image, speaking someone else's words, praying to someone else's heaven.*

54 *The empire's greatest factory produces neither copper nor palm oil. It produces Ap-ap. Its finest products are paraded as Tokoh, the elites, of whom it is said with admiration: dia sudah jadi manusia, "they have become human." As though a Papuan were not human until they had become someone else.*

55 *Like the boys of Pleasure Island who laughed their way into becoming donkeys, the Ap-ap is not dragged into the cage. They are rewarded into it, one title, one salary, one ceremony at a time, until they can no longer remember that it is a cage at all.*

56 *And so the Kugi is not abolished. It is decorated. It wears a uniform, a robe, a lanyard. It speaks of progress, faith, and order while it dismantles its own people. The cage no longer needs a guard once the captive has been persuaded to become its warden.*

The Great Inversion

57 *The empire did not merely ignore the three teachings. It turned each one inside out.*

58 *Where the Lani said, we are born to die, the empire said: you are a child of God, destined for heaven, exempt from death.*

59 *Where the Lani said, we struggle to survive, the empire said: your struggle is a spiritual battle, and your earthly hunger is beneath the dignity of a redeemed soul.*

60 *Where the Lani said, we can become Kugi, the empire hid the Kugi beneath the costume of virtue and painted over it until destruction looked like civilisation, development, and the will of God.*

61 *A person who believes they will never die, whose hunger is unholy, and whose violence is blessed is the perfect instrument of genocide, and its perfect victim.*

Instant Noodles

62 *In place of the cosmos it destroyed, the empire offers instant noodles: processed food for the body, imported religion and entertainment for the mind, cheap phones for the restless hand. None of these is nothing. They ease real pain. But none of them returns what was taken.*

63 *This is the empire's masterpiece: a cage so comfortable that the captive mistakes it for freedom, while every song the captive sings and every bond the captive forms is quietly converted into data and revenue for those who built the cage.*

The Cage Without Walls

64 *Here is the deepest warning of the Psycho-Cosmocide paradigm. The greatest prison is not the one imposed by nature. It is the one constructed inside consciousness itself.*

65 *Once a civilisation colonises the structures through which a people perceives reality, remembers its past, imagines its future, and understands its place in the cosmos, the cage no longer needs walls. The cave wall has moved inside the skull. The shadows are projected from within.*

66 *And when captivity feels like freedom, domination feels like progress, and extinction feels like civilisation, the destruction is already complete.*

67 *This is the paradigm shift. The war for Papua is fought not only over mountains, rivers, and votes. It is fought inside every Papuan mind, at the level where reality itself is assembled.*

Naked Before Existence

68 *So strip the wall bare. Scrape away every painting: the heaven, the destiny, the progress, the nation, the market, the screen.*

69 *What remains is what the Lani always knew. A body that will die. A hunger that must be fed. A capacity for destruction that lives inside every one of us. A darkness no mind can see beyond. A self sealed off from every other self.*

70 *This is the terror of existence. It is what every civilisation has painted over, because a people that looks at it directly cannot be sold anything.*

71 *Look at it. Do not look away. This is not the end of the manifesto. It is the beginning of the only honest life there is.*

Wonesis: The Responsibility to Survive

72 *Wonesis is not nihilism. Nihilism stares at the bare wall and says nothing matters. Wonesis stares at the same wall and says: then everything that keeps life alive matters absolutely.*

73 *Wonesis is not pessimism. Pessimism waits for the end. Wonesis plants a garden in the face of it.*

74 *When every painting is stripped away, one thing remains: survival. Not survival as mere breathing, but survival as the oldest sacred duty of every living thing: to feed the body, protect the young, keep the land, carry the memory, and pass life on to those not yet born. This is the one thing there is. Every god, every ideology, and every empire was only ever a story told about it.*

75 *Wonesis is responsibility for that one thing. Responsibility for the land that feeds us and the water that keeps us alive. For the language that holds our world. For the dead who made us and the unborn who will inherit what we leave. For the Kugi within us, which we must name, own, and restrain, instead of painting it as virtue.*

76 *Wonesis does not promise to break the seven cages. Any voice that promises that is selling one more image on the wall of the cave. It asks something harder: to live inside the cages awake. To feed the body from land that is still our own. To speak the ancestral word. To face consciousness without buying a counterfeit heaven. To use the machine without being mined by it. To walk the corridor of death unafraid. To stand humble before the unknown. To honour the sealed interior of every living thing.*

77 *The cages of existence cannot be escaped. The cages of empire can be refused and destroyed.*

78 *That is the critical choice before every Papuan being, and before every human being on this dying human world: to live as Ap or as Ap-ap; as one who faces the bare wall and takes responsibility for life, or as one who worships the paintings while the world burns behind them.*

79 *We are born to die. We struggle to live. We carry the Kugi within us. Let us say it again, plainly, in our own tongue, in our own valleys, on our own land.*

80 Then no empire will ever again be able to sell us our own cage and call it progress and freedom.

The words, views, and ideas expressed in this manifesto are personal, reflective, and diagnostic rather than declarations of settled truth — a reading of the human condition through the Psycho-Cosmocide lens, offered to provoke thought and questioning rather than to close it.

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