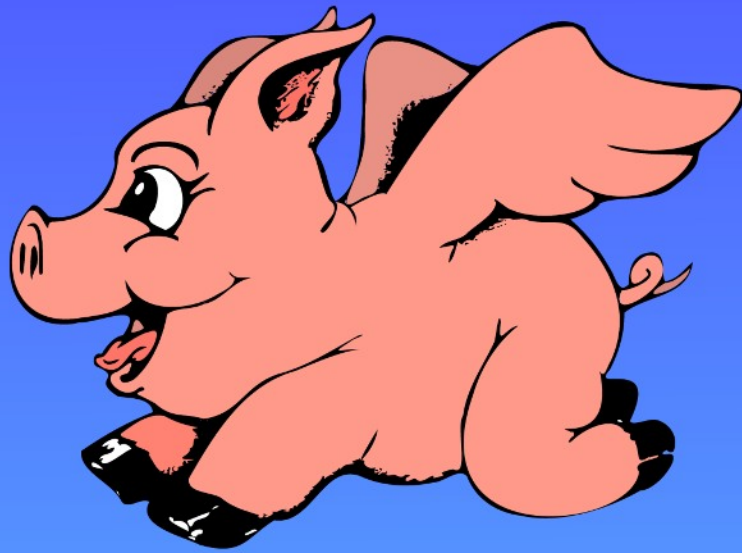


# HAPPY



by Steve Tyler Lawson

## For No Damn Reason

*Discovering The Love That Lives You*

**Twenty Fourth ePrinting – November 13th, 2023**

**by: Steve Tyler Lawson**

Some illustrations, including book cover, by:  
**Steve Tyler Lawson**

*Dedicated to:*

My wife and thousand year love

**Sheri**

...and to the spiders!

# History

A couple of weeks into a Community College ceramics class, I ran out of clay. Acquiring more involved a short stroll with the instructor to a small storeroom. On the way, my teacher, a bitter, and often snarky master ceramicist, saw the lilt in my step, and the big goofy smile on my face and said with cynical rebuke, “What are you so happy about?”

His chide echoed similar incidents in my youth. This question, leveled at me by public school classmates who seethed with jealousy, conveyed a threat of violence. I don’t have a clear memory of these original events—only, a dark bully strewn blur. These were frightening encounters that compelled me to hide, from public view, my enthusiasm for life and learning. They gashed the emotional wounds that festered into painful shyness.

My lack of disquiet under the pall of this latest pose of the “happiness question” was exhilarating confirmation that I was *back*—that all the work I had done on myself throughout my life actually made a difference—evidence I was capable of public happiness once again, and *for no damn reason*. It also focused me on the question, *what is it about this notion that one needs a reason to be happy?*

I truly didn’t know—thus, I watched. I watched others and I watched myself. I noticed how I too was suspicious of people who were happy for no apparent reason. I knew immediately my suspicion was collusion with the prevailing attitude towards the appearance of superfluous felicity. Over time, I began to learn about people who were content, not due to possessing ample money, or copious sex, or solid political connections, etc. They were just *happy*. The concept of *healthy people*<sup>1</sup> came into my awareness—also referred to as *authentic people*. Unassailable, nonjudgmental people, who *live and let live*, and can get along with just about anyone.

Many of my earliest memories are of pain, loneliness and fear. I spent most of my younger years seeking a way to cure, or at least tolerate, the ache in the

---

<sup>1</sup> As opposed to *dysfunctional people*.

pit of my soul. An inner “voice”, of unknown source, guided me to many programs, therapies and spiritual practices until finally, though I still feel the challenges of daily life, they’re more likely to ride on a sea of bliss radiating from the center of my being. I no longer wait for a reason to be happy. *I create it on purpose—for no damn reason!*

## Preface

This book is my letter to humanity—my request for the reader to review “reality”—to get in touch with what is *really* going on and to discover who you *really* are. Unless you’re already “awake<sup>1</sup>”, who you *think* you are, likely has very little to do with who you *really* are. In fact, who you *think* you are is likely who you *aren’t*!

I spent my life doing this—looking around, and within. I still do on pretty much a daily basis, and often even minute by minute. Sometimes I forget—sometimes circumstance rules my demeanor. I lose touch with who and what I am, and get caught up in *animal drama*. But after decades of practice, it doesn’t take much for me to bring myself back to “center”—back to my “happy”.

I have what might be a unique perspective. I was raised in a household ensconced in science<sup>2</sup>, but later was pulled towards metaphysics by forces unknown. Thus, I have fingers in both worlds. I followed the advice of my maternal grandfather<sup>3</sup> to educate myself in science, but I was also compelled by a need to make sense of my life and science fell short. Thus along the way I dodged my grandfather’s supercilious eye, and delved into the “spiritual”.

---

<sup>1</sup> In the pre “Woke” sense of “awake” – if that makes any sense.

<sup>2</sup> A father with a master’s degree in zoology, his father a medical doctor for 50 years and associate dean at USC School of Medicine, in California. Mother’s father with a PHD in astrophysics, and a professor of Mathematics and Astronomy at OSU. Mom was an artist, so she modeled breaking the mold.

<sup>3</sup> An astrophysicist with a small observatory at Oklahoma State University dedicated to him: The Mendenhall Observatory.

What I've put down in this book is all I can recall from a lifetime of seeking, learning, growing, and transforming myself into the mainly mirthful guy I am today<sup>1</sup>. Some have said I'm enlightened. I'm not sure if that's true. I *am* fairly certain the body I'm utilizing to write this book is not actually who I am. And, I'm certain who I really am is something typically referred to as "spirit" or "consciousness". Basically a form of intelligent energy. I've yet to experience the fabled "Cosmic Consciousness"—that experience of seeing or knowing, all at once, all of reality, throughout time and space. This is why I don't consider myself *actually* enlightened. Perhaps there are different levels of enlightenment, aka "enlightened" versus "ascended master". I'm definitely not an ascended master!

I regularly experience what is probably the Nirvana spoken of in "Eastern Thought"—a bliss, sometimes mildly in the background, and sometimes intensely in the fore [especially during meditation]. I've experienced a powerful, rumbling, sometimes thundering, rushing flow of "energy"<sup>2</sup> up my spine, and out the top of my head—a bliss so intense it's difficult to contain [again, mostly during meditation]. In fact, that seems to be my current spiritual challenge—learning how to *be* with this intense energy. With each mediation I learn a little more. If I achieve this before I croak, perhaps I'll get back to you 😊

Since this blissful energy entered my life, my fear of death has

---

<sup>1</sup> Though, I still have my "moments".

<sup>2</sup> The Metaphysical term "energy" probably has the same root as the scientific term: The Greek word *enérgeia*. The same with terms like "resonance" and "light". Are their metaphysical meanings synonymous with the scientific sense? Were the terms for the metaphysical version of these phenomena correctly coined, perhaps by one or more Enlightened Masters who, through their understanding of both worlds? Since these terms are in the vernacular, I will use them, but with the caveat of incredulity.

abated. I now live in a generally joyful state, full of humor and appreciation for the wonders of life. And clairvoyance seems to be part of the package. Glimpses of the future, the apparent ability to heal, or at least provide some relief from suffering. Also, telepathy with my wife.

Bottom line, there is a world that extends far beyond common knowledge, or at least the common awareness of this “Western” culture I was raised in. This limited view is emblematic of those who place all their faith in their senses. With this book, I intend to straddle a line between science and spirituality, plowing one into the other, with the intent of exposing you, my reader, to a new level of truth.

Hopefully this dichotomy of mine builds a bridge to the cynic, or exposes new inquiry for the skeptical<sup>1</sup>. And, if a few choose to widen their perspective and walk across that bridge, perhaps this will be a happier world!

In short, this book is my layman’s view of *awareness*. It’s not meant to be a *how-to*, or a *self-help panacea*. I do offer the occasional suggestion, or even an instruction, or two, but that’s ancillary to the goal of this book: Merely to inspire the pertinacious to engage in renewed exploration.

Regarding the structure of this book, after the first few chapters, it tends to wander from the theme to become more of an anthology of essays. If you’ve ever tried to write a book like this, you know how frickinly difficult it is to organize everything into a coherent

---

<sup>1</sup> My disapproving grandfather has since passed [year 2000 at age 97]. So, we’ll never know if this book had a chance in hell of swaying him. Perhaps, from the context of his new perspective [assuming no fiery stay in Hell], he’s nodding in approval—wouldn’t that be a kick!



stream!! If you haven't, take my word for it! And, I suppose it's a bit presumptuous of me to even be writing a book. K-through-College, I hated every English class—barely holding onto a low C average. I mean, if I didn't have spell-check, and the assistance of AI to sort out my grammar, this book would be even more of a mess than it is. So, please accept my apology in advance!

I consider English a second language. My first language is the emphatic connection I have with shape, form, and feeling. Essentially, the Right-Brain language of *Art*. And, when I write, it starts as images that I attempt to translate into written form.

Why “Damn” in the title? Because:

- I wanted to make a statement regarding the ridiculous aversion to swearing! The MythBusters confirmed the pain endurance-elevating power of swearing<sup>1</sup>, and I see that as evidence that swearing deserves greater acceptance in public discourse, even among children. It's time to break free from our Puritan/Victorian shackles! Also, we shelter our children way too much in this culture.
- It's funny.
- It elevates the level of passion. I'm not talking about mere happiness! No, I'm enthused about a state of being that transcends the common experience! A state of levity, and peace that I believe is forgotten nature—as H.L. Mencken said, “God is a comedian playing to an audience that is afraid to laugh.” I like to call this: “Original Grin”.
- It rails against how people get stuck in culturally imposed, often highly ridiculous *forms* and *structures* that tend to spoil any access to happiness.
- I wanted to emphasize the blindness to personal power often at the

---

<sup>1</sup> Episode 142 “No Pain, No Gain”

core of a lack of happiness. Freely using swear words is symbolic for emerging personal power.

- I'm pissed off at all the needless pain and suffering wrought by a humanity blind to its higher consciousness. If humans knew who and what we really are, Earth would be a sweet and wonderful place, full of creativity, love, humility, and tolerance, where everyone is plugged into the ecstatic wonder of it all! Thus, my use of the word "Damn" reflects that anger.

And, yeah...sorry about the footnotes! There are a LOT of them in this book. The ones intended to be humorous, I hope they are. Mostly, they convey ideas, information and/or explanation that I thought might be fun, or meaningful, but not crucial to the intent of this book. I'm not sure how you, the reader, should deal with them. If you stop and read them as you go, you'll get one experience—however, as digressions, they interrupt the flow. But, if you skip them until later, you might lose the context in which they are set. I'll leave it up to you<sup>1</sup>. Alternatively, you could read them first, i.e., before diving into the content of each chapter, read that chapter's footnotes, having faith that continuity will be revealed.

Bottom line, this book is my *layman's* opinion based on a wealth of personal experience. They are not necessarily proven by the rigors of scientific research or held credible by professionals with degrees and stuff<sup>2</sup>. In fact, this book is not about proving anything. This is merely me sharing my point of view. Any of the science, unless it pertains to "Natural Science" is apt to be true and

---

<sup>1</sup> I'm not even sure how I'm going to deal with them, myself, if I ever do an audio version of this book, or if I ever do a public reading!

<sup>2</sup> The word "stuff" was added by my inner-child ☺

correct. If it's Physics or Electronics, it's true unless I unknowingly made an error. I'm pretty sure in all other cases I offered qualifications in the footnotes. When I belabor a point, it's merely to improve comprehension.

Regarding the links throughout this book [links to web pages and YouTube videos], if you're tech-savvy at all, or just observant, you might have noticed most of them link to my [www.hfndr.com](http://www.hfndr.com) website<sup>1</sup>. I did this because links go "stale" and YouTube videos get pulled. If I used the raw links, there would be no way for me to correct them, once this book is in your hands. So, I applied my skills as a web developer and came up with a scheme to fix these errors remotely. You might notice these URLs<sup>2</sup> point to a directory called 'fw' [short for *forward*]. Also, tacked on the end of the URL is something known as a "query string". A query string starts with a question mark, followed by an expression—in the case of this book, that expression follows this pattern: `ln=xyz`. What this does is activate my little forwarding routine. For example, a typical link might be:

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid37](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid37)

What that does is tell my forwarding routine to access video number 37<sup>3</sup>.

If, in the future, I discover video 37 has been pulled [i.e. no longer exists], I can look for another, similar video, and assign it to the *video 37* variable, thus fixing the broken link without ever having

---

<sup>1</sup> HFNDR is an acronym for *Happy For No Damn Reason*

<sup>2</sup> Stands for Uniform Resource Locator and is the techie terminology for a "link" to a website.

<sup>3</sup> Which, in this instance, is a video called "What is a QueryString" that starts out with a simple explanation, and then goes into considerable technical detail, so no need to watch the whole thing 😊

access to your copy of the book.

In case you don't know:



This is called a *QR Code*. Most camera apps on modern Smartphones react to these and present a way to link to the website this thing points to. Essentially, it's just another way to put a link into a document, such as this book. If you try this and your camera app does nothing, then either QR Code

recognition is turned off, or the camera app you're using has no such facility. In such case, if you want to utilize the QR Codes in this book, you can probably find an app for this. Just go to Apple's App Store, or Google Play, or the Samsung Store, or the Microsoft Store [or whatever it's called on your smartphome] and search for a *QR Code reader*.

FYI: The above QR Code links to a YouTube video explaining QR Codes.

BTW: I created the QR Codes, in this book, using an online QR Code Generator at:



[www.qrcodechimp.com](http://www.qrcodechimp.com)

As of this writing, there is no charge to use most of the functionality—I did these for FREE! It’s easy to use, and the result works great, and looks great. Their QR Code Generator is feature rich, even at the FREE level. And even though it has a lot of features, it’s still pretty easy to use, and it offers many delightful ways to customize your QR Code. That chain-link logo in the middle is my own graphic, created in Adobe Illustrator, and it was easy to include it using the controls on their generator [I also did the “Video Camera” icon]. I looked at a LOT of different QR Code generators with a FREE tier, and I like this one the best. They do have pay-level features, but I really didn’t need them!

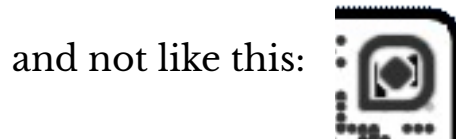
In my opinion, the *cons* are:

- The lack of the ability to download an SVG image format. But, PNG seems to work very well, as long as you don’t scale it too much. Their QR Code Generator offers 4 different sizes: 256px [the size I chose for this book], 512px, 1024px, 2048px, 4K. There’s, also, a PDF option—probably best for printing, and might even work for very large formats, like billboards [depends on whether it’s vector, or not].

- There are a few bugs in their QR-Code generator. For instance, some of the “Stickers” appear so large in the preview, only a fraction of the QR-code is visible. That would be workable if it corrected for the download, but it doesn’t. The downloaded result is an unusable fraction of the full graphic. The “work-around” is to choose a different Sticker—which is what I had to do, because the one I wanted was broken like that. This seems to be affecting only around 10 to 20% of the stickers, so there is still a large number of workable stickers. [UPDATE: Even months after I sent them a “bug report”, it’s still broken!]
- Occasionally the QR-Code image will corrupt [another bug]—especially when a QR-Code is already showing and some action changes the image. A corrupted QR-Code tends to not be readable, or it’s slow to read. Always test a new QR-Code! This happened to me several times while generating the codes for this book. I discovered the corrupted codes later, while I was testing them [yeah, I went through the whole book and tested each one]. Because I discovered this later, I don’t know for sure why, or when the corruption happened, so I can’t offer you a way to prevent this from happening, but here’s an example of what this looks like:



Notice the crud in the “eyes” [those small features in three of the corners]. The eyes should look like



If you try scanning this corrupted QR code it might work, but it will probably take some effort and time. The “workaround” [i.e. the “fix”] seems to be to just try getting it to regenerate.

LibreOffice Writer has a QR code generator<sup>1</sup> [*Insert/Object/QR Code...*] that I tried. In fact I did all of the QR codes in this book, using that method, and everything was fine until I needed to save it as a Microsoft DOCX file. When I opened the DOCX file, all of the QR Codes were fuzzed out, and thus useless [probably a side-effect of excessive image compression]! So, I had to redo them all!

---

<sup>1</sup> LibreOffice Writer is the editor I used to write this book – ‘cuz I despise Microsoft. BTW: that hate is coming from my *primitive self* 😊

Here's a QR code that points to the HFNDR<sup>1</sup> YouTube playlist I created, containing all of the YouTube videos in this book. It's just another way to access the YouTube videos<sup>2</sup> linked to in this book:



[HFNDR Video Playlist:](#)

[www.hfnldr.com/fw/?ln=web26](http://www.hfnldr.com/fw/?ln=web26)

Why did I first publish in *digital form* [aka “eBook”]? The main reason is to overcome the financial barrier to owning a copy. Physical books have become so expensive, especially books containing color photos! You can access this book for free [and opt out of making a donation—it’s OK, I understand]! And, if you *do* enjoy it, or even benefit from it, a mere one US dollar donation will be greatly appreciated, and will, basically, help to establish my retirement fund. And, if you choose to donate more, I won’t object.

I’ve had the eBook version of this work out for nearly a year, now, and there’s been very few downloads. I published it on both my own website, featuring a PDF downloadable eBook, and a proper Kindle version on Amazon Books. So, as of this writing, I’m doing the work to establish a Paperback version of this book, which will, of course, not be Free, and will be more expensive than the Kindle

---

<sup>1</sup> HFNDR is an acronym for *Happy For No Damn Reason*.

<sup>2</sup> There are a few videos, in this book, that are *not* on YouTube. Thus, they aren’t included in the playlist.



version.

The first half century of my life was spent on the quest for personal growth that produced the fodder for this book. As such, establishing a nest-egg for retirement was pushed to my *golden years*. And, now I'm doing the work that perhaps will help me satisfy this personal debt. So, your contribution is, essentially, a recognition of, and thank you for, my life's work.

Again, everything in this book is my *layman's opinion*, and as such should never be taken as authoritative advice, nor should it ever supplant, supersede, or replace professional prescription! Take it with a grain of salt, and an eye of scrutiny. Everything I put in this book is *my* truth, after nearly a lifetime of searching, learning, trying, and failing and ultimately succeeding in the event of "Steve's life", and I offer it only as a paradigm of possibility, but not as a statement of fact—even though I use pronouns like "you," "we," "us," "our," etc. which presumes you-all are the same, and subject to my characterizations. I'm hoping you can grant me some license, here, because writing it that way makes the language so much less cumbersome! Please, consider it as code for something that I consider *true about humans in general*, and that in no way intends to pigeon-hole *you* as an individual.

BTW: I had to look up what parts of speech "you," "we," "us" and "our," are—being NOT an English major. So...that's what *pronouns* are! Who would have known (pretty much most everyone else! ☺)

And finally: Please! PLEASE!! If this book goes viral, DO NOT use it as the basis for a *new religion!!!* This world **DOES NOT** need another *religion!!!!!!*

## Before It Mattered, It Didn't Matter

*"The more the universe seems comprehensible,  
the more it also seems pointless"*

~ Steven Weinberg

Since a few millions years beyond the beginning of time, some 13.77 billion years ago<sup>1</sup>, the cosmos has existed as an ever expanding dusty vacuum<sup>2</sup>—the turbulent remnant of the most stupendous explosion<sup>3</sup> to ever occur<sup>4</sup>!

This vast, predominantly silent, inherently dark, near void we call the Universe, is a regular kerfuffle of chaos: Bursting stars; colliding galaxies; searing radioactive flares; all in a riddle of particles zipping around at near light-speed like cosmic shrapnel!

---

<sup>1</sup> Got that number from a Google search, and specifically, from this site: [www.space.com/universe-age-14-billion-years-old](http://www.space.com/universe-age-14-billion-years-old) –...of course, if you get your natural history from Bible school, then six thousand years ago. Though, full disclosure: Biblical views will likely be in dire conflict with the contents of this book—just so you know—in case you don't want to waste your time—in fact, reading further could be dangerous—you know, words of Satan leading you astray ☹. Or, reading further could actually save you from such dismal delusions that lead you to believe silly things like *humans and dinosaurs coexisted*, or *homosexuality is a sin*. In other words: YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!

<sup>2</sup> Included in my concept of “dust” are asteroids, moons, planets and even stars, since compared to the considerable expanse that is “The Universe” even a star is a mere speck!

<sup>3</sup> Well.. actually... not an “Explosion” per se. More like a *colossal expansion*—like a bubble of existence, inflating, with explosive speed, into a cosmos we still barely understand.

<sup>4</sup> This is the generally accepted “informed mythology” as of this writing. The “Big Bang” is a *theory*. And though *highly plausible*, it's still *untested* [yeah...how do you test *that?!?*]. There are *other* theories vying for acceptance. For instance: [Example of other theory\(ies\) that challenge the Big Bang](#). And REALLY?! Dark energy and dark matter?!? MYTHOLOGY!!

If things in this Universe aren't pinned down by the gravitational pull of some large dirt clod<sup>1</sup>, or massive gas ball, or spinning down the gravity well of a colossal black hole, they're freezing in interstellar space at near absolute zero temperatures.

Even under the relative calm of an Earth-like planetary atmosphere, there's regular<sup>2</sup> pandemonium from ground ripping quakes, air whipping tornadoes, globe shrouding volcanic eruptions, icy cold blizzards, million volt electrical jabs, hell raising hurricanes and shoreline scrubbing tsunamis<sup>3</sup>.

But, none of that really mattered, until *matter* developed the ability to sit up and scream "Holy shit!"<sup>3</sup>

*Nothing exists except atoms and empty space;  
Everything else is opinion.*

~Democritus

Our bodies are made of that same stuff—atoms and electricity—that everywhere else in the Universe stoically succumbs to this transfiguring turmoil. So, why does the stuff that comprises us, give a crap? And for that matter, *how* does it give a crap?!?

Around 3.7 billion years ago<sup>4</sup>, here on Earth<sup>5</sup>, a bit of matter arranged

<sup>1</sup> You know—like *planets*, or *dwarf planets* such as Pluto [*hate you Neil deGrasse Tyson!* <kidding>], or a large *moon*, or *Death Star* [homage to *Star Wars* ☺]. BTW: Large *clods* of matter are squeezed into a sphere by their own gravity—hence “round”—sorry *flat-earthers*. Would the Death Star be crushed by its own gravity? Probably not—but it's fun to speculate!

<sup>2</sup> Think astronomical time scales.

<sup>3</sup> Paraphrase. And, in fact, the first bits of life [such as amoebas] probably *wanted* to say this, but couldn't, because nothing had, yet, taken the time to invent mouths or language.

<sup>4</sup> I'll assume, from here on, all the creationists and Bible enthusiasts have either left this conversation, or are willing to risk damnation. So, all further cosmological timing will be from the scientific point of view. Also, that “3.7 Billion” figure is *as of this writing*. Scientists are always busy looking around for new evidence—so that figure could change.

<sup>5</sup> Assuming life, on this planet, did, indeed, start here, and didn't arrive on a comet, or something.

itself in a very special way. A small blob of coordinated carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, calcium, phosphorus, and various trace elements, gained the ability to *move about* and *reproduce*!

How outrageously freaky is that! Back when the Earth was still relatively young, an inert bit of goo made of minerals, water, and air mysteriously acquired the ability to intentionally manipulate other minerals, water, and air for its own benefit. Plying its new chemical prowess, this bit of goo eventually put itself into a bag made of fat—or the bag formed first, and then magic goop inside the bag spontaneously came alive! Either way, this little orb of slime created the concept of: **I** i.e., *Individuality*.

For the first time in the Universe, there was a **ME**—a concept of being separate from *everything else*—though I doubt this early life was capable of such philosophical pause!

And even more preposterous, this squishy little orb figured out how to divide into more squishy little orbs, opening a way for this new thing called life to start a generational legacy. And due to a *fruitful<sup>1</sup> frenzy* of self-replicating blobs, they soon spread their legacy over the bulk of the planet!

Before the first instance of life, anything with a high level of organization, for instance a crystal, got that way from some non-directed<sup>2</sup>, environmental processes—such as heat, pressure, phase-change<sup>3</sup>, etc.



<sup>1</sup> In case any Bible enthusiasts are still reading. You're welcome.

<sup>2</sup> Even if there *is* a God pulling the strings in all of this, things like *crystal growth* pretty much happen as a result of mere physics—no *creation event* required.

<sup>3</sup> Like when water becomes ice, or turns to vapor, or when Sodium and Chloride ions, dissolved in water, become table salt due to the evaporation of said water.

For instance: *Rock Candy* ... Rock Candy, in case you don't know, is a cluster of sugar crystals on a string [or a stick]. When the conditions are just right, in a bath of warm supersaturated sugar water, sucrose molecules, and optionally food coloring, arrange themselves on a medium, such as a string [or stick], building one layer upon another, into ever larger crystal clusters [aka *rocks*], until they become a tasty candy treat.

A snowflake is another example.

And I suppose an ocean wave, breaking on a beach, could be seen as an ordered pestering of sand and pebbles<sup>1</sup>—even if the pestering is chaotic. And, speaking of *sand*: sand dunes!

These are cases of *external* conditions guiding the organization of matter that were happening in the Universe long before life came along. So, that's not what makes life unique. Life engages in the *deliberate* manipulation of chemistry *inside* its living cells<sup>2</sup>. In other words, Rock Candy might be the *life of a party*, but is in no way actually *alive*. Nor is a snowflake, an ocean wave, or a sand dune. In other, *other* words, *life* is an entirely new<sup>3</sup> and phenomenally different instance of organization—*self directed organization!*

A living cell can duplicate *itself* by the amazing and complex process of *mitosis*! Let's see rock candy do that<sup>4</sup>!

And speaking of clusters: Even more mind-blowing, these little one celled creatures began to *assemble* into *multi-celled organisms*! In other

<sup>1</sup> Shells didn't exist before life.

<sup>2</sup> Even if *crystallization* happens to be *part* of one, or more, processes occurring inside said living cell. It's not the crystallization that drives the process. Crystallization is merely a *part* of the process.

<sup>3</sup> New by cosmological standards. Again, assuming we really know *when* and even *where in the Universe* life first came about.

<sup>4</sup> Sure, you can point at a cluster of crystals and cry *duplicates*! But, did any of them come *out of* any other of them? Did one divide into two? I think not!

words, individual cells banded together, and began *Working together!* They actually started *cooperating* to create a *yet more complex, and more capable entity!!* Some of these cells took on the task of grinding up bits of nutrient, thus broadening the menu beyond mere soup—adding *diversity of diet* to its ever expanding scope of *being*. The Bobby Flay's and Julia Child's of the world should thank their stars for this!

But the world wasn't always the benign paradise that brought about this fluke of nature. As soon as the environment started kicking these little clusters around, as environments are apt to do, they developed nerves, and sensors, and greater articulation in their mobility, so they could know when they were about to be kicked, and could get the hell out of the way<sup>1</sup>.

With the advent of nerves came pain. Being kicked around is not, generally, good for the *integrity of form* that life relies on, so pain was implemented to generate *concern*. Before then, kicking and smashing, and all forms of annihilation *didn't matter*—to *anything*. It was nothing more than *change*.

Getting kicked around isn't generally good for maintaining the structural integrity that life relies on, so pain was introduced to provoke *concern*. Before this development, kicking, smashing, and all forms of annihilation *didn't matter*—to anything. It was nothing more than *change*.

The Universe is big on *change*. In fact, as far as the Universe is concerned, *change is axiomatic*. Until life came along, change was no big deal. But, once matter organized into living, breathing, metabolizing, reproducing entities requiring ongoing intactness, it became *vulnerable*

---

<sup>1</sup> At least, that's my take on how mobility came about. Likely, the clusters successful at developing nerves and mobility, etc., were the ones able to survive long enough to eventually produce you and I.

to change<sup>1</sup>. *Change*, for the first time in the Universe, became a *problem*—precisely because change has the potential to put a stop to all of this life business.

*Why* is life so bent on ensuring its continuity? Why is this such a *big deal*<sup>2</sup>? After all, a rock neither plans its life nor contemplates its demise. To matter, nothing matters! My guess is, the *drive to keep life happening* was, and still is, the very thing *keeping* life happening. In other words, until preservation of the species became a priority, *preservation was unlikely*. Over and over life probably sprang up and then fizzled out, because all previous versions of life had a “whatever” attitude. In other words, all previous versions of life merely maintained the status-quo of all other matter. While life maintained a laissez-faire attitude, little to no effort was put towards overcoming lethal adversity.

Okay, I acknowledge the liberty I'm taking in my characterization of the emergence of life on this planet, but the point I'm trying to make is that this drive for the preservation of life is an *anomaly* in contrast to the general mode of the rest of the matter in this Universe. How did it get that way? Science has no definitive answer for that, thus my playful speculations.

Assuming I'm right, though, that life kept popping in and out<sup>3</sup>, it wasn't

<sup>1</sup> Actually, according to current scientific understanding, the energetic essence of things, in the Universe, can be neither created nor *destroyed*. In this context, the word “destroyed” has, at least for me, more of an *emotional* connotation. When writing the first few paragraphs, I struggled to evoke drama, without using words directly associated with concerns of the living...like *painful*, *poisonous*, *deadly* or even *damaging*. The point being: in a Universe, absent of life, there is no *concern*, thus such words have no meaning (can you *poison* a rock? And, *damage*, what's that in a non-life context?!). My struggle to come up with dispassionate language (I mean, even the word *kerfuffle* fails this test), evinces the pervasiveness of sentimentality in our view of existence.

<sup>2</sup> Were you incredulous when you read that? Did you think, “Well, Steve, of course it's a big deal—that's a dumb question!” But, I reiterate: *Why?* Why is *survival* an imperative? What I'm actually asking, here, is: Can you extricate yourself from the *survival imperative*?

<sup>3</sup> All the instances of life before the life that led to us, might have left some sort of fossil evidence, but if it wasn't ever ubiquitous, there would only be small hard to find pockets of >>> continued on page 7



until a version of it sprang into existence yearning to really, *really* keep on existing, that life became what it is now—a frantic sack of chemicals, driven to *survive at all cost*. Basically: mud with a *type A* personality<sup>1</sup>! Or, maybe life was like that on the first try. Either way, all our angst about survival, and our compulsion to create the next generation, is likely nothing more than an extension of the original, naturally selected attitude needed for life to persist: *Frantically fight to keep life going, no matter what!* Thus was born the *Survival-of-the-Fittest Free-for-All* that has been at the core of shaping the *animal kingdom* for the last few *billions* of years. In truth, we've all forgotten why survival is such an imperative. But, isn't it rather strange that it is? When you really think about it, you gotta wonder why this particular form of matter thinks anything matters.

And, this combination of nerves and imperatives sure does seem to be a winning formula! Over the few billions of years that life has scurried over this planet, the Universe tested the hell out of life's survival instinct. Not even city sized asteroids, or massive planet shrouding volcanoes could snuff it out. Nor the periodic ice ages and other radical swings in the planetary environment, or reversals of the Earth's magnetic field, nor the occasional barrage of solar flare radiation from the sun, and perhaps even a nearby supernova or two (though there is no scientific evidence of such occurrences). All of these events were courtesy of a Universe that doesn't seem to give a squat whether, or not life participates in the Universe's natural history!

But, life thumbed its nose at this apparent apathy towards its participation, because always, during each life squashing event, somewhere on the planet, some form of life resisted being squashed,

<<< 6 each occurrence—thus, maybe why scientists have yet to find any.

<sup>1</sup> I'm fairly certain this was the advent of *conservatism*.

and thus all life persevered—we are the living proof of that. After each mass extinction event, that tiny bit of enduring life caused a flurry of new, abundant life on the planet.

This life-mandated struggle to *survive at all costs*, and to *procreate prodigiously*, is contrary to *change*. For the first time in the Universe, *change* was an *annoyance*. *Pain* twisted “change” into a thing of *crisis*. In other words, the advent of *life-bent-on-staying-alive* led to the concept of *something-to-lose*.

Pain is at the center of our aversion to change.

It *hurts* when the body is injured. It *hurts* when the body needs more food, or water, or air. It *hurts* when the opportunity to make more little bodies is thwarted. Even just the thought that any of the above *might happen*, is a source of pain—*emotional* pain.

And, when those original little multi-celled creatures developed the ability to *forecast* impending pain, a whole new dimension of *woe* came into being—the dimension of *worry*. Worry developed as an impetus to predict, and avoid *pain*<sup>1</sup>.

Another thing life invented is *need*<sup>2</sup>. As soon as *need* showed up, *dissatisfaction* became a thing. Mere existence was no longer enough.

In my opinion, these were the first Conservatives, and for them, preservation of life was the first traditional norm. In fact, I would say that when life turned to Conservatism, life finally had a chance to persist.

---

<sup>1</sup> And, if you're balking at the idea that worry goes back that far, well, you're probably right. But, at some point worry came into being, and I doubt anyone knows when that actually happened. But, it probably didn't show up until humans came on the scene. But, aren't humans multi-celled creatures?

<sup>2</sup> “invented?” ~ “created?” ~ “caused?” ...Semantics!

Before this, the word “matter” had only one definition<sup>1</sup>. Rocks don't have *needs*. Minerals simply exist. Planets don't care if moon sized asteroids smash them to bits. Stars don't mind exploding into giant clouds of hot, colorful gas. Whole solar systems sucked into the Black Hole at the center of their Galaxy, are not missed...*by anything but the living—if living beings happened to be around to witness it, or be horrified by it!*

When a rock rolls down a hillside and hits other rocks, none of them scream, “Watch where yer going!”. And, if one or more of those rocks fracture, the air doesn't care if it's sliced by the sharp, jagged fragments—air is incapable of feeling. And if one or more of those pointy bits manages to stab an intervening river, the water gives nary a crap. And when a boulder slams into said pool, and the spray soaks everything in the vicinity, there are no screams, or expletives, or groping for towels.

But, for the living, there is *satisfaction* and *dissatisfaction*. When the *needs* of the living are not met, there is *no peace*. For the first time in the Universe there came the *need* to breathe, the *need* to feed and drink, the *need* to reproduce<sup>2</sup>, the *need* to eliminate, the *need* to sleep, the *need* for an especially narrow range of temperatures<sup>3</sup>, and a specific composition of air.

And, for higher life forms, the *need* for companionship, social interaction, *space*, and even the *need* to be entertained, or at least distracted—in other words: *conditions of contentment*. When all of the needs of a living entity are satisfied, it can finally be happy merely

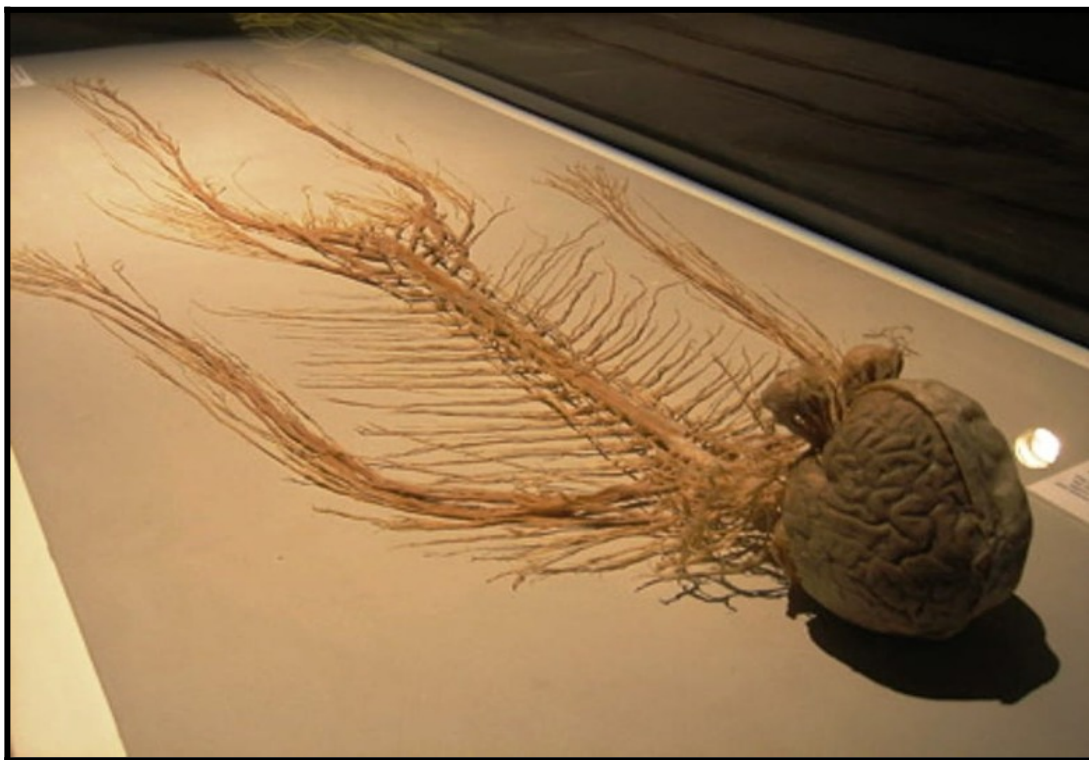
<sup>1</sup> Yeah, I know, there were no *dictionaries* back then – poetic license.

<sup>2</sup> Or maybe it's *only* a compulsion to reproduce, since a living entity can, usually, survive without reproducing. But, on the grand scale of *preservation of the species* or even, *preservation of life itself*, it certainly *qualifies* as a need. And, based on animal research, the *need to breed* can even take precedence over the *need to feed*.

<sup>3</sup> We live in what is called the “Goldilocks Zone”. Our planet's distance from the sun allows for average surface temperatures that, among other things, keeps the bulk of water on our planet in a liquid state. Thus, for life, our planet's position from the sun is **just right!**

*existing.*

But contentment doesn't last long, does it? Soon, *hunger* recurs. *Tiredness* returns. *Toxins* accumulate. *Horniness* flares. *Loneliness* creeps in. Basically, the body is a querulous, bundle of nerves, demanding constant coddling. If you disagree, try holding your breath and report back to me in 24 minutes and 3 seconds (the 2016 Guinness World Record). Or skip lunch and see if your gut doesn't rumble in protest. Or tell the call-of-nature what it can do with itself, and see if it doesn't do it on you. I think Buddhism's First Noble Truth gets it right: "Life consists of suffering, pain, and misery."



The Big Bang<sup>1</sup> was the most intense pulse of energy ever. Everything after that is what I call "the Long Fizzle". Things in the Universe flow towards greater chaos, increased disorder—in other words, the Universe is falling apart. This is called *entropy*. And, as entropy increases, usable

<sup>1</sup> ...or the *Horrendous Space Kabloolie* [from *Calvin and Hobbes* by Bill Watterson - one of my heroes!]

energy decreases. Stars burn out and radioactive elements decay [loss of usable nuclear energy], Chemicals react [loss of usable chemical energy], Mountains erode [loss of usable potential energy], and dead things decay [loss of usable Farley energy<sup>1</sup>].

But, what about living things? Life bucks this trend. Life pushes against entropy. Life collects energy and uses it to build and organize. This is *Negentropy*, the opposite of Entropy. There are forces constantly at work trying to tear our flesh down [Entropy]. Our bodies are in a constant struggle to reverse entropy, repair the damage, and abolish these necrotizing intruders [Negentropy]. Life is a *struggle*—a struggle against *Entropy*! If we truly did *let it go*, we'd wither and die, and return to the disorder of dust—probably not what Elsa<sup>2</sup> was singing about.

This struggle to keep bodily structures in repair, is contrary to the ways of everything else in the universe<sup>3</sup>. This push against the norm is part of, or possibly most of, why life is difficult. Simple is sitting down and doing nothing. But, after three, or so, days, dehydration would put an end to that! In order to live, we have to constantly go about the business of supplying our bodies the materials and energy it needs to buck this universal status-quo.

Entropy [the way of the Universe] = Nothing matters.

Negentropy [the way of life] = *Oh hell yes it matters!!!*

Contentment, it seems, is fleeting and fully at the mercy of *circumstance*—circumstance made *harsh* by the painful imperative to satisfy life's stringent conditions. For the first time in the Universe, *circumstance*

<sup>1</sup> I mean, who had more energy than Chris Farley ... too soon? And rather than attempt to enumerate life's many energies, I coined this term, based on the Farley phenomenon - hopefully it catches on the way "Thagomiser" did!

<sup>2</sup> *Frozen* by Disney ["Let it go! Let it go!!" ♪]

<sup>3</sup> Except, perhaps, the *time crystal*: [www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web71](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web71)

made a difference.

Remember, beyond the sphere of life, circumstance is meaningless. To anything but life, when change happens, *nothing cares*. Aside from life, nothing sheds a tear for *anything*<sup>1</sup>. Aside from life, nothing struggles. Existence just *IS!* Life only judges something as a “problem”, if that thing conflicts with life’s compulsion to preserve the intricate structures, and complex conditions making *comfortable life* possible.

In other words:

To the Universe: — Change Happens.

To Life: — *Shit Happens!*

Life is just weird. Science can't even quite define it. This is a bunch of chemicals all up, walking around, thinking it means something to be up walking around. The dirt life treads on, made of similar stuff, has no opinion on this. And someday, the stuff that once stomped on all that stoic dirt, will likely be some other life's stoic dirt.

So...what the hell does this say about this thing called

---

<sup>1</sup> In fact, I think it's safe to say: *Tears* are exclusive to life.

# *HAPPINESS?*

That's the question I will attempt to answer in this book. But, first I will attempt to deprogram you. Then, I'll share what I've discovered for myself, in the hope it will awaken something in you.

Yeah, that's right, you might get WOKE!

If that scares you, then you best drop kick this book, or burn it—maybe even work to get it banned.

Ignorance is what is currently destroying life on this planet. And, unless you awaken to the lies that are manipulating people into colluding with the powers that are raping this planet, then you'll likely continue to be among those I hope I never get the chance to say “I told you so,” to.

And, the funny thing is, by being awake to your own power, you'll have far greater access to happiness—real happiness—than these insatiable control freaks currently spearheading the decimation of life on this planet.

And, I don't mean to denigrate you for a decision to abandon this book. Life on this planet had a good run—I mean, 3.7 billion years! Not bad. And, even if the current environmental extremes become the 6<sup>th</sup> Big Extinction Event, life will likely spring back, like it did after each of the other five. And if number 6 occurs and fully decimates life on this planet, I wouldn't be surprised if after a few millions of years, life reappears. Based on this planet's natural history, life seems an inevitability. And, considering the cosmic scale, where a hundred billion years is a flash in the pan, and where exists a trove of trillions of planets, with a workable percentage capable of supporting life, I'd say there is plenty of opportunity for life to try it again, and in fact, to try it over and over until it gets it right. And if our true nature is that of spirits that transcend the body, then we'll likely be the ones giving it another go. In



other words, there's a good chance existence is like a video game in that "Game Over" isn't necessarily the end.

But, it would be nice to have this go-around succeed, and that's the attitude of this book.

BTW: if you do decide to burn this book, and it's in eBook form, then make sure to not breathe the fumes!

## Face It, You're An *Animal*

*Millions of people do not realize how closely connected we humans are with the rest of the animal kingdom. They do not realize that we ourselves are animals. Instead, they perceive a false reality in which humans stand on one side of an unbridgeable chasm and the rest of the animal kingdom stands on the other.*

~Jane Goodall

“Neo,” meaning *new*, or *recent*, and “cortex,” Latin for *bark*, *rind*, or *shell*—this new brain of ours, the *neocortex*, doesn't *replace* the older, animal brain. It's in *addition* to it. And, though it's definitely more versatile, it's *not* primary. The neocortex is more like an upgrade<sup>1</sup>. But, the original *animal* functionality is still very much in place, and can powerfully influence how we think and behave.

Yes, we have a human brain thinking human thoughts that is generally being very unlike an animal. But, this new brain is formed over the top of the original animal brain, and that animal brain still calls the shots. In other words, we're *animals with a retrofit*. But, it was MacGyvered on by natural selection, so it's a bit of a hack job. Not a lot of thought went into how the two were going to work together. There's the primitive brain, aka “Lizard Brain,” that's on a military style 360 swivel (if you've ever watched the nervous, flitty nature of sparrows in the wild, you know what I mean). This primitive brain reacts to sounds/smells/perceived movements/etc constantly assessing the threat level.

The new brain can influence the aim, or grab the “reaction gun” before

<sup>1</sup> Or a “Plug In”.

anyone gets hurt, but the gun gets pulled from the holster, and the trigger pulled by the old, animal brain. And that trigger is all emotion! The animal brain can be very insistent and can even *override* our attempts at being in charge of the situation!! It's our very ability to choose our response to these *animal urges* that sets us apart, but the fact we have these urges means *the animal is still with us*.

The ability to choose, however, gives you the opportunity to assume the role of animal trainer, or lion tamer/pet owner/zookeeper... Your task is to bring your inner animal under *your* control, so you can teach it tricks, and keep it from breaking the china<sup>1</sup>, or eating the neighbors! For instance, the trick of temperance; the trick of patience; the trick of investigation; the trick of introspection; the trick of seeing the bright-side and finding humor when the primitive self wants to be all *sullen*, or *combative*. I call this the *feral override*.

Our primitive brain legacy is analogous to a whale's lungs.

In case you didn't know, whales<sup>2</sup> were once land animals who decided they were done with dirt, and went back to the sea. But they still, not being able to fully shed all of their land animal trappings, such as noses and lungs, still have to come up for air. They *did* manage to move their nose around to their back, to become that thing we call the "blow hole".

They also have a tiny, non-functioning hip bone left over from their 250 million-ish year "walkabout" on land.

The same thing is true about the human brain. From slime, to protozoa, to fish, to amphibian, to lizard, to ape, to human<sup>3</sup>—all of that animality

---

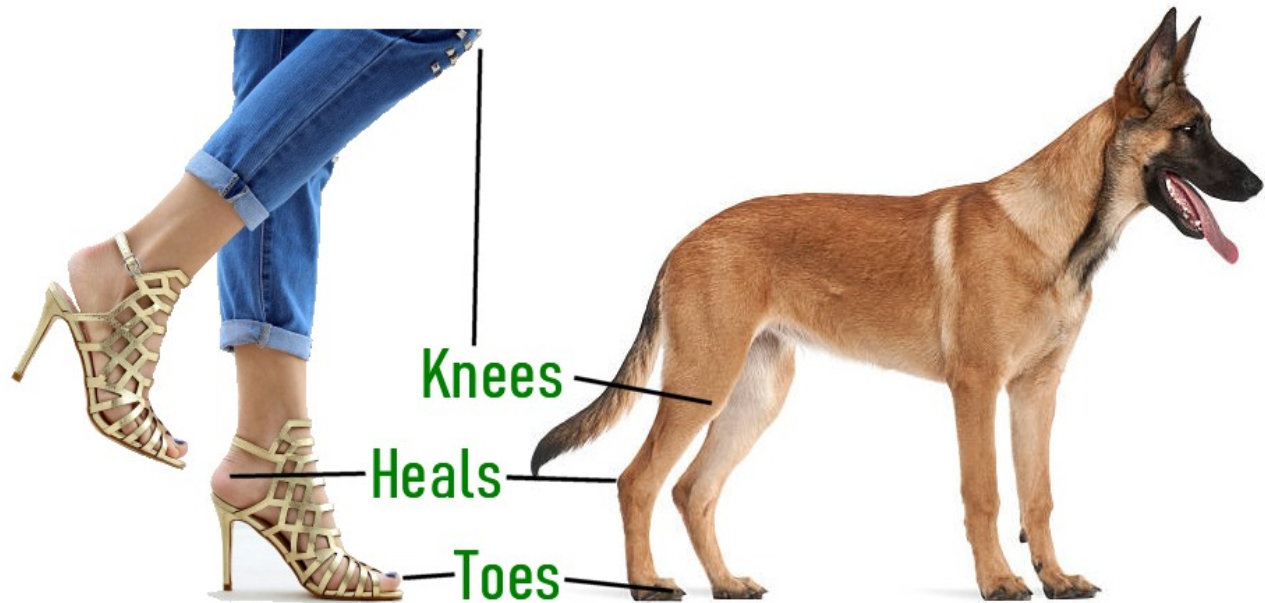
<sup>1</sup> Actually, the MythBusters let a bull loose in a mock china shop, and it carefully avoided disturbing china, or anything in the room, but the air! So, bulls are egregiously misunderstood!! [85<sup>th</sup> show, 2007 season, #16 - *Red Rag to a Bull*]

<sup>2</sup> Did you know that Dolphins are also whales?

<sup>3</sup> Don't quote me on that progression 😏

still lives inside us, and influences us—the way lungs spoil a whale’s dream of being a *real fish*<sup>1</sup>.

Our animal nature is made evident with a simple question: *What’s up with high heels?!?* Did you know most animals walk on their toes<sup>2</sup>? I realized this while learning how to draw animals. Have a look:



In other words, the reason high heels are all the rage is because flat feet just don’t match the ancient animal template for attractiveness<sup>3</sup>, which is a template that lingers in our primitive mind. High heels can be uncomfortable<sup>4</sup>, but foot binding, a horribly painful, disfiguring and barbarous practice common in China before it was banned in 1912, is an example of how humans are driven to absurdity by the artifacts of our animal heritage.

<sup>1</sup> Probably not. Whales seem quite happy with being whales.

<sup>2</sup> Yeah, I know what I’m referring to as a dog’s “Heel” is really called the “Hock”, and what I’m calling the knee, on a dog is called the “Stifle”, but if you do a bone-per-bone comparison, you’re likely to come to the same conclusion. And, how about this: horses walk on one toenail!!

<sup>3</sup> Though, Audrey Hepburn pushed that envelope, for me!

<sup>4</sup> Steve Martin: *The Cruel Shoes*.

I mean, come on! You have to admit, we *do*, at times, behave a *lot* like animals. For instance:

- Salivation at the mere thought of [insert favorite food]. In fact the very need to eat and drink is quintessentially *animal*.
- The inevitable need to pee and poo.
- Arousal in the presence of a smokin' hottie<sup>1</sup>.
- The need to sleep.
- The tendency to get all bent when prodded, poked, or otherwise stressed.
- Tendency to go berserk when cornered.
- Social pecking orders.
- Bullying, hazing, one-upping all driven by animal systems of social hierarchy and dominance.
- Grudges, peeves, tit-for-tat.
- The advantage of attractiveness, and anguish of deformity, and segregation of the *different*.
- Fight, freeze or flee, when threatened.
- And just generally, our behavior when we lose our shit!

Prod us and we seethe. Starve us and we grow irritable. Lock two or more males in a room with an attractive female and dicks get measured<sup>2</sup>. When our needy bodies petition the mind, it's our animal nature that gets the memo.

Our bodies are full of bones, flesh, and organs, just like an animal. We're born like an animal, and we suffer from the same vulnerabilities

---

<sup>1</sup> Even if there is no way in Hell, or high water, it will *ever* happen.

<sup>2</sup> I'm a heterosexual guy, so I can only vouch for *straight male* behavior. If there's something like this between females, or in the LGTBQ community, then please consider this as *code* for whatever that is.

animals do, including injury, disease and mortality. And maggots are equally fond of both forms of rotting flesh.

If you raised the objection that not all animals are born in the same way, consider that pretty much 99% of the time procreation involves an egg, a fertilization process, and a gestation period. Pretty much, it's the same process, except sometimes the egg hatches inside, and sometimes it pops out first. I wonder what the implications are of humans not having to fight their way out of an egg to get born.

Outside of the room<sup>1</sup> where I'm writing this, hangs a hummingbird feeder. It holds a couple pints of sugar water, feeding six fake flowers positioned around the feeder's girth. In other words, plenty to go around. *Yet, the birds fight over it!*

Some of the birds are more aggressive than others. A more submissive bird only gets quick sips before being chased off by a more aggressive bird. A meeker bird will either never fully sit while drinking, or will sit, sip, then nervously flit into the air, then sit for another quick sip, often with their wings still buzzing away.

The aggressive bird will plant its imperious butt on the fake, plastic twig, and drink without a care.

Remind you of any humans you know?

Here are more examples of animal codes in human behavior:

1. Respect the pecking order, unless you're ready and willing to battle for elevated status. In other words, know your place.
2. Don't look the alpha male/female directly in the eyes -- "what chu lookin' at?".

---

<sup>1</sup> Work on this book spans many a year, with more than one change of residence.

3. Never appear weak, vulnerable or needy. Self sufficiency in all things!
4. Probably shouldn't sleep with the alpha male's lover.
5. Also don't sleep with the alpha male's ex-lover—unless you're given permission. And even then, I wouldn't.
6. Do what you can to not appear too different from the current template for social conformity, or genetic purity. For example: Late night comedian Red Carpet fashion snark; School children's merciless taunt of the *strange*; Trees bearing *strange fruit*<sup>1</sup>.
7. Don't act weird, or do anything that seems suspicious or dangerous to others. This is, essentially, a corollary to #6.
8. Don't make other people feel awkward or uncomfortable. Typical social norms dictate we be in charge of everyone else's comfort and/or feelings.

I once saw a video on YouTube of three cats. In the center, a dominant male cat. To his left, a mostly stoic, seemingly disinterested cat. And the goofy cat to the dominant male's right. The goofy cat, while futzing around with a cotton ball, stumbles and [mildly] body-checks the center cat. There's a moment where the disinterested cat seems to cringe a little in empathy for what it knows is coming next. The goofy cat glances at the dominant cat with an expression that seemed to say, "Sorry, big guy." Which was clearly way too familiar and disrespectful, because the center cat, with ears pinned back, smacked him a good one—Moe style! You could literally see the rage building in the center cat's

---

<sup>1</sup> A Billie Holiday signature song.

body language!

A lot of that, of course, is probably anthropomorphism on my part, but if you saw the video<sup>1</sup>, you might not think so. I've seen similar videos featuring an elder gorilla giving an underling a disciplinary cuff when it got too cocky or boisterous.

Once, as a boy of 6 years old or so, I was with a clutch of other kids who thought it great fun to tease the two dogs on the other side of a chain link fence separating the neighboring yard from the one we were in. One of the dogs was a German Shepherd with guard dog training. The other was a yappy little poser. A primal thrill within me, spawned by the glee of dominance over aggressive creatures, compelled me to join in with this abuse of power. And the more we teased, the angrier the dogs got.

A few days later, I was visiting a quasi-friend at the home of those same dogs. Silly me, I didn't make the connection. But the dogs did. It was feeding time, and with their doggie bowls full, my friend's mom opened the back door to let them in<sup>2</sup>. The instant they saw me at the kitchen table, they eschewed lunch for the chance to chew on me!

The poser dog nailed my arm leaving a mere bruise. But, the Shepherd tore open my lip. It took seven stitches to close it back up. Remind you of any humans? When a human holds a grudge, how different is that from the way those dogs behaved?

Have you ever watched a nature show? Ever noticed the parallels between the behaviors exhibited by the animals in the show, and behaviors you've seen in other humans, and even in yourself—especially in social situations?

<sup>1</sup> And, believe me, I looked for it!

<sup>2</sup> But, we still don't know who let the dogs out - *rim shot!*



**“Yeah, but, Steve...isn't that just a cheap anthropomorphism of animal behavior?”**

Well, if you're referring to one of those cutesy Disney nature films, like *Chimpanzee*, *Bears*, or *Monkey Kingdom*, then, yeah. But, I'm talking about Science grounded documentaries revealing nature being its true self, like on the Discovery channel or National Geographic, or that incredible new [as of this writing] series on Netflix called *Our Planet*.

If you can watch those and not see a resemblance to human behavior, then you're in serious denial.

For instance this—a TED Talk by Frans de Waal, a preeminent primatologist [unfortunately, there will probably be an ad, or two, at the beginning, but they are usually, either short, or skip-able]:



[Fascinating video revealing ape-like behavior in humans, or vice versa?](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid01](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid01)

I know, for some of you, this may mess with your ego. “No way am I a disgusting, vial animal!” you might be thinking [or even shouting at this book].

But, hell, the notion we're mostly *animal* is scientific fact. **98.8%** of *human DNA* is exactly the same—*equivalent* [**NOT different**] to the DNA

<sup>1</sup>“Get your stinking paws off me, you damn, dirty ape!” --Astronaut George Taylor, played by Charlton Heston, in the original *Planet Of The Apes* movie.

of a *chimp*<sup>1</sup> That means we're only *1.2% different!* A cat's DNA is closer to human than that of a dog, which doesn't surprise me. And I doubt that would surprise most cats, either.

Place an undiapered human baby together with a puppy, in the same room, and eventually, both will soil the carpet. Both will whine for food. Both will eventually fall asleep. A space alien watching this might categorize them in the same class.

On a side note, a mature kitten in the same room will seek out a place to bury its business. The space alien would likely consider the kitten the progeny of the more intelligent race on the planet.

BTW: Did you know a zebra, during its first 15 minutes of life, learns to stand, and within an hour, is able to walk, and even run, and from the get-go, possesses a full complement of survival knowledge? Let's see a human baby do the same! But, I digress.

My wife and I had great fun watching the Decorah Eagles Nest webcam<sup>2</sup>. One striking feature was how the baby chicks knew to point their little butts outward, and shoot their poop over the edge of the nest<sup>3</sup>.

Why aren't human babies that smart? But, again, I digress.

Assuming you were raised "civilized", most of the time you don't behave like an animal, right? But, how would you behave if your world was suddenly turned upside-down? How silly are those disaster movies, where the beleaguered characters either reveal a hero self, or become the one to hate? Often, the ones hated early on, become the most civil

---

<sup>1</sup> BTW: we are the direct descendants of **Apes** ("Great apes" to be exact), NOT *monkeys*. **Chimpanzees**, and **Bonobos** are our distant cousins – monkeys are more like third cousins once removed, but, even monkeys are a whopping 93% DNA match to us humans.

<sup>2</sup> [www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web70](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web70) [seasonal]

<sup>3</sup> Thus, not wise to stand under an Eagle's nest!

and heroic when things go to shit—I know: *fiction*, right? [but, come-on... we all know it's true].

You may be “civilized,” but your basic “you” is founded on animal nature. I mean, after all, you had to *learn* to be civilized, right? We all know that family of wild, undisciplined kids. What were you before you were taught to behave (assuming you ever were)? Even the most civilized, when shit happens, have their animal self<sup>1</sup> moments.

Yes, you *are* human, with all those wonderful human attributes no other animal has! For instance, the ability to wax poetic over an especially tasty breakfast, or eulogize a lovely sunrise, or operate heavy machinery. But, that's usually only when you're not stressed—not pushed to your limit! Unless you're an exceptionally disciplined human, in dire circumstances your demeanor is, likely, going to be ruled by the panic and narcissism coming from your inner animal.

A brilliant fictional portrayal of this phenomenon is the 22<sup>nd</sup> *Episode*, of the 1<sup>st</sup> *Season* of the **Original Twilight Zone**—titled: “**The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street**”<sup>2</sup>. As of this writing, it's available on both **HULU & Netflix**.

- When you want to smack someone for startling you, you're *feeling your animal*.
- When you salivate over that cheeseburger (even if it's vegan), you're *feeling your animal*.
- When you're angry because you're not getting your way, you're *feeling your animal*.

---

<sup>1</sup> Even if you've mastered the ability to step out of your animal, you probably still have those brief moments where you loose it. Unless you're one of those one-in-ten-million who I call the unassailable!

<sup>2</sup> Written by Rod Serling himself!

- When you judge someone by their looks, *you're feeling your animal.*
- When you want to jump someone's bones, *you're feeling your animal.*
- When you catch your lover with another, *you're feeling your animal.*
- When you want to kill that son-of-a-bitch, *you're feeling your animal.*
- When you take offense at someone calling you an animal, *you're feeling your animal!*

It's your very ability to choose your response to your *animal urges* that sets you apart, but the fact you have those urges, means the *animal is conjoined to you.*

It is *so* important to recognize this truth, because this awareness affords one the opportunity to notice their *animal response*, and then choose *humanness*. You can choose to follow your animal urge, or **to not!** In other words, the ability to be conscious of your *animal* and act contrary to the *animal code*, is **huge!** It's your **Feral Override**. Another way of looking at this is: *You have the power to override the machinery!*

I mean, what animal can drive a car to the market without crashing, or play a violin like Itzhak Perlman<sup>1</sup>, or rack up high scores on a video game? Or even *design* a car, or *make* a violin, or *write* a video game?

I doubt a lion ever *decides* to go on a fast, or drink a mango smoothie, or do Pilates. A lion fasts if the pride lioness' prey is too elusive. Any smoothie in a lion's gullet is likely the stomach contents of the latest kill [I know! Dark implications]. Pilates? Only a cartoon lion<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Okay, most humans can't play a violin like Itzhak Perlman, but I'd bet my donor organs NO animal can, either.

<sup>2</sup> If you said, "What about a trained lion?", come on. Maybe you could dress the lion in tights and a "Jungle Pilates" tee shirt, and train it to do some moves that might be related to Pilates—the lion still doesn't know it's doing Pilates—nor would it choose to do so on its own.

This is a great power, the power to override your inner animal—a **SuperPower** in the animal world.

One of the steps in the shark survival playbook is to actually turn and *fight the shark!* When a shark's body language is saying, “*you're my next meal!*”, take yourself off the menu by punching it in the nose!

Here's a video advising this very thing [I set it to skip to the part about punching the shark in the nose, but you can run it back to the beginning if you want]:



[\*Safely Scuba Dive With Sharks | 5 Rules to Stay Safe!\*](https://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid40)

[\*www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid40\*](https://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid40)

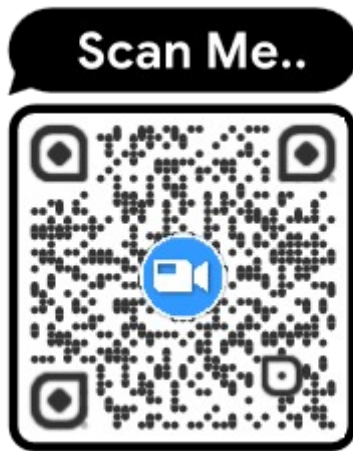
Or, maybe better, this:

I saw a video of a trained shark feeder where she stayed a shark by gently pressing on its nose! The shark had missed the hunk of fish she tossed toward it. Having missed, it went for her hand. Being alert, she snatched her hand away, then calmly placed it on the shark's nose and held it there until the shark got over its autonomic urge to bite.

The video cautioned us nonprofessionals to never try this. No problem! As a rule, I avoid such situations, but should I ever find myself under the gaze of a hungry shark, my animal code, in the face of all those teeth, will scream “*Turn tail and swim! Get the flop out of here!! NOW!!!*” But, all my splashing about would massively increase the sharks craving for me.

As much as it feels like the exact *right thing to do*, fleeing is the best way to *get chewed to death*, so it's the exact *wrong thing to do*! Especially since the shark can swim a hell of a lot better (and faster) than I can!

Here's a video featuring Andy showing us how to gently direct a shark *around*, rather than *through*!



[How to Deter a Shark, Told by a Safety Diver](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid39](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid39)

Equipped with our marvelous human brain, we have the opportunity to rescind *the animal code, and turn and face the shark.*

Unlike lowly prey<sup>1</sup>, you have the ability, in a pinch, to leap to the top of the food chain and look the shark straight in the eye, and become more apex than its predator ass. Being at this pinnacle you have the power to either punch its lights out, or use the gentler approach demonstrated by Andy, or even hook the SOB and throw it on the barbie!

Let's see a measly fish do that<sup>2</sup>!

It's probably a LOT easier for a trained professional to do this, but all us humans have this latitude. I've never tried this with a shark, and hopefully I'll never get the chance to. But, with a far less dangerous predator, I've done something similar.

Before I was licensed to drive [being but a lad], I relied on my bicycle for most of my around-town travel needs. The mere velocity of me on my bike triggered the "chase all moving things" *dogie code* of nearly every

<sup>1</sup> Mothers are often an exception!

<sup>2</sup> First of all, a dolphin is not a fish. Second, dolphins are also predators, and I'm talking about a prey animal finding the courage and presence of mind to actually turn and fight the shark. Also, I doubt a dolphin can work a barbecue! [Unless, of course, it's a Miami Dolphin].

untethered canine I encountered. The typical outcome was fangs nipping at my pant legs.

One day, fed up and already angry about other shit in my life, I slammed on my breaks, turned, and bellowed a loud, guttural roar. The dog yelped, and literally tucked its tail and ran. This was a powerful moment for me, considering the K-9 mauling of my earlier youth.

I did the same for all future bellicose dogs. I was able to do this because I overrode my inner animal's fear-impulse and chose a dominant role. I activated my Feral Override and invoked my *animal SuperPower*—in this case, the ability to morph into the semblance of a *dog devouring carnivore*. But, this isn't always easy. Facing down something as menacing as a shark, or lion, or vicious dog, is likely to petrify. And, that feeling of lethargy, and/or panic, and/or mental confusion, and/or incontinence when faced with something terrifying, is a VERY striking example of the animal part of us commanding dominance. Challenging that very poignant feeling of the primitive brain asserting its will, is truly difficult. And, the very tremendous effort needed to overcome such feelings is a strong testament to *who's REALLY, actually in charge!*

Later, as a young adult, I used my animal SuperPower on a human "aggressor".

It was an electrical engineer who joined our little band of *technicians*. He reveled in lording over us his superior engineering education. He also took every opportunity to relate the story of his fall from entrepreneurship that landed him among us "inferiors". He had yet to bend my ear, but I heard about it from the others, who didn't dare do anything but enable this guy, while they harbored silent resentment! Their hesitation was a direct manifestation of their *inner animal's* survival



instinct.

Finally the day came when he sidled up to me and related how he, and a “money guy”, teamed up to start an engineering firm. But upon completion of their first project his partner stiffed him on the proceeds—money he said he needed in order to “get ahead of bills” in his personal life. He clarified this to be the reason he had to *settle* for a position among us lowly technicians.

The second time he cornered me to tell this story, I didn't let him finish. I waited for a beat, then, as with that bike chasing dog, I looked him square in the eyes and in a firm voice, asked, “What are you going to do about it?” Based on the reactions of the others within earshot, you'd think I'd just called his mother a whore.

Undaunted, he continued, “...and he stiffed me...”

Again, eyes riveted, I repeated, “What are you going to do about it?”

A best friend, and co-worker across the bench from me at the time, surreptitiously gestured for me to shut the *puck* up. But I continued, repeating my little question until he finally gave up, and walked away.

A few days later, he approached me and shook my hand in thanks. When I asked why, he told me I had given him the courage to call his ex-partner, whereupon he learned that it was all a misunderstanding—his partner had no idea the money hadn't reached him, and “BTW, check your account *now*.”

Then he smiled and walked away, never to be seen again.

· - ----===<•:+:{☉}:+:•>====- - ·

Hummingbirds can only be hummingbirds. That's all they know. Imagine if one of those alpha hummingbirds I previously spoke of, were to notice some big, ugly dude with a pony-tail, periodically, and with comforting consistency, refilling the jar, and think, *gee, there's plenty to go around! There's no real reason to fight! Let's all just get along!* After which the bird throws a *nectar party* with an open invitation to all hummingbirds in the neighborhood [*no bees allowed!*].

Not gonna happen, right<sup>1</sup>?

But we humans are capable of this. That's what *makes us human!* This ability to step out of *the code*. The ability to assess a situation, invoke reason, and go against our primordial impulses and do something different. To rise above our animal mind. To break from billions of years of naturally selected animal tradition. To ditch the rules. To, maybe, choose *happiness in the most ridiculous of circumstances*, even in the face of negative reactions from other nearby humans to the *silly grin on your stupid face*. A certain ceramics teacher comes to mind.

Recognizing when your *animal-self* is in control, gives you the ability to step out of it, and choose a different, and hopefully "higher" way. To truly be human, it's almost always the case that you have to actively *choose* humanness. That's why I call it the Feral Override. When one is aware of their animal nature, the ability to choose humanness is far more accessible, and brings forward the very *possibility* to make such choices! But, this must be *learned*—and then *practiced*.

It's precisely when you're in your animality (I like to call it "being in your animal") that this power to choose is most propitious. When things are

---

<sup>1</sup> Actually, we have, since I first wrote that, seen more than one hummingbird feeding at a time. Our feeder has 4 perches, each with two plastic flowers. One day, we saw a bird on each perch, and even one perch with two birds! Aggressive and timid, dining together! Maybe it was Hummingbird *Happy Hour* 😊

fine and dandy, more than likely you're being a relatively congenial human, but it's those times *when times get tough*—when you're pushed to your limit, or backed into a corner—when the Universe gets in the mood to test the shit out of you—those are the times it's most expedient to be in possession of the power to notice when your inner animal is roaming free on your outside, and put it on a leash, or even lock it back in its cage.

But, those times when your animal is in control, are usually those times you want nothing to do with *introspection* or *choosing* or *being reasonable*. I like to put it like this: this is when your ***Animal is UP***. A more primitive part of your brain is in control, and all it wants to do is *nullify the threat—by any means possible—as soon as it can—no matter who gets hurt—or what gets damaged or destroyed!!*

That's when your *animal logic* takes over—logic far removed from civility, magnanimity, common sense, impartiality, self discipline, self sacrifice, or any other *higher way*. And, it's extra hard because your biochemistry is involved. The body-machine uses chemical signals, and once those chemicals are in the bloodstream, the urges they produce are powerful, and very difficult to oppose. But, oppose we must, if we are to own the moment!

A pair of doves hangs out in the general vicinity of our house, and often, when I'm out puttering around the house I'll inadvertently startle one of them. If this happens while the two are together, one will scream and fly away, leaving the other behind. I imagine it yelling, "Every dove for itself!! Sorry, dear!"

When a human does this—leaves their partner, the very person they

promised to love, honor and cherish<sup>1</sup>, to their own defense—that human is generally considered a coward, and held in low esteem<sup>2</sup>. But really, they're just deferring to their animal self. When a person acts to the contrary—puts the well-being of another before their own self, we call them a *hero*! Such outlandish behavior is the exception precisely because it's contrary to this foundational animal nature.

At least part of the biochemistry that drives us is called *hormones*. While on a walk in the park around a small lake, my wife, her daughter<sup>3</sup>, and I witnessed what looked to me like *duck rape*. Two male ducks flanked a female duck, while a third jumped on her back and pinned her head in the dirt while giving her the carnal business.

This encounter began with expressed delight from us humans at seeing the trio of ducks emerge from the lake, especially since they stopped right in front of us. It concluded with mild shock at the brutality of nature, especially after we noticed the top of the female duck's head. It was rubbed bare of feathers and skin, leaving a raw, bloody scalp.



This is animal behavior, and when

it shows up in humans, that human is in his, or her *animal*. In fact, this is exactly why there is so much rape in the human population. And it's

<sup>1</sup> There's no mention of heroism!

<sup>2</sup> Rick And Morty fans would peg this as "Jerry-esque."

<sup>3</sup> From a previous marriage.

made worse by puritanical sexual shaming. And is, actually, a very good argument for legalizing prostitution<sup>1</sup>, but again, I diverge.

I've seen this behavior in the neighborhood doves. A male will continue to pester a female, even after getting the cold shoulder. I'm sure if these male doves had a neck as long and articulated as a duck, they would enact the same sort of brutality. Animals are rapey! It's the way of nature. Yeah, nature isn't always so sweet and cuddly. And, humans are part of nature. I rest my case.

When a human, jacked up on hormones, chooses to not be a dick while under the influence, that human is actually *being a human*. Succumbing to hormonal behavior is mere subservience to animal authority. The true accreditation of *humanness* goes to one who tempers such urges with civility and wisdom.

So, get familiar with that feeling—that bubble-up-of-crazy! The more you can learn to catch that feeling—to realize in the moment, *hey, my animal is up*—the more capable you'll become at wrestling back control and becoming the human you really are. In fact, I suggest that the old saying:

*“He/She is only Human”*

be changed to what I think is the more relevant:

*“He/She is only **Animal**”*

Here's what I mean:

---

<sup>1</sup> The movie “Never On A Sunday” starring Melina Mercouri, portrays a woman who's calling [surprise pun!] is that of a compassionate and caring component to the male libido, acrimoniously referred to as “prostitution”. I happen to think it's possible for this to be as valid a service as that of a school teacher, or Tupperware® vendor. It doesn't have to be exploitative, and in fact, I believe it's the exploitation of “sex workers” that should draw the attention of the law. The women, and men, who feel called to this profession should be allowed to practice without punitive interference. There should be no more regulation than is leveled at a restaurateur.



intelligent choices! Like counting to ten, or filtering my words, or taking a moment to learn the truth in the situation, or explaining to the other person that, "I just need a moment."

=====  
----- END SPOILER ALERT -----  
=====

Watch this video of Pebble, the cockatoo, mimicking a human tirade, and then think of the oh-so-cute silliness of this bird the next time you're losing your shit. It might give you leverage to catch yourself *being in your animal*, so you can become more magnanimous, and laugh it off.

PRUDE ALERT:<sup>1</sup>



[\*Pebble The Crazy Cockatoo - Kelly gets it\*](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid32](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid32)

And it gets worse. We humans not only get emotional juice from our primitive brain, our higher brain tends to amplify it into an imaginative

<sup>1</sup> Yeah, that bird might be cussing – not sure – but if foul language triggers you, maybe steer away – especially since they didn't blur it's beak. Sorry, I have to laugh: CBS is in the practice of blurring the mouth of a cussing *animated* character. Can anyone *really* read cartoon lips?!? Sure, the cockatoo might be spewing expletives, but give me a break! It's a goddamn bird! How much *meaning* is really discernable?!

array of “what-ifs”. In fact, we torture ourselves with this. Neurologists have demonstrated that we go through the exact same pain and grief imagining scenarios, as we do actually experiencing the real thing. It’s the same stress, either way. So, using our marvelous new brain retrofit, we create a world of misery that mostly never, ever actually occurs in real life. Then we do it again...and again...and again...

And, much of this is due to programming that is, essentially, outdated. Most of us are not in immediate danger of being eaten by a lion, or a shark! So, wouldn't it make more sense to only worry about that when lions and sharks are an actual threat? That’s a fundamental flaw in the human brain. I mean, really: The whole thing needs to be torn down and redesigned from scratch. A better design would allow a greater degree of reasonable control over the survival initiatives. “I’m not in the jungle, right now, so we can do with less worry about lions, tigers and bears<sup>1</sup>.” “Social media trolls are complete strangers, so we can turn that one off!” And, sometimes mean, nasty people just need a friend, so “maybe I could not always expect them to be a threat.” A more effective algorithm would allow logic and common sense to prevail. “My self worth has nothing whatsoever to do with the negative opinions of others.”

To quote Popeye:

*"I yam what I yam, and that's all that I yam"*

BTW: In the comic strip, Popeye’s father, Pappy, cracks open a dictionary and looks up “Yam.”

“So, what yer sayin', son, is you're a *Sweet Potato*?!”

<sup>1</sup> Yeah, I know there are no bears in the jungle...wait, are there even lions in the jungle?!? If Dorthy can think so, why can't I? Wait... Dorthy was in a forest!!



. - ----===<•:+:{0}:+:•>===---- - .

If you still can't buy it [that you are, in fact, an animal], you might as well drop this book now and kick it to the curb<sup>1</sup>. The very core of this thesis hinges on this basic concept: Your animalism is one of the main things pulling you away from happiness, preventing you from being the human you were meant to be, which is another way of saying: Your animalism is complicit in thwarting many of your chances of being *Happy For No Damn Reason!*

---

<sup>1</sup> Don't break your toes!

## Calm Your Animal, Claim Your Human

*Do you have the patience to wait till your mud settles  
and the water is clear?  
Can you remain unmoving till the right action arises by itself?*  
~Lao-Tzu

So... how do you tame your Inner-Animal?

Since you're still reading, I'll assume you're on-board with the whole *you're an animal* thing. What can you do with this insight?

First of all, let go of the notion that this higher brain of yours is *in charge!* It's not<sup>1</sup>! Otherwise, you wouldn't be having difficulty with all of this.

The best you can do is manage it. And to that end, let's start with these<sup>2</sup>:

**14 things you can do to Cool Down and Regain Your Humanity  
when your inner Animal is, well...*being an animal*:**

### 1. CATCH IT!

Learn your own triggers, so when they happen, you can recognize your trigger reaction and choose not to let it run you. Another way of saying this is, unwire your buttons<sup>3</sup>!

---

<sup>1</sup> Even if you're a Sociopath, apparently. I'm no Psychologist, so I can't say for sure, but I'm told by genuine sociopaths that they get irritated and even angry, and that sounds like out of control, to me.

<sup>2</sup> Probably not a comprehensive list, but hey, maybe there's something in there that will help.

<sup>3</sup> "Button" is a term I picked up from the 12-Step world, and is basically another word for "trigger"

We all have buttons – those little landmines being triggered by other peoples irksome behavior. But if you're paying attention, you might notice in some [possibly not so rare] cases, nobody else shares your vexation<sup>1</sup>. Are all of them wrong? Perhaps. But, isn't it more likely there's something unique going on in you that has you all bent out of shape over this person's demeanor?

You might want to get some help with that [see, Getting Help]. But, until then I suggest you quickly proceed to **#2 Count To 10** and/or **#3 Tune Into Your Feelings**.

## 2. COUNT TO 10

And, in fact, probably a lot higher—like 50, or even 100! Basically, this allows your liver time to metabolize the hormones out of your bloodstream—the hormones making you want to “kill” that person you think has wronged you. Remember: *This Too Shall Pass [through the liver, into the kidneys, and out the next stream of piss<sup>2</sup>]*. After a while, if you still feel *that way*, then give **#3 Tune Into Your Feelings** a try.

Deep breaths are another way to calm down, and avoid making a mess of things.

---

<sup>1</sup> Unless it's a common trigger—something involving gender, racism, antisemitism, grammar violation, etc.

<sup>2</sup> OK, that's a simplification: The liver *metabolizes* the hormones, and then these metabolites are filtered out by the kidneys, finally to be pissed out, but that isn't as catchy.

*Practice the pause  
Pause before judging  
Pause before assuming  
Pause before accusing  
Pause whenever you're about to react harshly,  
and you'll avoid doing and saying things you will later regret.*

~Lori Deschene

Bottom-line: *Emotions fade.* The resentment generated by your retaliation may not! And, if you have a conscience, you may be left with indelible regret. In truth, over time, you might even forget what you were so upset about.

**Anger** is *temporary madness!* Your rational brain is *gone*, and the primitive mind is in charge. And the primitive mind knows nothing of *scruples, or bridges, or long term consequences.* All it cares about are primitive, short-term measures. Mitigate the threat! Put down the aggressor! Establish dominance! Be as scary and threatening as possible! Teach the SOB a lesson, so they never do it again!! That last one might actually involve input from the higher mind, but only as a subordinate advisor.

It's important to allow time for this madness to clear.

I know it's hard to expect rationality to show up in the face of mindless rage, but have a little faith. Counting is a simple thing. So is breathing. There can even be an inner negotiation. *"When we're done counting, if you [the primitive mind] still need to crush the cocksuckers, I won't intervene!" "Just ten more!" "You'll thank me later!" "And, maybe we can find a punching bag, or worst case, a wall to put our fist through [make sure it's something soft, like plasterboard! Some walls are as*



*solid as rock, and some actually are rock!]*” **Disclaimer:** I’m not advocating the punching of walls, but if that’s an alternative to assaulting pets, or people, or for harming yourself in ways more serious, then do what you must do, but please let that be a sign you need some help.

Eventually, with some practice, you might even reach the point of not reacting at all. I call it putting on a Miyagi face<sup>1</sup>. I mean, why even expend the energy? Choose your battles.

**“This little one’s not worth the effort.”**

~Obi-Wan “Ben” Kenobi

And, even more advanced is actually listening to the person. Hearing what they have to say, beyond the outer appearance. Listening to *them*, rather than to the mental jabber in your own primitive mind. Three things might happen, at this level: 1) *You might learn something*; 2) *You might have something helpful for them*; 3) *You might even find out they’re not the beast you thought they were!*

This is the mode of the peace maker. See **#12 Listen to Them, NOT to Yourself** below.

### 3. SHAKE IT OFF

Cesar Millan, on his show Dog Whisperer, inadvertently validated something I already knew about my physiology: When I’m stressed, especially when worry is a prominent cause, my body wants to shake, in the same way I’ve seen dogs shake to expel water from their fur. But, I’ve seen them do it even when dry

Cesar says it’s to shed stress, and I believe him. In fact, after seeing this in several Dog Whisperer episodes, I now do my best impression, and damned if it doesn’t make me feel better! The stress actually does lift, and life becomes easier to manage. It gets easier to push the thoughts aside, and get back to sleep, or get busy

<sup>1</sup> From the movie **Karate Kid**. Mr Miyagi, when verbally accosted, would stand stoically with his eyes half shut and lips pursed, presenting the visage of mild disinterest. For me, it’s a symbol of unassailability.

doing whatever needs to be done to remedy whatever is causing the worry. It frees up my mind and makes it easier to get to my creative, problem solving self, so I'm not mired in my ruminating, hand-wringing self, or my self-pity self, or my head-buried-in-the-sand self.

Just give your body a little shake. It's the same kind of motion as when you shiver from a chill. Do it again if one wasn't enough [sometimes I need two or three]. Yes, it's a bit weird, and yes, it may feel awkward at first, but your body knows how—just give it the chance. I mean, what would you rather: Maintain your cool, or *authentically chill*?

#### 4. SELF SOOTHE

This is something I don't know a lot about. I certainly didn't learn any of this as a child. And, the bits I've been introduced to, were offered at different times and places, and never, as far as I recall, was referred to as "self soothing". I do mention something akin to this in various places in this book, especially in the chapter titled: **Could you be afraid of feeling good?**[page328]. I only recently learned what it's called.

And, being that I only recently became aware of this concept, which betrays my own ignorance, I shall defer to a better authority with the following link:



[\*Self-Soothing Strategies: 8 Ways to Calm Anxiety and Stress\*](https://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web19)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web19](https://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web19)

## 5. TUNE INTO YOUR FEELINGS

Listen to your thoughts with the understanding they *generate* your feelings. Get honest with yourself. Remember, when you point a finger at another, there are at least three fingers pointing back at you<sup>1</sup>. Then remember: No one is really to blame. It's all just *personal cautionary tales* we run in our heads—little anecdotes based on [often loosely] one or more crappy things that happened in our past. A personal cautionary tale is like an *emotional antibody*. It's coded with elements of an “original trauma”—a painful, or frightening event from our past—that we absolutely never want to experience again. We run these tales in our head to remind us to never allow the circumstances that led to the terrible event, to “get us”, or “corner us”, or to never be allowed to play out in our lives *ever* again! If said circumstances even loosely match the patterns of a *cautionary tale*, alarms go off that mobilize us.

We all have a little *Homeland Security Team* living inside us that

<sup>1</sup> Assuming you still have all your fingers. If not, then phantom fingers, maybe? And, since your thumb, which indeed is also a finger, is probably pointing off into space somewhere, I didn't include it.

monitors all our sensory information. When it sees signs of impending events matching one of the cautionary tales in its fleshy little database, it calls out the *Visceral National Guard*. This can show up as a panic attack; as yelling—often with colorful expletives; as fists in the air; as cold shoulders and silence; as clandestine plotting and evil plan review. These strategies for preventing a recurrence of past horror are personal, and varied.

A common side-effect of all of this is “projection.” If your little sentry sees behavior in another it considers a match for one of the emotional antibodies on file, it projects onto that person a slideshow of “dangerous characteristics”—things that typify the kind of person that *might be a threat*, thus turning them into a proxy for some odious personality of the past. This person, then becomes an unwitting doppelganger-target for all the wrath you have stockpiled for the original accursed runt. When this happens, the innocent rarely know what hit them, and they respond, often with their own projection, or at least with reactionary feelings appropriate to your onslaught. Problem is, the onslaught is bogus. If people knew that ill feelings from others, more than half the time, are most likely mere projection, i.e. are in no way actually personal—if people could remember that one little truth, the bulk of humanity would live in far greater harmony. Have a look at **#7 DON THEIR MOCCASINS AND WALK AROUND A BIT [PAGE 52]**

It’s important to realize that these cautionary tales tend to be inaccurate. Especially when they’re written by a child’s mind. Because children lack adult experience, and adult mental capacity and adult references, they tend to draw incorrect conclusions, and to exaggerate, using amazing creativity in the process. For example, your puny little white self gets a beat-down from a larger, and stronger, very angry black kid [personal experience!]. Right then, and there your little child mind writes a tale that warns about ALL BIG BLACK KIDS! After that, the alarms go off around any black person that seems to fit the profile. Or a dog bites you [also, personal experience!], leading to a cautionary tale about the vicious



nature of ALL DOGS, or at least dogs of the same breed [German Shepherds, in my case].

The actual truth is, the black kid was running his own cautionary tale about “bitch-ass white boys”, and you just happened to be, in that very unfortunate moment, a perfect target. So, not ALL *black kids*—just that particular black kid<sup>1</sup>. But, it hurt so bad, and was such a frightening event, reason flew out the window!

As for the dog, well, a week or so before the biting incident, you were teasing that particular dog, so...just that particular dog, and not really her fault! But, our little child minds, and the “lizard brain mentality” of that primitive animal brain of ours, tends to get this wrong—it tends to over blow, and to grossly generalize, and to leave out certain pertinent details. Because, again, it hurt so much, and was so freakin’ terrifying!

Adults tend to write inaccurate cautionary tales as well—but, probably not quite as flawed. Some cautionary tales are valid, and valuable: Like the one that has you avoid poison ivy, or venomous spiders, or lawyers like Jimmy “Saul” McGill<sup>2</sup>.

Personal cautionary tales are the consequence of emotions left unprocessed—often because they happen in childhood, in an atmosphere devoid of any adult role-model for *how* to process said emotion<sup>3</sup>. Stuck emotions lead to unresolved issues, and unresolved issues are citadels of psycho<sup>4</sup> behavior.

Breathe, and allow the feelings to flow. Bring the feeling into your heart area and breathe some more. Allow yourself to yell, scream,

---

<sup>1</sup> Yes, that’s an example from my own childhood. And I still have that cautionary tale in my head, but with my ability to notice my own RIDICULOUS, when I hear that cautionary tale, in the presence of an angry looking muscular black man, I can temper it with wisdom, and take the moment for whatever it actually is, at the time.

<sup>2</sup> The lawyer character in the AMC hit show “Better Call Saul” – prequel to “Breaking Bad”

<sup>3</sup> There’s some irony in that statement, because, likely the very adult “caregivers” that might function as role-models, are the very adults that caused the emotional shutdown, in the first place. Of course, every story is different, and usually riddled with complexities.

<sup>4</sup> Using a bit of slang, here, for a whole spectrum of nutty behavior, all the way from the relatively benign, to stark raving.

cry, whack a pillow with a tennis racket, cuss—whatever that feeling compels you to do. Well...within reason—I mean, it might compel you to *kill the bastard*, but, of course, that’s the behavior we’re trying to avoid, isn’t it! Instead, “kill” an *effigy*. In other words, this is about *process*, not *reprisal*.

Polite society has its place, but sometimes one needs to be *rude*, and maybe even a bit *crude*! If you absolutely cannot justify “processing” in the vicinity of the triggering event, because it might, for instance, damage your “social standing”, or frighten people into calling the men in white coats, at least do it later in a safe space. A noisy place is good—like an unpopulated beach near the thunder of crashing waves<sup>1</sup>, or close to a tall waterfall, or under a train trestle while a train is roaring by, or under the flight path of a busy international airport [but, of course, *not on the actual runway*], or if home is within earshot of the neighbors, do it while making a smoothie, or operating a leaf blower, or other such extreme noise maker [though, maybe not *chainsaws*—there’s no telling where that will lead].

Failure to process the emotions around negative events can foster *preemptive behavior*. This is when your cautionary tales lead to paranoia, and you take preemptive action to prevent something that *might* happen [even if there is no remote chance in hell it is likely to ever *actually* happen anytime, soon, or *ever*]. Unprocessed feelings can, also, go the other way, towards shyness, neurosis, endless rumination and catastrophizing. This failure to process tends to lead to fretting over one “*what if*” after *another*. Processing is all about being present to the current reality, and resolving the emotions around it, so it doesn’t turn into a future fallacy full of exaggerated, and even fabricated convictions. By processing, we demonstrate to ourselves our own ability to cope with whatever caused the emotional issue. Without that demonstration, the negative emotions linger, and become detached from the initial reality, and are typically blown into *trolls* that seem impossible to defeat.

---

<sup>1</sup> I only have the Pacific Coast as a reference, where the waves make considerable noise. Other beaches might not suffice.

Paranoid preemptive action is the bailiwick of evil. In fact, that's all evil really is. Someone so traumatized by past events, they can't stand the idea of it ever happening again, are pushed to desperation, and resort to some form of *preventative action*, often as *violence*, or *cruelty*, or some such antisocial behavior. Even *greed*, and *sloth based fraud* have their root in some personal dark pact forged in the wake of some shit from the past. I guarantee, down at the core of even the most detestable person, is a sweet little soul in *serious emotional pain*. I even believe redemption is possible for such people, but there are some serious trust issues to overcome.

Tune into your feelings, and do your best to link them to any establishing thoughts—do your best to follow the connections—ask the question, “*what thought led to this feeling [old or recent]?*” Then, turn it around by paying attention to those thoughts. Catch the event of it becoming a feeling. Eventually you'll be able to *unwire* it—render it void—sometimes, simply by mentally discrediting the whole thing—realizing how different the relationship is between *reality* and *the founding thought*—now that you're no longer a vulnerable child. I did a lot of this in therapy—especially during my “inner child work”, where I assumed the role of *nurturing parent*.

And if you can't do it yourself [e.g., this is a lot harder to do with PTSD, and the like], get help. [see page 568, **Getting Help**]

## 6. GIVE UP SELF-DEPRECATATION!

What if we're OK, just the way we are? What if, blemishes and all, we're fine, dandy and peachy. And, like every other *just fine and dandy* individual on the planet, we're actually already worthy of our *good*. To illustrate, let's take this to the extreme: Is there such a thing as an *evil baby*<sup>1</sup>?

Does *evil machination* drive a baby to wake its parents at three in the morning for a mere feeding? Poopy diapers may seem *evil*, but

<sup>1</sup> [Smithsonian Magazine Article: Are Babies Born Good?](#)

are they *premeditated*? Babies seem to delight in hosing a parent down during a diaper change—*evil?!?* Or, are they merely exploring the features of their new body, or sharing their discoveries?

A baby doesn't have the capacity to *plot* or *scheme*<sup>2</sup>. And if such behaviors later appear, they are invariably primed by a *crisis of faith* that spawns the errors of thought conducive to *evil* behavior.

Somewhere along the developmental line, shit happens. It could be an innocent event interpreted as *shit*, or some form of *actual abuse* or *injustice*. Either way, the subsequent crisis of faith leading to some form of *evil*, is *forgivable*, because it was beyond the control of the individual. Even when the choices of character arising from the crisis are less than commendable, can the individual be blamed for their lack of wisdom? If they don't know, how can they be expected to *know*?!

Some examples of *innocent events leading to erroneous conclusions about the self*:

- A youngster defiantly steps on a sidewalk crack, and the tyke's mother actually does break her back. And, due to the little guy's "magical thinking", winds up secretly carrying this guilt and horror into his adult life, even though, as an adult, he/she possesses the facility to connect the coincidental dots.
- A mother comes home after a tough day at the office, and unloads the stress of the day on her kid, who then carries the belief he/she is the cause of the suffering of everyone in the world. This can "seat" even if later the mom apologizes. Especially if credibility issues already exist in the relationship.
- A child, proactively aspiring to own a supportive role in the family, volunteers for tasks such as setting the table, folding towels, polishing silver, etc. The mother, being obsessive-compulsive, consistently redoes

---

<sup>2</sup> If they did, they would be as adorably funny as the Stewie Griffin character, from *Family Guy*.

every task performed by the little one. This is done silently, without explanation, because the mother is conflicted, and doesn't know how to communicate with her son or daughter. This comes across as irritation, and soon, the child concludes he/she is a worthless incompetent, which makes him/her into a timid and reserved adult, who consistently, and often obsequiously defers to others in all matters.

And, examples of actual shit, causing unfortunate conclusions about one's own reality:

- A father sexually abuses a daughter, and she, in her adult life, associating the sexual attention with love, is driven into relationships with men for all the wrong reasons, leading to labels such as *home wrecker*, or *slut*. And worse, she's attracted to abusive men.
- A single parent praises their child for everything they do, even when it is crap, in a well intentioned overcompensation for feelings of parental inadequacy, and the kid assumes an unearned diva persona in adulthood, and can't understand why everyone hates them.
- A favorite sibling dies and the surviving kid is treated like dirt because of unwarranted parental resentment. The kid, thinking he/she actually is somehow complicit, carries a load of self loathing, and guilt into his/her adult life, and this inner seethe is acted out in overtly destructive ways.

Getting to the bottom of *it*—finding a way to reconcile the underlying inequity, is the *remedy* to evil [aka *dysfunction*]. Assuming you believe that (and you really should<sup>1</sup>), consider that if evil can be *removed*, it must be *ancillary*.

If you're beating yourself up over some past errant behavior, or for

---

<sup>1</sup> I've seen this enough times in 12-step meetings, and Group Therapy sessions to be a believer. Plus, I count myself as an example, having transformed from a jealous, grudging, angry young man, into the relatively serene, easy-going old-guy that I am now. Not sure if my younger self was authentically *evil*, but I did transform myself into someone with vastly different, and far more enlightened, attitudes and convictions.

socially repugnant thoughts, or for *anything negative* about yourself, give yourself a break! Nobody's perfect! Far more productive is acknowledging your *mistake*, or *error of reasoning*, and resolving to work on it. Make amends, clean up any mess[es] of your wrong doing, and ultimately *forgive yourself*. If you're capable of remorse, you're demonstrating you *are a good person*—that you *care*. Channel that energy into releasing yourself, and becoming a better person. Far more constructive than throwing yourself to the hounds of self hate, or the beasts of overt rage.

Ultimately, realize you're not who you're *being*. You are who you have the *potential to be*. How you're *being*, is a *choice*<sup>1</sup>. It may be difficult to choose otherwise, but the fact that it's a choice, opens the *possibility for change*. And hopefully, armed with what you've learned here, your utility for change has increased.

Ricky Gervais wrote, produced and starred in “**After Life**,” a wonderful TV show that beautifully, and *brilliantly* illustrates this whole concept. The first season plays like a **mini-series**, with a *delightful wrap-up*. The entire **Season 1**, is available on **Streaming Netflix**, and I **HIGHLY** recommend it!

## 7. DON THEIR MOCCASINS AND WALK AROUND A BIT

Point of view can change everything. Maybe they're having a bad day, or even a bad life. Making the effort to see the other person's side of things, might allow you to understand where they're coming from. You might actually get to discover they're not so different from you. A realization that could lead to you being a more compassionate human being, one able to think of someone *other* than yourself<sup>2</sup>. And then, you might even get to feel really good about yourself, about others, and have a far nicer life, as a result<sup>3</sup>!

<sup>1</sup> And, **NO**, I'm not talking about such things as being Gay. Homosexuality is **NOT** a choice! Just as being **Female**, or **Male** is *not a choice*. Sexual preference is **NOT** in the *genitalia*, it's in the *mental circuitry*. So, when I say “*being*”, I'm talking about *behavior*, not *physiology*.

<sup>2</sup> From time to time.

<sup>3</sup> The quality of your friendships might improve, too...though, you may lose a few, in the process ☺

Remember: that other human is likely just as much a bundle of nerves as you are. We're all doing our best to manage these fretful bodies we're all bouncing around in. And, believe me, NOBODY is at their best when they are mired in a body [more on that, later]! Some are better at it than others, but nobody is perfect at it.

We seem wired to judge. I think that tendency is a throwback to our animal roots. The animal kingdom has little tolerance for "different". Vicious gossip, cruel teasing, denigrating social media comments, and all other trollish, bigoted<sup>1</sup> behavior, very likely has its foundation in our animal past.

Being truly *human*, means eschewing all such nonsense. The ability to do so, is one of the basic things distinguishing us *humans* from *animals*, and is a primary feature of the evolutionary process separating us from the apes, and from animals in general. The ability to do this—to override our feral tenancies—is our *animal SuperPower!*

Another way to say, *walk a mile in the other person's moccasins* is this: *Elevate your context*. We mostly walk around in the limited context of our own experience, and woes. But, where other people are concerned, there's another context: *the other person's POV*. And, still another context is *humanity in general*. And, an even broader context is the matter we're all made of. And, remember, *to matter, nothing matters*.

When you pull it back to the planet Saturn [more on that later], where Earth is but a mere, blue crumb, floating in a whole lot of black, the context is how fricking small we all really are! There's a whole Universe out there, and down here on this mere speck of a planet, you gotta wonder how anything is so important. After all, only life thinks it is.

And for you students of the Bible, *is God a bigot*<sup>2</sup>? His son doesn't seem to think so—or at least He thinks we humans shouldn't be,

---

<sup>1</sup> Look up the word *bigot*, you might be surprised ☺

<sup>2</sup> This is hilarious if you know that the word "bigot" comes from the phrase "by God".

otherwise why would **He** tell us to *love one another*<sup>1</sup>, and to, even, *love our enemies*? So, there you go—cut it out!

## 8. LET GO OF BEING RIGHT!

Ask yourself this: Would you rather be *Right* or *Happy*? I mean, *really*...is it so important to be the one who has all the answers—to prove your point—to teach a lesson—to have the *upper hand* or be *one up*—to be *the smartest*<sup>2</sup>?

Yes!

At least, that was my position as a young adult. And even now, I like being right! I really do!! And I cringe horribly, deep down to my Dickies quarter socks when I'm wrong, or when I know I'm *right*, but they won't *get corrected*!

Over time, I achieved a level of abdication from this holy charge [aka “holier than”]. A wise spiritual teacher of mine asked me if I'd rather be “right”, or happy. That was a few decades ago, and since then it's been a lot easier to “step down”. But, it wasn't until last year that I gained a deeper appreciation for my crazed, inner know-it-all.

Behavioral Science theorizes this obsession as evolutionary fallout. Among early humans (aka, the primates preceding humans), those who correctly processed sensory input such as a pending lion attack and then proceeded to correctly act to avoid said attack, were the ones who lived long enough to sire children who were more likely to carry on that level of brilliance. Meanwhile, the poor saps who didn't *get it right* died as virgins.

Then, there were the subordinate humans who survived by following the example of these more capable peers.

<sup>1</sup> You know—*love thy neighbor, as thyself* –**Matthew 22:39**. Sounds like “love one another” to me! BTW: “*Love your enemies*” resides at –Matthew 5:44.

<sup>2</sup> I used to think so—so much so that I consistently fabricated lies to sound intelligent and knowledgeable! When I let go of that, my life got so much easier. I finally realized that it didn't matter. I finally confronted the underlying pain, and released myself from what was driving me—essentially a dearth of acknowledgment and acceptance due to a vast parental void.



Bottom line, being right [IQ], or being right about another's rightness [EQ], carries the weight of many millennia of evolutionary pressures.

Even if someone across from you is being an *ignorant asshole* who could sorely benefit from *immediate* correction... *patience* my friend. The Universe has been around for some 14 billion years. It's likely going to last at least as long as that, and by current calculation, FAR longer. So, there's plenty of time for *them* to get it right.

The Scientific principle "Conservation of Energy," and, hence, conservation of *information*, implies the existence of something like reincarnation, or at least preservation of whatever the essence of *self*, is. I'm betting the Hindus have it right, and we keep coming back to life, in one form, or another, until we *get it right*. So, no worries—the Universe will work it out 😊

Be there for that other person. Have faith in the process. *Live* your own truth and *let live* the foibles of the foolish. I mean, heck, your campaign for Truth, Justice and Your Way isn't really working, *is it?*

Another title I was considering, for this section, was:

### **Get Over Yourself!**

Arguing until you're blue in the face (or until one, or more of you are black and blue) isn't the answer. Patience is [see **#2 Count To 10** on page: 41]. Also, Humility is. And, quite frankly, not being a dick, is. But, patience, humility, and not being a dick, can be difficult. Notice if *fear* is behind your impatience with this person. Is there a sense of *urgency*? Do you want to get it the f' over with, this effort to get them to f'ing stop, so you can have some peace?

Face it, you're being kind of a selfish coward when you do that, i.e. too afraid to own your own angst. Are you too Proud? Macho? Self Loathing? Is this getting in the way of you allowing yourself to self-sooth [see **#4 Self Soothe** on page: 44]—to wait for the right action to surface—and, just maybe, be there for them, instead of yourself?

The word *patience* is derived from an 11<sup>th</sup> century Latin word meaning *calm endurance of misfortune*, blended with Old French for *patience, sufferance, and permission*. So, essentially, *suffering with another in tolerance*.

So how about extending an offer of peace—being a counselor to the harmed, over and over, until the situation shifts. Be a demonstration of “right living”. *Be the change you want to see in the world*, as Gandhi advised. It’ll be good practice for you, and miracle of miracles, it might *actually* inspire a shift in the other (and quite deviously, in yourself). And, in the process, you’ll have kept your nose clean, and you might even learn something!

And, what if you, actually, are the one who’s wrong? Have you considered that? Have you taken the time to really listen to your “opponent”? Most people don’t know how to listen. That’s covered in **#12 Listen to Them, NOT to Yourself** [page: 63]. This is where humility comes into the picture. Being humble enough to look at yourself. Being brave enough to dig down and face your own demons! Often, inability to sit with a person, and be there for them while they go through their own shit, is a sign you have some demons you’re unwilling to face.

## 9. NOBODY “MADE YOU”

If you’re saying somebody “Made you *feel* this” or “Made you *do* that”, reconsider. Notice what power you give to others. If they’re smacking you around, then, yes, it’s pretty clear they *made* you. But, in most cases when this is claimed, it’s not actually true.

*“The devil made me do it!”*

~Geraldine by Flip Wilson

“You made me angry!” – no, you were *angered* by something they said or did. This is an important distinction. To say they *made* you

angry is the stance of a victim. But, are you *really* a victim? Or, are you an adult, in charge of your own feelings? It's a different thing if you're being abused. In that case they are being a perpetrator, and you are most definitely a victim.

But, if it's true everyone around us *makes* us feel this or that, or makes us react this way, or that way, or causes us to do whatever noisome thing we did, in the name of retaliation, or revenge, or preservation of liberty, justice and common decency, then consider this: What if someone, in your vicinity, suddenly becomes peeved by something you did or said! Suddenly they're claiming you *made them madder than a cat dunked in pig fat!* Did you make them? Or, is it more likely, they reacted with anger, of their own accord, based on their own baggage, or model of proper conduct, or proper scruples, or some other arbitrary internal structure having nothing, really, to do with you?

But, there is a fine line. And, it's for you to discern that line. Are you truly a victim, or are you reacting from some personal idiosyncrasy? There's no wrong answer. This is merely about introspection, with the goal of reaching the greatest level of personal honesty, to facilitate a life of integrity, where true happiness can show up.

## 10. IT'S PROBABLY NOT ABOUT YOU

Don't take it personally. If someone rages at you, it's rarely about you. And if it is, GREAT! You have an opportunity to learn something about yourself and, perhaps, a chance to grow. Swallow your pride and be willing to listen and learn.

But, really—it's VERY *likely* NOT about you! This is an important thing to *understand*. People see what they want to see. Basically, they *filter* their perceptions to corroborate their own *personal cautionary tales*. Another term for this is *collecting evidence*. They *collect evidence* to support some ancient personal stand, taken in the face of an interpretation of earlier event(s), usually in childhood, and

usually it's an error of reasoning. Whether or not this conclusion is reasonable, or truly consistent with actual events, it lives as their *truth*, and thus, *feels* just as real as if it really was true.

For instance, I was maligned, more than once, by bully-jocks, dressed in those elite-athlete “letter-jackets”. So, I’m sure you can understand, under the circumstances, why my underdeveloped, youthful mind came to the conclusion: **ALL jocks are belligerent assholes.**

This conclusion ruled all my behavior around jocks, until one fine Sunday morning at *church*, of all places<sup>1</sup>.

From the beginning of Middle School, to the last dismal moment of High School, I eagerly attended the youth programs at my family’s church, a complete about-face from my preteen church aversion. And, that Sunday morning it was a High School group I was attending, and one of the “kids” was a *varsity jacket*<sup>2</sup> wearing jock. I, de facto, loathed him, until that morning when the fates thrust us together. As part of a “group share”, he spilled his guts about all the pressure and challenges he was *suffering* from [“boohoo”].

This followed my own sharing of intolerable pain in my teenage life. And, as it turned out, my “share” cracked *him* open. The youth leader in charge of the session, skillfully drew my contempt out of me, into the open. He, then, mentored a conversation between the two of us, which lead to mutual tears, and a prolonged hug. The episode completely shifted my attitude toward jocks. It also opened my mind to the possibility of *shades of gray* in all of my subsequent thinking: A, gee, maybe not all [insert jock analog] are the same, adjustment to my thinking.

Another of my *spiritual teachers* (much later, and at a completely different venue) floored me with the question, “Do you really think

---

<sup>1</sup> This was a very progressive church, with very, CONSISTENTLY *excellent* youth leaders! So much so, I consider them among the *spiritual teachers* of my past.

<sup>2</sup> I never understood the meaning, or significance of a “Varsity Jacket” other than as a flag for *assholeness*. I’ve, since, Googled it 😊

you're that important?" This was prompted by me sharing that I felt everyone was watching me and judging me.

At first I was confused. *What did my being "important" have to do with my conviction other people were incessantly judging me?* But with time, and some painful personal scrutiny and introspection, I began to realize how egotistical it was for me to think anyone cared to waste so much time watching and judging me. While, all along, I was merely *projecting* this paranoia on them.

Even if I genuinely am on the other end of a jabby finger, whether overt or covert, it's still, most likely, *not about me*. The gosh-darn, honest, hard to accept, impossible to believe truth is, it's 98% likely, *it ain't really about me [or you]!*

More likely, it's merely that I chanced to fall into their cross-hairs at a low point in their life. Or, in the case of a long-term association, such as a co-worker situation, I just happened to possess some of the "qualities" this person loathes—merely because those qualities are reminiscent of some asshole at the center of one of their *cautionary tales*<sup>1</sup>.

*Self confidence* is often misconstrued as *arrogance*. *Shyness* as *dishonesty*. A *dopey look* might appear as *mockery*. A person with *Liberal ideas* is branded an *Elitist Snob*. Someone living in a *trailer park* is labeled *White Trash*. Maybe it's true, maybe it's not, but at the bottom of it all, is the truth that most perception is colored by past, completely unrelated malfeasance, whether real or imagined—or is merely a matter of prejudices and/or peeves passed down through countless generations.

Dare to come out from behind your blind—come out of your safe space and engage the other person—find out what the *actual truth* is. Find out what is actually going on *over there*—on there side of the

---

<sup>1</sup> A story living in the background of one's subconscious, that serves to save that one from reliving a traumatic moment in their past. These tales compel us to collect evidence of patterns we believe to be precursors for recurrence. If the attitudes, habits, mannerisms, etc., of someone in proximity, seem to match those patterns, the boom will undoubtedly be lowered, even if undeserved.

fence.

If you boil it down, this one is akin to **#8 Let Go Of Being Right!** - page 54.

## 11. BUT IT MIGHT, ACTUALLY, BE ABOUT YOU

The other side of **#10**, is being the one doing the projecting. Have the courage to realize you might be in that other person's face because you see something in them (whether it's actually there or not) you either *don't like about someone in your past* OR that you actually *don't like about yourself*.

The people around us can be as mirrors, reflecting behaviors we loathe in our own self. If you compulsively react to someone's *way of being*—especially if you obsess over ways to “fix” them—you might need to consider if **#6 Give Up Self-Deprecation!** [page 49] is the real issue.

Have the courage to own it, rather than projecting it on other people. And, make peace with whatever it is. Maybe even consider get some help for yourself [see **Getting Help** on page 568]. Remember, no one is perfect—not even you.

And if it's the latter—*something about that person resonates with something negative from your past*—then consider your behavior might just be a sign you're actually giving them a bum-wrap. In other words, have another look and don't be so quick to judge. Consider if your own derogatory words are not a sign *other words* would be more appropriate. Apologetic words. Even empathetic words.

I call these “buttons”. And I call examining these triggers from the past, “unwiring your buttons”<sup>1,2</sup>. This takes effort, focus, dedication and courage, but the reward is a more peaceful, less combative life. Live and let live, is a far more congenial and constructive policy, and

<sup>1</sup> I didn't come up with that. It was passed down to me by a teacher. But, I now own it.

<sup>2</sup> I got that phrase from a very wise and wonderful 12-step sponsor of mine.

carries the added benefit of you not behaving like an ass.

But, beware...digging down has the risk of you encountering your “darkness”. We’re all taught to be good little boys and girls. But, many of us, inherently, aren’t. In fact, most of us aren’t. In fact, I would venture to say, not even those *born a saint* are void of darkness. It kinda comes with the whole animal heritage.

The Dalai Lama associates *inner darkness* with *ignorance*. And, I would add that it’s largely *ignorance of just how much our animal-nature has its way with us*. Ignorance of that tends to spoil opportunities to choose a higher path—that road less traveled<sup>1</sup>.

And if you object to the idea there is any darkness within you, ask yourself this: *Self? How would you react in a crowd revved up on mob-mentality, calling for your participation in the slaughter of a group of people deemed “the enemy”—a group of people you happen to know are innocent, and NOT deserving of the beating they’re about to receive?* Would you oppose the crowd, risking their wrath? Or, would you, in order to save your own skin, participate in the slaughter? Aren’t you, in that latter case, just as complicit in the act of murder? And, wouldn’t that be rather *dark* of you!?!?

That’s an extreme example, I know. But contrast sheds a better light on this hard to see reality. Even something as socially innocuous as jokingly wishing someone would fail, so you can advance in your own coveted pursuit, betrays a dash of darkness, don’t you think?

Our darkness usually shows up when we’re pushed to our limits. A person oblivious to their darkness, or in denial of it, has little, or no defense against it. This is especially true when guilt, or shame are tangled up with the shadow of personal darkness. A prime example is the shame of “original sin”. Inability to own one’s inner darkness means, when it shows up, it becomes a struggle *against*, rather than a confident, knowing nod, followed by a far greater array of choices.

---

<sup>1</sup> BTW: *The Road Less Traveled* is an excellent book, by M. Scott Peck, that I HIGHLY recommend!

*The dark night of the soul comes just before revelation.*

~Joseph Campbell

I faced my own *dark night of the soul* in stages throughout my young adulthood. One of these stages was during the time I attended 12 step meetings. What helped was hearing others tell their *dark night* stories. I learned that having darkness within is not a shameful thing. It's a very natural thing. And a very forgivable thing. And, what *especially* became apparent is: *The first thing that needed forgiving was my own self.*

Revisiting that Dalai Lama quote: Ignorance is involved, and ignorance is merely the absence of information. Once informed, we have a chance for better behavior, from a more powerful place of conscious choice informed by wisdom.

One of my brothers once described me as: *A master of good intentions.* Hearing that hurt a little, but I immediately recognized myself in that profile. The undercurrent is: *I lie.* I want to be helpful, and I imagine myself being helpful, and even believe I have the ability to be helpful, but when push comes to shove, I recede. And, knowing that about myself—that darkness within myself—the darkness of deception, and of projecting false hope—allows me to catch my unproductive impulse, and choose a more conducive mode—conducive to being the *helpful person* I aspire to be, or to setting better boundaries where I'm more judicious with my volunteering.

This darkness manifests in many ways. For instance:

- Hating someone because an authority figure you covet attention from, begins dividing their attention between you, and that other.
- Plotting revenge against someone who innocently caused you embarrassment.



- Lying, Cheating and Stealing—all modes of darkness.
- Passive aggressive behavior.
- Betrayal.
- Sexual abuse.
- Backstabbing—figuratively. Literal *backstabbing* is also an example of darkness, but in another league.
- Vicious gossip—though I suppose it could be argued all gossip has a dark motive.
- From wishing ill will on another, all the way to perpetrating ill will on another.
- Serving broccoli without cheese, salmon without a nice Chardonnay, and liver in any form!

## 12. LISTEN TO THEM, NOT TO YOURSELF

*When people talk listen completely.  
Don't be thinking what you're going to say.  
Most people never listen. Nor do they observe.  
You should be able to go into a room and when you come out  
know everything that you saw there and not only that.  
If that room gave you any feeling  
you should know exactly what it was that gave you that feeling.  
Try that for practice. When you're in town stand outside the theatre  
and see how the people differ in the way they get out of taxis or motor cars.  
There are a thousands ways to practice. And always think of other people.*

~ Ernest Hemingway

Most people don't know how to listen. When they *think* they're listening to another person, they're really listening to themselves.

“What?!” you say? “That’s ridiculous!” you say? “There’s no way I’m listening to myself, when I’m listening to someone else!”

Yes, I know. It seems like that, doesn’t it? But, aren’t you really composing in your head what you *plan* to say in response to what they are currently saying? Some *pithy comeback*, or *pearl of wisdom*, or *anecdote about yourself* brought to mind by their jabber, or a *scathing defense* if the windbag is a cheeky bastard? Something that will elevate you, make you the *hero*, or the victor, or the beloved—rather than serving the other in any way? Or maybe your mind completely wanders into reminiscence, because of something they said. Your mind is off thinking about someone in your past, or a favorite pet, or something they called to mind, that you forgot to do, or would rather be doing, or a place you’d rather be, or absolutely never be. *Are they still yammering away?!?*

Assuming any of that has you knowingly nodding, then, be honest...is that *really* listening?

Sincere, unencumbered, nonjudgmental, perfectly attentive listening, is a skill. Most of us are not natural listeners. That animal brain tucked under your *superior* human brain, is also listening, and if not properly disciplined, it does what it naturally does:

- Listens for threats. And when detected, whether real or not, cajoles the higher mind to slide down the pole to the War Room.
- Listens for foraging opportunities. Seducing the higher mind to fly off into some food related fantasy.
- Listens for chances to procreate. Drawing the higher mind into a carnal fantasy fest – Oh Là Là.
- Listens for ways to have fun. Not sure the mental dynamic, there.
- Or just finds ways to escape the boredom of listening to some idiot go on about his or her stupid problems.

Invariably our mind gets distracted away from the conversation.

OR

If the person we're listening to says something that touches our empathy—our concern—our sense of horror—or a pet peeve—etc—we *react*. We get drawn into their drama, and start believing their “cautionary tales”. We get incensed with the two-timing asshole, or drawn into the rage against the deadbeat brother-in-law, or the painful dilemma of the abusive boss, or twisted up in despair over a gay man's dread of coming out to his female wife. In short, we *collude*.

Good listening, right? I mean, we *should* get into the drama, right? That's human empathy, right? That's proper caring, right?

Yes and no.

To really, effectively listen to someone in a way conducive to putting you in a position to be of *actual value*, it's important to *stay out of the drama—to not get drawn into their inner spiral—and, most definitely, to not make any assumptions about what they're saying*.

In other words, *keep your own drama out of it!*

We get drawn in, because we tend to listen from our own projections! Or, put another way, *we listen with our Lizard Brain*.

Effective listening is all about keeping your own assumptions, stories, opinions, feelings, conclusions OUT OF THE PICTURE. Even harder: Keeping your own *cautionary tales*<sup>1</sup> out of it!

Why?

Say a woman in her mid-thirties comes to you and says her two timing husband of ten years wants a divorce so he can go marry the young trollop he's having an affair with. Plus, he's fighting for full custody of the children—the pig!

---

<sup>1</sup> For an explanation of Cautionary Tales check out **#5 Tune Into Your Feelings** [page 45]

*“I was planning to go to cooking school—really wanted to go, but I guess that’s out—since now I have to get a full time job because until the divorce is final, I’m not getting any financial support from that cheating asshole! But, I don’t know what I’m going to do, because the only work I’ve ever done is raise two children, and care for our household while he went to school, using money left to me by my parents, may they rest in peace. He got his degree, landed a well paying job, started the career that was supposed to support us while I pursued my dream! I don’t even know if I have any employable skills!! Now he wants to leave me, with no thank-you-very-much for making it possible to get his dream—total, **f’ing-asshole-jerk!!!** Now, I’m terrified I’m going to wind up homeless!”*

So, what are you hearing in all of that?

- Asshole-Cheating-Deadbeat-Husband-Who-Squandered-Her-Inheritance?
- Total-Jerk-Who-Won’t-Even-Do-The-Right-Thing-Financially-Until-A-Court-Forces-Him-To?
- Self-Absorbed-Prick-Who-Won’t-Even-Acknowledge-Her-Massive-Sacrifice-That-Allowed-Him-To-Pursue-His-Dream?
- Poor-Jilted-Housewife-That-Wants-To-Go-To-Cooking-School-But-Can’t-Because-Her-Two-Timing-Dick-Of-A-Husband-Left-Her-In-The-Lurch?
- A-Poor-Put-Upon-Woman-About-To-Wind-Up-On-The-Street?

Hard not to get caught up in the despair, the anger, the injustice, the sadness, the futility—right? Yes it is. But for effective listening, one must ignore all of that, and listen for the opportunity to guide the person towards finding his or her own solution.

I would start with having her talk more about cooking school.

*“What?!,” you say? “Are you nuts?!,” you say? “I would get more into what an asshole her husband is, or commiserate with her on what a dick he is for taking advantage of her, or collude with her fear of*

*becoming homeless [a cautionary tale], and pour on the reassurances, and level platitudes at her in an attempt to bolster her spirits...*

Let me stop you there, and say, what I heard from her was: *she wants to go to cooking school, but decided that can no longer happen. That's the real issue. Her assumption is [aka cautionary tale is] that all that other stuff is stopping her from pursuing her dream. Also, I heard her passion regarding cooking school. In fact, a lot of her upset is likely more about the grief wrapped around the supposed crushing of her dream. So, in a conversation with her, I'd want to hear more about that—so she hears more about that.*

Me: *“Tell me more about your passion for cooking.”*

She: *“Well, all my friends tell me the things I cook for them are amazing. In fact, even my husband, jerk that he is, would enthuse over the meals I prepared for him. In fact, a few times I filled in as ‘cook’ for a friend who has a catering business. There were raves! It felt so good. In fact, cooking has been a passion for me since I was a little girl, cooking with my Grandmother.”*

Me: *“You say there were raves – from whom?”*

She: *“From a number of people at the events that were being catered. In fact, one of them, an owner of a restaurant chain, gave me a card...”*  
<she fishes in her purse—it takes a beat or two because she doesn't know where it is, at first> *“here it is.”*

As she prepares to hand the card to me, she notices, for the first time, the writing on the back. She missed this because she never really believed becoming a successful chef was possible. So, with jaded disregard, she tossed the card into her purse and forgot about it. Thus, she gave it a mere cursory glance, and missed the fork in the road to her new life!

The idea she could, besides being a mom, make a living doing *that other thing*—that *thing* that would fulfill the other half of her life, was foreign to her. Further conversation revealed that she was raised averse to such “female frivolity” as pursuing a career. *Get*

*married, have children, emotionally support your husband in his pursuit as a breadwinner.* That was the core of her old-fashioned upbringing. In a way, she was set up to be used by an ambitious partner—used and thrown away. And, probably at the bottom of this female directive was a need to placate the Gods of feminine obligation, which excludes the pursuit of her own dreams.

But, hearing this, in my role as *listener*, it is not for me to collude with her cautionary tales regarding female roles, or her anger at being used and discarded, but to treat this as information that reveals more of the whole picture of what is shaping her choices. Like the choice to not look at that card, but instead toss it aside with no real intent to ever visit it again. Why would she? Her whole mental mantle was constructed to conceal any hope of being more than a loving mother, and dutiful wife.

Instead, I endeavor to hold a space for her passion, and be the catalyst for change in her life. “Change” such as, her finally reading the words scrawled on the back of the card: “*You’re a culinary artist –CALL ME!*”

Long story short, after some encouragement from me, and after the grounding question, “*What’s more important to you: Being angry at the asshole, or Getting the life you deserve?!?*” She called the number on the card. There was immediate, jovial recognition, and the offer of an apprenticeship, along with a reference leading to a scholarship to a fine cooking school, and a flexible schedule allowing her to juggle being a mom with raging against the taboos and creating the career of her dreams. In short, the “asshole” became ancillary.

Having scored a paying job, she was able to secure joint custody in court—a concession, because she originally wanted *full* custody—oh well, like Mick Jagger sings: “*You can’t always get what you want*”. And, this “lesser” result actually turned out to be a blessing in disguise, because it gave even more freedom to pursue her dream.

This sort of thing, invariably, leads to a soul-search, and for her it led to the realization that being a mom, though wonderful and all,

was *not really her number one passion* [cautionary tale revised!]. Coming to terms with such a personal truth, can be difficult, and painful, and guilt inducing [and part of the “coaching” might be to seek help confronting these guilty feelings]. But, truth is truth, and sometimes you just have to accept who and what you are and trust there’s a greater wisdom.

“...you just might find that you get what you need!”

OK, I made all that up—but, similar *coaching sessions*<sup>1</sup>, conducted by me and others, have gone down similar, just as revealing, and ultimately as rewarding paths. Quite often there is a moment where an “*I could never!*” gets confronted—which is invariably a *cautionary tale*. *I could never* betray my children, like that! A mother *never* puts herself before her children! *I could never* be that horrible!! And, that’s the sort of thing you listen for: Horrible? Who says? In what Universe? Have you asked them how they feel about that? Have you considered they might want you to have the life of your dreams? Aka, maybe this cautionary tale, of yours, is *wrong*. Land sakes!!

When listening to someone’s tale of despair, It’s very easy to get caught up in the apparent impossibility of it all. And the feelings of hopelessness aren’t always over on *their* side. Often, someone’s story will tap into your own *cache of impossibility*, that inner chamber of false personal assumptions of how things work, of what is and isn’t possible in life, and of how woefully inadequate we think we really are—i.e. your very own, *personnel cautionary tales*.

It’s *really* important to understand that most of this stuff you feel compelled to collude with, when listening to another person, is fantasy. And, when it’s your own fantasies, it’s valuable to know these things about yourself. You can use this *personnel* insight to un-wire these falsehoods from your psyche. Doing so will make you

---

<sup>1</sup> Much of this skill was obtained from a series of classes I attended, called “Being Coach.” Modeled on the idea of being a coach in “Life: The Game”. Sitting on the bleachers, self-talking yourself out of playing the game? Get some “Coaching”.

a better listener. A listener capable of unhooking from their dramatic cache of impossibility [*everybody has one*], and who can guide others to do the same.

The benefit of listening *without getting caught up in all their drama* is, the *inconsistencies* become crystal clear. In other words, you get better at hearing those things that just don't add up:

Examples:

- The inconsistency: "I'm a terrible artist" then, later, "I won a First Place ribbon in High School for one of my sculptures"
- The disconnect: *a belief that a puny High School award is no indication of real talent—a jaded assumption.*
- The challenge: *take your portfolio to a gallery, or an art school, and get a second opinion. In fact, get several.*

He: "Oh, I couldn't do that!"

Me: "Why not?"

He: "Well, if they tell me it's shit, I'll be devastated!"

Me: "So, what I'm hearing is, you would rather live in a fantasy, and not risk actually knowing the truth—truth that would either lead to you becoming a successful artist, or if it turns out you don't have 'talent', to you dropping that aspiration and beginning the search for your real vocation."

He: "Well, yeah...when you put it that way..."

or possibly:

He: "F'you, you ankle biting dick!!"

Yes. Sometimes *being coach* means you take some initial flack. Like being labeled a *total jerk/asshole/dick/...* But if the ultimate outcome is the realization of life-long dreams... worth it, right?

Being an experienced coach who knows to not take such vitriol personally, you carry on:



Me: “Wait...wait, consider this: Artists like Georgia O’Keeffe, Frida Kahlo and Claude Monet, weren’t at first, accepted by their peers, but their works redefined the art world! So, consider not placing too much stock in the opinions of supposed authorities.”

Here’s another one:

– The inconsistency:

First she says:

“I drove my car through her prize flowers, ‘cuz she was being such a bitch...”

then, later:

“Property is sacred, and anyone who destroys it, should rot in hell!”

– The disconnect: “Property is sacred”, yet she destroyed property.

– The challenge: “Didn’t you destroy property when you trounced your opponent’s flower garden?”

She: “That’s different! She deserved it!”

Me: “Really? So, your morals only apply when it serves you...”

She: “Look, idiot! My morals are just fine. She was being a total jerk!”

Me: “In what way?”

She [incredulous that I don’t see the obvious]: “What?!”

Me: “In what way was she being a ‘total jerk?’”

She: “She dumped extra fertilizer on my flowers, so they would develop brown spots—it was total sabotage!”

Me: “Wow! So, these competitions are really important to you.

She [again, blown away by my naiveté]: “F\*\*\* yeah!”

Me: “Sounds like you’ve been doing this for a while.”

She: “Twenty years...since my mother, God rest her soul, let me help

*her with her prize-winning flower garden.”*

Me: “So, it sounds like this is about more than just flowers.”

She: “Yeah...I suppose so. That was my only real connection to my mother when I was a kid. Then she died, and I really miss her.”

Me: “Prize-winning flower garden’...” I rub my chin for effect, “sounds like winning was important.”

She: “Yes, it was everything.”

Me: “So, isn’t that the real issue? Winning at a flower show is wrapped up in your grief and your love for your mother, and the feeling of being loved by your mother.”

She: “Damn...you’re right!”

Me: “Important enough for you to bend your morals?”

She: “Yeah...shit...I guess I owe someone an apology—but, I’m not ready to forgive! That was a dirty thing to do, messing up my garden like that.”

Me: “Yes, literal dirt.”

Laughter—softened feelings—conversations about parallels between her intensity about winning, and what might be behind the sabotage. Then a challenge to meet with the saboteur for truce cocktails, which leads to them learning about each other’s similar backgrounds, with parallel maternal bonding over flower shows, and the miracle of fast friendship between once mortal enemies.

It really works like that! I know, because I’ve practiced this kind of *listening*, in *real* scenarios, involving situations I can’t divulge, because they’re private—which is why I made these up. But, believe me, it’s similar to the real ones, and it really is magical!

And, one silly thing that can happen is, you become interested in other people! In fact, your life becomes more of a life of service. And, THAT, my friend, is a potent key to real happiness! And a level of richness you might not be aware is possible.

Another silly thing that happens is, you get to learn more about yourself, become conscious of more of your own cautionary tales [and we do tend to be oblivious to our own], and as a side benefit, un-wire more of your own buttons, should you care to. And, in the process become an even better listener, and a better person!

### 13. CULTIVATE LOVE

Being in a space of *love* (and in fact, being in *love* with the world), is far more pleasant than being in *anger*, *resentment*, *hate*, or being in any of the other *dark* emotions. Lingering in dark emotion [i.e. not allowing such emotions to *flow* naturally] often leads to *regret*, *remorse*, *guilt*, *shame*, *anguish*, *disappointment*, *heartache*...in other words, a world of hurt. It's only because of some obsolete animal code that we hang onto grudges, in an inane imperative to manage retribution—like it's our job to ensure balance is maintained in the Universe.

*"Surrender your self-interest. Love others as much as you love yourself.  
Then you can be entrusted with all things under heaven."*

~Lao Tzu

*"In the end, only three things matter: how much you loved, how gently you lived, and how gracefully you let go of things not meant for you."*

~ Buddha

The Bible actually has something worthwhile to say on this, too: *Vengeance is mine, saith the lord*—so, let the Lord handle it! Even if

you're not religious<sup>1</sup>, or a student of the Bible, this is good advice. In other words, let the Universe sort it out. Your job is merely to be a *decent human-being*<sup>2</sup>. And being a decent human is an excellent way to *cultivate love*<sup>3</sup>!

As a young adult, I didn't know much about love. If my younger me read this, he'd say. "What a load of crap!" My parents were pretty distant. They tried, but what love they showed was fleeting and symbolic, at best. Thus, it's been difficult for me, in my life, to express and/or demonstrate love. But, living with, and caring for a wife [my first wife] with borderline personality disorder was a great training ground for me [not that I'm . Her disorder more than once manifested as stoic, suicidal behavior on one end of the scale, and periods of screaming and crying at the other. In between were episodes of paranoia, and disjointed rage that, frankly, had me fearful for my life. The end result of it all was I learned a great deal about love, and how to be genuinely loving and supportive.

I'm not suggesting you take on a mentally ill wife as an antidote to a "love challenged" childhood. Maybe, instead, have a look at Getting Help [page 568] at the end of this book.

---

<sup>1</sup> I'm not. But, my science grounded parents thought it wise to at least expose me to the Bible, since it's such a ubiquitous feature in this culture I live in.

<sup>2</sup> One of my favorite lines in a movie: "*He knows you disapprove of him. He knows you think he's weak. But, he's not weak. He's decent. And if you, or Bruce, or anyone else tries to beat that out of him, I swear to God I'll take him away.*"

~ Searching For Bobby Fischer

<sup>3</sup> Another favorite movie quote: "*Be excellent to each other!*"

## 14. CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY YOU MIGHT BE “STOKING THE FIRE”

Consider if you’re being a drama junkie—someone who generates drama—even *thrives* on it. Are you being someone who deliberately creates drama in their own lives, and/or in the lives of the people around them—even if it’s done subconsciously? I call this stoking the fire.

Stoking the fire has a similar feel to getting revenge or otherwise “resolving” the issue with some sort of comeuppance, mixed with the perpetual burn of a nebulous sense of victimization, except, in this latter case, there’s no real target. And, by the way, it never does resolve the issue. In fact, it’s not about resolving the issue. Resolving the issue would ruin the “fun”.

It’s more like an endless dalliance with a self fulfilling prophecy. This behavior is, usually, nonproductive, and even self-destructive, and tends to have, at its core, veiled self derision, and/or self-deprecation [see **#6 Give Up Self-Deprecation!** on page 49].

It helps to see this as a form of addiction. I’m not sure there’s a specific 12-Step program for it, but [ACA](#)<sup>1</sup> or [ACoA](#)<sup>2</sup> is more of a generalized program for addressing the deficits in adult-skills resulting from any sort of dysfunctional upbringing. If the local [meeting\(s\)](#) in your area are like the several I’ve attended (some are

<sup>1</sup> Adult Children of Alcoholics.

<sup>2</sup> Adult Children of Alcoholics. First came AA, a spiritual 12-step program designed to assist those encumbered by uncontrollable drinking. The success of AA led to the establishment of groups focused on other addictions—all modeled after AA. Some-when, meetings for those compromised by the dysfunctional effects of being raised by Alcoholic/Addicted family members were established. This was needed because dealing with an alcoholic/addicted care-giver is a different kind of challenge—but, the spiritual techniques applied in AA, also, remarkably, are effective for this. ACoA/ACA for the adult children of an alcoholic household, is an example of this. Al-Anon is for those living with, or those otherwise affected by an Alcoholic in their lives, and Alateen, which, as the name suggests, is for teens dealing with an alcoholic or addicted family member. And, finally, there’s a whole slew of programs for other forms of addiction, such as NA for narcotics addiction [and drug addiction in general], OA for overeaters, GA for problem gamblers, DA for compulsive debtors, etc.

quite dysfunctional—I wonder why ☺ ), then the attitude is: If you identify with “[The Problem](#)”, you’re welcome there. “[The Solution](#)”<sup>1</sup> is waiting.

If this sounds like something you’d like to pursue, then here’s a list of the URLs, maintained by the ACA World Service Organization [the official ACA volunteer organization]:

Home Page:	<a href="http://adultchildren.org/">http://adultchildren.org/</a>
Literature:	<a href="http://adultchildren.org/literature/">http://adultchildren.org/literature/</a>
Meeting Search Tool:	<a href="http://adultchildren.org/meeting-search/">http://adultchildren.org/meeting-search/</a>
Online Meetings:	<a href="http://adultchildren.org/quick-search/?onlinebt=Click+Here">http://adultchildren.org/quick-search/?onlinebt=Click+Here</a>
Telephone Meetings:	<a href="http://adultchildren.org/quick-search/?telephonebt=Click+Here">http://adultchildren.org/quick-search/?telephonebt=Click+Here</a>

BUT, this is a condition that, along with, or even instead of a 12-step program, likely requires skilled assistance to overcome (see **Getting Help** on page 568).

<sup>1</sup> There’s a “God” name-drop in the literature used by AA, and thus ACA/AcoA, and all the other ‘A’s, but believe me, these programs are not even close to a religious organization [and if *religion* is being pushed at any meeting you happen to attend, *get the hell out*—it’s *not* a legitimate 12-step meeting!!] The use of the term *God*, in the third of the 12 steps, has raised vigorous objections in many of the meetings I’ve attended. I was one of those dissidents. The idea of turning my life over to a *God*, was already on my list of ridiculous notions, thus for I, and others, this was a nonnegotiable sticking point. But, seasoned members guided me to an understanding that the word *God*, in this context, refers to a “Higher Power”. Essentially, a “*Power greater than ourselves*”, as described in the 2<sup>nd</sup> step. It’s a fake-it-until-you-make-it exercise, and I was invited to assign, as my *Higher Power*, anything I wanted it to be: Lightning, Oprah, The Sun, Cheese Wiz. A seasoned member of one of the meeting I attended said he chose a telephone pole as his *High Power*: Being taller than he was, heavier than he was, harder to bend, or break than he was, and being able to endlessly hold up *high voltage* power lines, something he couldn’t even come close to doing, a telephone pole was definitely a *higher power*. This might sound silly to you, but once you confront your unseemly personal behaviors—those that have, consistently, evaded all attempts at alleviation--i.e. been more powerful than you--you might find yourself adopting silly gimmicks, like this. And, really, that’s all it is: A *gimmick*.

## And BTW, You're Also A *Machine*

*"Our body is a machine for living.  
It is organized for that, it is its nature."  
~Leo Tolstoy*

What is a machine?

According to Merriam-Webster it's:

***1e : an assemblage of parts that transmit forces, motion, and energy one to another in a predetermined manner.***

Machines vary in complexity from a simple rope and pulley system, to a 747 jetliner<sup>1</sup>. Some machines are purely mechanical, like an old hand-crank Ice Cream Maker<sup>2</sup>, and some are electrical as well, like a blender, or a refrigerator.



<sup>1</sup> Actually, as of this writing, the **Airbus A380** is probably the largest civilian aircraft in existence...but who the heck's heard of it? Pretty much has some association with a 747.

<sup>2</sup> On many a July 4<sup>th</sup> it was my duty to apply my limited child strength, and endurance, to the seemingly endless task of turning the crank on the Ice Cream Maker. But, the pain and boredom was worth it! No commercial Ice Cream has ever come close to the deliriously wonderful flavor, and silky texture of my dad's Ice Cream recipes!!

What if your body is a machine [you may have noticed that I already touched on this concept].

Long ago, I confidently announced to a group of fellow adolescent Sunday School classmates, that we are, in fact, *all machines*. I was, in part, showing off for a beautiful brunette. And, fully in step with my luck with women, she was the very, and only one that turned to me. With her face contorted, she screamed, “I am NOT a machine!”<sup>1</sup> So, clearly, not everyone is aligned with this idea. But, Merriam-Webster is:

**2a: a living organism or one of its functional systems.**

Not a machine in the man made sense of motors, gears and transistors, but one made of meat, bones, blood and nerves. A remarkable machine that can extract fuel from ground up animal and/or plant matter, grow itself, repair itself, defend itself from micro invaders and even reproduce itself<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> I had the hots for her, and it was crushingly clear that my standing with her, in that gruesome moment, instantly devolved from *unlikely* to *hopeless*. But all was not lost. My agnostic parents were members of the Northridge chapter of the United Church of Christ (mainly for its social venues). It was [and still is] a progressive church, with an excellent youth program. A few weeks after my faux pas, our youth director instructed us to pair up. With rare audaciousness [for me], and spurred by adolescent hormones, I leapt to her side. To my surprise I was not rebuffed.

Directed to lead our blindfolded partner around the grounds, I was first to wear the mask. When it was her turn, I took her down to the stream, behind the church. This was a place I knew well, having spent most of my younger years there, ditching Sunday School. I paused her on the shore of the gurgling water and had her reach out with her other, unencumbered senses. She correctly identified it as a “Brook”. Then I held her hands as I risked leading a crossing across three stepping stones. As birds sang, and tree leaves rustled, I took her to the top of a small bridge and perched her on the edge, and again asked her what she sensed. “Open space,” she enthused, “like we’re up high, or something.” To my utter gratification, when the class regrouped, she gushed about what an amazing and wonderful experience it was. She still had little interest in granting my carnal dreams, but it certainly was a feather in my adolescence cap!

<sup>2</sup> Or, for approximately half the human machines on the planet, help another reproduce itself.



# DO NOT READ THIS!

You did, didn't you—you *read it!* And, actually, it was your machine that read it...before *you* had any say in the matter.

Consider this: don't the functions of a body continue even when a person is asleep, or unconscious, or in a coma, or even when the brain is considered-*dead*? If the brain is asleep, or *dead*, what's left? A pump [*heart*], two air exchangers [*lungs*], a circulatory system [*veins & arteries*], a filtration system [*kidneys, liver*], a food processor [*teeth, stomach*], an energy extraction system [*colon*], propulsion system [*muscles, legs*], manipulators [*arms, hands*], a data processor [*brain*<sup>1</sup>]*—sounding at all machine-like?*

For some, when the semicircular canals in their ear send signals to their brain, patterned after a particular kind of swaying motion, their mind assumes the body is reeling due to the ingestion of poison, and initiates a purging protocol. That's why a percentage of humanity gets sick on boats and carnival rides. This happened to me once on the Mad Tea Party ride at Disneyland. I was miserably sick for hours, and swore I would never ride those damn teacups again!

This purge response is autonomic. Our distant ancestors who successfully puked the poison out were *Naturally Selected* because they survived to pass down this quirk of DNA, spoiling the theme park rides and ocean cruises of future generations.. In other words, the environment *programmed* a poison purging protocol into some early human's machine-mind, to be triggered when certain kinds of rocking motion occurred.

Here's another, something called "Instinctive Drowning Response": A human flailing about in a body of water, typically a human that hasn't

---

<sup>1</sup> That other brain. The one that never sleeps, or that can continue to function even when a person is "brain dead".

learned to *swim*, often reaches a point, usually in response to panic, where the autonomic nervous system takes over and applies an ancient program designed to mitigate the situation. The victim's body assumes a vertical posture, with their head tilted back, while their arms engage in a different sort of characteristic flail that ludicrously fails to achieve the intended goal of keeping the mouth above water. The primitive mind is in control at this point, and all reason is tossed to the fishes. Reason like:

- Moving the limbs in a manner that succeeds at preventing actual drowning.
- Calling for help.
- Listening for and/or watching for any rescuers that happen by. And, following their instructions.
- Instructions like: .....
  - Raising an arm above the water, so the rescuer can see where the hell you are.
  - Taking swim instruction from the rescuer as they approach your drowning ass.
- Basically, not panicking!

And, if the rescuer *does* manage to locate you, this autonomic behavior [sans *reason*] makes it harder for the rescuer to achieve their purpose for being there.

This is just another example of the machine taking over and running an outdated program, and serves as yet more proof of what it actually is that gets the last word in times of strife. In other words, this is how stupid we can get, when the *machine* takes over.

Here's an example of what computer code looks like. Any text prefixed by two semi-colons [';;'] constitutes a "comment". In computer language, comments allow a programmer to document their computer code, so other programmers can get a better idea of what the heck they were thinking. The computer ignores these lines and focuses on everything else as if following a recipe. The computerese word for this is "execute"-- e.g. the computer "executes the code." In the code segment, below, written in an old language called Lisp<sup>1</sup>, I'm using the comment structure to explain the code:

```
(let* ((fromEars (Listen)) ;; Listen using the electronic "ears".
      (heard (Parse fromEars LANG_ENGLISH)) ;; Treat what's heard as English
      (cond
        ;; If "How are you doing" was heard...
        ((string= "How are you doing" heard)
         (let ((mood (SelectRandomMood ListOfMoods 'COMMON)))
           ;; ...then select one of these responses based on the
           ;; current mood.
           (cond
             ;; if the mood is Perky, then say "Fine, and you?"
             ;; 'eq' is short for "equivalent to?"
             ((eq mood 'PERKY) (Speak "Fine, and you?"))
             ;; if the mood is grumpy, then say "Don't ask!", and so on...
             ((eq mood 'GRUMPY) (Speak "Don't ask!"))
             ((eq mood 'FATALISTIC) (Speak "I can't complain.))
             ((eq mood 'PARANOID) (Speak "Who wants to know!"))
             ((eq mood 'PIVOT) (Speak "Look at you getting all chatty.))
             ((eq mood 'INDIGNANT) (Speak "Wouldn't you like to know!"))
           (t
            ;; If the mood is not recognized, then speak a default response, and
            ;; log an error so the programmers know there is a problem.
            (Speak "I honestly don't know.")
            (Error.log "Unknown Mood!")))))
      ((string= "'sup?" heard)
       (let ((mood (SelectRandomMood ListOfMoods 'HIPSTER)))
```

<sup>1</sup> Lisp (short for "List Processing") is a computer language developed at MIT in the late 1950s by John McCarthy and his colleagues, specifically for Artificial Intelligence research.

```
(cond
  ((eq mood 'COMPLIANT) (Speak "'sup?")
   ((eq mood 'STONED) (Speak "'Up' is subjective, man!"))
   ((eq mood 'SUSPICIOUS) (Speak "What are you, a stinkin' Fed?!"))
  (t
   (Speak "Come again?")
   (Error.log "Unknown Mood!"))))

;; If what was heard can't be determined, then say "What?!" and log an error.
(Speak "What?!")
(Error.log "Unable to parse 'heard!'"))
```

That's essentially all a computer does—follow a set of instructions on how to do this or that. The above example illustrates how computer code could be written to interpret audio captured by a pair of robot ears. The speech recognition software endeavors to convert that raw audio into a format the computer can process, known as *data*. This data is then used to randomly select from a list of predetermined responses, transforming them into electrical signals that are used to drive a speaker that acts as a *mouth*, so some human will think the robot is capable of *giving a flop*<sup>1</sup>.

Typically, the list of possible responses will hold thousands, even *millions* of cases. This sort of thing is getting pretty sophisticated! Add in facial recognition, with the ability to discern an expression on a human face, and that information can be used to adjust a “mood” which in turn can influence which list of responses to use. Pseudo-random numbers are used to vary the responses to cut down on monotony. The end result seems rather convincing, but it's all FAKE!

**Bottom line:** All you'll ever get from an AI is a *canned response*, varied by a bit of randomness. In other words, *devoid of authentic emotion!*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It's **not**. And in my opinion, *never will!*

<sup>2</sup> Developers of Artificial Intelligence might argue there's more to it than what I described—and, they would probably be right. I'm no AI expert, but I do have some thirty years >>> continued on page 84

If it seems like the droid is having an emotional response, it's all just *programming* [even if *Machine Learning* is the technology]. It really isn't much different than a ventriloquist's dummy. A skilled ventriloquist can make an inanimate object seem alive and delightfully responsive—or rude, or grumpy. But, none of it is true<sup>3</sup>! So, what makes our body-machine any different?

Douglas Adams spoofed this in his iconic book: *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* [the first in his 5 book *trilogy*]. In this excerpt, Arthur and Ford, following their seemingly miraculous, and highly improbably rescue from certain death, are being escorted to the bridge of the spaceship they appeared on, by a passive-aggressive, and intrinsically depressed robot named Marvin:

Marvin [making conversation as they walk]: “And then of course I've got this terrible pain in all the diodes down my left side...”

Arthur: “No? Really?”

Marvin: “Oh yes. I mean I've asked for them to be replaced but no one ever listens.”

Arthur: “I can imagine.”

Marvin [after stepping through the door to the bridge, and addressing the humans sitting there]: “I suppose you'll want to see the aliens, now [referring to Arthur and Ford]. Do you want me to sit in the corner and rust, or just fall apart where I'm standing?”

What about the mind? If the body is a machine, isn't the mind part of

---

<<< 83 of experience programming computers, and I chuckle at the notion that AI could ever achieve “consciousness”. Something would have to happen beyond the understanding of science, like a system with sufficient complexity that a “spirit” could inhabit the thing and bring it to life. But, my guess is that only the semblance of “consciousness” will ever exist, and only ardent anthropomorphism will ever explain any “aliveness”. It would be like throwing spaghetti at a wall, and claiming deliberate art were it to land in the shape of Elvis [probably a visage of his later years considering how spaghetti hangs].

<sup>3</sup> Unless, of course, you're in the Twilight Zone [*The Dummy* – Season 3 – Episode 33].

that machine? The mind, after all, manages all of those autonomic functions, such as beating your heart, pumping your lungs, digesting your food and managing that complex endocrine system driving so much of what the body does, and feels.

The seasickness response is a great example of the mind functioning as part of the body-machine. The body senses the lurching motions of a boat being tossed by waves, and the mind engages the body's stomach-purge mechanism, reasoning that the body has been poisoned.

**OK! Wonderful!! Assuming I am a machine, what's so flippin' special about that?!**

Because this *machine* has a mind of its own, and tends to do things that leave us perplexed, perturbed, abashed and generally spoils our chances for happiness.

The body-machine, *being a machine*, imposes certain impediments to our range of joy, and places limitations on us having a comprehensive experience of this universe we live in<sup>1</sup>. It obliges certain autonomic responses<sup>2</sup> to the plethora of stimuli impinging on our daily lives. These responses are the foundation of our *animal behavior*. And that animal behavior response is nothing more than something selected from a list<sup>3</sup> of *cases*<sup>4</sup>, based on some *input*<sup>5</sup> supplied by our senses.

Knowledge of these limitations—this machine programming—is a powerful tool for stepping out of the machine mandated animal role, and realizing true freedom in one's life. The freedom to know what is

---

<sup>1</sup> Such as the inability to see most of what is going on around us – more on that, later.

<sup>2</sup> Such as vomiting when we get seasick.

<sup>3</sup> A list refined by billions of years of testing!

<sup>4</sup> Like those “*If-then-else-if*” statements featured in that computer code sample I showed you.

<sup>5</sup> Such as the input from those microphones in the robot's ears.

going on, and make informed, overriding, intelligent choices in life. Choices lifting us above slavery to our biology. Choices like taking Dramamine before stepping on a boat, or refusing the teacup ride, or turning and punching that shark.

Being cognizant of the human machine is also a powerful defense against those who would take advantage of it.

The con artist is a master at manipulating the human machine. Their main tool is emotion. They call it keeping the mark, "under the ether." Less reputable sales people apply this as well. When someone is emotional, they're far easier to manipulate. The thinking part of the brain—the neocortex—is literally swamped by an amygdala in freak-out mode—remember, *the lower brain will dominate if not kept in check*.

It can be any strong emotion: fear, lust, envy, grief, anger, to name the biggies. A successful con puts the victim under the ether, by keeping them in an emotional tizzy. It can be the anticipation of some prize, like a large sum of money, or prices slashed to crazy depths<sup>1</sup>, or fear of the loss of a loved one, or the steely slam of a prison door, or the prospect of a steamy night with an A-List celebrity, or a supermodel—all of which is pure fantasy—and would easily be exposed as such, by a rational mind fully aware of the flesh-machine's vulnerabilities.

But that's the *artistry* of a con artist, keeping the mark so embroiled in their emotional madness they make the exact, predictable mistakes designed to fleece them. And why are these responses so predictable? Because humans are all made of the same machinery and *programming*.

Being present to your own machine, increases your immunity to this sort of manipulation. In other words, it becomes far easier to spot a con:

---

<sup>1</sup> ACT NOW! Or you'll miss out!!



- *Ah-ha! You're trying to get me upset by impersonating some sort of law enforcement authority, so I'll fork over a hefty bogus fine!*
- *You're rich uncle left you a buttload of money, but you need access to an American bank account to free the assets? Give me a break!*
- *Oooh! Sex with gorgeous, loose Russian women?! Sounds appealing, but Ha! How'd I get so lucky?!*
- *What? You're going to make America great again? By keeping those scary terrorists out, by vanquishing all those Godless, evil-loving, socialist Democrats, by wrestling back all those overseas stolen jobs, and generally restoring nationalism, White Supremacy, and God, to the American way of life? And, yer saying I should trust what you say, Mr. Orange Guy who, according the Washington Post, told over 10,000 lies, many of which can be traced on public media, and just completely ignore what you do<sup>1</sup>?*

Knowing this makes you privy to the primary tools of those adept at deceit, so you can chuckle, and say "Good try", and avoid getting cider in your ear<sup>2</sup>!

And it happens closer to home: We are constantly being conned by our lower brain, even without external provocation. *You know you want that extra doughnut...a little skimming off the top won't hurt...5 minutes late is not really late<sup>3</sup>.*

And, not only does this awareness afford you immunity to human predators, it also gives you power to conduct your life on far more

<sup>1</sup> Hey, he grabs women by the pussy, so he can't be all bad...right?!

<sup>2</sup> "Guys and Dolls" 1955 movie where Marlin Brando's character Sky Masterson warns the gambler, played by Frank Sinatra, of the inevitability of getting *cider in his ear*.

<sup>3</sup> In my youth, I was a master at being *exactly* 5 minutes late. I abhorred the awkward boredom of arriving early, and figured that 5 minutes was so slight as to be, essentially, on time. Numerous supervisors, noticing the precision, pointed out that if I can be 5 minutes late, I can be on time. True, but cutting it that close was just too perilous.

constructive terms.

In the book, “Siddhartha”, the namesake character claims three skills:

I can think.

I can wait.

I can fast.

Essentially, this is a claim of mastery over the body-machine.

*"I have just three things to teach: simplicity, patience, compassion.  
These three are your greatest treasures."*

~Lao Tzu

Knowing we are a machine, gives us the unique ability to laugh at it, minimize its foolishness, and even *reprogram* it.

For instance, when you're at the appliance store, standing in front of a wall of TV's, pining for one of the larger, more expensive models, while your sensible self is screaming, “Stay within budget!!” If you know about *Distinction Bias*<sup>1</sup>, you have a better chance of escaping with your budget intact, and having the experience, once you get home, of the smaller TV *actually being just fine*<sup>2</sup>!

The Body-Machine is like a computer with feet, allowing it to wander around getting those fingers, at the ends of those cool appendages, into the business of life. And, like a computer, it can be programmed. And believe me, it *does get programmed!* The first time a youngster touches

---

<sup>1</sup> Check out the [NirAndFar.com/best-articles](http://NirAndFar.com/best-articles) website for a series of excellent articles on, basically, managing your machine. BTW: I'm not endorsing this guy, but he seems to be giving this stuff away, and what I read seemed helpful, so what the heck 😊😊

<sup>2</sup> At the store, you were in *comparison mode*. At home, there is nothing to compare your new TV to, thus, any bias has vanished and left you to just enjoy the thing! This, of course, will only be true if you actually did purchase a TV that serves your needs.

something hot, a program is written to *not touch hot things*. The first time it goes out into the cold without a coat, a subroutine<sup>3</sup> is written to *put on a coat before going out on a winter day*. And later, as a teenager manipulated by peer-pressure, the program is updated to *not look like a coat wearing pansy*.

But, we can also *deliberately* program the machine, as illustrated by Peter O'Toole's portrayal of T. E. Lawrence, not minding the pain of pinching out a lit match.

Most people are running around in "Default Mode". All those accumulated little programs, written by the bumps and scrapes of life, along with the standard set of subroutines written by billions of years of evolution, like *pride; embarrassment; fear; glee; rage; goofiness; indignation; sentiment; affront; lust; envy...* each provide a default response to life's little prods or prides. In this scenario, happiness only shows up if circumstance happens to trigger a *happiness subroutine* [or mode]. Knowing you are a machine, and your machine runs programs, and that you can substitute *other programs*, gives you a key to the kind of freedom afforded by switching out of *default mode*, and *into* "Deliberate Mode".

If you, from this *higher watch*, feel **Pride** coming on, for instance—i.e. *you notice your Pride program is running*—then by switching to **Deliberate Mode**, you can jump out of the Pride program, into a program of your own making—perhaps one that tempers **Pride** with **Humility**, or turns it into **Self-Effacing Confidence**, or **Obtuse Mockery**. Or, you can turn on

---

<sup>3</sup> In the parlance of computer programming, a *subroutine* is a little bundle of instructions, designed to be used over and over. It's like a cake recipe that gets used every time someone wants to bake a cake. A real-world example: Whenever you strike a key, on your computer keyboard, a subroutine is called that handles the task of sending the code for that key across the cable that connects the keyboard to the computer. The programmers could have placed a duplicate of that code at every point where a particular key is recognized, but that would be wasteful. Instead, they placed a call to a subroutine, so that code only needed to be in one place.

a dime and choose *spontaneity*. Spontaneity is the act of running *program free*<sup>1</sup>. And, this is where you get to be **Happy For No Damn Reason!** Or you can be *Angry For No Damn Reason*, or *Manic For No Damn Reason*, or *Coy For No Damn Reason*, or even just completely *Outrageous!*

Engaging in the insane looking antics accessible from Deliberate Mode is a great way to find other people running in Deliberate Mode, because anybody running in Default Mode is likely going to react with fear to your apparent insanity. Whereas, the *Deliberates* are gonna look at you quizzically, probably with a glint in their eye, knowing odds are good they've encountered a *kindred spirit*.

To put it another way [because, I understand this can be a difficult concept] the beauty of *Deliberate Mode* is, you can, instantaneously climb off your high-horse, and get humble and authentic (which is just another way of saying *jumping out of whatever default program you're running, and getting into deliberate personal truth*).

A powerful way to make this transition to Deliberate Mode is to get authentic with yourself, and reveal your nonsense to the people around you! “Ha! There I go again!! Being the know-it-all! Sorry!!”

Something I learned while watching a dog show that can help with this, is a thing called the “shake-off”. Dogs do this to shake off stress—it’s the same body movement they use to shed water from their fur. I’ve felt the urge to do this, too, and now I understand why! A shake-off is a great way to deal with stress—for instance the stress of confronting your own machine! I can’t do it like a dog does it, but similar kind of shudder movement seems to do the trick.

---

<sup>1</sup> Or, writing the program on-the-fly.

The ability to reveal your own nonsense is, literally, an animal SuperPower! It's the capacity to, spontaneously, in the driven moment, grab yourself by the earlobes, and yank your *you*, right out of its *stupidity*. It's the power to charge towards the *inner beast* with nothing more than a conviction of *rectitude* (since this is, *after all*, about you being an *Asshole*<sup>1</sup>!), slay its pretentious hairiness, and transform yourself into a genuine, flawed, humble human being who can own their own shit, and laugh—hysterically if necessary—at her/his own absurdity<sup>2</sup>!

The mind is a machine requiring self-training. You have to learn how to drive a car. The body-machine is the same. And speaking of driving, here's an example of being the trainer of your own animal. The body-machine, being an impatient contraption, wants you to text while driving, which is not wise because you could wind up in a ditch, or in the path of an oncoming bus. To not text, one must train the body-machine, in the same way a dog must be trained to “sit” when commanded, or to not poop in the house.

A speaker, at a spiritual retreat I once attended, led us in an exercise. He instructed us to look around the room and list down everything colored red. Then, after a few minutes, he had us close our eyes and try to remember the things in the room displaying even the least bit of green. He instructed us to call out whenever we remembered something green. And a few of us did, but after we re-opened our eyes, it became chillingly clear how much we all had ignored a large portion of the greenness in the room, even though it sat in full view of our eyes as we used them to scan the room for red!

The point was to illustrate how we filter what we see. And how this plays

---

<sup>1</sup> See what I did there? *Rectitude* – *Rectum*...I slay myself!

<sup>2</sup> \***Spoiler Alert!**\* I, later, refer to this as “Fessing up to your own Ridiculous”.

into a rather common, and fallacious practice I like to call “Collecting Evidence<sup>3</sup>”. How often have you decided something is true, and then made it your life’s work to collect things supporting that premise, ignoring anything that refutes it? If you think you don’t, then keep an eye on yourself going forward, and see if you can catch yourself in that act.

Bottom line:

**You are a machine, and unhappiness  
boils down to operator error!**

The good news is, you can use your animal SuperPowers to assume the role of System Operator. The “SysOp” has the power to manipulate the machine, write new programs, and install new modes of *being*.

*"There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says 'Morning, boys. How's the water?' And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes 'What the hell is water?'"*

~Quote from commencement speech delivered by *David Foster Wallace*

We possess *far* greater power to create happiness in our life than most realize. Almost always, access to personal happiness boils down to mere choice. This is the purview of mastery over the *animal-machine*. Knowing what it is that is “making” you unhappy—being aware of the process—the mechanism of the animal-machine—allows you to be the *driver*, rather than a mere passenger white-knuckling it through one

---

<sup>3</sup> Coined by someone else, but I don't remember who.

drama after another.

But also be aware that stepping into happiness may not be *comfortable*—not at first, and maybe not ever. This is the philosopher's stone that unlocks the *how*.

*Think, Fast, Wait*<sup>1</sup>.

Essentially, what I'm talking about is: The power to *appropriate* the machine<sup>2</sup>.

The *older fish* has been to the top of the water. He knows about water because he's poked his head out of it and seen it from the air. What about all the fish that haven't done this? They, likely, have no clue they're swimming in something. Knowing about the water is like having this higher watch—it's like understanding the mechanics of swimming—the mechanics of life.

Then the fish, who's been to the top, realizes the implications of peeing. For a while, he might freak out about fish piss—and develop a fish-piss neurosis<sup>3</sup>.

When you can laugh about *fish piss*, is when you've graduated.

This is *wisdom* I'm talking about. Being able to circumvent physical and/or mental aversion. Being able to scrutinize the signals from your body, and the thoughts from your mind, and ground yourself in *knowledge* and *experience*, and from this powerful position of ownership, make wise choices—sometimes *hard choices*—in opposition to all of the body-machine's portentous bellyaching. This is the pinnacle of your *Animal SuperPower*. The power to be Happy For No Damn Reason—

<sup>1</sup> Remember Siddhartha?

<sup>2</sup> 'appropriate' - *verb*: "to take without permission or consent; to seize; to steal." – Should we fret if *nature* objects?

<sup>3</sup> The theme of much of Woody Allan's comedy was this sort of *fish-piss neurosis*.

whenever you want to—damn the torpedoes<sup>1</sup>—or the piss soaked water!

It's common to eschew happiness in favor of a misguided *submission to circumstances*. Awareness of the machine and its various *quirks* and *oddities*, affords one the opportunity to, in many cases, *circumvent circumstance*. An example of one of these quirks—one of these *mechanisms of the mind*, is something called: *Cognitive Ease*.

What's that? A laxative?!

No. But it may have been used to *sell* laxatives.

Advertising should be merely *informational*—an “*I just wanted to let you know about this product, in case you have a need...*” sort of thing, right? But, it rarely is. Advertisers use every trick of science and persuasion, to manipulate you into buying their client's product, whether you *need it*, or not. Tricks designed to manipulate that little *machine* you're riding in. They're banking<sup>2</sup> on you not knowing about these tricks of the mind – and your ignorance gives the Advertising Industry a HUGE advantage over you.

*Cognitive Ease* is a *cog*<sup>3</sup> in your body-mind machine that can be commandeered to instill love for a product they're pushing, even if you had no previous interest, or need for said product. Or a political candidate they want you to elect; or a social issue they want you to get behind; or a cult ideology they would just adore for you to embrace. Awareness of this little cog, and how it works, affords you a position of mastery, and can save you from being suckered.

---

<sup>1</sup> ...full speed ahead! In other words, *we're doin' this, no matter what!!*

<sup>2</sup> Literally – advertising revenue topped \$104 Billion in 2017 [[www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com)] – Is that laughter I hear?

<sup>3</sup> OK...yeah.. pun intended. Sorry. I inherited it from my father.



Here's a YouTube video that does a great job of explaining Cognitive Ease:



[The Illusion of Truth](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid09](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid09)

The next video is yet another step towards this sort of anarchy<sup>1</sup>:



[The Science of Thinking](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid10](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid10)

Have you ever watched fish in an aquarium? One will take a dump. Another will see it and think it might be food. They rush over and gulp it down, only to spit it back out, in quick turn. Then, seconds later, the same fish will see it and think it's food...over...and...over...

---

<sup>1</sup> Because, with luck, what you're becoming, by reading this book, is an *anarchist*! The word "anarchist" is derived from the word *an-* "without" + *arch* "leader" + *y* "characterized by" – or, essentially, someone that can function without a leader.

That's living at the beck and call of the body-machine. Know your *poop* from your *delectable worm*!

The intent of this book is not to be a *body-machine instruction manual*, but I consider it a win, if I've inspired you to conduct your own inquiry into this fascinating subject.

For instance, by checking out the following links.

BTW: if you visit the *How-Stuff-Works* website, notice the plethora of *clickbait* peppered around the *pertinent content*, and how it all plays on your curiosity, your cravings, and even your fears. The intent here, is to compel you to

→ *click* ←

They are, essentially, insidious attempts to *manipulate your machine*. But, you should be wise to that by now. So, steel your resolve, align your focus, and don't allow yourself to be led astray [unless you want to be led astray – 'cuz, after all, really is *your* choice]:

- The Creative Brain – *Netflix*
- Hidden Brain – *NPR radio series* - [www.npr.org/series/423302056/hidden-brain](http://www.npr.org/series/423302056/hidden-brain) or <https://hiddenbrain.org/>
- Brain Games – National Geographic Channel
- The Thinking Shop [much of which is available in a FREE downloadable digital format, or you can purchase the professionally printed product]– [<https://thethinkingshop.org/>]
- The Free Learning List – [<https://freelearninglist.org/>]
- How Does The Brain Work – Nova [[www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/video/how-does-the-brain-work/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/video/how-does-the-brain-work/)]

- How Your Brain Works [beware of the **Clickbait!**] – [<https://science.howstuffworks.com/life/inside-the-mind/human-brain/brain.htm>]
- The Netflix series, “Explained”.
- The Mandela Effect [beware of the **Clickbait!**] – [<https://science.howstuffworks.com/life/inside-the-mind/human-brain/mandela-effect.htm>]

A great deal of scientific research has gone into understanding the human machine. Some examples:

- **Confirmation Bias:** Things we already believe, whether true or not, lead us to select new information based on these current views, with no openness to the possibility that our views may be in error. This is used by the likes of Fox News and Right-Wing talking heads.
- **Availability Bias** [also: **Availability Heuristic**]: We tend to give our own memories and experiences [especially *vivid* experiences] more credence than they deserve, allowing them to steer our choices. The error comes when there are other possibilities we miss because they exist outside our experience. This is, essentially, a failure to look beyond our own experience, before leaping.
- **Salience Bias:** Sensational statements feel far more correct than information delivered in a dry, unexciting tone. Contrast *Fox News* with *National Public Radio*. One is more compelling, while the other is more likely to offer truth. Characters like *Tucker Carlson* and *Glenn Beck* rely heavily on Salience Bias to sway their audience and line their pockets. Feelings may seem valid, but are not always fact! Dogs don't always bite, even if fear claims they do.

In other words, the human mind is not a good judge of truth. That's why science was invented—as a technique for bypassing these quirks of the mind, and approaching *actual truth*. It's not perfect, but it's a hell of a lot better than treating syphilis with oxide of mercury [a nasty poison],

or drowning women on the notion someone's epileptic fit was the work of sorcery, or bleeding the sick because of the inane notion that disease is caused by an overabundance of blood, or believing the Earth is flat, because, well, it sure looks flat!

So, leeches *no*—but maggots, believe it or not, *yes*! How do we know? Science! Research has shown<sup>1</sup> that maggots eat dead tissue out of a wound [and *only* dead tissue]. Dead skin can promote infection, so its elimination is good for future health. Further research indicated that cleaning a wound with maggots, before surgery, actually lessens the chance for post surgery infection.

BTW: It was a rather simple thing to scientifically debunk bloodletting, a practice that persisted for a couple of thousand years.

This is the human opportunity! We can reason. And we can use that reason to step out of the darker aspects of the animal kingdom. We can use that reason to avoid creating conditions that cause starvation, disease, and other modes of misery. We can use that reason to not overpopulate. We can use that reason to make sure there is enough water, food and resources for everyone to live a happy, comfortable life.

But, it takes mastery over the animal-machine. It takes the discipline of becoming the tamer/trainer of one's own animal nature. Ultimately, it takes completing the singular leap into this new state of life—into full humanness!

---

<sup>1</sup> Called *Maggot Debridement Therapy* (MDT), where "sterile" larvae (*Phaenicia sericata*), which are placed on a person's wound twice a week and left there for 48 to 72 hours. This has been around since the 1920s, but Ronald A. Sherman and Kathleen J. Shimoda did the science back in 1990, and published in the October issue of *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, and since peer reviewed.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15472863/>

## I'm Sorry, But You Don't Know Shit

*"The first principle is that you must not fool yourself  
 —and you are the easiest person to fool.  
 So you have to be very careful about that.  
 After you've not fooled yourself, it's easy not to fool other scientists.  
 You just have to be honest in a conventional way after that."  
 -Richard Feynman*

Reality is the sum of all you can see, hear, taste, touch and smell, right?

· - ----====<•:+:{☺}:+•>====- - ·

Have you ever stood between a long, straight span of railroad tracks, and followed them with your eyes to the horizon? The two rails seem to merge to a point. Yet, if you walk their length (making sure, of course, to dodge any trains that happen by), the distance between those rails varies by no more than an inch or two, the Railroad Track Maintenance workers make sure of that.. After a few miles, you're likely to stop and ponder the possibility that your eyes were deceiving you—especially after looking back and noticing that where you were once standing, the tracks are squeezed together. If you're fond of critical thinking, you would still not be convinced. Maybe train rails behave like that, and seeing IS believing.

If you watch a train recede from you as it runs down that same set of

rails, it seems on a cruise to *gnatsville*<sup>1</sup>. Yet if you ride the next train, and diligently watch for signs of shrinkage, the outside world, visible through a window in the car you're riding in, doesn't expand until you're no taller than a speck of dust. Isn't the evidence, at this point, lean towards this all being an "optical illusion"?

Especially after you cajole some friends into riding the train while carrying on a cellphone conversation with them, as you watch the train shrink into the distance. Do their voices glissando into mouse squeaks, as you might expect were they really shrinking to oblivion? I'm sure we can all agree they wouldn't. So why are your eyes telling a different story than all this empirical evidence?

You can cover the entire full moon with a raised thumb. Does the moon shrink to mere millimeters to hide behind your extended extremity?

A mirage looks wet, just before it vanishes. Was the air above it bestowed with increased humidity?

The ends of a rainbow appear approachable. Are they?

*"But, the sun is eclipsed by the moon."*

~Roger Waters

Why do you dismiss these conspicuous deceptions of perception?

---

<sup>1</sup> If irksome little gnats could found their own city. BTW, the gnats where I live actually bite! So, a city of gnats, if founded in our neighborhood, would be a veritable hell-hole!

***But, Steve, everyone knows that as things recede, they don't really shrink! And we know full well the foibles of mirages, moons and rainbows!***

Sure... *now* you know. But, *how* do you know? Were you always aware of these things, or did these pearls of wisdom fall from heaven and enigmatically lite in your brain? Or, did you, in fact, learn them? Or maybe in your childhood, circumstances supported your own investigation—such as a train ride, or a chance to chase a rainbow. But, was there a time in your youthful innocence when, for you, receding objects magically shed volume, mirages sloshed in the distance, and the Moon swooped down from the sky and coyly hid behind your thumb?

Do you remember the moment you learned the truth of these things? Or, do you just take for granted your accumulation of *corrective knowledge*?

Did it take longer with *rainbows*? To me, it still seems like there has to be some physics that allows a determined person to rush over, and mingle with the end of a rainbow. Easier to abandon are notions of shiny pots of gold, or magical unicorns at the summoning beck of virgins. But, catching the end of a rainbow somehow seems *doable*, right<sup>1</sup>? When a glorious rainbow spans the sky, I feel compelled to rush over to one of the points where it clearly touched the ground. And upon reaching that point, ask anyone in the vicinity, with unabashed excitement, “Did you see it?! Was it really here?!”

Someone schooled in science has long abandoned the idea a rainbow

---

<sup>1</sup> Did you just now learn that it's *not*? A rainbow moves with you, so it's impossible to reach one of its ends. It's like trying to touch your elbow, with the fingers on the same arm. The elbow moves away, when the fingers approach. And I said *fingers*, not *fingernails* ☺

can be caught. Knowledge of the optics of refraction in raindrops, puts an end to such silliness<sup>1</sup>.

But, weren't there times in the past, before adults ruined the magic, that things like this lived as *truth* for you. Whole societies have existed, filled with people, who, for the full length of their lives, emphatically nodded in the affirmative to utter fallacies. For instance, a *flat Earth* at the *center of the Universe*.

There were times when declaring anything different, especially to large crowds, could get you burned at the stake!

Would you naturally assume the Earth is round<sup>2</sup> without being told? Probably not. What about the movements of the sun and the myriad points of light in the sky? For a long time Western culture believed the Earth was at the center of the Universe—the “Geocentric model” of the cosmos. And, there are people, today, who believe in a Flat Earth. I mean, if you look around<sup>3</sup>, it seems pretty flat doesn't it? And, if you look up, clearly the whole cosmos appears to be revolving around our planet. Back in the days before nearly instantaneous communication, you couldn't just call your buddy in Nuuk, Greenland<sup>4</sup> and ask them what stars were up in their night sky while comparing them to the stars you see in Invercargill, New Zealand. So, it made sense, back then, for people to be convinced *the Earth is flat*-- except, in most cases people

---

<sup>1</sup> In a way, it is possible to “catch” a rainbow. With the sun at your back, generate, within arms reach, a continuous water mist in front of you—the denser the better. A rainbow will form in the mist, fully within your reach. But, it's not nearly as glorious as the full chromatic spectacle of a typical sun shower forged, sky high rainbow!

<sup>2</sup> The proper term is *spherical*. But, the common vernacular is “round”, so I'm staying with convention.

<sup>3</sup> HA! You look around, and see flatness!! Get it? Look a “round”.....sorry..like I said before, it's in my DNA!

<sup>4</sup> I figured Nuuk, Greenland is pretty far away from where most everybody else is. If you're a resident of Nuuk, Greenland, then how about Slapout, Oklahoma (where rumor has it the local store is perpetually “slap out of everything”).



actually weren't! Through much of human history it was known that the earth is a sphere. Ancient Greek scholars, such as Pythagoras and later Aristotle, provided evidence that the Earth is a sphere based on observations of the stars, the changing positions of constellations as one travels north or south, and the Earth's shadow on the moon during a lunar eclipse. It took a bit longer to knock Earth off its celestial throne. It was Nicolaus Copernicus, Johannes Keple, and Galileo Galilei who did that.

Eratosthenes, a Greek mathematician and astronomer, even calculated the Earth's circumference with remarkable accuracy in the 3rd century BCE. The understanding of a spherical Earth persisted through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. By the time of Christopher Columbus's voyages in the late 15th century, the notion of a flat Earth was not prevalent among educated individuals. Columbus himself did not set out to prove the Earth was round; rather, he underestimated the Earth's size. The current ubiquity of flat earth fanaticism is unprecedented, and might be about something other than crackpot theories.



[Why People Think the World is Flat](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid20](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid20)

But really, unless you think the world's space programs are colluding in an elaborate deception, the evidence is available for everyone to see, on the Internet, and from numerous space programs, both government and private. Thus it's hard to escape decisive evidence that *the Earth is pretty darn round, like a big F'ing ball!*



[Views of the Very Spherical Earth from the ISS](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid02](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid02)

Misconceptions, like the belief that everything revolves around the Earth, that the Earth is flat, or that celebrity implies veracity, exemplify conclusions drawn solely from unexamined observations, without the application of critical thinking. Here are some more examples of physical behavior easily misinterpreted:

- Helium balloons, when present in the cab of a car, not only pin to the ceiling, they also lean into a turn in the opposite direction you might expect. And, get this: If the car is transporting both helium-filled balloons, and air-filled balloons, they will move in opposite directions whenever the

car turns, accelerates, or brakes. The air filled balloons will slide away from the turn as expected, but the helium filled balloons will go towards the direction of the turn! When the driver hits the gas, the helium balloons will pile up on the windshield, and if the driver slams on the brakes, the helium balloons will rush to the back of the car!! The air filled balloons will behave like they're "supposed to". TRY IT – it will freak you right out!! But, maybe don't do this with more than one helium balloon; otherwise, the balloons will crowd around you and try to get you killed!!



[A Baffling Balloon Behavior  
- Smarter Every Day 113](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid36](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid36)

- Peanut butter is neither butter, nor anything to do with nuts. A peanut is a legume, like a bean. Thus, it's far more like a *pea* than a *nut*! And, contains about as much *butter* as a *butterfly*. Also, Pistachios are the seeds of a fruit; avocado is a fruit with a seed; Kiwi fruits are actually berries (alternately known as Chinese Gooseberries); also, not a fruit, the banana is of the same family as ginger and grows on a large bush. Broccoli is a shrub; zucchini is a flower stem; and peppercorns are more like raisins!
- The Moon landing, which really did happen. Check out MythBusters season 6, episode 11.
- The solid scientific evidence that greenhouse gasses are warming the planet to disastrous extent.

I know someone who, in her youth, asked her mom the brilliant question, "when did color come into the world." The youngster had

keenly observed that color was consistently missing from movies and TV shows of the past<sup>1</sup>.

*"The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing"*

~Socrates

Another is the notion we *are* this body-mind. Sure *feels* like it, and even *looks* like it—in fact every one of our senses seems to corroborate the notion this fleshy lump is, indeed, who we are. But look how well our senses served us in determining the shape and position of the Earth, or the veracity of distant quivering desert floor “water”, or of the shrinkage of rail cars, or the expected direction of a helium balloon’s lean when tearing around a corner!

Reminds me of an Emo Phillips<sup>2</sup> joke: *“I used to think that the brain was the most wonderful organ in my body. Then I realized who was telling me this.”*

· - ----===<•:+:{☉}:+:•>====- - ·

*“To know that we know what we know, and to know that we do not know what we do not know, that is true knowledge.”*

~Nicolaus Copernicus

Mirages, rainbows, miniature moons, and the apparent contraction of things afar, are all *Optical Illusions*. Deceptions of perception proving *seeing ain't believing*—or at least it shouldn't be.

<sup>1</sup> Though, colorization is assailing that sacred bastion of classical cinema!

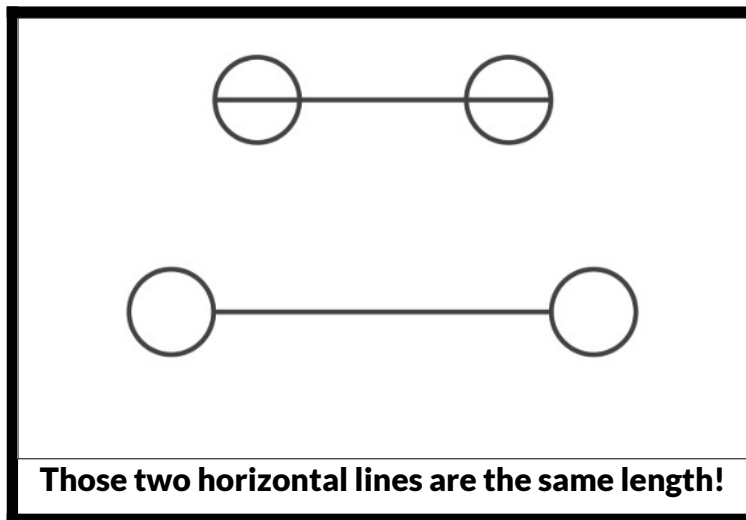
<sup>2</sup> One of my favorite comedians!

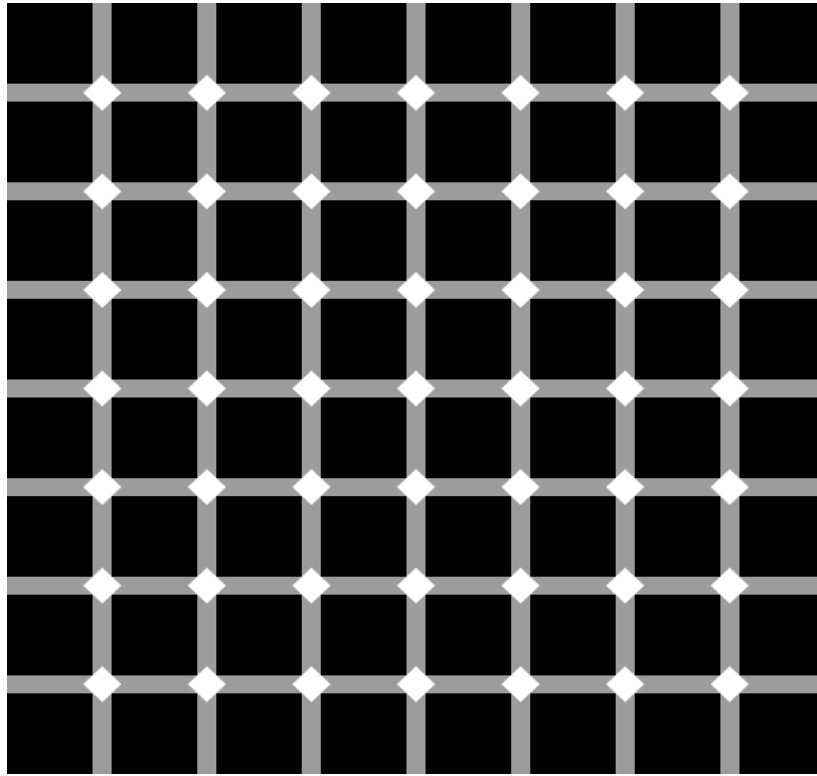
Your eyes are frequently deceived.

And, it's about to happen again.

On the following pages are a number of *eye benders*. Two of them involve horizontal lines that, contrary to appearance, are actually *straight, parallel, and of equal length!* Be sure to verify this with a ruler!

Have fun!





**Yup! Those little black dots, dancing in the white diamonds, are but mere phantoms!**

In the next page, **Tile A** and **Tile B** are the *same shade of gray!* Don't believe me (and there's no reason you should)? Make a photocopy of the page<sup>1</sup> and then cut off the strip along the dotted line (below the image) and punch out the two circles (A & B). The idea is to line up the punched out circles, with those two tiles (tiles A and B), so you can see their twin grayness through the holes<sup>2</sup>. Did you hurl expletives of amazement?

If that's too complicated, take the photocopy you made and fold it so tile A and tile B are right next to each other. You might need to bend the paper back, so you can get a good look.

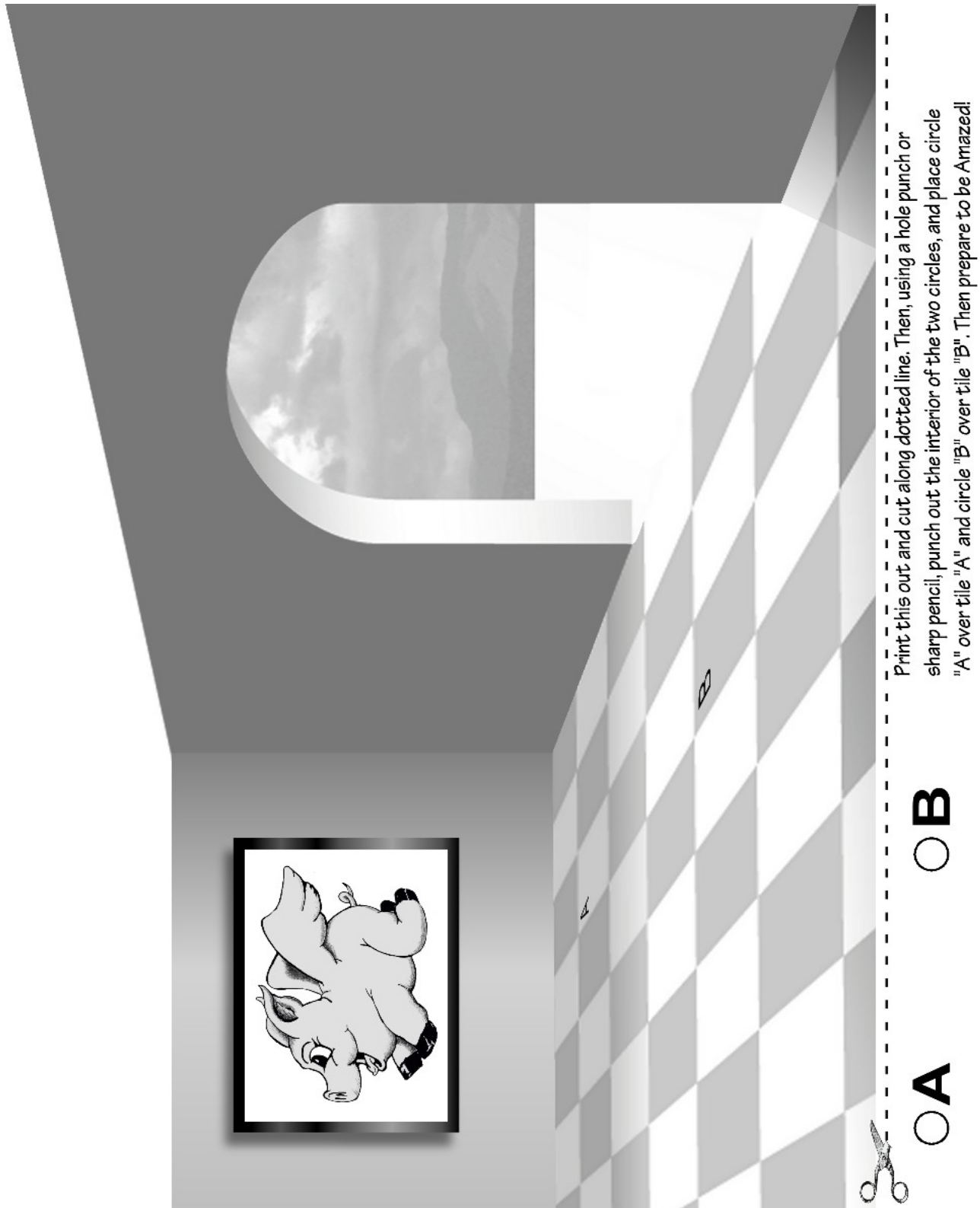
Or, check out this animation I created to make it easier to witness this effect:



[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web31](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web31)

<sup>1</sup> Or, if this is an eBook, PDF or the like, go ahead and print it. If it won't let you print, then you can view its animated form on my website, at: [www.hfndr.com/illusions/](http://www.hfndr.com/illusions/)

<sup>2</sup> The white strip of paper serves as a blind, blocking all but your view of the gray within the two marked tiles. This allows your eye to see them as they really are, without the confusion of the other tiles.



Print this out and cut along dotted line. Then, using a hole punch or sharp pencil, punch out the interior of the two circles, and place circle "A" over tile "A" and circle "B" over tile "B". Then prepare to be Amazed!

○ A ○ B



BTW: Another illusion is the appearance of depth in the picture. Also, the feeling of “light” coming in from the “outside”. Same with any emotion attributed to that picture of the “flying pig”. It’s *all* a fabrication of the mind. In fact your mind is likely conjuring a great deal in regards to that flying pig “picture”:

- That it’s hanging on a “wall”
- That it’s casting a shadow on a “wall”
- That it’s a picture of a “pig” with “wings” [it’s not! It’s just an assemblage of lines and blobs].
- That the “pig” is *happy*.
- That the “pig” is *flying*.
- That the frame is *shiny*.

The little *gal hog*—who, indeed, appears to be having great fun with her new found talent, is nothing more than a series of strategically placed strokes of the pen<sup>1</sup>. On the next page is a similar illusion, but in some ways more striking, and even eerie!

. . ----====<•:+:{☺}:+•>====---- . .

For the next illusion, I suggest you make a photocopy of the page<sup>2</sup>, and cut out figure ‘**a**’. Then carefully cut it in half, as shown in ‘**b**’, making sure, as best you can, to segregate the shades of gray – i.e. try to keep from leaving any dark on the light side or light on the dark side. Then arrange them as shown in ‘**c**’.

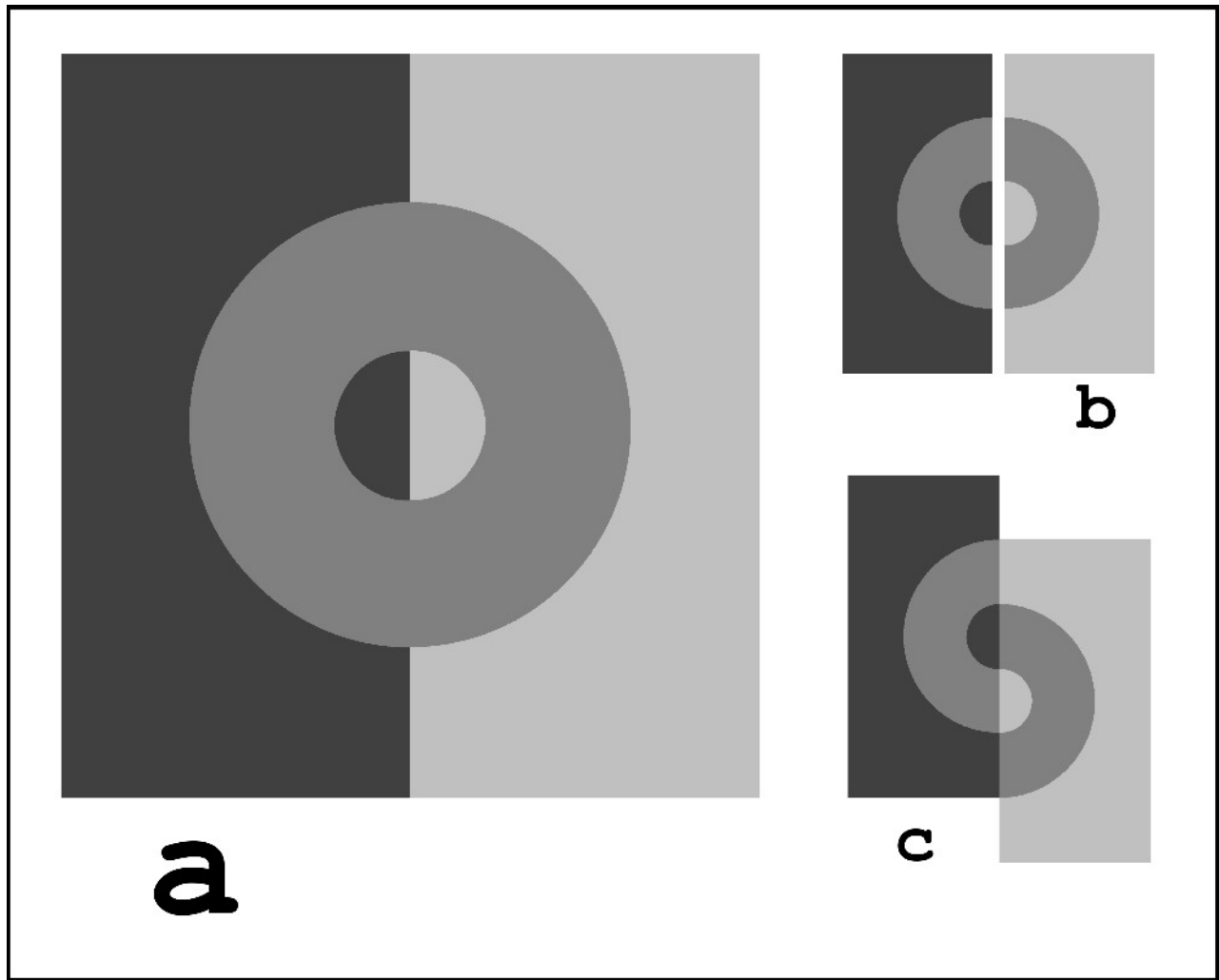
<sup>1</sup> I know, because I drew it—first with a pencil, and then with an ink pen.

<sup>2</sup> Or, if this is an eBook, PDF or the like, go ahead and print it [I give you permission], if it won’t let you print, then you can view it on my website, at: [www.hfndr.com/illusions/](http://www.hfndr.com/illusions/)

The doughnut shape is all one shade of gray—but, once cleft in twain, and laterally shifted, the doughnut halves seem of freakishly different shades—yet nothing changed but position!

Move them back and forth between the positions shown in ‘**a**’ and in ‘**c**’. The change might not happen right away, so give it a second, or three. You’ll probably see it slowly transform. And, yes...it’s still just ordinary paper.

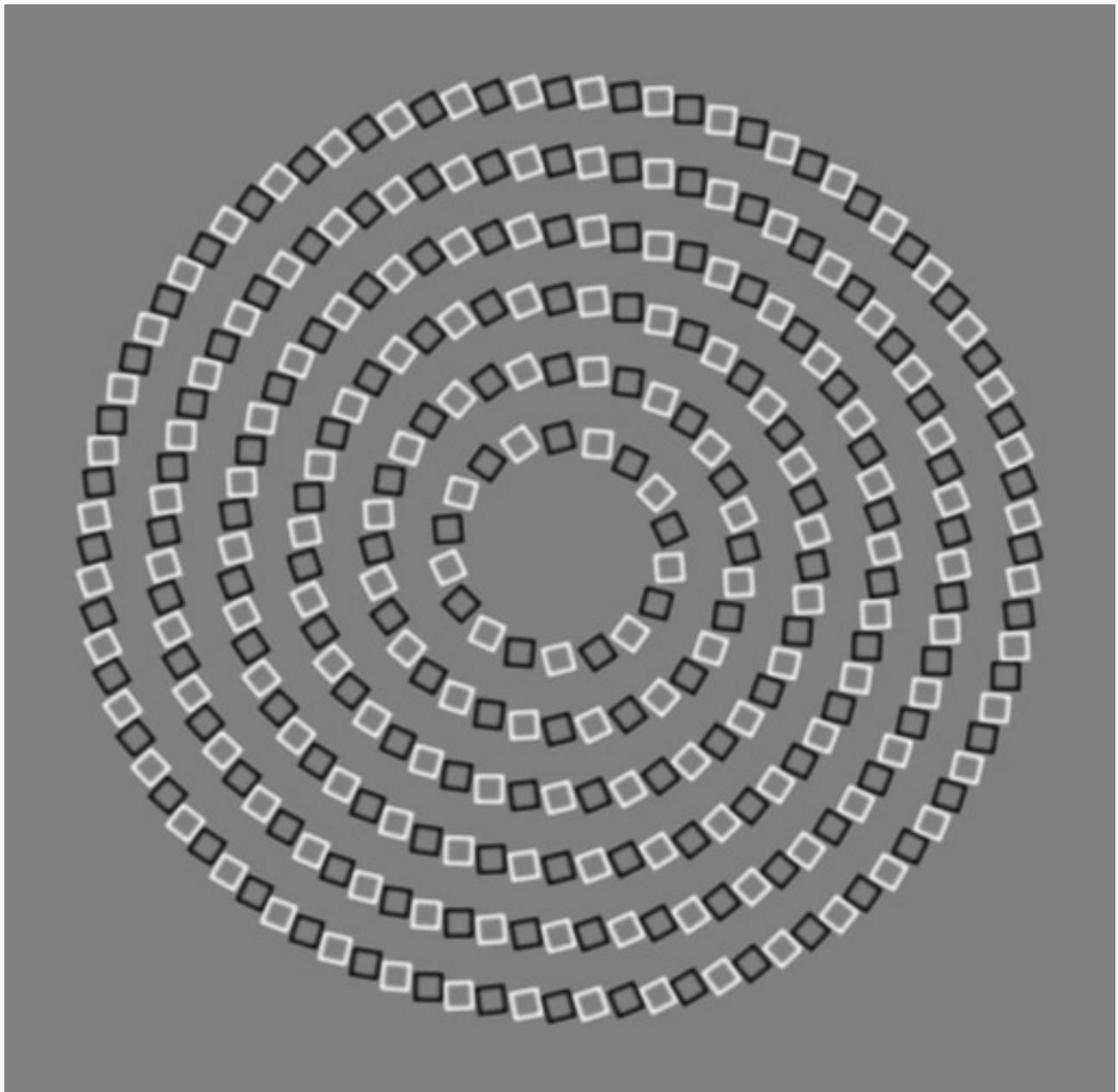
BTW: Not an illusion is the hair standing up on the back of your neck [assuming it is].



Here's an animation for this one:



[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web32](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web32)



Spiral, right?

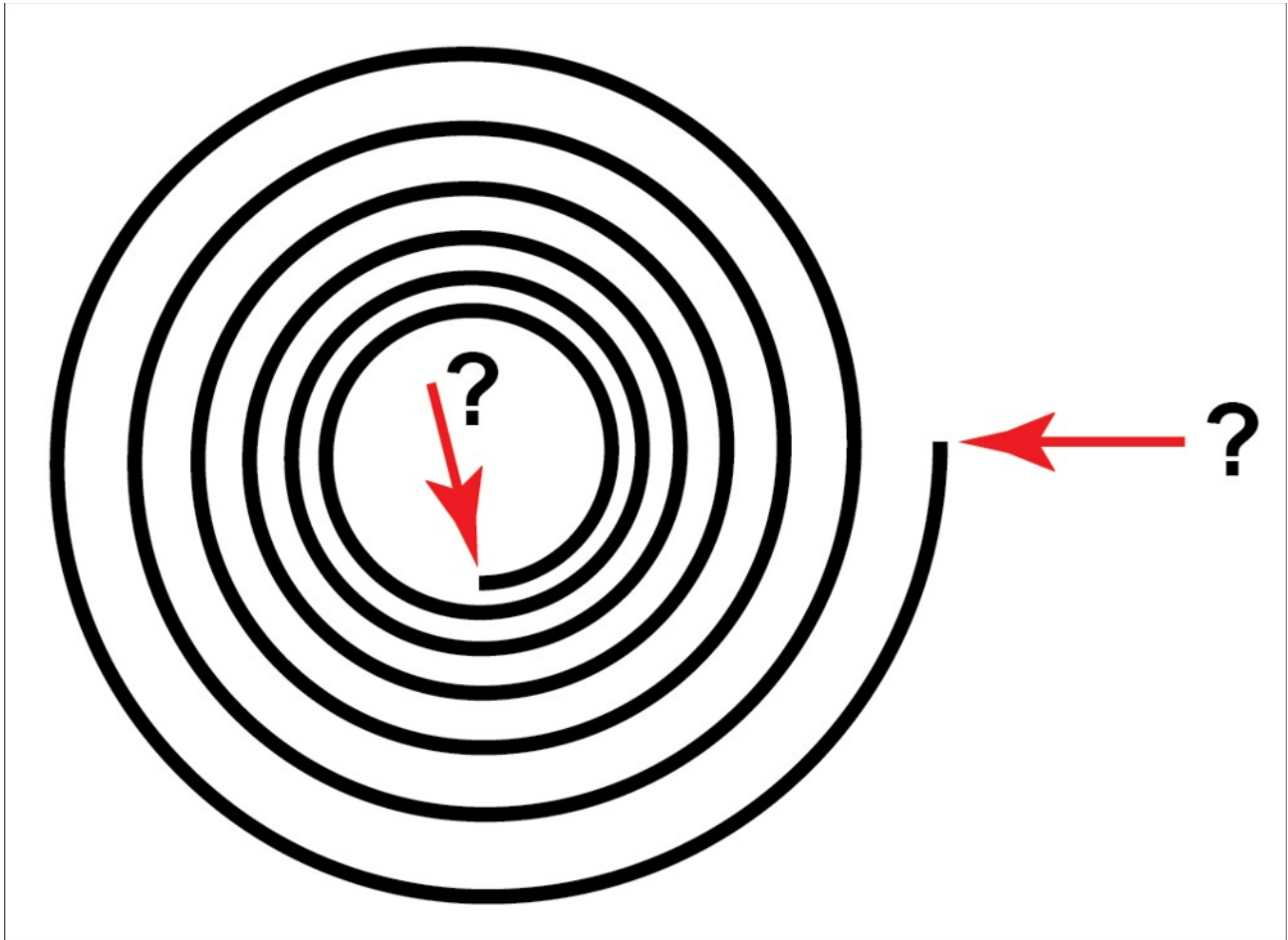
Then, where's the start?

Where's the end?

Pick a point, and try tracing the "spiral".

Going in circles?

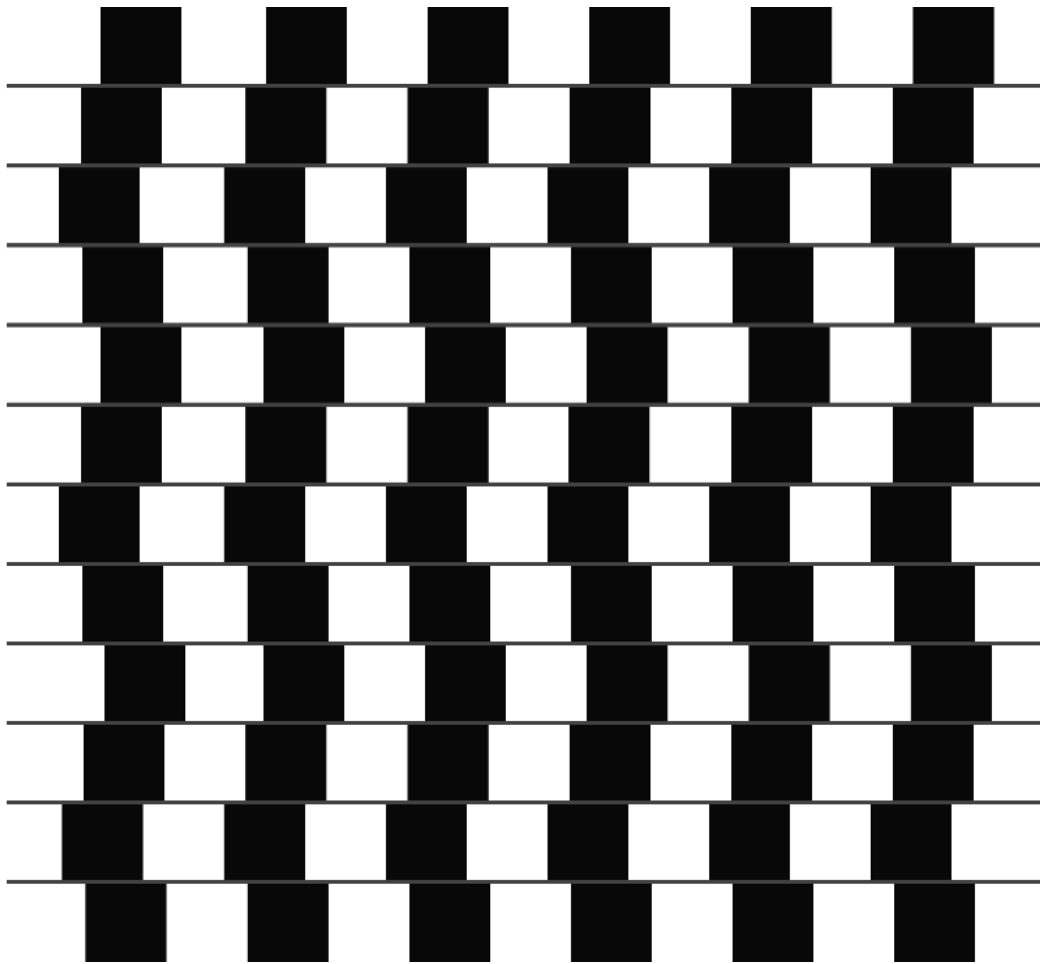
Here's an actual spiral. Notice how it has a beginning, and an end.



Follow this link for an animated version that clears things right up:



[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web35](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web35)



**Nothing is slanted! It's ALL 90° angles! A ruler will call me NOT a lair.**

And, the animated version is here:

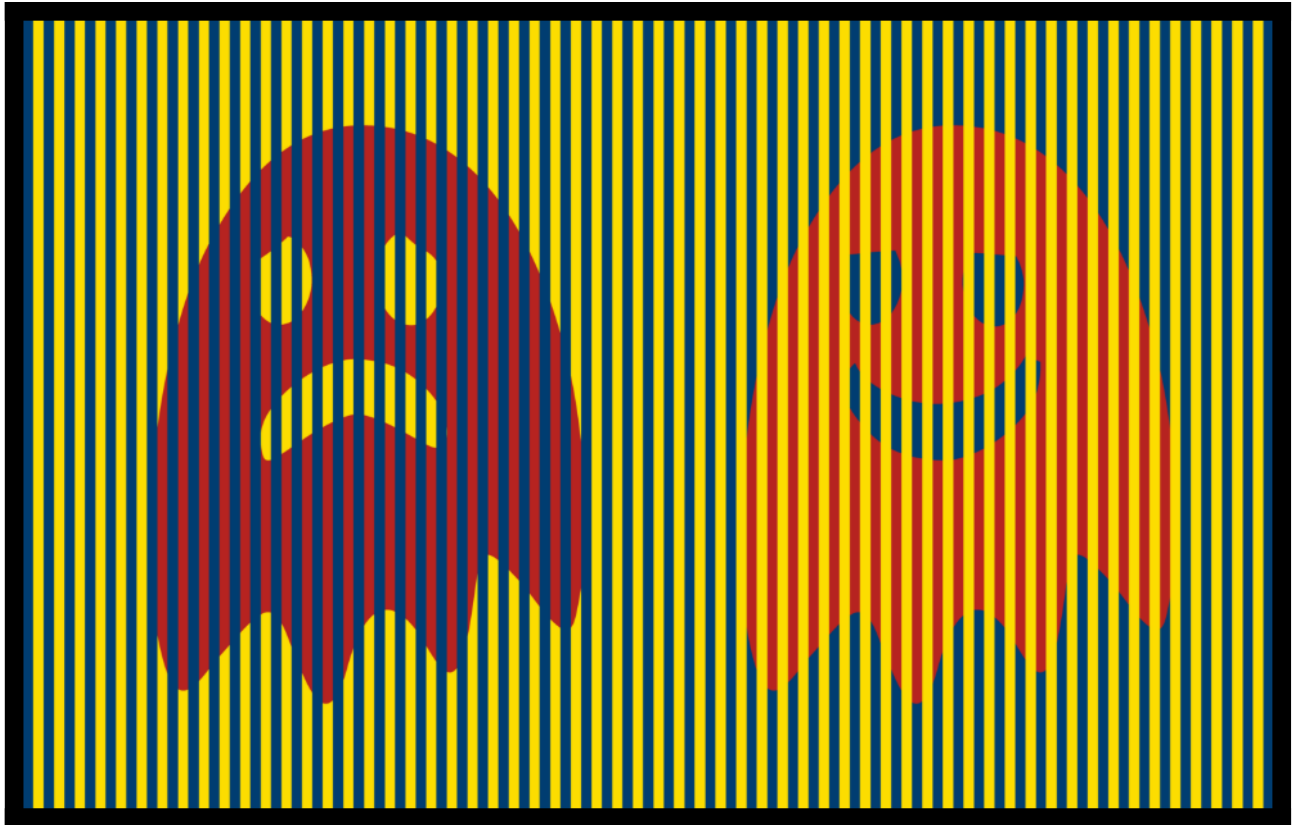


[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web34](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web34)

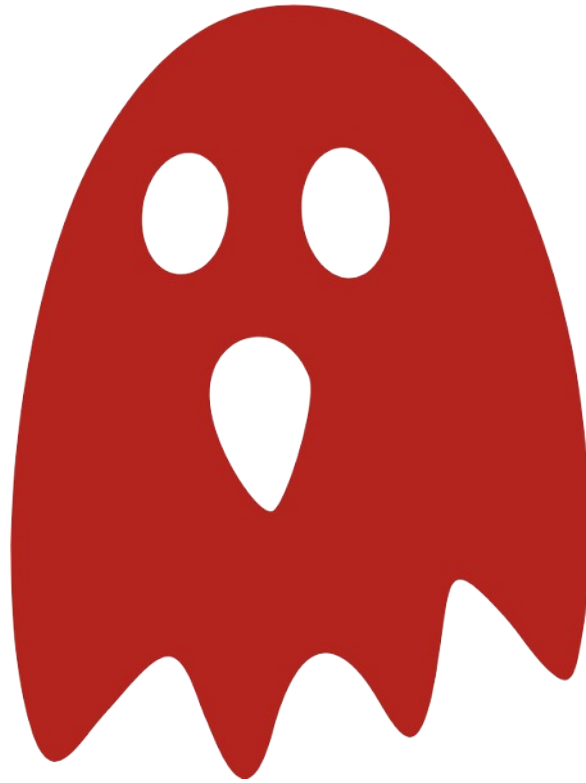
Purple Ghost?

Orange Ghost?

Nope, two Red Ghosts...of the exact same shade!



This shade:



In other words, ALL the ghosts are red, like the ghost on this page, yet what you see...well, it's *not how it be!!*

It be animated here:



[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web36](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web36)



And, here's a general link to all the illusions on my website [in case you want a simpler link to save/share/remember/etc]:



[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web30](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web30)

And, here's a couple of YouTube videos with more optical mind-freaks:



[Optical Illusions Show How We See](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid13](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid13)



[15 Unbelievable Visual Illusions](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid33](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid33)

Still trust those eyes of yours?

What about audio illusions? Check out this video, and be prepared to get freaked-the-HELL-out!!:



[Word Changes Depending On What You Read](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid38](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid38)

This is a spooky demonstration of how our mind modifies, or filters, what we hear. You hear a completely different word/phrase depending on what your mind *expects* to hear! This is how two people can hear the same thing, and come away with two, often *very*, different interpretations!!

This comes into play when we collect evidence to substantiate a belief. Because we hear what we want to hear, we can completely miss evidence contrary to our stance. In other words, hear things that support our stance, when, in fact, they refute the hell out of it!

Still trust those ears of yours?

How about *mental* illusions?

Here are some words/phrases:

- **blackmail**
- **jailbird**
- **birdbrain**
- **reprobate**
- **deflate**
- **old fart**
- **podcast**
- **broadcast**
- **outcast**
- **odd people**
- **weird couple**
- **Weird AI**

You've heard of Nelson Mandela, the South African anti-Apartheid activist, right? Do you know where and when he died? If you thought he perished in prison back in the 80's, you're among those with an erroneous notion.

A Blogger named Fiona Broome dubbed this sort of thing the "Mandela Effect".

Here are more examples:

- In Star Wars episode III, Darth Vader said, "Luke, I am your father." right? Wrong. He said "No, I am your father."
- "Mr. Monopoly," that guy with the white mustache, dressed in a tuxedo and top hat featured on the Parker Brothers Monopoly Game box cover<sup>1</sup>—he wears a Monocle, right? Nope. You're probably conflating Rich Uncle Pennybags with Mr. Peanut!

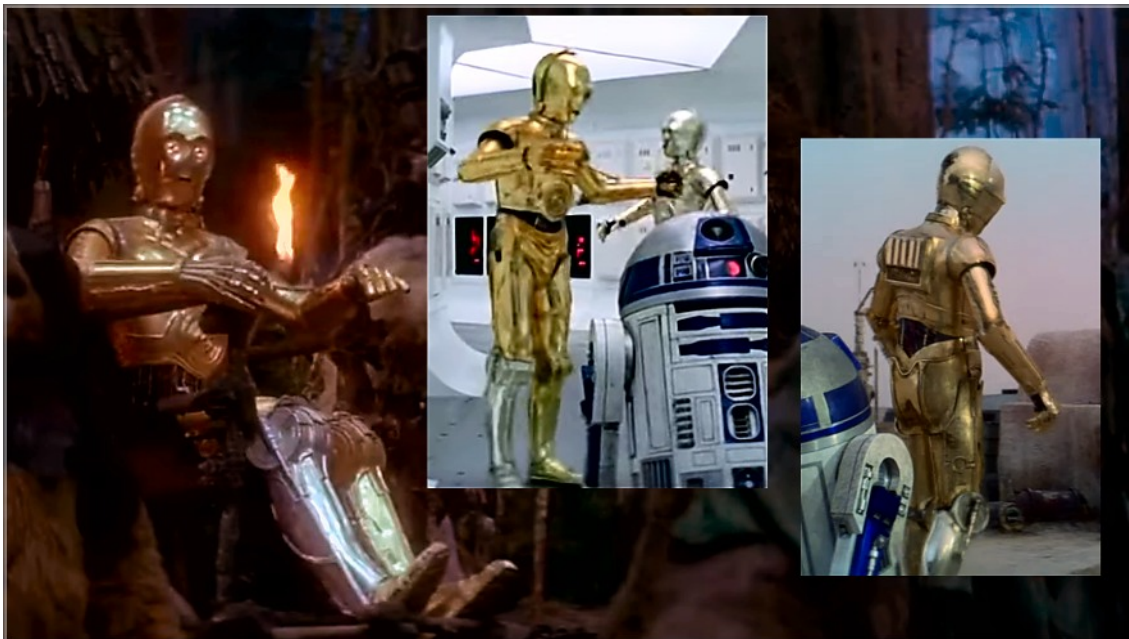


<sup>1</sup> According to Wikipedia [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monopoly\\_\(game\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monopoly_(game))], the Monopoly game has a rather interesting, and surprising [to me, at least] history!

- The fruit on Fruit Of The Loom underwear is spilling out of a cornucopia, right? If you thought that, you used your brain to *reconstruct* that iconoclastic logo into something it's not. For decades, the Fruit of the Loom logo has flashed on screens, both tubular and flat, and all that exposure, you would think, would latch the correct image into your mind, but not so. What actually happened is your human mind decontextualized the thing—placing it in a more general category, where it mingles with other remembered images of a similar kind. For instance, images of a cornucopia excreting fruit that resembles the Fruit Of The Loom fruit.
- Ed McMahon, the Johnny Carson era *The Tonight Show* sidekick, never appeared on camera as part of the Prize Patrol. Any memory of Mr. McMahon standing next to a giant *Publishers Clearing House* check on the porch of a sweepstakes winner is false.
- Star Wars fans bungled it again! C-3PO was not always fully gold colored. In episode III, IV and V, C-3PO's lower-right leg is silver colored.



FRUIT OF THE LOOM®





- Tom Cruise wasn't wearing sunglasses while dancing in his underwear in the 1983 movie Risky Business. But, was he wearing Fruit of the Loom<sup>1</sup>?
- I remember spreading Jiffy peanut butter on my many childhood sandwiches. My memory is flawed. It was Skippy! Or was it Jif?! Actually, it could have been either. My mom was a frugal shopper who had no brand loyalty whatsoever.
- Watch me do Hannibal Lecter: "Hello, Clarice." Did you catch the melodic tone? Pretty good, right? Wrong! No tone. No mention of her name. Only "Good Morning." I probably conflated "Here's Johnny!" (for the tone) from The Shining (1980), with "Hello, Newman"/"Hello, Jerry" from Seinfeld (beginning 1992<sup>2</sup>).
- Remember that list of words/phrases at the beginning of all of this?!? Without looking, guess which of the following were actually on the list [starts on next page]:



---

<sup>1</sup> I Googled it and found nothing – but I gave up 5 levels down.

<sup>2</sup> According to Wikipedia, the Newman character first appeared in Seinfeld 1992 [unless you include the voice only appearance in the 1991 "The Revenge" episode] and occasionally appeared until the show's finale in 1998 [unless you include the 2020 political ad chastising Dumpty45's appointment of Louis Dejoy as a ploy to impede mail-in voting—*thank you Wayne Knight! <sarcasm>*].

- blackbird.....
- jailbait.....
- broadcast.....
- reprobate.....
- deflate.....
- old fart.....
- pod people.....
- outcast.....
- old broad.....
- musical fruit.....
- odd couple.....
- Weird Al.....

The answers are on the next page, so don't peek!

- blackbird.....
- jailbait.....
- broadcast.....
- reprobate.....
- deflate.....
- old fart.....
- pod people.....
- outcast.....
- old broad.....
- musical fruit.....
- odd couple.....
- Weird Al.....

How'd you do?

If you thought some of those, like "blackbird" and "odd couple" were part of the original list, you got Mandela'ed!

Have a look at these numbers:

**1 2 3 4 5 6 7**

We, here in the west, are in the habit of writing things down from left to right. But, can you make that assumption about these numbers? Did I write/type them from left to right? Or...

..were they:

1. What if the numbers were scrawled by a foreigner, a rebel, an engineer, and/or a scalawag?! Maybe they were put down in some chaotic order, due to indecision, cultural disparity, or stinkerism?

4  
2 4  
2 4 6  
12 4 67  
1234567

2. And, in this particular case, aren't they just symbols on a page? And, in the strictest of scrutiny, aren't they just black blobs that your mind

is giving meaning to? And, as such, isn't any form of ordering *meaningless*? Like "Jesus toast": Is it miraculous gluten, or a coincidental arrangement of carbon<sup>1</sup>? Maybe the numbers emerged from a rain of ink falling through a stencil. And, as the droplets formed the characters, at what point did the splatter of dots gain the



<sup>1</sup> Or Photoshop?!

semblance of Arabic numerals?

Here's a link to a Javascript program I wrote that illustrates this concept. Notice when the dots suddenly shift to recognizable/readable characters.



[\*Reticent Rain\*](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web40](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web40)

3. What if the numbers are merely composed of tiny shapes that happen to line up into the appearance of numbers, due to the parallax effect, when viewed from one particular direction!?! In other words, they only look like a set of numbers from one particular angle, like the various sculptures in this video:



[Illusion: Sculptures Only Appear If You Stand In The Right Spot](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid21](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid21)

Here's another one:



[Giraffe to Elephant illusion](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid52](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid52)

In other words, you probably made assumptions about how those numbers were rendered, right? I mean, yeah, because this is a document produced on a word processor, it's pretty obvious they came into being the way any bits of text come into being when produced by a guy typing on a QWERTY keyboard in the USA. But, I could have painstakingly typed them in a different order, just to be a wiseguy! Or even changed the mapping on my keyboard so the numbers naturally fill the screen from right to left—WISEGUY!!

Speaking of *numbers*, even mathematicians are vulnerable to these mental distortions. Srinivasa Ramanujan was a prominent mathematician who lived in India from 1887 to 1920. He made substantial contributions to the mathematical world, including solutions to problems then considered unsolvable. But, he fell into a common trap. And, it was even obvious to his mother:

*"What on earth are you talking about? There's no way that's true!"*

~ Ramanujan's mother

He postulated that  $1 + 2 + 3 + \dots + \infty = -1/12$

In other words, he wanted us to believe that summing the counting



number from 1 to infinity is NOT an infinitely HUGE number, but a number that is LESS THAN ONE, and even, inconceivably, a NEGATIVE NUMBER...

# WHAT?!?

To “prove” this, he used reasoning similar to the following:

$$1 + \infty = \infty = \infty + 1$$

$$\text{Thus: } 1 = \infty$$

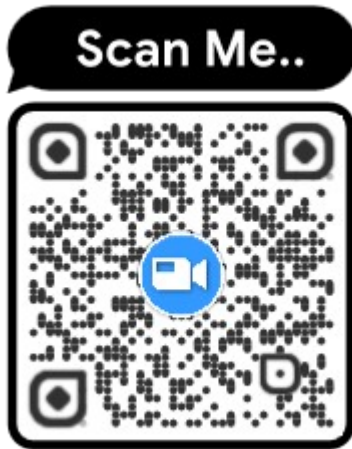
Absurd! The error, of course, is accepting that the following equation is valid:

$$1 + \infty = \infty$$

It's not!  $1 + \infty$  is, indeed, also *infinite*, but the two forms of infinity are not the same. What sets them apart is the rate of approach to infinity. And, that's the case for the infinity in:

$$1 + 2 + 3 + \dots + \infty = -1/12$$

Here's a video where one *very smart person* tries to convince *another very smart person* that Ramanujan's proof of this is *actually valid*:



**ASTOUNDING:**

$$\underline{1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + \dots = -1/12}$$

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid46](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid46)

Here's a detail of Ramanujan's proof. Go ahead and skip this. I included it for the nerds reading this book. I'll use a different font so it's easy to tell where this nonsense ends.

Ramanujan's proof begins with this bit of math:

$$1 - 1 + 1 - 1 + 1 - \dots$$

This is called a "series", because it involves a *series* of numbers. Regarding this series, an absurd assertion is made based on the question: *What does this series sum to?*:

If we take the sums, of this series, as it progresses, we get:

$$1 = 1$$

$$1 - 1 = 0$$

$$1 - 1 + 1 = 1$$

$$1 - 1 + 1 - 1 = 0$$

In other words, it alternates between one, and zero.

Here's another way of looking at it:

$$\begin{array}{cccccc}
 1 & - & 1 & + & 1 & - & 1 & + & 1 & - & 1 & \dots \\
 \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & & \\
 1 & & 0 & & 1 & & 0 & & 1 & & 0 & 
 \end{array}$$

And, what if we take the average of these partial sums?

That's:

$$1 + 0 + 1 + 0 + 1 + 0 = 3/6 = 1/2$$

So **1/2** right? Well, yeah, but the idea that **1/2** is the actual sum of this result, out at infinity is absurd! Why?!

Well, doesn't it breakdown if we do it like this?:

$$1 + 0 + 1 + 0 + 1 = 3/5 \neq 1/2$$

Right?! Also, the very nature of this series is that it never stops! It just keeps alternating between 1 and 0 FOREVER!! There is never a point where it ends and a sum can be taken, which is shown by the very fact there is an alternate sum: **3/5**, which contradicts the **1/2** result!. The computation of an average is dependent on where you stop the series to take a sample. But, it's just a sample. It's NOT a result.

But, these very intelligent people managed to convince themselves that a series, that repeats ad infinitum, can be given a finite result.

Here's a video, by a respected mathematician that debunks this harebrained concept [It gets rather technical, and goes over my head, but I offer it in case you need convincing 😊]:



[\*Numberphile v. Math: the truth about  \$1+2+3+\dots=-1/12\$\*](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid47](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid47)

Yeah. Geniuses can be very smart at being stupid.

Another such misconception [i.e. deception of the mind] is that reality is somehow *composed of Math*. If that were true, then mathematicians could conjure like wizards, and so far, I've only seen that happen in the Movies<sup>1</sup>.

So often, we form opinions, and even defend those opinions, with little or no cognizance<sup>2</sup> of the assumptions that led to our opinion<sup>3</sup>. Like the assumption, here in the West, that something is always written from *Left-to-Right*<sup>4</sup>. *Because, like, that's just how we do it – now leave me alone!*

But, certain Asian languages are written from Right-to-Left, and even from Top-to-Bottom! And, if your argument is, “those numbers are not Asian script”, then, my counter is: *Cannot an Asian pen **Arabic numerals**? And, by-the-way, yes, they are **Arabic**, and last I checked, **Arabia** is considered an **Asian nation**.*

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Strange, for instance!! A favorite comic book character of mine, and Cumberbatch conjures a more than credible portrayal.

<sup>2</sup> Whether due to *ignorance* or *absentmindedness* or even *pigheadedness*.

<sup>3</sup> Yes! *Opinion*!!

<sup>4</sup> Consider “left to right” as code for whatever direction it is that you read.

Bottom line: Make sure you've established *context*, before doing any reasoning, otherwise your mind will likely wander in the wrong direction, and ultimately get nowhere!

### Magic Mirror

Try this. Here are those numbers, again:

**1 2 3 4 5 6 7**

Get yourself in front of a mirror—one large enough to frame all the numbers—and look at them in the mirror. They're backwards, right? The **1** is on the right, and the **7** is on the left! ie, *reversed*! But, why only in the horizontal direction? Why aren't they also upside-down—ie, reversed in the vertical direction?

Does the mirror possess some magical, mystical impishness designed to bedevil your sensibilities?

No. The answer is far less mundane—and will seem obvious, in a moment!

In fact, *you* are the culprit! No, really! It's because of something *you did*—something you probably didn't even pay attention to *as you did it*.

Try this. While still facing the mirror, without moving the paper with the numbers on it, look down at the numbers on the paper. The one is on the *right*, isn't it? And the *seven* is on the *left*. And, they aren't

backwards, right?!

Now, turn the paper so the numbers are, once again facing *you*. Isn't the *one* back to being on the *left*?! And the *seven* back in its original place, on the *right*?!

Do you see it? If not, try this. With the numbers facing you, stand once again in front of the mirror and flip the page over from top to bottom. Now look at it in the mirror. Notice how the *one* is still on the *left*, and the *seven* is still on the *right*, but now, the numbers appear *upside down*! Again only *backwards* in one aspect, but the new aspect is in the *vertical*!

Now, while still standing in front of the mirror, and with the numbers facing towards you so they are face up, with the 1 on the right. Slowly turn the paper around from left to right. We're back to the numbers appearing reversed in the horizontal direction, right?

You did that, when you turned the paper around. When you turned the paper, you turned the numbers and reversed them. It's that simple! When you turned the paper from top to bottom, you turned the numbers upside down. And, when you turned the paper around from left to right, you caused them to reverse in the horizontal direction.

The same thing happens when you turn yourself around to look in a mirror. For instance if you put on a shirt with writing on it, and then turn to look at yourself. What if you're already facing the mirror. Then writing was already turned, at some earlier point. Or, how about his. In the case of wearing a piece of clothing with writing on it, while standing in front of the mirror, if you look down at the writing, it appears non reversed. And, when you move your head to look at it in the mirror, your head turns, and it's that turning which flips the letters.

It's even easier to see this if you write something on something transparent, like a slab of glass (hopefully safety glass), or a piece of clear plastic. With the writing facing you, look through the transparent slab, so you can see both the writing on the slab, and the reflection in the mirror. Notice how in both cases the writing is NOT reversed. Then, turn the slab around, and notice how they are BOTH reversed! The writing on the slab is reversed, and the writing in the mirror is also reversed. When you see it like this, ALL of the mystery dissolves!

What if the common way of looking at yourself in the mirror was to flip head over heels into a handstand?! Isn't that just a different kind of *turning around* to look in the mirror? Silly? Not in all instances—as I'll reveal, later.

In our daily lives, we tend to ignore the mundane—like that lateral 180 spin of things, and selves, to access a peek in a mirror. It's exactly *because* the solution to this puzzle was hidden in the mundane, that it was so boggling to the mind. It's why things can *hide in plain sight*.

*"Your assumptions are your windows on the world.  
Scrub them off every once in a while,  
or the light won't come in."*

~Isaac Asimov

There is so much of this going on in our daily lives, and most of the time it's of little, or no, consequence, or concern. But, we argue. And, we often argue with great conviction—and even with vehemence, and cruelty—defending a position that often, is merely a misconception, or an error of context, or of perception, or a forgotten assumption, or the Mandela Effect, or some other cognitive error we humans are naturally

prone to.

So much unhappiness comes from this. Something so easy to avoid, if we remember our visual and mental shortcomings, and let that knowledge humble us. Like arguing over the pronunciation of the word “tomato”. Or lambasting someone for buttoning their shirt from the bottom-up. Or snobbing over wine tannins at a tasting. Or assuming someone is being *harsh*, when, in fact, they’re merely tired, or having a bad day. Or hearing a racial slur in an innocent remark. Like using the word niggardly in conversation. [Stole that from an episode of *The Good Fight*—one of the best shows on TV, as of this writing!] Or branding someone a “loser”, based on an innocent error, or a one-time failure. Or the sight of a lover kissing another, enraging the significant other, who’s unaware it’s merely the brother<sup>1</sup>.

For instance, how about that *Seinfeld* episode<sup>2</sup> where Jerry, while waiting for a red light, attends to an itch on his nose, unaware that a love interest of his happened to be watching from a taxi cab in the adjacent lane. Her point of view led to a far less attractive interpretation of what was going on with that finger. Was it buried *in* his nose, or merely eclipsed *by* the nose. Her mind latched onto the former, ruining any future relations between the two.

---

<sup>1</sup> Or *sister*. But *sister* doesn’t rhyme with *another*. 😊😊 Also, let’s assume the “kiss” is a mere peck, so incest can be ruled out.

<sup>2</sup> Season 4 – Episode 13 (The Pick)





She drew a conclusion based on insufficient information. Her interpretation of what she perceived was incorrect, and her stubborn adherence to her interpretation squashed the potential for pleasure, and put the *Jerry character* through a world of *pain*.

By the way: What about a weightless Astronaut? Might he or she go head over heels to look in a mirror? After all, in outer space, “up” has far less meaning<sup>1</sup>. Orbital Assembly Corporation claims they’ll have a hotel in space, orbiting the Earth by 2025 [good luck with that!]. Whether they succeed or not, and if modern civilization survives long enough, there may well be hotels, and even homes, in space. And, though it looks like the Von Braun Station [the proposed name of the Orbital Assembly

<sup>1</sup> A Facebook post alerted me to this: today’s date [as of this writing], when rendered in a digital-clock font: 120222021, being both a palindrome AND an ambigram, it reads the same left-to-right, right-to-left, top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top! Thus, no matter how you look at it in the mirror, it always looks the same!

hotel] will have artificial gravity, there might be a zero-gravity room<sup>1</sup>, and in that room there might be a mirror, and if so, people might, on occasion go head over heels to have a look at their weightless self.

Still trust that brain of yours?

---

<sup>1</sup> A misnomer since the room will still be in the presence of a gravitational field, but because the hotel will be endlessly falling around Earth, it will *seem* like there is no gravity, the same way someone riding in a diving airplane has the sensation of zero-gravity.

## Here are the lyrics of an old blues standard called **Hot Nuts**:

*Sellin' nuts, hot nuts, anybody here want to buy my nuts?  
Sellin' nuts, hot nuts, I've got nuts for sale.  
One for five, two for ten,  
If you buy 'em once, you'll buy 'em again.  
Sellin' nuts, hot nuts, you buy 'em from the peanut man.*

*Nuts, hot nuts, anybody here want to buy my nuts?  
Sellin' nuts, hot nuts, I've got nuts for sale.  
You tell me your nuts is mighty fine,  
But I bet your nuts isn't hot as mine.  
Sellin' nuts, hot nuts, you buy 'em from the peanut man.*

*Sellin' nuts, hot nuts, anybody here want to buy my nuts?  
Sellin' nuts, hot nuts, I've got nuts for sale.  
You tell me that man's nuts is mighty small,  
Best to have small nuts than have no nuts at all;  
Sellin' nuts, hot nuts, you buy 'em from the peanut man.*

*Spoken: Hot nuts? Peanuts! Nutsies? Nuts!*

*Sellin' nuts, hot nuts, anybody here want to buy some nuts?  
Sellin' nuts, hot nuts, I've got nuts for sale.  
You see that man all dressed in brown,  
He's got the hottest nuts in town.  
Sellin' nuts, hot nuts, you buy 'em from the peanut man.*

*Nuts, hot nuts, anybody here want to buy my nuts?  
Sellin' nuts, hot nuts, I've got nuts for sale.  
When a hog gets hungry, he begins to grunt,  
When a man gets hungry, he begins to hunt,  
For nuts, hot nuts, you buy 'em from the peanut man.*

~ Lil Johnson

Lil just singing about toasty peanuts, right? What? You thought it was something else?!

In the Universe, there is only Joy. We make it something else with all of our judgments, innuendos, insinuations, allegations, assumptions—all of which regularly spoil the joy. In each moment the world is deconstructed, and recreated in the image of our personal conceptions.

When I was a young boy, I delighted in building things and then tearing

them down. There was joy in both. I think that is the mind of God. When I see people pray to God to spare them from some tragedy, I imagine God glancing over his shoulder and shouting, “I built you a whole frikin’ Universe, and you want more from me?!”

In 1914 Thomas Edison’s lab caught fire. After making sure everyone was safely out of the building, he stood with his son, watching the blaze. When his son expressed despair over the loss of the lab and all its contents, Thomas interrupted, saying, “Where’s Mom? Go get her! Tell her to get her friends. They’ll never see a fire like this again!”

And speaking of *racial slurs*, if I were to stand in a well populated section of, say Compton, California, or Harlem, New York, and yell “NIGGER!” at the top of my lungs, I, being a white guy, would probably get my ass kicked—*severely!* But, there are whole cultures that wouldn’t care to bat an eye upon hearing that word coming out of my mouth. With no reference to the historical and ethical implications associated with this word—the deep-rooted racial violence it represents—they likely would not respond with more than indifference or disregard.

And, don’t get me wrong. I’m not minimizing the ugliness bound up in that word. And, I’ll probably get my ass kicked for just including this in my book, but my intent is to point to the subtle, but important conflation of word, and intent. After all, if a two year old were to blurt out that word, in pure, innocent mimicry, would anyone take offense? I can imagine, to a two year old, it’s a fun word to say.

What if a mentally challenged young, white adult, having no clue of the word’s dark history, or its offensive nature, were to take up screaming it

---

<sup>1</sup> Yeah. Once is probably too many! And “once” is the precise number of times it will show up in this book! [I’m screwed if I’m ever pressed to do a public reading of this section! I’ll probably jus say “n-word” because I’m chicken!]

—just because, like I said, it's fun to say? What if someone shot him/her for saying it? Tragedy or justice?

After all, a word is merely vibrating air! It only has meaning, if you give it meaning. If I yell that word intending to perpetuate the hate and violence wrapped up in its legacy of atrocity committed under the banner of white supremacy, then yes, I would deserve to have my ass handed to me—but, *only* because of the intent behind my saying it. But, if I'm, say, a five year old, or an adult with a five year old mentality, and I'm merely parroting a word in naïveté, because it *sounds funny*, or is *fun to say*, then any violence done to me would be tragic, pointless, and unjustified.

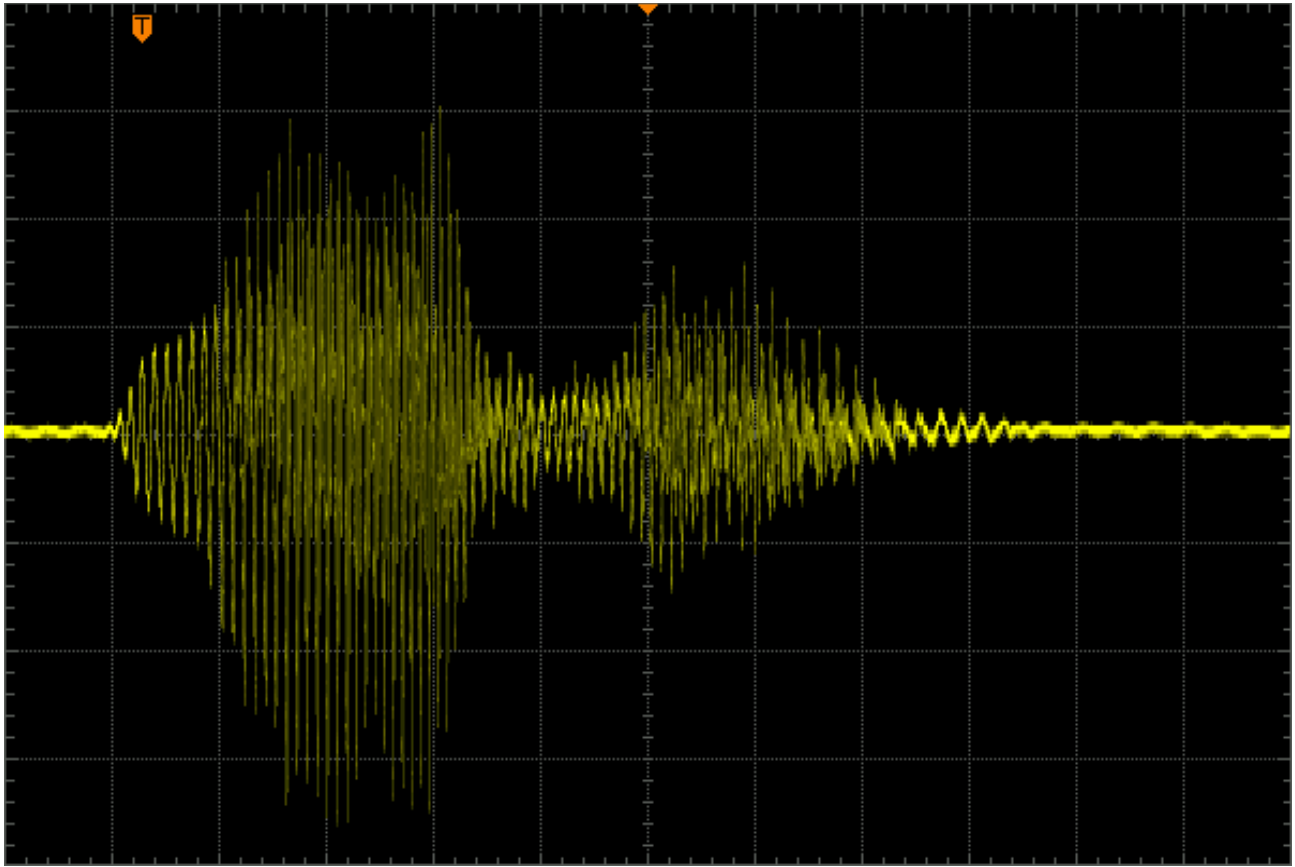
If I yelled the “N-word<sup>1</sup>” in a crowded square in South Africa, the worst reaction I might get is people wondering what the hell I was yelling about. In South Africa it's the ‘K’ word. If I yelled, “Kaffir”, THEN I might get my head bashed in. I had never heard of that word until I watched the Trevor Noah Netflix special: “Son of Patricia.”

I once encountered a parrot, prone, on occasion, to screech the phrase, “What a Homo!”. Did it have any idea the derogatory nature of what it was saying? Or, did it just learn to mimic the slur, hurled frequently at the TV, by the bird's previous owner? *Tweet*, or *Re-Tweet*?!?

---

<sup>1</sup> Hell no I'm not going to write it again! Once was probably too many times! [*notice how freaked out I am over a mere word?*]. The audio book is also going to be a challenge!!

Have a look at this:



What you're looking at here is the N-word as seen on an Oscilloscope. In other words, that's the shape of the vibrations one hears when the N-word is uttered. Would you have known that, had I not told you?

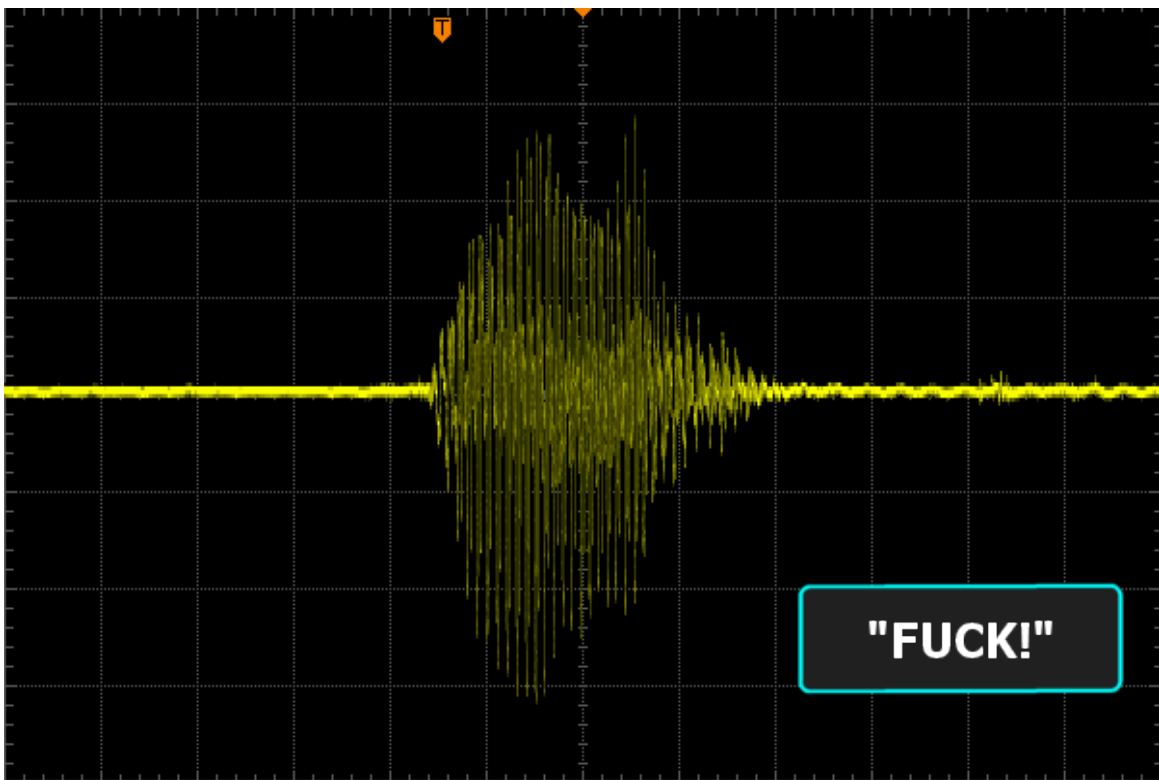
We speak a word, and it ruffles the air, which disturbs adjacent air, and which wiggles subsequent adjacent air—something that continues for however long there is energy to keep it going<sup>1</sup>. This transfer of rattling air is what transports sound to our ears, and what continues it down our ear canals, until it bangs on the eardrum housed down in the inner-ear. This quivering of the tympanic membrane<sup>2</sup> is converted into an electrical impulse that the brain may, or may not, recognize—and for

<sup>1</sup> As a sound wave travels, energy is lost to friction as heat.

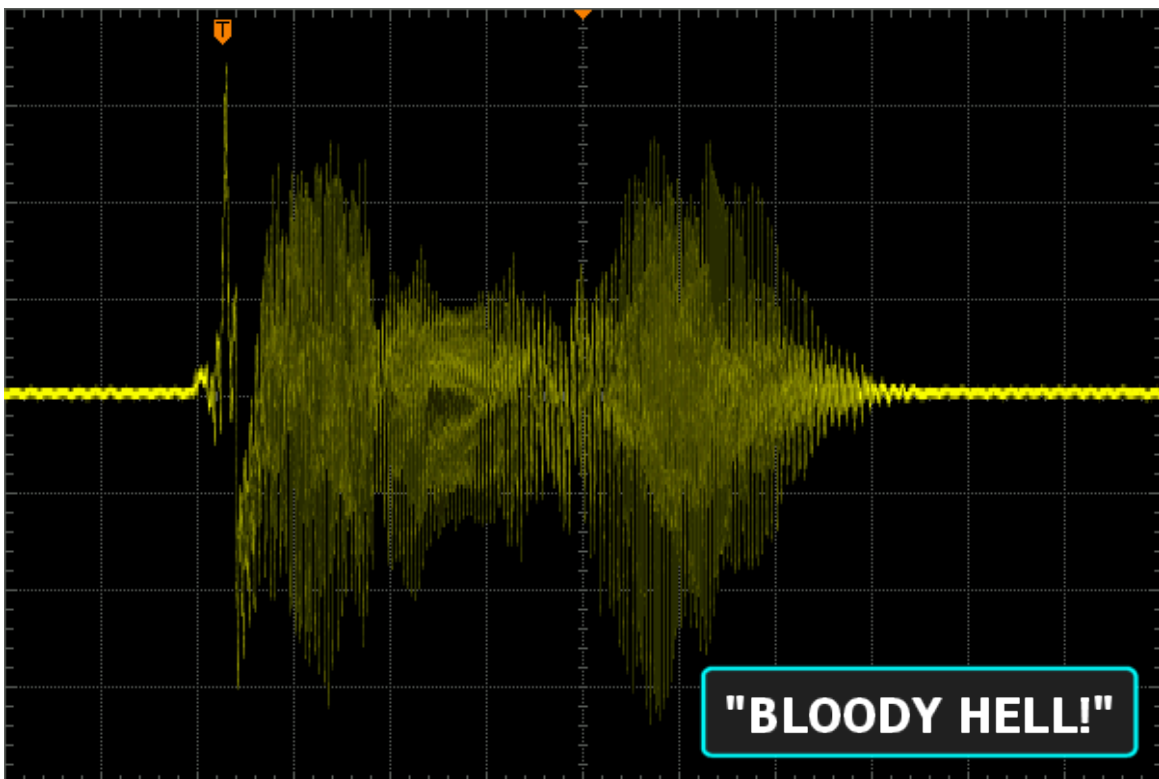
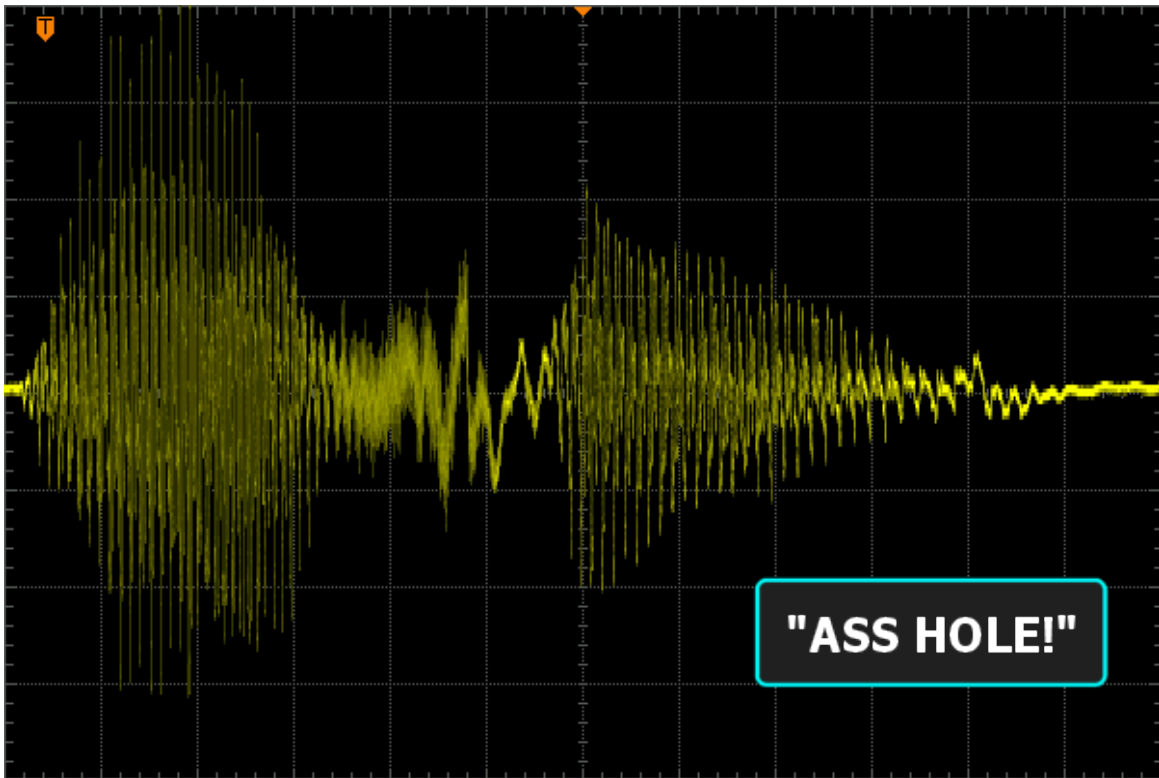
<sup>2</sup> From the root "tympanum" or *drum*, which is the same root as the word "Tympani", or Kettle Drum.

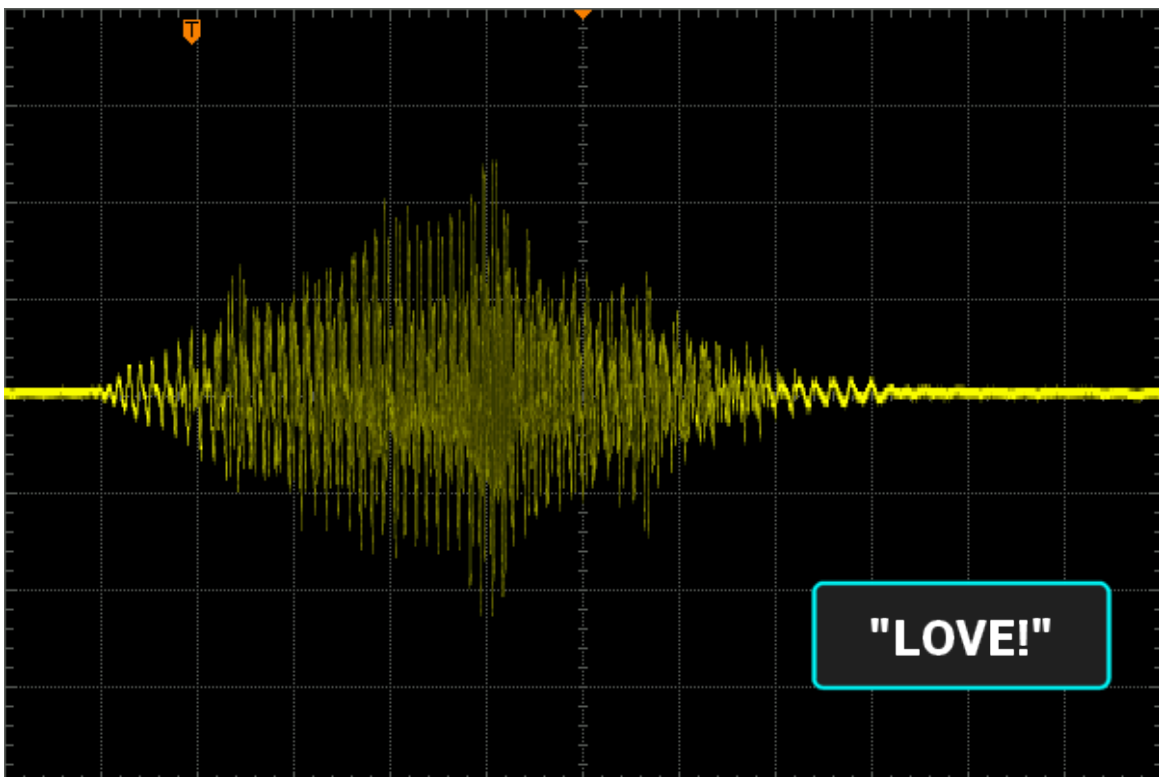
some, this particular squiggle, if originating from the mouth of a white guy like me, will lead to shades of black and blue spreading over a moderate percentage of once white skin.

Here are some more:









I threw in that last one for shits and giggles.

Bottom line: It's all just agitated air!

If I said to you, "βάλλ' εις κόρακας", unless you were schooled in ancient Greek, you wouldn't know I just told you to "go fuck yourself!"<sup>1</sup>

Apparently this, "Γλείψε το δεξί μου αρχίδι" means, "Lick my right ball!"<sup>2</sup>, which is a more creative way of saying "go fuck yourself!"

Here's "Go fuck<sup>3</sup> yourself!" in Bengali: "muri kha".

And in Moroccan: "Seer Thwa!"

Unless you're some crazy language expert, you didn't even know to be offended, before I explained the offense to you. Until then, it was just some strange writing. Before you became privy to the meaning, it was just *noise*.

This is what your mind does. It assigns meaning to a particular noise. It turns that noise into some learned *concept*. And, if the concept is deemed offensive, your mind loses its shit! Often, an emotional response is nothing more than the mind finding meaning in something *not really all that meaningful*. How does someone, actually *Fuck their self*?! How is such a thing even possible? Maybe by undergoing some bizarre sex change operation involving hermaphroditic appendages?

Sometimes, there's an actual threat behind the noise. A crazed, wild-

<sup>1</sup> At least according to a site I found while Googling "How to swear in ancient Greek".

<sup>2</sup> Again, I only have the Internet to go by. But even if I'm wrong, I'm right—because the illustration is valid. If I say "nermuswhump" means "you're an ugly toad", then it *does* mean that, because *I just created that meaning*. Now I can insult you with "nermuswhump" all I want, because you know what I think it means. How is the case of an established language any different? Was it always established? Wasn't there a point where someone said, "I think I'll call this smelly thing I just expelled, `Shit`. And, how about I call the thing that expelled it, an `Ass`!" Didn't that lingo become established because enough people agreed `shit` & `ass` are spectacular nouns?! And, before that happened, wasn't there no one *anywhere* who gave a shit if anyone shouted, "shit" or "ass"?

<sup>3</sup> Is my use of this word, over and over, bothering you?

haired, no-neck-meat-wall screaming, “*I’m gonna kick your scrawny ass!*” might very well be something to worry about. But in most cases, the real “threat” is merely some imagined eventuality. How often, in such cases, would temperance have prevented an escalation, or avoided hurt feelings, or forestalled an exorbitant medical or dental bill.

What was that noise? Nothing but gurgling throat meat!

Raise your index finger and it’s a summons. Offer your pinky to enter into a solemn pact. Raise your thumb to show approval. But, raise that middle finger and all hell breaks loose.

In Iran, raising the thumb to someone can lead to a brawl. In Australia, better be careful how to present your erect thumb—too much upward movement means “Up your bum!”. In Brazil, the “OK” sign is like “giving the finger”. And, currently in this nation, it can be confused with the ludicrous “Proud Boys” sign<sup>1</sup>.

If a gang member is watching, the wrong hand gesture can actually get you killed<sup>2</sup>.

But, does a finger (or a hand) really possess this much power<sup>3</sup>? If you give “the finger” within reach of a baby, that finger will likely wind up in the baby’s mouth. The infant doesn’t know the inflammatory intent. But, at some point in the child’s development, meaning will be attached. The child learns it should be offended by one particular arrangement of fingers, and elated by another. But, aren’t they just fingers?

*Yeah, but Steve... it’s the intent behind the fingers, right?*

---

<sup>1</sup> Though, the LGBTQ community has imbued the word “Proud” with full rainbow “Pride” – which fills me with GLEE!! Look up “Proud Boy” in the Urban Dictionary – good for a laugh!

<sup>2</sup> In North Carolina, Terrance Ervin Daniels was brutally attacked in 2013 with a kitchen knife because his signing to a deaf friend resembled a rival gang sign.

<sup>3</sup> Can you pass the Willow “Finger Test”?

Yes, but do you *really* know what that *intent* is? And, not knowing, aren't you just responding to an *imagined* intent?

If you could peel back the scalp of the finger foisting fellow, and peer into their brain, you might just see:

1. The frustrations of a bad day?
2. The ruminations of a recent row with their spouse?
3. Existential anger over some arbitrary event, like the death of a loved one, or concern over Global Warming?
4. Some other cultural meaning for that gesture, possibly with a more positive connotation?
5. The mechanics of a gesture meant merely to scratch an itch?
6. A newly prescribed drug's side-effects?
7. A brain tumor?
8. A mentally challenged mind merely playing with things misconstrued?

Is it possible to just treat as rhetoric, anything uttered in hate—to ignore it as if it was a rustling of leaves, or a splash of water. Again, this is the power you possess, being a human with the ability to choose—the capacity to override your animal self. This is the path to peace. It's our mind that makes something of it—mostly, the primitive mind. And that something is all about sussing threats. So, yeah...maybe the intent

behind the gesture is worth attention. If you glance at a razorback with the wrong tilt of the head, you're likely to get pummeled. So, use your higher brain to assess intent, and respond from that. In other words: *Use your wisdom*. And then, perhaps, *your words*.

Isn't your reaction that of fear<sup>1</sup>? And your knee-jerk response, not unlike the kick induced by the doctor's mallet? In other words, isn't it just that your biology is f'ing with you?

How often do we respond to a *jerk* by being a *jerk*. If we knew the true [or whole] story behind the "asshole's" behavior, quite likely, we would realize the person is not really an asshole, or even a jerk, but just someone having trouble dealing with some difficulty in their lives. And what they really need is some understanding—aka, *a friend*. Or, again, maybe they're just a foreigner—or mentally compromised—or blind—or deaf—or mentally challenged—or an android—or from another planet...?

The Apple TV series Ted Lasso does a wonderful job showcasing this very thing.

Fear comes from that primitive-brain of ours. It's our inner lizard responding to ancient "animal wisdom" regarding modes of survival—modes that may no longer apply. This primitive brain fear reaction is like radio static—noise that drowns out the more subtle signals that could have led us to a more magnanimous response. Thus, it's the primitive brain's fear response *turning us into jerks*.

In the press of late, the police profession has taken a beating. Barring those few troglodytes in blue, I can appreciate how difficult the job is. Going into a situation where the possibility of danger is a given, has to

---

<sup>1</sup> Even if it was *anger*, anger usually starts as *fear*.

mess with even the most evolved individual<sup>1</sup>. I'm sure there's a constant battle between this ancient lizard brain mentality, and the desire to resolve the situation without violence or gunfire<sup>2</sup>.

The Lizard Brain urges a “kill-or-be-killed” approach, but the evolved mind relies on *observation*, *patience*, *empathy*, and *negotiation*<sup>3</sup>—and only resorts to violence as an absolute *final* measure. And there's precedence for this in the lives of characters like Mohandas “Mahatma” Gandhi with his *non-violence* tactics, Dr. Martin Luther King's *freedom riders*, and the passive resistance of Nelson Mandella.

The character John Nolan, played by Nathan Fillion, in the ABC TV series *The Rookie*, is a wonderful illustration of this.

Don't let objects of malicious symbology, such as the display of fingers, or the utterance of words, assail your happiness! You have the power to choose your response.

In training individuals for peaceful civil disobedience, such as at the Jack Spratt Diner sit-in of 1942, and the 1960 Greensboro sit-ins at a Woolworth's in Greensboro, North Carolina, the participants were prepared, beforehand, by subjecting them to the sort of assaults, both verbal and physical, they might encounter. Because mere *suspicion of intent* can be an instigator, it's critical that a passive posture be maintained throughout. The trainee “graduated” only after demonstrating the ability to remain impeccably docile against any assault.

---

<sup>1</sup> And really, shouldn't only those with “hero mentality” ever wear the badge? Otherwise, how likely are they to become a menace to society? In other words, if you can't stand the heat—find another profession!

<sup>2</sup> Unless “Warrior Cop” nonsense [ala Dave Grossman] is afoot. Talk about throwing gasoline on a fire!!

<sup>3</sup> O.P.E.N.?

It's a learned skill, the ability to resist the primitive brain's crazed desire to strike back. This is VERY difficult, and requires considerable practice, and self control. The primitive brain is programmed to defend life and limb, and mitigate any threat by any means possible. Holding that at bay is like staring down a furious gorilla.

Contrary to *primitive mind* logic, this is also the best way to affect change. Otherwise things devolve into an eye-for-an-eye endless feud that leaves everyone blind, and stupid, and quite possibly *dead*. Our human minds are awesome at coming up with scenarios. I call them *what-ifs*. *What if* he wants to *kill me!* I ought to *kill him first*, just in case! Strike first, and ask questions later!! Wait?! He was just having a bad day? Blowing off a little steam? Deaf-signing to a friend. No real need for a massacre? Oh well, nobody's perfect, right?!?

Yes, *sticks and stones may hurt you*, but words? Words can suggest sticks and stones are on the way. But, it truly is NOT the *words* breaking your bones. And, in so many cases, the threat of sticks or stones is empty, and only a projection of *need*. Learn to *listen* for the need. Then find the courage to reach out a helping hand.



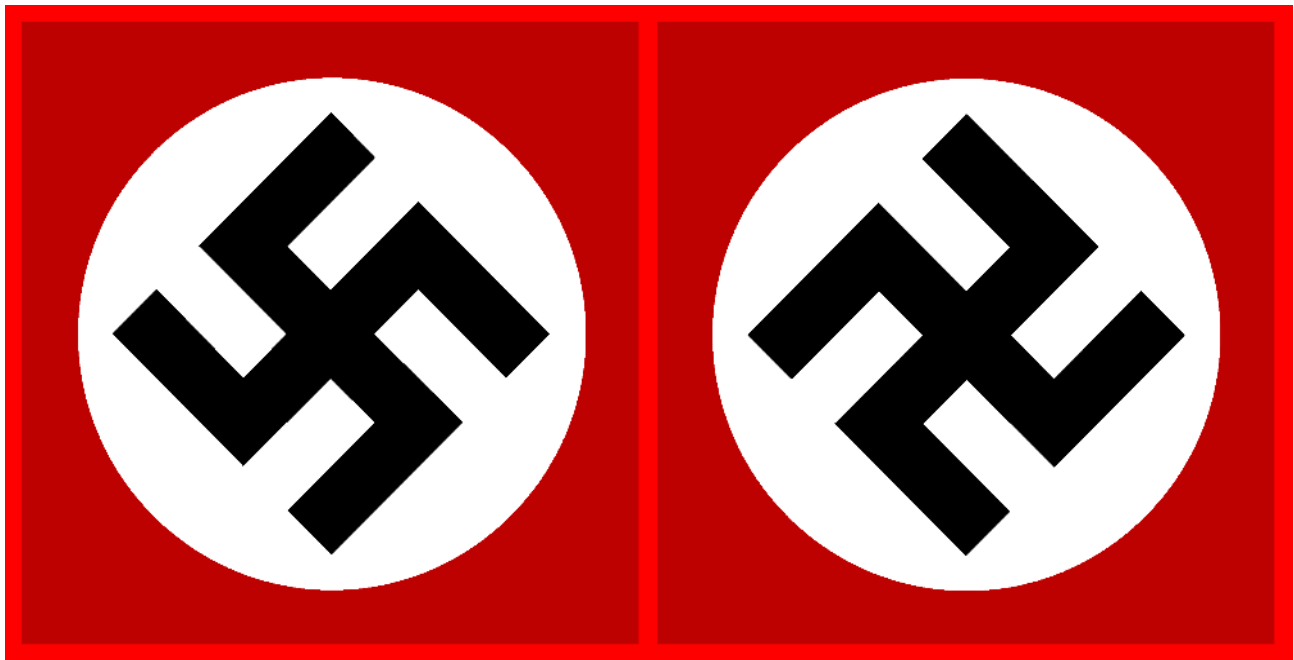


If only these dogs could figure that out [actually, one of them seems on the verge]:

[Fence Causes Friction For Dogs @viralhog](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid42](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid42)

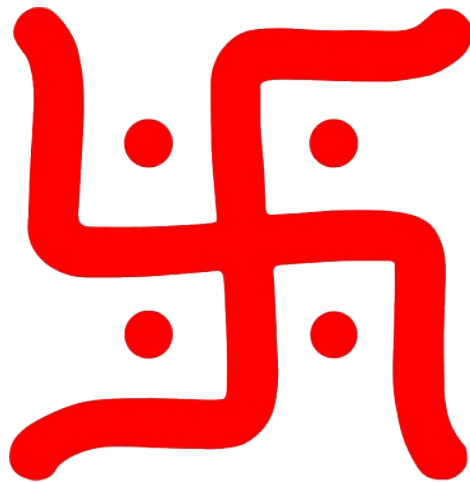
· - - - - = = = < · : + : { ☺ } : + : · > = = = - - - ·



Which one is the evil one?

Neither!

The one on the right was hijacked by Hitler. In the Nazi context, it truly symbolizes an evil agenda, but the graphic, itself, is neither evil nor good. Any emotional value is an anthropomorphism.



This symbol, or ones similar to it, can be traced back to half a millennia before the supposed birth of Christ. As can the word “*swastika*”, derived from the Sanskrit root *swasti*, a word composed of *su*, meaning *good*, or *well*, and *asti* meaning *it is*, or *there is*. So, basically: *all is well*.

The word *swasti* occurs frequently in the Vedas as well as in classical literature, with the meaning: *Health, Luck, Success* and/or *Prosperity*. The word is rooted in its use as an affable greeting. How very non-Nazi is that?!

In fact, the Nazi hold on this symbol spans less than a century<sup>1</sup>. Jainism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sami shamans, the Celts, Ancient Greeks, Romans, Illyrians, Armenians, Medieval Europe have all, to varying degrees, claimed, as part of their culture, this happier interpretation of the *swastika*, for **FAR** longer—in some cases, periods of time measuring in the *thousands of years*! So, how justified is this fixation on the dark, co-opted Nazi meaning?

And, that’s the point. Fear is what makes it so. The fearful meaning dominates, because the primitive brain dominates—unless we override

---

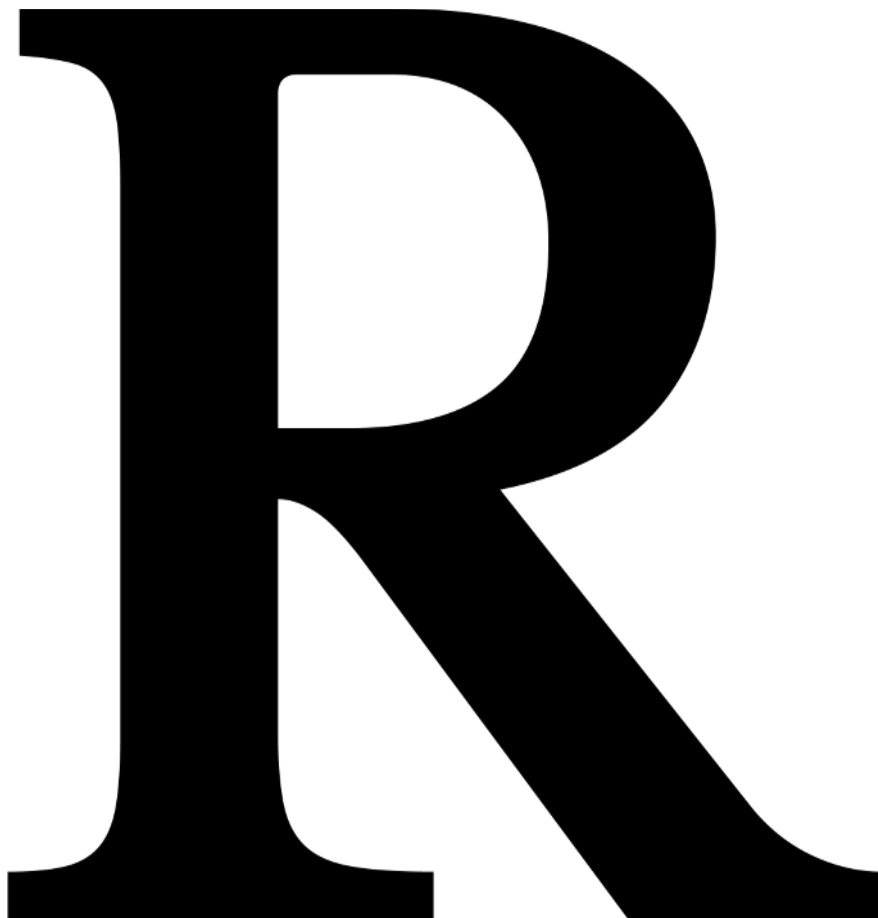
<sup>1</sup> As of this writing.

it! Happy For No Damn Reason is all about that override!

What if, whenever a Neo-Nazi flashed a swastika, we responded with, "Aaw! Thank you for wishing me Health, Luck, Success and/or Prosperity!!

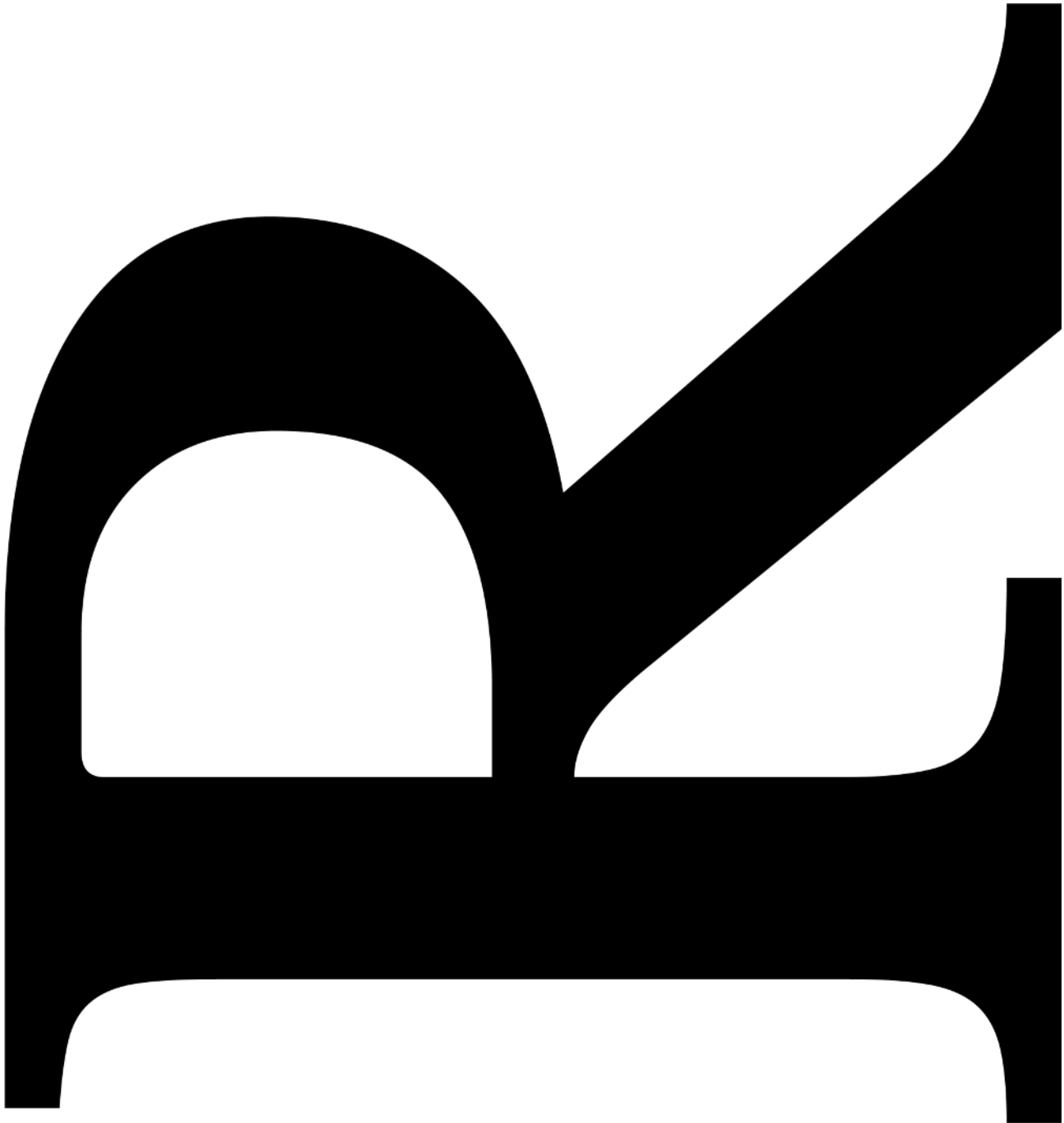
· - - - - = = = < • : + : { ☉ } : + : • > = = = - - - - ·

What do you see when you look at this:



Did you see the letter "R"? Is that really what it is? I mean, isn't it just some black lines that go from thin to fat to thin with some runs that are

straight and some that are curved? Can you see just the lines without giving any meaning to the silhouette they form? Does this help?:



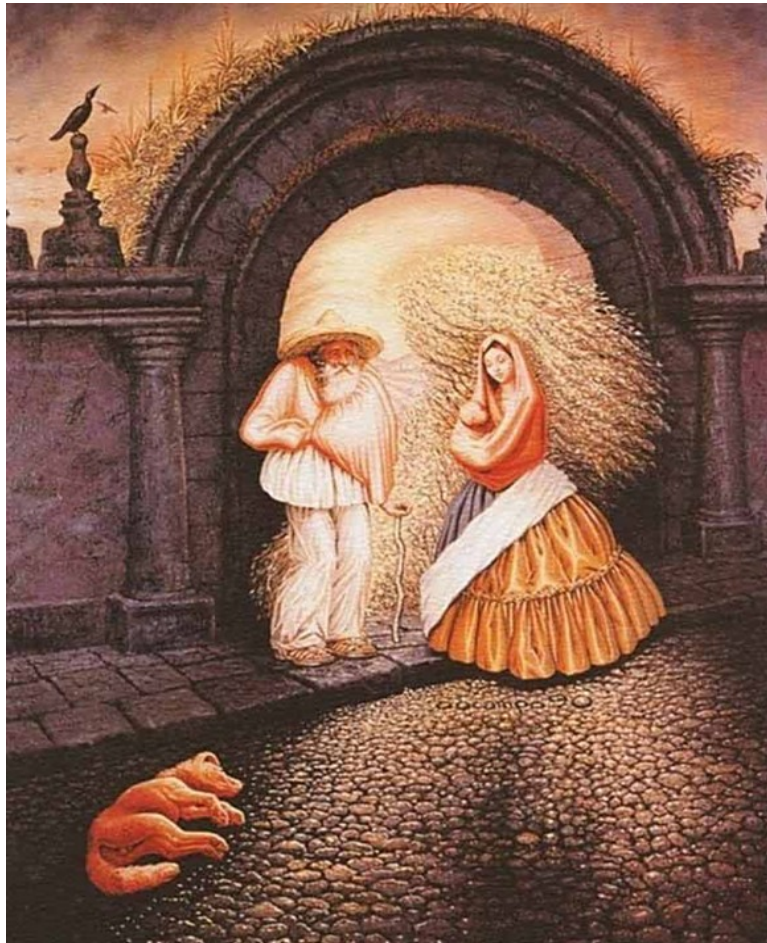
Happy For No Damn Reason

I'm Sorry, But You Don't Know Shit

or this:



Your mind is a little busy-body, constantly assigning meaning, even when you're not aware of it! You just fall for it! *Dupe-dee-doo, that's an "R". NEXT!* says your silly little Left-Brain!!



In the painting above, what did you see first? The “General” or *members of his family*?

The one on the following page is a bit more difficult.



Did the *old lady* first catch your eye, or the *young girl* were you first to spy<sup>1</sup>?

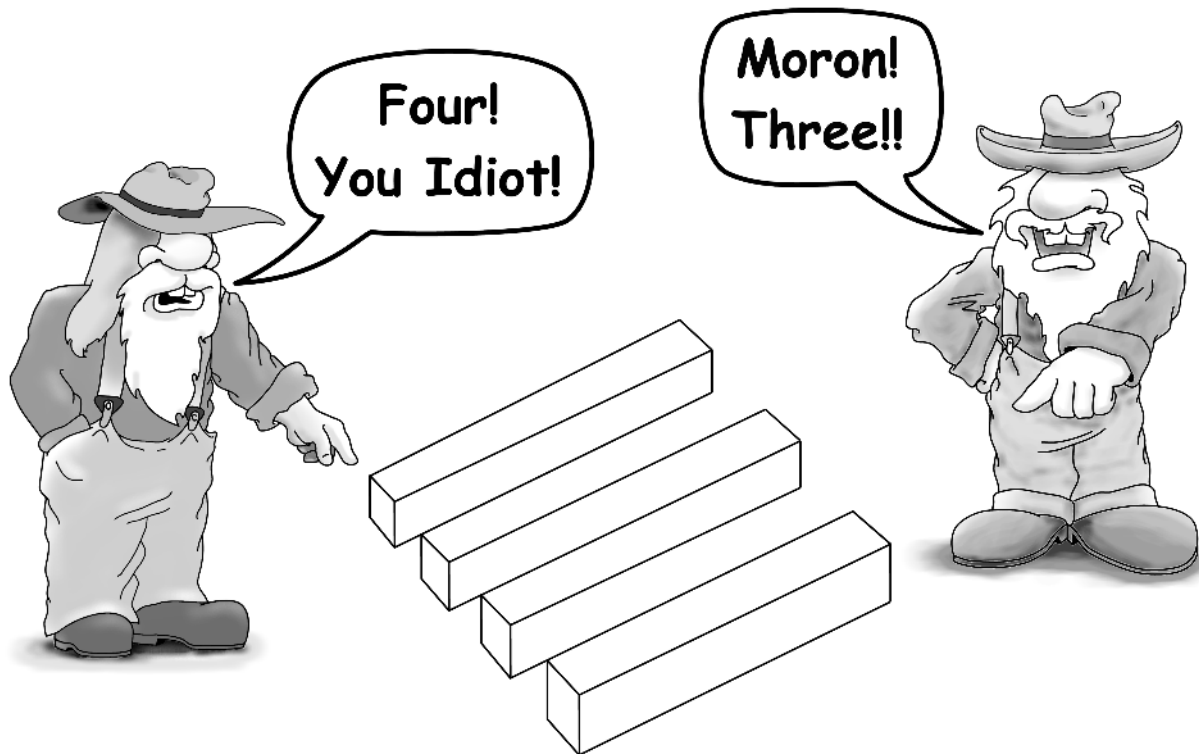
<sup>1</sup> "My Wife and My Mother-in-Law" is a famous optical illusion depicting an old woman looking off to the left, AND a young woman looking over her right shoulder. (The old woman's nose is the young woman's chin.). Drawn by the American cartoonist William Ely Hill, for the magazine Puck, on November 6, 1915. And was actually based on an 1888 German postcard.



In other words, what I'm trying to say, is simply:

*Nothing means squat, until you make it mean something!*

· - - - - = = = < · : + : { ⊙ } : + : · > = = = - - - - ·



A trap that highly intelligent individuals frequently fall into is set by their ability to amass what seems to them *comprehensive knowledge*. It seduces them into the arrogant belief they know everything there is to know about something, and even everything.

*Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit.  
Wisdom is not including tomato in a fruit salad.*

~original quote from unknown author

*Philosophy is the attempt to explain why tomato doesn't work in a fruit salad.  
Spirituality is getting it that the tomato is one of God's little pranks.*

~my augment

A step up from this level of know-it-all intelligence, is the concession to a larger scope than one's current breadth of knowledge. To climb this step, all you have to do is catch, and fully notice that quintessential moment when something comes into your awareness you never even considered as a possibility. Noticing such a moment, and tying it back to the memory of you being oblivious to whatever *that* was, can open humility—and that's when you truly grow up!

*"The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are so certain of themselves and wiser people so full of doubts."*

~Bertrand Russell

. - - - - - = < • : + : { 0 } : + : • > = - - - - - . .

Are the thoughts in our head, always even *our own*? There's a fungus that drives a particular weevil to *go climb a tree*. As the weevil climbs, the fungus eats its insides, and by the time the bug reaches the target height near the top of the tree, the weevil, while still clinging to a branch, dies from lack of internals, whereupon the fungus chews through the insect's thorax, and erects antenna-like appendages used to launch spores to the wind, so more weevils get driven up a tree. Ain't nature a hoot<sup>1</sup>!?!?



Photograph by Wildlife Photographer of the year [2019] Frank Deschandol

<sup>1</sup> I reiterate, how does mere evolution come up with that?!?

Perhaps less gruesome is the parasite, known in scientific circles as *Toxoplasmosis gondii*. This little critter has the remarkable ability to hijack the host's<sup>1</sup> brain systems related to defensive mechanisms [to increase schmooze potential], and sexual attraction [to increase reason to schmooze], so the infected rodent becomes a lustful stalker, improving the parasite's chances of locating new hosts!

Or get this: For decades, scientists have studied a phenomenon called the *gut-brain axis*, where bacteria in our own gut sends messages to our brain<sup>2</sup> as food cravings. This is to entice us to send down the foods *they* want us to eat. So, basically, they can turn us into pizza ordering 'noids—gaining the pie, without having to pay the delivery guy<sup>3</sup>.

Essentially, these are examples of critters hacking the *biological machine!* The implication of all of this? Some of those cherished thoughts in your very own brain, *might not even be your own thoughts!*



[Scientific article featuring the Gut-Brain Axis \[PDF\]](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web16](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web16)

You're being deceived all the time—over and over—without even realizing it. Yet, I bet you still conduct yourself, in your life, as if *you're a know-it-all in complete control*. I call that *arrogance*<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For instance, a rat.

<sup>2</sup> [www.bbc.com/news/health-43815370](http://www.bbc.com/news/health-43815370)

<sup>3</sup> Because “gal” doesn't rhyme!



[The Dunning-Kruger Effect - Why Incompetent People Think They Are Competent](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid19](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid19)

I've fallen into this trap numerous times. For instance, as a young man, I thought I knew enough about computers to advertise myself as a “computer repair specialist”. A good friend of mine who himself was strapped for cash at the time, having taken out a second mortgage on his house to start a Printer Repair business (because, unlike me he was a true expert), ponied up \$400 so I could place an ad in the local paper. Soon after, my first customer called. He quickly, though inadvertently, made me aware how far out of my depth I was! I was able to compensate for my foolishness by doing artwork for my friend's business, but I still cringe when that memory surfaces.

So, along with all those errors of perception explored in previous paragraphs, you're also vulnerable to outside influence<sup>1</sup>, even from within the perimeter of your own, actual, *you-ness*, leading to all sorts of mental activity regarding nothing you would otherwise care about.

So, who the heck are you anyway?!? And how would you know?!?!?!?

This, of course, begs the question: *If your body-mind is a machine, what's your relationship to it? Are you that machine? Or, are you something else—*

<sup>4</sup> And I don't mean that in a derogatory way. It's merely a matter of whether it serves you, or not. And, becoming aware of behaviors with a negative personal impact, gives you the opportunity to substitute behavior that promotes a more positive path.

<sup>1</sup> Remember how I said the inside of your gut is really outside of you?

something using that machine to do this thing called *life*?

## **I Think, Therefore I Am, But What's Doing All The Thinking?**

*"Are we biology or God or something higher?  
I know my heart beats and I listen to it.  
The beat is biology, but what is the song?"*  
~James Frey

What is that chatter in your head? Is that *your* voice? Not sure what I'm on about?

Sit for a moment, and do nothing. Just sit and listen. It won't be long before you hear what I'm talking about. Go ahead. Put the book down<sup>1</sup> and sit in a chair and do nothing for a short while. Then come back, and continue reading.

[Intermission]

---

<sup>1</sup> ...or look away from your monitor, or put your tablet down, or pause your audio book...

INTENTIONALLY BLANK



Did you hear the voice? Did it sound something like: “I wonder how long I’m supposed to do this? He really should have done a better job of explaining this. Can I stop now? This is stupid! I’m bored!”

Who was that speaking? Was it you? If it was “you”, then why does the chatter continue in the background even when *you* aren’t paying attention to it?

[you noticed it again, didn’t you].

And what *you* is it that isn’t paying attention to the chatter? Buddhism calls this chatter: *mind-monkey*<sup>1</sup>.

Assuming you’re a typical life form, what is it in you that is so buffeted by circumstance? If you say this thing is you, then I must ask, is it you snatching your hand away when it touches something hot? Is it you kicking your leg when the doctor smacks your knee? Is it you making your mouth water in the presence of delectable culinary treats? Is it you beating your heart, and pumping your lungs when you’re not even thinking about it?

What is it that is healing your wounds, and battling the pathogens constantly invading your body<sup>2</sup>? What is it digesting the food you eat, and extracting the materials needed to grow your bones, muscles, hair, nails, skin, and all those vital organs that keep you wiggling about? And, for that matter, what is it causing the actual growth of all those vital bits making up your body? And what is it that finally poops out whatever your body considers useless<sup>3</sup>?

Life has been doing all of this, without anything really thinking about it,

---

<sup>1</sup> Or “monkey mind” depending on which side of *the pond* you learned English.

<sup>2</sup> Yeah! That shit is everywhere!! Wash your hands, much?!

<sup>3</sup> If you’ve ever spent time around animals, you might have noticed, for example, they tend to piss and poop without warning.

for billions of years. I mean, do animals ponder this stuff? Probably not. Yet, it gets done.

If it's you doing all of this, how come you didn't, from the very beginning of your ability to wonder about such things, have knowledge of any of the details about all this stuff going on inside of you? Before science dug into [literally] living organisms and figured all this out, humans walked around just fine<sup>1</sup> with no knowledge of any of it. So, how can it be this "I" that you think is you, who is the who you think you really are, when so much of what's going on inside you escapes your common awareness, or even, largely, your involvement?

And, how about this: if you still think it's you who does these things, can you NOT do them? Can you not snap your hand away from fire<sup>2</sup>? Can you not kick your leg when your shin is smacked? Can you command your body to not make piss or poop?

OK, Steve, what about the mind? Am I not my "mind"?

If you think you are your mind, then can you NOT think of

- Little furry rabbits frolicking in a flower festooned meadow?
- Or, Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough ice cream?
- Or, cows leaping over a golden moon?
- Or, the melody to the song, Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star?

If you are your mind, then why were you unable to prevent me from influencing your thoughts just now? I, basically, just tapped your mind

---

<sup>1</sup> What people typically mean when they say they are "Fine": *F'ed up, Insecure, Neurotic, & Emotional*. Thank you 12-step!.

<sup>2</sup> If you're like Peter O'Toole's *Lawrence of Arabia*, maybe you *can*. In one scene, after snuffing a burning match with his bare fingers, Lawrence quipped, "Certainly it hurts...The trick, William Potter, is *not minding that it hurts*."

knee with little rubber thought-mallets!

Yeah-but, Steve, to be a thing, must I be in full control of it? Couldn't I be, say, a rock, even though I have no control over if, or when, I roll down a hillside.

Sure, you can identify as a rock. But, are you truly the rock, or are you an essence embodying the rock?

Are we some external controlling force? Or, are we merely rag dolls, buffeted by whim? Or, slaves to stimuli? In other words, are we the puppet, or the puppeteer?

What about "I think, therefore I am"?

Yes. And, what, exactly, is this I, doing all this thinking??

"Cogito, ergo sum"

~Rene Descartes

In Descartes' explanation of the reasoning behind this "First Principle" of his, he also concluded the mind consists only of thinking and is wholly distinct from the body<sup>1</sup>. He also acknowledged perception can be deceived, which he considered in his reasoning—finally concluding he was the one doubting his senses, and thus, could not doubt his own existence, since he was the one doing the doubting.

But, does this really prove this doubter is composed of little neurons in squishy gray matter? Or, is the doubter simply inhabiting this squishy place—in the way we inhabit cars. I drive my car, but I am not my car<sup>2</sup>.

*"I drive, therefore I am"*

---

<sup>1</sup> And caught a lot of flack from the current Pope, for publishing such *God diminishing* ideas.

<sup>2</sup> Unless you're the reinCARnated mother in the 60's sitcom *My Mother The Car*.

~Anonymous

I sit in my car, and work the controls, and achieve mobility, yet I don't measure the fuel, or time the spark that ignites the gas, and it's not me that expels the combustion products. The crankshaft turns with no effort on my part, and the wheels achieve the rotation allowing me to speed down a road, yet I'm fully insulated from all combustion driven twisting and turning. All I do is direct all this activity. I work the levers, knobs, buttons and wheels and the car complies, producing the result of delivering me, the driver, to some destination. Or, sending me on a nice Sunday drive. Or, if my skills aren't up to par, into a dalliance with a ditch. The car itself has no awareness of any of this higher purpose<sup>1</sup>.

Say I encounter someone who stirs the wildness in me. All I want to do is jump their bones. A thought that dominates all other thoughts, and compels me to go against a certain promise I made to my one and only, under the trellis, before witnesses.

BUT, I must have sex with this person—the desire burns in me, even while I desire to remain faithful. How can I be in conflict with myself? Which “I” (or “me”) wants what?

Isn't it the body that is going hog wild over sex? Hormones pumping through the veins, secreted by the flesh-machinery in response to a catalog of carnal stimuli. But, if I say, “I didn't do that! I didn't pump or secrete!!” Then who did (or what did)?!?

Who is the I observing all of this? Who is the I contemplating the consequences? Who is the one thinking, “If I do the deed, there will be

---

<sup>1</sup> Unless what a friend of mine said is true regarding an LSD trip he had. He told me he could sense the consciousness in all the things around him—the rocks, the flowers, even the Earth herself—and I suppose, *cars* too.

hell to pay”? Some angelic being loitering on one of my shoulders<sup>1</sup>?

And who is this I embodying the frenzy—that craves what it shouldn't? Are we three people: the devil sitting on that other shoulder, the angel previously mentioned, and the guy with the stadium shoulders? Or is it something else—something like a spirit-self driven to distraction by the body it's encased in?

The fact there is conflict suggests we aren't one personality. It's even in the vernacular: “Part of me wants the affair, but another part knows I shouldn't!”<sup>2</sup>

Like most of the other functions in your body-machine, the mind runs all by itself, even when you aren't paying attention. It's constantly keeping tabs on what's going on around it—constantly assessing the level of threat to the body, opportunities for sex<sup>3</sup>, where it might get a drink, or find some food, or a place to sleep, and all the while worrying about things like who might be conniving behind its back<sup>4</sup>. This is the *primitive mind*. It's an extra mind we all possess, and when the “higher mind” is left to itself, it teams up with this primitive mind to ruminate over past decisions, what other people might be thinking about us, whether to worry that the sale isn't still happening at the local appliance store, whether or not to invite uncle bob to dinner on Saturday, and whether or not Cousin June is going to bring her vile lime jello with banana slices that nobody dares tell her is as disgusting as warm beer and SPAM!!

---

<sup>1</sup> On which side does the *Angel* sit? I can never remember!

<sup>2</sup> In case you now have the *Twinkle Twinkle* song stuck in your head, try this: think of your favorite song, and play *that* in your head. I have what I call a “safety song” for when this happens. Mine, as of this writing, it's *Blackbird* by *Lennon* and *McCarthy*. And, sorry if I gave you an *idée fixe* on Chocolate Chip Cookie-Dough Ice Cream—unless that makes you happy, in which case, *you're welcome!* 😊

<sup>3</sup> Being male, I can only speak of the male mind. It's my understanding that for a female mind, the “sex priority” might be different.

<sup>4</sup> Assuming the voice has a *back* 😊😊

This collaboration of minds is constantly monitoring the senses. With tremendous computing power, it works to understand all it sees, hears, smells, touches and tastes. Then some other part of you either ignores these assessments, or applies one or more of them to the moment—sometimes to great emotional extreme. It's as if some “*other you*” is *riding* the machine that this *background-processing* mind lives in.

If something comes within the machine's “sensory grid”, the machine-mind, in an instant, assesses if it's a threat, and if deemed a threat, it decides whether to challenge it, avoid it, or just give in to the futility of resistance. Given these primitive recommendations, “collaborative you” decides to either stand its ground, flee like a scared rabbit, or freeze like the iconic deer-in-the-headlights<sup>3</sup>.

If this observed *thing*, instead, looks sexually attractive, or edible<sup>4</sup>, or for us humans, and various other higher animals—*looks fun*<sup>5</sup>, the “primitive you” feels the urge to investigate, and takes the “other you” along with it. Even if it appears threatening, sometimes the “primitive you” is still compelled to investigate—to discover, for sure, if it really *is* a threat—or just to satisfy that all consuming curiosity. All this cogitation occurs in the blink of an eye, in the machinery of the body-mind. The role of the “higher you” is secondary, and might even be nothing more than a

---

<sup>3</sup> I mean, come on, it isn't just Fight, or Flight. Sometimes the deer Freezes! Or, maybe that's a *flight* from onus?

<sup>4</sup> Or both—sorry...I just had to 😊😊

<sup>5</sup> I mean, can you imagine an *ant* stopping to have fun? Even when a *bee* dances, it's serious business. And I doubt a *spider* ever plays with its food! But, I've seen behavior in dolphins, crows, dogs, and even cats that sure looks like *play*. On a windy day, above a ridge that bent the wind upward, I watched numerous crows riding the updraft with apparent glee. On several of the many whale watching trips my wife and I have done, dolphins showed up to “play” in the boat wake. And I'm sure we've all watched dogs play together [though I suppose there could be a serious motive, such as establishing a social order]. Plus, numerous time's I've witnessed massive gatherings of crows [mass murder?]. And I swear they were telling humorous stories. One would caw for a period, then suddenly the hundreds in attendance would burst out sure sounded like laughter.

witness to what automatically happened, after the fact. Unless this moderating *higher you* steps in, the automatic machinery will run the show, leaving the *higher you* to deal with the result—to pick up the pieces; accept the compliments; feel the shame; revel in the victory; change the underpants; and often wonder why in the hell the body-machine behaved the way it did.

These functions of the body-mind-machine, can be summed up with one word:

# *Biology*

So.....

*Are you your biology's stooge?*



Face it: You're being used by life.

We are driven to survive at least long enough to procreate. Unless you're one that life discards. I was a dorky teenager shunned by the desirable girls—the girls that best fit my template for attractiveness. But, life neglected to turn off my hormones. It was a brutal joke, “I think I'll make him *horny* AND *dorky*, then sit back and watch the comedy.”

Though, sometimes the dork *does* get the girl, and even has a family—life pushes it's agenda where it can. For instance: *this dork*—though, I chose to avoid becoming a father. That was me exercising my feral override! Suck it, nature!!

If you take into account the ways of nature, with its carnivorous food chain, and survival of the fittest tango, where the weak, the sick, and the stragglers are the one's likely to be picked off by predators, there seems precedent for a Norse God who relishes the struggle—aka, the crucible of battle. May the strongest survive, and earn their celebration in Valhalla!!

It's all rather brutal. Biology only seems to care about preserving life, no matter what it takes, or who gets hurt in the process. It's odd that pain has such a high priority on the sensory scale, yet so little regard is given to the afflicted.

The other day, I noticed a couple of rather large wasp-like critters scurrying around on the trunk and branches of a tree in our backyard. I managed to get a good enough photo of one, for Google image-search to identify it as a “Steel Blue Cricket Wasp.” Further reading determined that it seeks out crickets, and when it finds one, it stings it into paralysis, then lays 2 or 3 eggs in its innards. Then it carries the cricket, converted into an incubator, to its lair. When the eggs hatch the little ones feast on

the cricket's insides.

Run Jiminy, Run!!

Yes, my inner child was traumatized by this!!



Bottom line: Life will use you if you let it. But, we humans have the intellectual power to override all of that. And, that's what I count as *being human*—vs being an animal. By recognizing that “other you” that sits above all of this, you have the chance to define that *you*, and to become whatever “you” you want to be—instead of being a subjugated animal, used by life!

## Your Mind Is Your Worst Enemy

*"It is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles.  
Then the victory is yours. It cannot be taken from you."  
-Buddha*

My current wife<sup>1</sup>, Sheri, used to work in an HR department. One day, a co-worker was complaining to Sheri that she wasn't included in a departmental raise. "But you got a substantial raise when you moved to this department," Sheri consoled, "and, frankly, you're making much more than I am."

The woman instantly felt better—even though nothing more had changed than how she perceived her situation.

This is the Limbic System<sup>2</sup> in action—that part of the mind in charge of *fight, flight, fear, history, dominance, finding food, fornication, and caring for the little ones that result*. Another name for it is the *Lizard Brain*<sup>3</sup>.

I like to call it, "The Great What-If-er." Like I said before, it's constantly running scenarios on all the sensory input it deems important—even if

---

<sup>1</sup> I've had two, so far.

<sup>2</sup> I did a little [very little] research on this, and it turns out that recent advances in neuroscience have some scientists calling for obsolescing the term *Limbic System*. But, even so, still valid is the idea that the collective *brain* evolved from the *primitive* to the *sophisticated*, culminating in the human intellect. But, the takeaway is that the primitive parts are still there, and still quite actively involved in our overall, moment-to-moment experience.

<sup>3</sup> Actually *Lizard Brain* is not entirely accurate. The part of the brain attributed to the period of evolution involving *lizards* is only a subset of what could be called the primitive brain. So, *Lizard Brain* has become an appellation for *Primitive Mind* as *Kleenex* is for *Facial Tissue* or Neon Sign for all colorful, glowing signs [neon only produces an orangish-red color]???

it really isn't all that important, or even relevant. This is, undoubtedly, an evolutionary development left over from the days when we lived in the sticks, and really had to worry about not being eaten while hunting for our next meal, or a way to get laid<sup>1</sup>. The ones who worried the most (i.e. had the best What-Ifers), were the ones that survived long enough to spawn the next generation of What-Ifers.

There's nothing wrong with this facility. It comes in quite handy when driving a car, or negotiating a deal, or planning for retirement. But, it's important to see it as a tool, and keep it in its place. In other words, it's important to not be *ruled* by it. *Use the tool, don't let the tool use you.*



[Max crashes his car to heal Carla -- scene in Fearless \(1993\)](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid51](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid51)

If you've ever used a felled tree as a bridge, to cross over a river, you know how this What-Ifer can get the better of you. It embroils itself in so much worry about slipping and falling into the river, it micromanages balance, making a toppling far more likely. And the more dangerous the potential fall, the worse it gets!

Have a look at this video of animals crossing a log, caught on a wildlife camera. Notice how they just walk across without a care. Even the larger animals. They know they can do it, so they just do. At one point [1:59] a bear stumbles while crossing, and without losing a beat, merely regains

<sup>1</sup> And, indeed, has a legacy in that progenitor protoplasmic mandate to survive at all costs which made persistent life possible.

balance and carries on as if nothing happened.



[Pennsylvania man captures all walks of life crossing log bridge](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid24](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid24)

In the Kung Fu episode, *Superstition*<sup>1</sup>, Master Po instructs young Kwai Chang to practice walking on a balance beam.

Soon, it becomes trivial. When Caine puzzles out loud over the banality of the task, the master reveals an identical beam, but with the addition, below it, of a searing pool of acid, complete with acrid vapors, and the specter of skeletal remains at the bottom of the turbulent liquid!

It's an identical beam, but crossing it has become a very different, and difficult thing! The mind freaks out because of its ability to imagine a stumble into the pool, where searing skin and brutal death would surely follow!

=====

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! SPOILER ALERT !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

=====

The “acid” was merely warm water colored to look like acid, with the addition of dry ice for even greater effect. The skeletons were painted on a canvas laid on the bottom of the pool, and held down by rocks.

Though, where did the monks get dry ice in that time period?

<sup>1</sup> Season 1, Episode 12 – first aired April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1973 ~ as of this writing, available on Amazon Prime.

=====

----- END SPOILER ALERT -----

=====

“Superstition is like a magnet,  
it pulls you in the direction of your beliefs.”

~Master Po

The What-If-er has its foundation in a more primitive part of the brain. But, in humans, it’s wired directly to the higher mental functions—those uniquely human abilities such as imagination, and higher reasoning. As a result of this connection, the higher mind tends to be shanghaied into processing all this primitive mental rigmarole. This generates a lot of “static”, and ultimately leads to *what-ifying things to death*. Judging by the animals in that river crossing video, and from other animal observations, they don’t fret, beyond the concerns of the moment. And, based on their surefooted steps while crossing that log, they don’t fret about more abstract things like slipping and falling.

. - ----==<•:+:{0}:+:•>====- - .

Evolution, essentially, gave Lizard Brain mentality access to extinction event technology<sup>1</sup>. For the first time in known Earth history, the lump of cells that collected into a complex organism, some 2.4 Billion years ago, has the ability to cause a cataclysmic event on the very planet that

---

<sup>1</sup> Such as nuclear weapons, AI-armageddon, and all the human made things contributing to global climate change, and my own hypotheticals, such as *genetically engineered mega-plagues* [whether intended or not], GMO crops gone irreversibly toxic, testosterone cream water pollution causing the rise of killer fauna, etc.

created it<sup>1</sup>. But, such a thing would only be a calamity to *life*. For matter, that stuff life is made of, it would just be another insignificant change.

It's only life that experiences this clash of agenda. The Universe will, likely, not give a shit if we blow ourselves up. And, if not even the cockroaches survive<sup>2</sup>, 2.4 Billion years is a pretty good run!

We humans, though, have the intellect, and dexterity to prevent our own annihilation. And, achieving, on a grand scale, command of the unruly ape-lizard within us, i.e. mastering our inner animal, and ultimately, becoming conscious of the spirit-self that sits quietly behind the mask of the Ego-Self, is what it will probably take.

So, in other words: *Probably not until we can all recognize and own up to our own*

# RIDICULOUS!

We are all idiots at one time, or another. We all lose it. We all make foolish choices, do stupid things, get ourselves in all kinds of nonsense. You are RIDICULOUS! I am RIDICULOUS! Own it! Make peace with it!

---

<sup>1</sup> Assuming life didn't arrive on Earth from somewhere else.

<sup>2</sup> Actually, there's another form of life far more resilient than cockroaches: whole menageries of animals that live in and around hydrothermal vents deep in the ocean. Such communities are likely to survive a nuclear holocaust because, not only will the miles of ocean water above their little heads, likely insulate them from the shock wave(s), radiation and fallout, but all their needs are provided for by the nutrients that flow out of the vents. These are, probably, the only creatures on the planet that don't need the sun to survive, so a nuclear winter won't phase them – it's already pitch black down there, and the bowels of the Earth provide them all the food and heat they need to survive. And in a few million years following, they might supply the seed for new life on the planet's surface above.

Our ability to assess our actions and account for our behavior is singular in the animal kingdom. But, are we yet removed enough from “animality” to accept full accountability for our deleterious actions?

A hyena hunts the weak and sick, gangs up on other hunters to steal their hard-earned kill and then they “laugh” about it. They’re polygamous, occasionally cannibalistic, and have been known to even eat their own young. Hell, they’ll eat excrement, if the need arises!

Low-life reprobates?!

Where is the line?

A hyena can only be a hyena. But, what about a human? The phrase “He/she is only human,” suggests a recognition of our, still, limited mastery of the mechanisms of flesh. The very fact that so many humans struggle with morality is, to me, evidence the transition from *animal* to *human* is not complete—at least, not for everyone.

Such luminaries as Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr, Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, etc., live, or lived, as an exception to this rule. And, for an *exception* to exist, there must be an “other”. Much of humanity, it seems, falls into this *other* category.

I see this “other” as semi-transformed. Evolution is not yet done with most of *humanity*. And, I see this as grounds for leniency. The same leniency afforded a carnivorous animal, or even a hyena. Aka, it’s generally understood the bestial behavior of these creatures, is merely due to their animal nature.

In the case where a human’s “animal legacy” wins out and leads to behavior generally considered “contemptible”, I suggest “contempt” is not a fair response. Recognition is better. Then mediation—in the



mode of “animal trainer”, all in deference to the ongoing transition from animal to human.

I contend that the animal part of us is beyond reproach *because* it IS *animal*. An animal can only be an animal. And a human, in the throes of an *animal moment*, can also only be that animal part, at least until the human essence identifies this animal behavior and applies discipline, or this person achieves the same end via the counsel of someone wiser.

This is what I mean by owning to your own RIDICULOUS! The more we can accept this nonsense as an adjunct of our animal nature, the greater chance we have of *mastering it*—of becoming the *animal tamer* or *zoo keeper* we are capable of being. If we can put away judgment and instead recognize this as a period of *transformation* that we are all going through, humanity has a greater chance of shepherding this transition into the desired outcome of becoming a truly *human society*.

Moreover, this self-application of our animal trainer abilities is especially effective if one is willing to act on exhortations from an outside observer. We can help each other stay on a human track and choose higher behavior, i.e., shepherd one another. However, this support must never be *punitive*. Compassion and humility must be at the foundation of all of this! And, even better if warmth and humor are present.

If we each humbly acknowledge our own animal nature, we can stand on compassion, informed by empathy. We can take turns being “the coach,” helping one another catch what we might be missing, reminding each other of the autonomous animal that so easily dominates our behavior.

By mutually agreeing to own our own RIDICULOUS, we can compassionately support each other to a higher plane of human

excellence, facilitating human transformation, and thus, the evolution of the human race.

Another way of putting this: *Allow others to be your “person”*.

“evolution didn't work on truth, it worked on survival”

~James Alcock

My survival instinct compelled me to avoid all dogs, following the attack that tore up my lip. Truth is, not all dogs are vicious. But, evolution didn't allow for such concessions. My mind was evolved to make rash generalizations, such as *all dogs are alike!* I had to use my higher mind to bridge this gap, and finally make the distinction that allows me, currently, to, with judicious caution, enjoy “man's best friend.”

This is why *unsubstantiated conviction* can become such a strong component in our life. Our brains are wired to form models of belief, with no examination of the veracity of said belief. It's tied into our survival instinct—our evolution. But, it leads us astray from actual truth. We're wired this way because *truth* wasn't always necessary for survival.

The donkey believes the grass is blue, even though it can see, with its very own eyes, that green is the true color. However, some authority, prominent in the donkey's past, made a compelling case for blue as the standard color for grass, thus, the donkey's conviction remains stalwart, even against the objections of a tiger!

For instance, the donkey may have been *raised* to believe the grass is blue. As children, our survival depends on our caregivers, so we adopt their beliefs without question. Our parents couldn't be wrong, ***RIGHT?!?***

Or, how about the lunacy of human gestation! Some-when along the

evolutionary line, life decided it was safer to keep the eggs inside until the time of hatching—no doubt because some predator, or predators, became overly successful at making a meal of the eggs laid by whatever was this human progenitor.

But, laying an egg is far easier than laying a whole baby!!! Thus, not a lot of intelligence went into that decision. For most humans, “having babies” an obsolete adaptation, since most modern human habitats no longer pose a threat to egg laying. Bottom line, if evolution was about doing the intelligent thing, egg laying would probably return.

Peacocks: Is the guy with the most glorious feathers really the best specimen to enhance the gene pool? I suppose if the goal is to evolve towards the finest bird-brained entertainment, then yes. However, in terms of actual (i.e. practical) genetic efficacy... a festoon of feathers may not always deliver. But, the feathers are quite cool!

Our bitter taste buds are probably of similar genetic heritage. To the mind, bitter means *spit it out!* Yet, not all bitter things are bad. But, in this case truth doesn't matter. Life is willing to avoid consumption of non-sickening bitter substances, missing out on potential nutrition, in order to avoid potentially consuming a fatal substance.

Often, our evolved sensibilities play us for the fool. However, recognizing our capacity for being RIDICULOUS, and harnessing our higher intelligence and imagination to pursue genuine truth is our unique animal SuperPower. It grants us the ability to find happiness for reasons having no foundation in the confines of evolutionary logic.

## Feelings Are Not Facts

"Feelings are just visitors, let them come and go."  
~Mooji

I often hear the phrase, "Trust your feelings." If I trusted my feelings, I would probably be in prison right now serving multiple life sentences ☹️. In other words, if I acted on every impulse, if I reacted without constraint, to every hurt, rage, hate, greed, envy, lust, fear, or anything other than love, I would be in perpetual trouble. Not that being in trouble is always a bad thing, but I'm talking about destructive, or at least counterproductive *trouble*.

More than likely, when they say "your feelings," they're probably really talking about something more akin to *intuition*.

It's common to conflate these two.

Nature mostly concerns itself with things like protecting the roost, managing a threat, eating or avoiding being eaten, mating or fighting for the privilege, or suffering the pain of not getting any. All driven by this thing commonly called *feelings*.

Another important distinction: Feelings are not facts. For years after that dog ripped my lip open when I was a young lad of 5, I reacted to all dogs in fear. Even if the dog appeared friendly, and even after the owner's assurance their dog doesn't bite<sup>1</sup>, I still relied on my feelings, as a

<sup>1</sup> "Does your dog bite?" "No." Dog proceeds to bite. "I thought you said your dog did not bite!?" "That is not my dog."  
– *The Pink Panther Strikes Again*.

factual assessment of the dog's character. In other words, the feeling was that ALL DOGS WILL BITE ME. But, that wasn't and still isn't a fact. The truth is, unless I plan to resume teasing dogs, most dogs will, in fact, NOT bite me.

Currently, my main aversion regarding dogs, is being slobbered on. But, even that is based on a possible error of reason, centered in the *feeling* dog germs will infect me. Still not necessarily a fact—just a feature of my mysophobia<sup>2</sup>.

*"Ugghh, I've been kissed by a dog!! I have dog germs!  
Get the hot water!! Get some disinfectant!! Get some iodine!"*

~Lucy Van Pelt [A Charlie Brown Christmas based on the Peanuts comic strip]

On the other hand, hairs-on-the-back-of-the-neck, welling-in-the-gut<sup>3</sup>, mystical knowing, and such things as couples knowing what the other is thinking, and pets going bonkers before an earthquake, *are* more potentially factual. I'm talking about this from a source beyond conventional science. Unfortunately, I have no way to prove this to you, other than to describe it, and suggest that you look for it in your own experience.

It can feel *like a feeling*, because a *feeling* can result, but the feeling is secondary, and I'm talking about something far more *primary*. There are many ways to access this. Some, like me, have identified certain sensations that flag an intuitive signal, and very likely, your sensation will

<sup>2</sup> Well, probably not so much phobia in my case, since there's no real panic involved – just a mild to moderate aversion – and a bit of OCD. I have a very vivid imagination, and it “informs” me. But, still not a FACT. It merely feels like it is.

<sup>3</sup> Based on my association with people of “faith” who speak of being informed by a “welling in the gut”, I suspect, based on results, most are being led by mere feelings, and the “welling” I'm familiar with is a different experience.

be different from mine. I experience it as a kind of *bump* or *tingle*—often in my spine, or that place yogis are said to contemplate, a couple of inches below the navel.

Others use *dowsing* or *muscle testing*. I've yet to get either of those methods to work for me, but I have friends that use these techniques to great success.

In the next chapter I will elaborate.

## The Mystical Element

*A human being is part of the whole, called by us 'Universe';  
a part limited in time and space.  
He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings  
as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his  
consciousness.*

*This delusion is a kind of prison for us,  
restricting us to our personal desires and affection for a few persons nearest us.*

*Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison  
by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures  
and the whole of nature in its beauty.*

*Nobody is able to achieve this completely  
but striving for such achievement is, in itself,  
a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.*

~Albert Einstein

What if, rather than having to punch a shark, you were able to avoid the shark, altogether? Was there a way for me to know what street that bike chasing dog was patrolling, and choose a different route? What if one could know when it's time to head for the hills the way animals seem to, before a tsunami mangles the shoreline.

The day before the 1994 Northridge, CA earthquake, while sitting at a traffic light a mere 50 miles from what was about to become the epicenter, I heard, in my head, a screaming voice urging me to “Stop

and get water!” Just beyond the sidewalk, to the right of me, was my favorite local water store.

The voice was familiar to me—the same voice that, throughout my life, guided me on my “self improvement” quest. But, this time, the voice was louder, and far more distinctive. And its impetus was to insure a more comfortable relationship with the aftermath of the aforementioned impending Earthquake.

How do animals know to move to higher ground before a tsunami? Why do dogs bark, and animals freak out before an earthquake? In 373 B.C., historians recorded the instance of animals, including rats, snakes and weasels, deserting, in droves, the Greek city of Helice, just days before a quake devastated the place. In my own neighborhood, I’ve noticed the eerie escalation of barking dogs, hours—even a day—before a strong earthquake. And, I’ve heard many accounts, from friends and acquaintances, of their pets also freaking out before the ground got freaky.

I ignored the voice, and the next day, the earth shook like nobody’s business! Shaking that fowled the water supply for a couple of weeks following, with government advisories to boil our water before drinking it. Fortunately, the Red Cross soon showed up with truckloads of “bottled” water<sup>1</sup>.

What if a quiet whisper told you to run for the hills? What if it advised you not to go to work, but to drive the other way—FAST!! What if all your luggage was on the plane you believed was about to fly you to the dream vacation you spent your life planning for. And what if, just before boarding the jumbo-jet, some mild urge arose within you, telling you

---

<sup>1</sup> In the form of white, generic aluminum cans, with pull tabs. Written on the side was a reference to the 1994 Earthquake, in case we wanted to keep it as a souvenir, I suppose.



*not to board that plane!?* Animals have no luggage, or lifelong plans. They can drop everything—which is pretty much nothing—and flee in a moment’s notice, with few regrets<sup>1</sup>. I think this lack of possessions, and absence of large agendas is key.

For most of my life I lived in Southern California. I knew the joy<sup>2</sup> of many an earthquake, both moderate and mild. Never the “big one”, but I was in neighboring San Fernando during the Sylmar quake of 1971—my first largish quake. That one was big enough to severely damage two hospitals, knock down several freeway overpasses, and tear a house in half [because its foundation straddled the fault line]. Halfway through that temblor, it seemed like the shaking would never stop! Mid-quake, a second strong jolt made the house creak and crack in a way that shook my confidence in its structural integrity—especially that of the ceiling above me.

That was the moment my body learned to panic in response to even a minor tremor. I spent the following day outside, on the grass in the front yard, terrified to go back into the still structurally sound house. Periodically, the earth beneath my butt rudely reminded me why I was sitting there. And, let me tell you, if you’ve never experienced an earthquake, it’s the weirdest sensation to feel the ground lurching about<sup>3</sup>, especially if, in the case of a mild tremor, nothing else is giving much indication the ground is behaving like the back of a giant agitated beast!

To this day I panic whenever the motor starts up in our Ford Fusion Hybrid. If you’ve never owned a hybrid car, it runs silent, except when it

---

<sup>1</sup> I wonder if, in the case they must flee some hard won hole in a tree, or an auspiciously placed cave, they feel hesitation or later, have regrets, if said hole, or cave is destroyed in the disaster? But, even so, the level of *distraction* is likely FAR less than in us humans.

<sup>2</sup> Sarcasm!

<sup>3</sup> Writing about this brings back a little of the panic!

doesn't. Periodically, the gasoline engine rudely comes to life to charge up the battery. If you park such a car, and sit in it with the ignition turned on, it is, at first, very quiet. One is lulled into a false sense of placidity. Then, VAROOM, the engine starts up, rocking the whole car, and triggering any earthquake phobic passengers!

After the Northridge earthquake, in 1994, there were frequent, nerve jangling aftershocks<sup>2</sup>. One morning, I was practicing a form of Tai Chi<sup>3</sup> when a vision came to me. It was like a strong daydream, where I saw what looked like a timeline stretched out before me, with little perpendicular marks along it.

When reality washed back in, I captured the image with pencil on a piece of paper—one long line for the passage of time, and a series of somewhat regular perpendicular marks—kind of like a flag pole with thin flags flying along its length.

For the next week, whenever there was an aftershock, I consulted the drawing. After a “calibration”, where I aligned the first two “flags” to the timing of the first two aftershocks, I was able to match up every little perpendicular mark to an aftershock with an average error of a minute or two, except for one which was off by 15 minutes. It was a week-long prediction of aftershocks, with *exactly* one “flag” for each occurrence! And, in case you're thinking, *“well, Steve, if the marks were regular, then perhaps because aftershocks tend to, also, be regular, of course they would correspond...”*

---

<sup>2</sup> And “aftershock”, for those of you unfamiliar with seismic lingo, is one of (usually) a series of, (usually) smaller earthquakes that follow the initial event. The bigger the main event, the stronger (typically) the aftershocks. And, also typically, they happen at fairly regular intervals. Like an expanding hot water pipe, making popping sounds as it periodically lurches past its moorings.

<sup>3</sup> Tai Chi Chich – a kind of americanized Tai Chi, created by Justin Stone, that is far easier to learn. Don't know if it has the same level of benefit as the Chinese versions, but, hey, it worked for me.

Let me stop you right there and point out that the few irregularities that prompted my use of the word “*somewhat*”, also corresponded to the timing of the aftershocks, to within a margin of error sufficiently, and markedly, beyond any doubt the marks were, indeed, a series of predictions, and not a coincidence—except in that one case.

For years after that, I received what I call “earthquake bonks” seeming to predict worldwide, large earthquakes, and even small local quakes. These bonks occur like a sped up video of the event—the whole quake, with a typical real time duration on the order of minutes, all compressed into a fraction of a second. Bonk!

. - ----===<•:+:{☉}:+:•>===---- . .

I once worked in a mailroom, and one of my duties was to sort weekly statements, addressed to various departments. Each statement was contained within an unsealed envelope, and the envelopes were rubber-banded together into bundles of as many as fifty, and sorting them required that I open each envelope to look at the department name printed on the statement. The letters were folded in thirds, so I had to slide the letter out far enough to expose the top third so I could determine which department mailbox to put it in. Very tedious!

While doing this, I began to know, intuitively, each statement’s destination, before I peeked at it. As I fished out each rubber banded bundle, its edge vaguely glowed with colors (or energies) representing different departments, something I painstakingly verified, over and over, as I progressed through the batches. Had I trusted this ability, I would have finished the job a thousand times faster.

· - ----===<•:+:{☉}:+:•>====- - ·

As my spiritual journey progressed and I began to open myself to greater mystical experiences, I regularly noticed that whenever I merely wondered about something, soon after (like within a day) I would see a billboard, or a magazine cover, or a blurb on TV, etc., providing me an answer to my question, or at least a collaborative response.

Truly one can argue that with the plethora of information accosting us daily, the odds are my answer would appear by random chance. But, so often? And so consistently? Over such a variety of topics? In such a, relatively, short time? Unfortunately, I have no scientific proof to offer, but it occurs to this day, and remains spookily consistent.

· - ----===<•:+:{☉}:+:•>====- - ·

And recently, a new “ability” surfaced. I have moments of “pondering”—a misty reflection spawned by some out-of-the-blue thought. Then, soon after [again within a day] something happens very similar to the thought. Some actual examples:

- *It's been a while since my brother called*—then, my brother calls.
- *I wonder if my wife is going to visit her daughter, any time soon*—then, my wife tells me she's planning a trip to her daughter's house;
- *I wonder why I'm thinking about cleaning up a mess*—then a plate of food dusts the floor.
- *My gaze focuses on the tires of our car*—that afternoon my wife's daughter is driving my wife and her family back from a hike, and one of the tires on her car goes flat.
- I look at the clock and think: *Relief coming, soon*—then, the phone rings. It's the doctor's office where my wife is scheduled, a week later, to get a back

pain killing injection, informing her of a cancellation, prompting the offer of an appointment that very afternoon.

- *Suddenly the Grace and Frankie episode pops into my head, where the Frankie character [Lily Tomlin] spends the night in a yurt—then, the next day, on a road trip, we stop in a small town featuring a number of yurts on the surrounding hillsides—something I rarely see!*
- *The thought comes into my mind that my flaky Banana PI backup server has behaved quite well for an uncharacteristically long period of time—then, the next day, the hard drive starts making a clicking sound, and I can't SSH into the server<sup>1</sup>!*
- *I'm taking a shower and I start thinking about how it's common for us old folks to slip and fall, and I should be using that bath mat we purchased a while back. Two days later, my feet slipped out from under me. Two things saved me from serious injury: The premonition prepared me, so it wasn't as much of a surprise. Which gave me a split second more time to implement my "cat like reflexes" which saved me. But, being able to own, and accept my own RIDICULOUS, I put away my stubbornness, recognized I'm getting old, and realized that I really shouldn't rely on those reflexes to be with me much longer. I now use the bath mat.*

Sometimes the actual event has a contrary nature to my mental experience. Like, I'll be thinking *It's so nice our TV has been so reliable this many months!...then it conks out!* Kind of sounds like a *jinx* doesn't it? What if a *jinx* is really just a *premonition*? The mentioned thing goes to shit because it was *going to go to shit*, not because someone *jinxed it into the crapper*. All the purported *dirty jinx* really did was get the premonitory memo before it actually happened.

. - ----===<•:+:{0}:+:•>====- - .

One of my early experiences with this precognition phenomenon occurred while I was getting ready to attend a party. My mind was

<sup>1</sup> Turns out, the SD flash drive was corrupted. Luckily, I was able to re-flash it with a backup image, and now it's running again. BTW : The Hard Drive making that terrible noise, that I have SATA connected to the Banana PI, was fine. [OK, yeah, I'm showing off my tech-knowledge ;P]

needing me to take my camera<sup>1</sup>. *I don't want to lug that thing around. "Take it! Take it! TAKE IT!!" It's awkward enough, for me, at parties, without having to deal with a camera, too! "Take it!! Take it!! You'll be sorry if you don't!!!"<sup>2</sup>*

The house was on a cliff, overlooking Devil's Gulch out near Ojai, CA. Being a desert climate, the river was nearly dry, but that was about to change. As the day waned, clouds billowed in the orange glow of the low-set sun, until, over the far bank of the dry riverbed, they let loose, dividing the already gorgeous sunset into a sunny side, and an angel-hair shower of rain and golden light. The parted clouds combed the sunlight into beams that streamed across the sky, right over our heads! I'd show you a picture, but, well, I DIDN'T BRING MY FRIKIN' CAMERA!

. - -----<•+:{0}:+•>===== - .

Another way I experience this is as a head's up—informing me of an approaching change—giving me a chance to prepare a response. Like when I was musing over the possibility of my wife's bipolar son coming to live with us, with the intent of providing him a support base, while he collects his life. The premonition gave me the chance to mull it over, and tussle with the emotions around inconvenience and interruption of our peace, privacy and sanctuary. And, before my wife asked, I had already decided supporting him was worth the relatively minor sacrifice, making it easy to give her an immediate answer. Clairvoyance allows me to appear a better human than I really am.

. - -----<•+:{☉}:+•>===== - .

<sup>1</sup> This is one of those early instances of "the voice", referred to in my Northridge Earthquake story,

<sup>2</sup> This was before cellphone cameras were a common thing, and the "camera" was a bulky SLR film affair.

The morning of the 9/11 attacks in New York, I was voluntarily cloistered in a beach house tucked in a small surf calming bay. It was a spiritual retreat, conducted by Shastina Free, a good friend of mine. The first morning of the retreat, I awoke annoyed at everything, irritated by everyone, and mostly I just wanted to break things! This was a mood very much out of harmony with the idyllic setting intended for meditation and contemplation, and not my usual mode.

Later that same morning, the live-in groundskeeper interrupted one of Shastina's healing sessions. Contact with the outside world was discouraged by Shastina, being a *retreat* and all, but he was alarmingly frantic in his urging that we turn on the TV. Shastina resisted, but his persistence won out. That's when we learned of the attack. It was then that I realized that my mood was not my own, but a reaction to [or absorption of] the nation's emotional reaction to these horrific events<sup>1</sup>.

The same thing also happens to my wife. Before a catastrophic event, like a mass shooting, she will invariably drop into a dark mood—something like hopelessness and depression. Before a major *natural* disaster, she has a different experience—more like a short lived pang of anxiety. If I understand correctly, it's more of a visceral version of my earthquake bonks. She's learning to distinguish these moods from her own emotions, but it's easy to forget.

. . ----===<•:+:{☉}:+:•>====--- . .

It happens way too often to be a coincidence that my wife and I think the same thing, at the same time. Happened with my first wife, too. One says the same thing the other is thinking. Freaky, yet cool!

<sup>1</sup> And, I'm not sure what it is that I'm "tuning into" when this happens. Very likely it's the glut of extreme emotional "energy" - but, I have no way to verify that.

· - ----====<•:+:{☉}:+•>====- - ·

Then, there's the Keurig coffee machine. And, before you give me any hell, we use reusable pods, that we fill ourselves, and the bag the coffee beans came in, goes into the recycle bin. And, now, on with the story:

My wife and I play a little game involving the filling of the water reservoir. Without looking at the level of water in the reservoir ('cuz that would be cheating), we use our intuition to fill a pitcher with just the right amount of water to bring the level, in the Keurig tank, exactly to the fill line. We're, both, getting it right around 95% of the time. Thus proving this sort of thing is possible!

For me, as I fill the pitcher, the sign that I get when my pitcher has the winning amount of water, is a little oomph that rings in the back of my spine, or in that region – some 2 inches below my navel<sup>1</sup>. Or a mild thunk, in my head, like when Uncle Fester, of the Addams Family original TV series, twists the vice just enough to relieve a headache.

To achieve this, I must ignore my ego's attempts to steal the glory, and instead, listen for that still-quiet-intuition. I get it right way more often than mere chance. Maybe I'm on a streak of incredible luck<sup>2</sup>, but it's more likely that I'm being informed from some mysterious source—that thing called intuition.

Occasionally, I will hit around 1 cm below the fill line. I call this my "Safety Stop". It happens when, fearing a failure will sully my record, my Ego intervenes. The result is a consistent miss, which is also remarkable. It's still this intuitive knowing, but my ego catches the

<sup>1</sup> The phrase "Contemplating the navel" I believe is in error: It should be "Contemplating two inches below the navel"!

<sup>2</sup> I do live a couple of hours from Vegas...hmmm.



moment when the knowing begins to blossom, calling *that* the peak, rather than allowing the feeling to crescendo to the true peak. An element of Zen, by the way, is the ability to ignore that Ego saboteur.

Demonstrating this sort of thing to others is problematic, because once I involve another person, winning becomes all the more important to my squirrely Ego<sup>1</sup>, and Zen goes out the window. Something akin to *performance anxiety* mucks up the works.

- ----==<•+:{⊙}:+•>====- - ·

*If it's the Psychic Network why do they need a phone number?*  
-Robin Williams

Are the birds and the antelope and the barking dogs all getting signals like the ones my wife and I receive? If so, why are humans, as a rule, not privy to this warning network?

If my wife and I are typical examples, I think humans *do* have access to this, but lose it to the noise of *negative imagination* and “*what-ifing*” things *to death*. In other words, our chattering brains drown out these signals, or relegate them to the “laughable” or discard them as “spurious”.

The *mental static* generated by our What-Ifers minds, I strongly suspect is the static that drowns out things like intuition and psychic ability. Which is why a mind, quieted by meditation practice, tends to be more

<sup>1</sup> Which usually results in a total and embarrassing fail! Because the Ego can't do it! As much as it wants to think it can.

psychic—i.e. able to access what is *already there*. This is something you can actually prove to yourself—if you’re willing to *pay the dues*—so to speak<sup>1</sup>.

I’m not denigrating *mental activity*. The mind is a great tool. But, just because one has a loud-ass table saw, doesn’t mean one runs it all the time! You’d probably miss a lot of important phone calls. A quiet mind is a beautiful thing—and spending some time in silence each day can be a pleasant respite from the noise—and might even save your bacon one day.

And, the more you practice meditation, the more you might find your life becoming peaceful—with an ambient calmness, and even bliss. And as peace pervades your experience, you will, likely, begin to hear that *still, quiet voice*—coming from a place that consistently demonstrates higher wisdom.

*Knowledge is knowing the tomato is a fruit.  
Wisdom is not including tomato in a fruit salad.  
Philosophy is the attempt to explain why tomato doesn’t work in a fruit salad.  
Spirituality is getting it that the tomato is one of God’s little pranks.*

~Anonymous with an extension by me

If you’re having trouble accepting any of this “mumbo-jumbo”, consider the converging train rails; the coy moon playing hide-and-seek behind your thumb; the shimmering pools of pseudo water, all of which you probably didn’t understand the true dynamics of, until someone explained it to you. It works both ways. You didn’t know to poo-poo mystical things until someone told you to. So, consider if your

<sup>1</sup> I’ve been meditating for decades: Dues! ☺☺ ...*alright, Ego, that’s enough!!*

unwillingness to entertain the possibility, might be the attitude of someone else, that you unwittingly adopted. Or, maybe you've grown weary and jaded from being deceived once too many times. I can relate. I think most can. There's a shyster on every corner, right? How many Nigerian Princes have asked you to leverage your American bank account to free up a whopping inheritance from a dead royal uncle?

The market is overflowing with snake-oil. I call that *noise*—and it tends to drown out the legitimate. And, because the *noise artists* are so good at smoke and mirrors, it gets even harder to sort it out. And, with the advent of AI, it is getting harder!

But, maybe, give the idea another chance—the idea that there's some actual “magic” in the world, even if you can't discern it right now. After all, it wasn't long ago that things like wireless communication, and moving pictures on a flat screen, were considered magical, mystical and impossible. It's not a huge stretch to imagine these things that I'm talking about, someday becoming commonplace as remote control, and *flying metal boxes that allow people to commute all over the world*.

I've encountered people with what I would call an “I know I'm right, even if my reasoning is flawed,” mentality. They live under an indoctrination of faith<sup>1</sup>, from some authority [or authorities] offering a sense of purpose, and belonging. These “authorities” extort unfounded confidence, and unwavering stubbornness in these people. Even when their coveted fantastical logic is credibly challenged, their primed response is [issued with due vehemence], “Begone with your beguiling ways!” or “The devil has your tongue!”, or “Nothing you say can convince me the world isn't flat!” or some other rhetoric of non-listening<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> And, I don't necessarily mean *religious faith*.

<sup>2</sup> More recently, “You're a misguided libtard!” Or, “You're brainwashed by the lies of Science!”

I would include in this group, Atheists unwilling to even entertain the possibility of a God, or Gods. Can they prove the *nonexistence* of God or Gods? Also, a Darwinist unwilling to entertain the possibility some sort of intelligence might be involved. Name me a controlled scientific experiment that excludes said possibility? Or, this guy I encountered that actually believed, and emphatically clung to the idea that science had discovered *everything* there is to discover. I'm betting the Jack Webb space telescope is about to prove him wrong<sup>3</sup>.

One of my *employment situations* featured a gaggle of disapproving righteous-right-wingers. These women could smell a Liberal from the next county, and maintained their resolve against *hippie logic*, or *Liberal platitudes*<sup>4</sup>.

The *queen* of the bunch was especially on my case, and ring-leadered the wrath of the others. She watched me with disgust, as I “selfishly” took over the lunchroom sink to prepare my daily leafy green salad—a ritual involving meticulous washing of each romaine lettuce leaf, before tearing it into salad-sized bits; cutting up a jicama into crouton sized cubes; then grating a liberally washed carrot as the final topping. That's right: NO DRESSING, an omission drawing particular contempt.

I told her I was happy to accommodate anyone who needed to use the sink—that they only needed to ask, but such a collaborative exercise was inconceivable to this crotchety covey.

One day, I overheard the queen bee telling her 'say-so sisters' she, as of that morning, was done with smoking.

---

<sup>3</sup> There 's still the mystery, for instance, of why the forming Universe favored matter over antimatter. And, until science is certain about *Dark Matter*, and *Dark Energy*, and what the heck is inside a *black hole*, I'd say there is more to know, and discover.

<sup>4</sup> Though, I truly admire their resolve. This is a powerful skill that, someday – maybe in a future life – they will apply to more constructive purpose.

The very next day, while preparing my salad, I heard, in my head, a clear voice that said: “She is about to walk into the room, and you are to say, ‘How's the non-smoker, today?’”

Moments later, she *did* enter the room, and I spoke my line, and she lit up. In fact, she became tearfully overwhelmed, and her reaction was so intense, it scared me a little because it was so out of character.

From that day on, how she treated me was vastly different. She smiled at me when we passed in the hall. She no longer hassled me about my salad making, and she even told her friends I was “Okay”.

Whatever the source of that “voice”, it offered just the right tonic to do a world of healing. This is the sort of magic that can occur in life when the mind is open and free. This is an example of the extent of possibility available to anyone daring to be *Happy For No Damn Reason!*

Why is there no scientific proof for mystical things? It's as if science hasn't tried. Science is great, but maybe there are aspects of the Universe that evade the scientific method, in other words, the realm of all phenomena that defy science. What if the application of scientific scrutiny skews the result in such cases? What if scientific investigation influences the mind or environment in a way that nullifies ESP. For example, electrical noise can damage a weak signal, such as the electrical signals used in an EKG, or urban noise skewing results in a birdsong communication study. Studying how birds communicate with each other in the wild is less likely to be spoiled by ambient noise, than it would in an urban setting, but what if you want to learn if that urban setting makes a difference? If the faint sound of a distant automobile burglar alarm occurs in the middle of a bird song, or the subtle hum of a power transformer is missed, or background chatter of kids at play is not

accounted for, an erroneous conclusion may be drawn. Similarly, performance anxiety might skew the question-and-answer portion of a psychology experiment. Perhaps, before science can properly test the mystical, some sort of *woo-woo Faraday Cage* is needed—a device to attenuate the sort of noise that might interfere with mystical experimentation.

What if some sort of psychic *hook effect* is at play. Couldn't the psychic noise of a researcher's *result anticipation*, or *skepticism*, or *cynicism*, cause a negative influence—i.e. *introduce a bias*—via the very psychic channel(s) being tested, thus shifting or canceling the result? I mean, if psychic phenomenon is real, then these negative psychic influences would also be real. They could be damping out psychic affect, the way two waveforms meeting 180 degrees out of phase cancel each other, thus producing the appearance of NO waveform. All tests for the waveform's presence would fail, if, say, the apparatus used in the experiment introduced a waveform of the exact same frequency, but 180 degrees out of phase. For instance a reflective surface, or chamber—perhaps a mental chamber that cancels whatever mystical phenomenon is under test. To deny that as a possibility is unscientific.

Maybe there is a set of phenomena that deliberately foils mystical events when they are under scrutiny—similar to the way *observing*, causes the wave function to collapse in a quantum experiment. Thus, such things could be outside the reach of the scientific method, which is the very reason such things are yet to be scientifically verified. I call this “false negative phenomena”. Also included in this set might be things like *ghosts*, *fairies*, actual *organic magic*<sup>1</sup> and *whatever it is that emanates from*

---

<sup>1</sup> As opposed to the kind of “magic” that satisfies Arthur C. Clarke's assertion that “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.” By “Organic Magic” I mean magic that emanates from a human's intention.

*Martin Short that makes people think he's funny.*

## Maybe You're Not A Good Fit

*"I was the kid next door's imaginary friend."*  
~Emo Philips

Do you feel like you don't fit in? I can only speak in terms of the societies I've lived in, but in only a few of them did I feel like I "belonged". The main one—the society of "American Life in Big City Suburbia"—has always been an enigma, to me. My occasional debilitating panic attacks lends credence to that. Maybe I have some of that "high-functioning Autism<sup>1</sup>".

The society in which you live is a structure. There are many structures like this –as many as there are groups of humans. California alone, the state I was born in, exposed me to at least this many different structures throughout my adult life:

Los Angeles

The San Fernando Valley

San Diego

Irvine

Laguna Beach

Humboldt

Santa Barbara

Oxnard

---

<sup>1</sup> ...and if this book does well, I'll go get that checked out!



Ventura

Ojai

Each has its own culture [and subcultures], its own rules, its own way of looking at how one should be *being*; its own brand of *good behavior*; it's own range of *lewd, rude, crude*; it's own measure of what gets you *accepted*, and what gets you *banished in shame*.

I best fit into spiritual communities. One of my happiest associations was with a small group of spiritually minded artists that I had a brief, but powerfully healing dalliance with in Ojai, CA.

Why assume that the structure you were born into, and/or raised in, is a good fit for the dynamic that is the sum of *you*? Is there some sort of celestial accounting [there might be] that automatically matches one's DNA to the situation they've popped into?

I spent a lot of time in cultures, some of them



I generated this lovely lady using Leonardo.AI.  
 Prompt: "An eccentric avant-garde woman in her 40's wearing wild clothes and jewelry with wild hair. She does what she likes and doesn't care what people think. She has a joyful disposition with a whimsical expression like she gets the cosmic joke."

supposedly “therapeutic”, that hammered me with the message: “there is something wrong with you the way you are!”, and thus “you should change this or that! One must, after all, be versatile!”. I was pressed to examine my “shortcomings” in dealing with the daily demands of the prevailing culture, rather than supported in finding my particular oddball place in the world. There’s a subtle difference: One is being pressed into conformance with acceptable societal roles, whether, or not, one’s “uniqueness” is suitable to those roles. The other is learning to exist, in harmony, as the “strange one”—learning to love, accept, and even flaunt one’s personal strangeness. And, especially, to discover one’s unique contribution to society *from* that strangeness.

Some called me “overly sensitive”. But, maybe my sensitive nature is an asset—the mode of a healer, for instance, or an “empath”. Certainly, “sensitivity” doesn’t fit with cutthroat Capitalism, for example, where one must “poker face” their way to their fortune—probably why I’ve been relatively poor all my life.

Some called me “meek”. Or, am I circumspect, or prudent, or one that picks my “battles”? Or, perhaps I’m a supporter, rather than a leader. Or, maybe I’m just less likely to be the *fool that charges in*.

Some called me “shy”. Or, or am I loath to cast my pearls before swine? More like: *Reticent as I surveil said “swine” seeking common ground, or at least indications of humanity*.

I suppose I could be in denial. But, what am I in denial of? Could it be a defense against an onslaught of well-meaning attempts to mold me into something that I’m not?

Ultimately I came to the full realization that it wasn’t necessarily *me* that was wrong, or bad, or broken. Over all those years that I attempted to be

a good student; ardent devotee; communicative client; dutiful church member; competent staff member; loving husband and provider; productive employee; affable neighbor; law abiding citizen<sup>1</sup>; -- maybe my supposed failures were actually more *incompatibility*, than *incompetence*. I was attacked by bullies in my youth, and I thought myself weak, for it. They told me I was a coward<sup>2</sup>, and I believed it! They also called me a “Fag”. Today, I know I’m just not a warrior type. I’m more of a nurturer; a creator; a gentle spirit. In a society of artists, or healers I probably would have thrived.

So, maybe it’s not you. Maybe it’s a mismatch. Maybe you would do better in a community of Athletes, or Surfers, or Sufis, or Monks, or Wine Tasters, or Lego Enthusiasts, or Cosplayers, or Software Engineers, or Cross Dressers, or Crazy Domino Tricksters!



[INSANE Domino Tricks!](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid23](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid23)

Or maybe the Latter Day Saints are your bailiwick, or a Polygamist community is your cup of tea, or heck, even a cult<sup>3</sup>! Or maybe your ilk lies in Middle America as a Gay-Hating Bible Belter, or as a survivalist in Humboldt County, or in a

<sup>1</sup> Not that I’m admitting to criminal behavior, per se [though I have stolen the occasional office supply – just doing my part to offset corporate greed ☺]. More like a social pariah/outcast prone to being cast as a miscreant – though I like to think: *renegade*.

<sup>2</sup> I’m paraphrasing.

<sup>3</sup> No! I’m *not* suggesting you go join a cult [unless that’s ABSOLUTELY the structure you need – just don’t drink the Kool-Aid!]. Also, finding the courage, or sense, to leave the cult, can be a character builder ☺

community of Mad Scientists, wherever the hell *they* hang out?!

Hey! Darkness exists, and I have no right to judge! I've spent many hours [over many years], in healing circles, and have seen human darkness, and human transformation in others as well as in myself. From this I learned even dens of hate, abuse, and misery, where the darkest echelons of humanity do their worst, redemption and healing are possible. In fact, in certain cases, it *was* the darkness that pushed the healing—pushed the transformation—transformation that might not have happened otherwise. And, what emerges from the darkness tends to be a better human—kinder, more forgiving, more tolerant to and of others and their own self. Because they've already seen it/been it/hated it/until they learned to accept it!

The point is, you are you: A summation of genetics [or lack thereof] and nurture [or lack thereof]. Some believe that astrology, karma, pre-birth contract, spirit-self on a mission, etc., also play a role.

Who says you have to fit into all molds? *Find your people!!*

And, there's precedent for this:

- Maybe you're not weak, maybe you're just pigeonholed. Desmond Doss was called a misfit, coward and was generally viewed with disdain by his peers in the infantry company he was assigned to during WWII. All of this hate was leveled at him because he refused to carry a weapon. One of the men in his barrack even issued an ominous threat: "Doss, as soon as we get into combat, I'll make sure you won't come back alive." His commanding officers saw him as a liability, assessing no worth in a soldier unwilling to fight. The tone of all of these critics changed the first time Doss charged onto a raging battle field to drag a fellow wounded soldier to safety. Over and over he did this, saving as many as 75 men, proving he wasn't a coward, or a liability, and in fact he

exhibited such a high degree of courage and self-sacrifice, he earned the Congressional Medal of Honor, among other decorations, including three Purple Hearts. Of the many disdainful things said to him, “misfit” was the only accuracy. If people call you weak, or a coward, etc. consider if, maybe, it’s the context they have wrong, and, that indeed, it has nothing to do with you.

- Maybe you’re not stupid, maybe you’re just misunderstood. Mahatma Gandhi wasn’t always loved. In the beginning his ideas were regarded as ridiculous, inane, absurd. And, maybe they were—after all, his dream of a liberated, and ultimately, unified India, was only partially realized. He was never able to inspire Hindus and Muslims to live together in peace. But, where does the ridiculous really sit in that scenario? Who were the truly inane?
- Maybe you’re not an arrogant asshole, maybe you’re just proficient, thus justifiably sure of yourself because of it. Bold competence is often mistaken for arrogance, especially if charm, likability and/or tact are not in the mix. There are numerous celebrities and historical figures who might deserve this consideration: John Lennon [of the Beatles], Barack Obama [mostly a Right Wing sentiment. But, hey, how can they dis a man who does a mean Al Green!], Leonardo da Vinci, Albert Einstein [who was a charmer, so all but envious peers would likely brand him an “arrogant asshole”].

In rebuttal to the aforementioned “push to be *all of everything*<sup>1</sup>” mandate I say: What about *Penn and Teller*? What if I’m the *Teller*<sup>2</sup>?! What if I’m the *Laurel*, and not the *Hardy*? I’d rather be the *Harpo*, than the *Groucho*, or the *Chico*. And, I’d definitely rather be the *Buster Keaton*, than the *Jimmy Durante*<sup>3</sup>! Why should I be expected to be *both*, or *all*?

<sup>1</sup> I mean, for heck sake, even the Army only wants you to be all you *can* be!

<sup>2</sup> Sans the mad slight-of-hand skills!

<sup>3</sup> What an idiotic paring that was! One of my pet peeves is the ruining of art by unenlightened/non-creative producers. Another example: The de-sexing of both Mae West, and Betty Boop, by prude-possé censorship!

Maybe it's just fine to be the you that your DNA is structured to be, and maybe the self-help aspect should merely be overcoming the psychological damage that prevents you from fully realizing your particular genetics, and not so much about extending *beyond* your genetics. Unless that's what you really want out of life. In which case I say *you're the exception! Gung-ho!!*

The bottom line, and the entire point of this narrative is: *Empowering yourself to be who you are meant to be, in opposition to who "they" want you to be*, is an essential component of being Happy For No Damn Reason!

## Failure Is Not The Same As *Failure*

*“Failure is not the opposite of success; it's part of success”*  
~ Arianna Huffington

I fail all the time. As an engineer, I’ve learned not to stop at failure. I would never get anything done—never complete a design—never deliver anything, if I stopped whenever I failed.

In fact, *letting failure stop you*, is the *actual* failure. This is not the same as being in denial about something that is irreparably broken, hopelessly wrong, or just a bad or stupid idea. When Einstein said, “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results<sup>1</sup>” I’m sure he meant to exemplify the act of not recognizing the futility of refusing to regroup.

There is a subtle distinction here. Edison failed over and over when attempting to invent the light bulb. But, he wasn’t doing the same thing over and over again. He was running the same experiment, over and over, but with different materials—namely changing the composition of the *filament*. The filament is that little glowing curlicue of wire in the bulb that produces the light.

There is a concept in science called “Black Body Radiation”. This is when a solid is raised to a high enough temperature for it to glow, and

---

<sup>1</sup> There’s no clear record of him actually saying this, but it is listed in “The Ultimate Quotable Einstein”, a compilation of Einstein quotes published by Princeton University Press—though, it is in the “misattributed” category. But, come on, it sounds like something he would have said., right?

by the way, “glowing” is an excellent property for making a lamp. Trouble is, most things either melt, or combust at temperatures this high. For combustion to happen, oxygen must be present, so to eliminate the oxygen nuisance, Edison tried different filament materials in a vacuum, which eliminated *combustion* as a variable. But, there remained that one other sticking point: *melting*. And, melt they did—one after another. Platinum seemed a contender, but alas it only lasted a few hours before succumbing to its liquid phase.

To make his light bulb work, he needed a material that would conduct enough electricity to brightly glow, and not melt while doing so.

He knew of several conductive materials that would stand the test. One being tungsten. Tungsten is a metal that melts at a very high temperature—high enough to withstand the searing heat required to make it glow nice and white [i.e., “White hot”]. But, tungsten is also very brittle, and hard to shape into a filament, and the fabrication techniques of the time were inadequate to do so on a production level.

Another of these materials is Carbon, with a melting point nearly as high as tungsten. Carbon also conducts electricity. But, carbon is even worse in terms of forming it into a filament. But, Edison thought of a way! When you heat plant fiber in a vacuum, to a temperature that would set it aflame in normal atmosphere, it turns to carbon—carbon that retains the original shape of the plant fiber. So, he tried many different plant fibers as the filament material in his next series of tests. But, the carbon ghost of whatever fiber he used, was *very* brittle, and easily cracked, and crumbled, so he needed to find a plant fiber that would leave behind a carbon filament that would hold up under the stress of being heated to thousands of degrees, and that would not crumble due to the vibration of twisting a light bulb into a socket.



He ran electricity through each carbonized filament until it became hot enough to glow. One each trial the filament lit up, but quickly fractured, severing the electrical connection needed to keep it glowing.

After trying more than 6000 different plants, some sent to him by biologists from all corners of the world, he tried cotton. Cotton was the first material to produce a sustained glow. The first cotton filament bulb glowed for fifteen hours before burning out. That was a record, and spurred him to keep trying different arrangements, adding things such as tar, then a wire scaffold, and with each improvement he gained longer and longer periods of electric light, until Patent number 223,898 became the first electric light sold to the public!

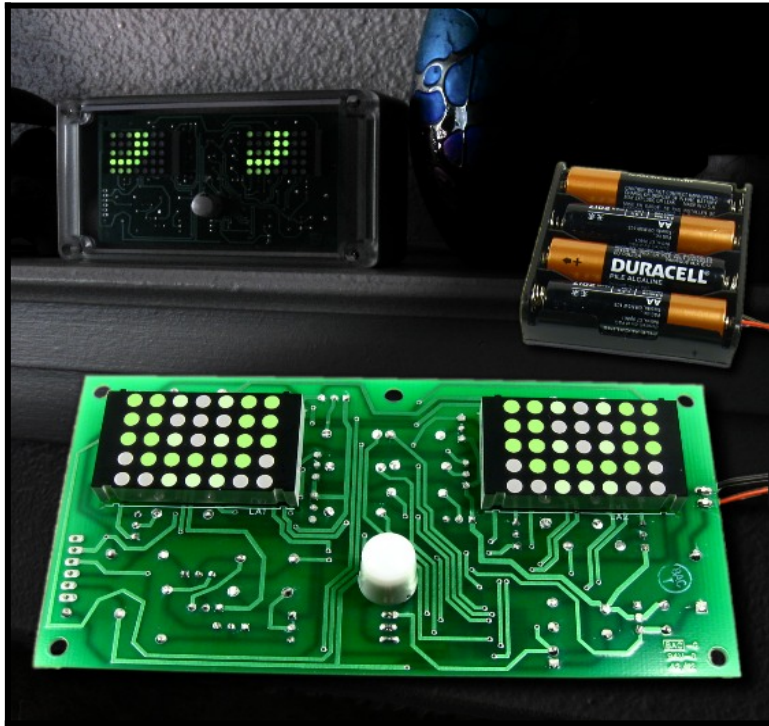
That was way back in great-grandfather's lifetime. When my grandfather was still a toddler, the tungsten filament replaced the crazy, but clever conglomerate Edison came up with [around 1910]. But, one of Edison's original light bulbs is still burning bright [as of this writing]. The following is a link to the webcam watching the "Centennial Light" that hangs in a fire station in Livermore, California:



[Centennial Light hanging in Livermore, California fire station](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web24](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web24)

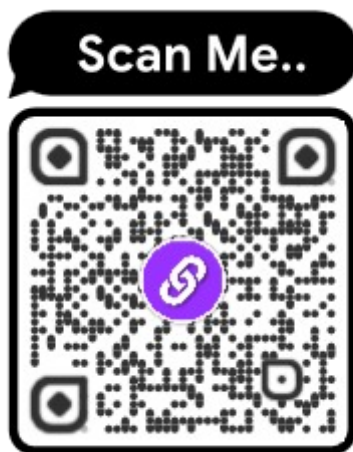
It's unlikely you'll travel down the path to success, without a few failure bumps on the way. Edison's name is associated with the electric light



bulb, because Edison persevered when others gave up. The other's probably considered it insane to continue. Edison proved them wrong. After thousands of failures, isn't that an indication you're on the wrong path? Sometimes *yes*, sometimes *no*. But, Edison might argue that until you've tried everything, you're not

done!

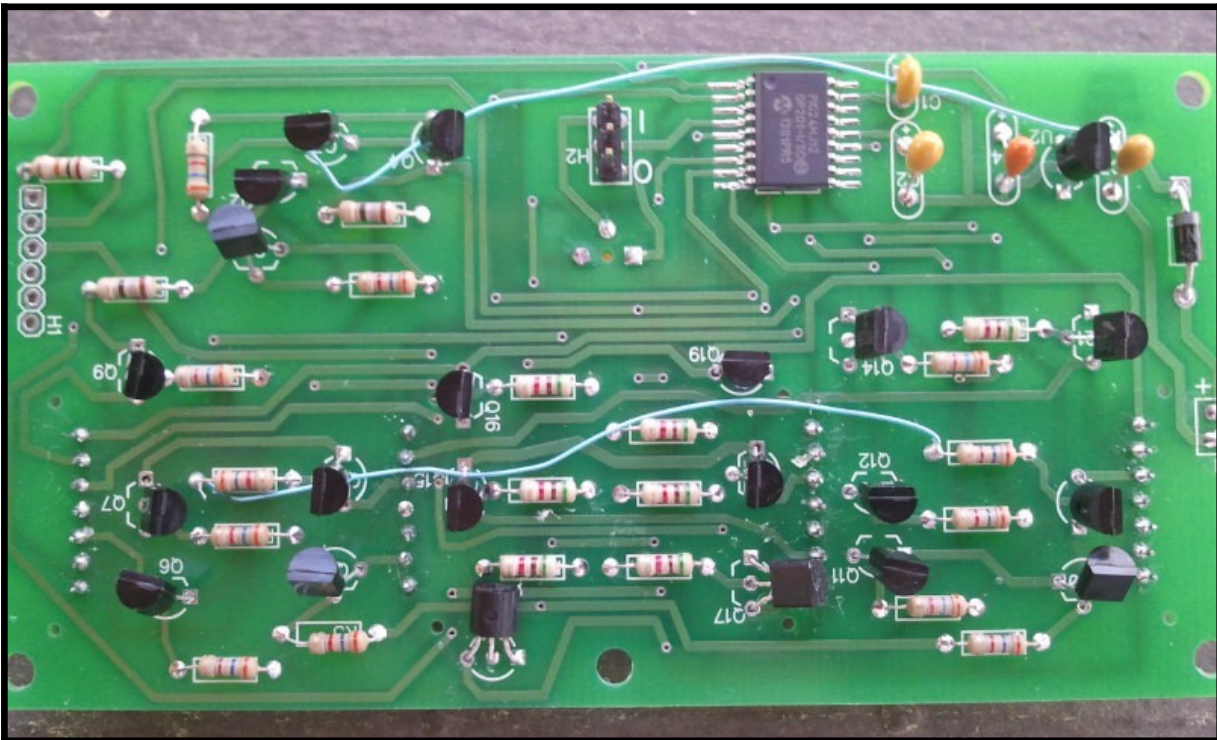
Another example is my “Electronic Animated Eyes” project—shown above. You can see an animation of the finished result at:



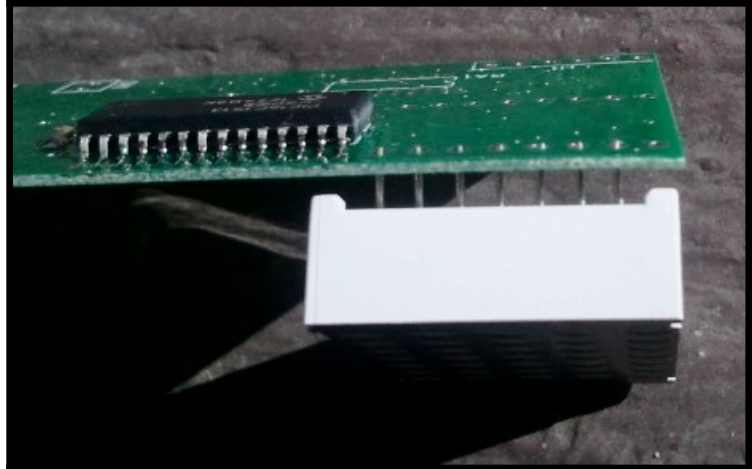
[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web29](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web29)

I encountered so many setbacks.

- The first set of 10 Printed Circuit Boards [PCB] had two missing traces. That flat rectangular green thing in the photo, below, is the PCB, and “traces” are like wires. They’re those light green lines running around on the PCB. Each trace behaves like a conductor, connecting electronic components together to make a “circuit”. So, on each board, to get it to work, I had to run *actual* wires to make up for the missing traces [the thin blue wires in the photo, below]—2 wires per board, thus 20 wires in total. That’s why we do what’s called a “short run” where only a few boards are manufactured, so any errors can be caught before escalating it to the “production run” involving more like hundreds, to thousands of boards. Imagine having to run 2000 of those wires —by hand!?!



- See those two rectangular things producing the “eye” effect, in the top photo? Those are called “LED Arrays”—essentially a matrix of little LED lights molded into one modular unit. I goofed when I positioned the holes on the PCB. They didn’t quite line up with the little wires coming out the back of each of the LED modules. The photo to the right, shows how I had to splay the wires slightly, to get the module to mount on the PCB. And, even then, the modules wouldn’t seat all the way down against the PCB.



- The next short run of PCBs [again, 10], everything worked fine. WhooHoo! So, I delivered them to the vendor. Soon after, I learned from the source of those LED Arrays, that stock was limited and they were nearly out of them... and BTW, they were only in stock because someone special-ordered them, but backed out. So, the arrays were marked down in order to clear them out, which was one of the reasons I chose them—such a deal, I thought!. Part of engineering is accounting: Balancing the cost of the electronics parts, against quality, so the price of the final product is as low as possible, without delivering crap. The other reason I selected those LED Arrays was the black background, which really makes the colored dots pop.

As it turns out, the black background is not a standard feature [why the heck not?!]. Such a thing is only available to one capable of coming up with the scratch to order them custom made, with minimum quantities at over a thousand. And, then, you have to endure the “lead time” [the length of time for them to be manufactured]--in this case, an excruciating 9 months!!!

The list goes on. In fact, don't even ask me what I went through writing the code<sup>1</sup> that animates those "eyes".

But, I did it, and it works quite well! All because I didn't let a little "failure" stop me.

*Failure is the key to success; each mistake teaches us something.*

~Morihei Ueshiba Creator of Aikido – a Japanese martial art based on Jiu Jitsu.

Another example is the space program. There is quite a list of failures in that arena, some of it quite public: The Apollo 1 fire that killed three astronauts, while they were still on the ground!; Apollo 13; the Challenger and Columbia Space Shuttle disasters, to name the most iconic.

But, even before all that, during the time NASA engineers and Scientists were learning how to build a rocket big enough to facilitate a space program, there was one failure after another, with many a fiery explosion. Fortunately, only unmanned prototype rockets were involved.

So, it's not failure, per se, that makes one a failure. It's failure to soldier on in the face of failure. That's how those Apollo 13 astronauts made it back home—alive and well. And, that's how boot prints wound up on the moon!

---

<sup>1</sup> On the PCB is a tiny computer [called an "MCU"], and the "code" is the "Computer Program" that runs on the MCU, and produces the illusion of a pair of inquisitive eyes.

*"The difference between a pro and an amateur is, the pro focuses on success, stepping over failure on the way, whereas the amateur is preoccupied with not failing, and lets a few mishaps end the project.*

*~Tony Johnson [my Karate instructor]*

One hopes every effort is made to confine all failures to the lab, so they don't happen out in public where they're more likely to turn tragic. But, also tragic, or at least unfortunate, is letting tragic incidents quash innovation. Imagine if the automobile industry closed up shop, following the first fatal auto accident, or if power lines were torn down, the moment someone got electrocuted, or all cutlery were confiscated and melted down, the moment someone gouged, or cut themselves.

Not everyone agrees, but I would have grieved had NASA shut down the space program following any of the tragic incidents that took the lives of astronauts, and even a few civilians.

Then there's this guy. He not only fails, but he augments the failure to learn as much as possible from it! I set the video to start at 25 minutes

in—which is where he talks about how he capitalizes on failure. Feel free to wind it back to the beginning if you want to watch the whole thing.



[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid45](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid45)

[\*MOLTEN GLASS VS Prince Rupert's Drop - Smarter Every Day 285\*](#)

Every project has its dog days—those periods of drudgery, when time slows down, and you'd rather be doing just about anything else. A trick

of success is knowing this is an invariable part of the pursuit, and that the odds are good the drudge will end, and the light will appear, at the end of the tunnel.

Amor fati is a Latin phrase meaning “love of fate<sup>1</sup>”, and though I’m not suggesting a masochistic pursuit of hard times, when you can thumb your nose at travail, and even bend it into something of sport—make it a game—beat out of it a relish for the challenge—you can shrink time, and pain. This is easier to do if your passions and ardor are wrapped up in the pursuit. When you can mount any project with amor fati, you give the Gods nothing to latch onto. You already know it’s gonna be tough—you’re already expecting a measure of the mundane, and a drain of mind and muscle. “It’s good for the figure!” you shout in defiance. “It builds character!” “...bragging rights!” “...something to write home about!” You feebly wag your fist at the vault of heaven before collapsing into inconsolable sobbing. But, you keep on!

However, there *is* a time to throw in the towel—a point where continuing definitely *is* insanity. Determining *when*, or *if* to throw in the towel, requires a bit of experience, a dash of economics, and some plain old commonsense. Or, an intervention.

Amor fati is another of those connections to being Happy For No Damn Reason. Maybe, the depths of despair seems a stupid, if not demented place to find *glee*. And, failure seems counter intuitive as a source for happiness! But, if you can go there, you will open a chapter of life with incredible rewards. Not everyone understands this, and they may call you crazy. Let them balk! Let them sneer! Be the visionary, who knows

---

<sup>1</sup> Thank you Brent for that tidbit! Brent spent his life savings on the purchase of an abandoned ghost mining town called Carro Gordo. Brent definitely has amor fati when it comes his passionate efforts to restore this town, an often daunting task, and the fates seem eager to toy with him. His YouTube channel is here: [www.youtube.com/c/GhostTownLiving](http://www.youtube.com/c/GhostTownLiving)

that good comes with the bad, and the “bad” isn’t necessarily a bad thing. And, I’m not talking about masochism, here. This is not gratification gained from pain, deprivation, degradation, etc. It’s a healthy acceptance of the pits life throws us into. It’s defiance in the face of fate and all her fickleness. You’ll get through it—and even if you don’t—even if it all goes to hell, and stays there, have faith in your ability to rebound and find a new tack, and take *that* to the celebration. Either way, you know the celebration is coming. In fact, you can celebrate every damn moment you’re still breathing. Happy on purpose just to spite them all! Then, when success *does* show up, invite the detractors to the party, so they can see you were right all along!! I’m not a huge fan of Thomas Edison<sup>1</sup>, but he *did* understand this.

---

<sup>1</sup> I mean, the guy wanted to string up DC power lines, and launched a vicious fear-mongering campaign that included electrocuting animals, including stray dogs, and Topsy the elephant, all to scare people away from Tesla’s more practical, and popular high voltage AC lines, in what was called “The War of Currents”. Fortunately Tesla won that war, despite Edison’s gruesome smear tactics. See: <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/plugged-in/the-westinghouseedison-rivalry-stray-dogs-circus-elephants-and-getting-westinghoused/>



## If You Only Knew How Ridiculously Small You Are!

*Space is big. Really big. You just won't believe how vastly, hugely, mind-bogglingly big it is. I mean, you may think it's a long way down the road to the chemist, but that's just peanuts to space.*

~ Douglas Adams—The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

In art school, I learned to periodically step back from a work to view the whole. Otherwise, you might wind up with a family dog that appears the size of a horse, or a cat that, by comparison, is more the size of a rat. Getting caught up in detail can ruin cohesion.

Seeing the Earth from outer space is, to me, the ultimate *stepping back*. I've never been given the opportunity<sup>1</sup>, but through the grace of the space program's sharing of media, and by my own imagination, I can look at



Photo courtesy the Chinese national space agency (CNSA) and Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS)

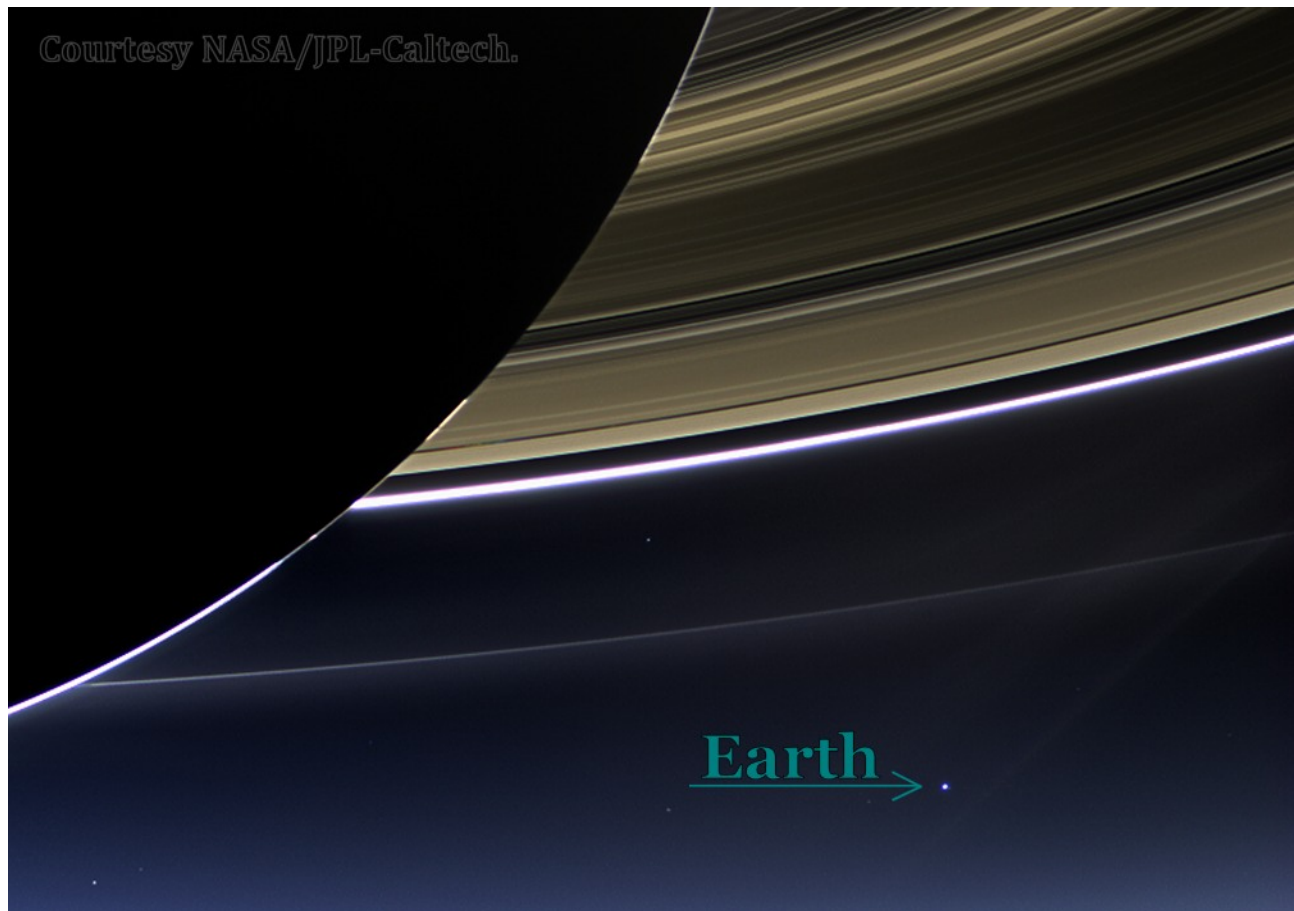
one of the various photos of our *big blue marble* and muse about the smallness of affairs on this planet when viewed from the moon and

<sup>1</sup> Unless I was abducted by space aliens, caught a glimpse out one of their flying saucer windows, only to have my memory wiped by the SOBs. Same difference, I suppose..

beyond.

An especially humbling [and spectacular] view was captured by the Cassini-Huygens spacecraft during its mission to study the planet Saturn, and vicinity. In the photo, below, the Earth appears as a small blueish-white dot.

From out there, it's very easy to look down on our little planet and wonder what all the fuss is about. The further out you go, the more trivial it all becomes. The Earth is an infinitesimal speck in this enormous Universe. I mean, even from Saturn, which by cosmic standards, isn't all that far away, Earth is a mere pinpoint of light, seeming no bigger than the stars in Earth's night sky.

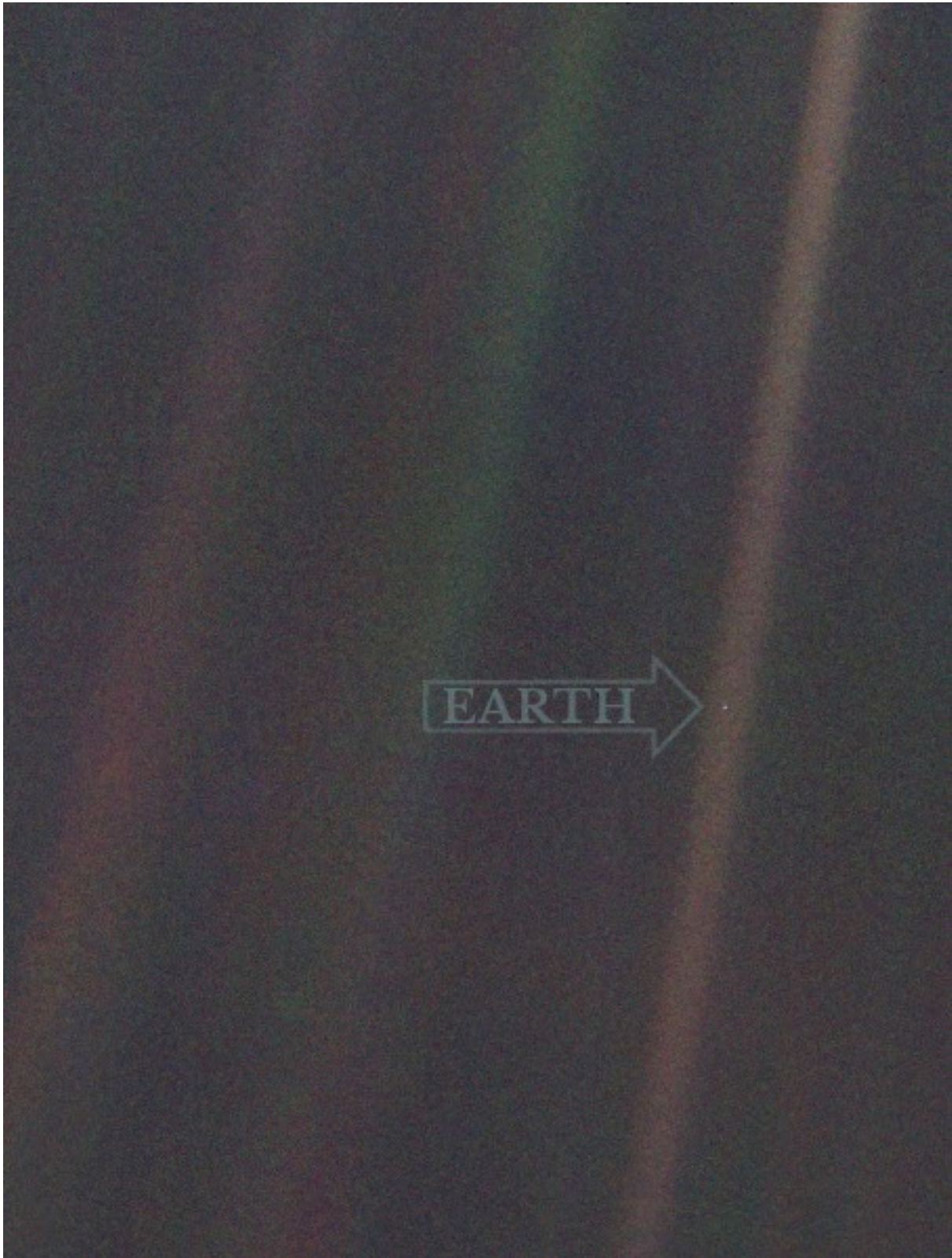


Below is a photo of Earth from 6.4 billion kilometers away (4 billion

Happy For No Damn Reason

If You Only Knew How Ridiculously Small You Are!

miles), taken by Voyager 1.



When I worry about something, it's bigger than the whole universe to me. Yet, a glance out the window of my 3rd story apartment at the trees, the distant mountains, and the cloud studded sky, instills, once more, this sense of smallness, and in that moment my concerns shrink as well.

Our sun is, on average, 93 million miles from Earth. Light from the sun takes around 8.3 minutes to reach us here on Earth. From the nearest star beyond our solar system<sup>1</sup>, it takes over four *years* for any news-worthy flash of photons, such as the star exploding, or shrinking into a brown dwarf, to appear in our night sky—a journey of some *25 trillion miles*. From that next star out beyond the sun, earth isn't even visible—at least, not with the best telescopes our current technology can muster<sup>2</sup>.

From Andromeda<sup>3</sup>, the next major galaxy from us, forget Earth...our relatively dim little *sun* would be lost in the fuzz of the 250 billion<sup>4</sup>, or so, other stars forming our galaxy!

Back in 1995, an astronomer named Bob Williams, pushing against great opposition from the astronomical community, used his clout as director of the Space Telescope Science Institute, to do something that knocked cosmology on its ear.

---

<sup>1</sup> Proxima Centauri - 4.22 light-years away - is a small, low-mass red dwarf star in the constellation Centaurus. It's too dim to see with the naked eye in even the darkest night sky. So, actually, the two other stars in this trinary system, Alpha Centauri A and B, would be the nearest stars, visible in the night sky. They're around 4.4 light years away.

<sup>2</sup> Though, they might have better telescopes than we.

<sup>3</sup> The Andromeda Galaxy is 2.56 Million light-years away. There are a few galaxies closer to Earth, such as the Magellanic Clouds, but they're considered to be within our galactic neighborhood, so Andromeda is the closest distinct galaxy to our own. BTW: Andromeda is on a collision course with our galaxy and is due to arrive in around 4.5 Billion years! Put the Champagne on ice!

<sup>4</sup> You may have noticed varying estimates of the number of stars in our galaxy. That's because the actual number is not really known. There's a lot of dust in our Galaxy, and some stars are so dim they're hard to see, even with the best telescopes, so it's rather difficult to count them all. Each time I DuckDucked [aka "Googled"] this, I got a different number. So, I just left it that way 😊

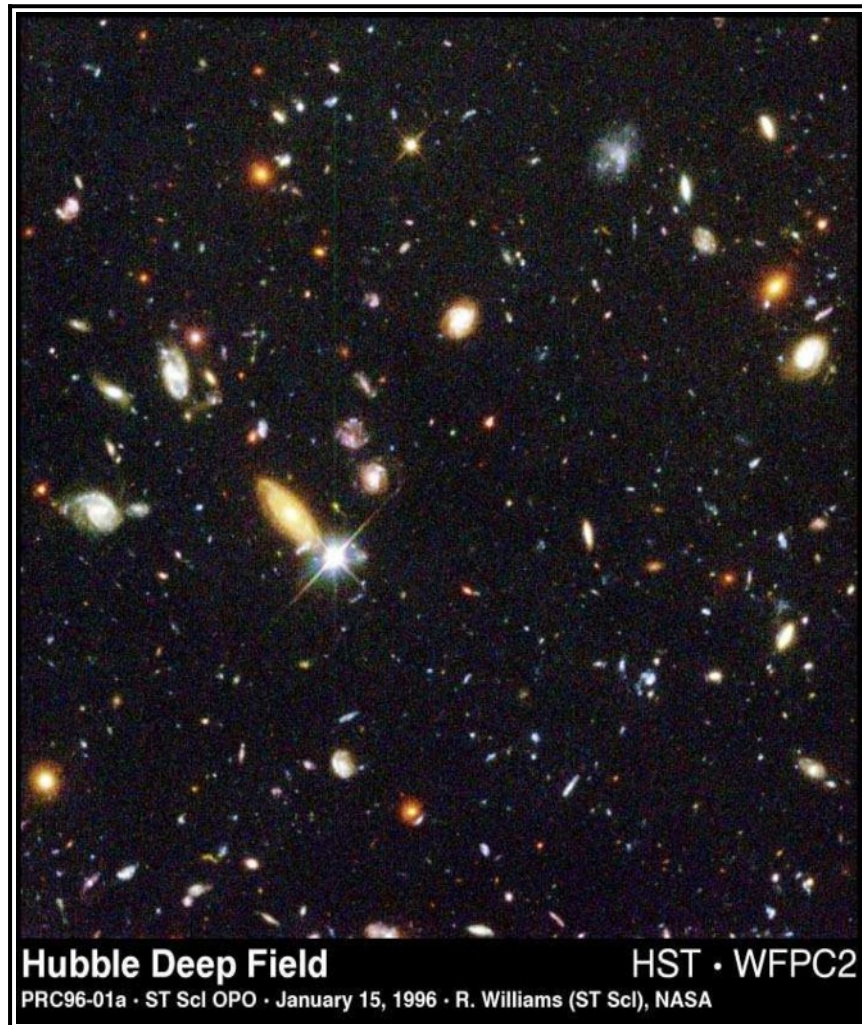
He pointed the Hubble Space Telescope at *nothing* for 100 hours<sup>1</sup>. It was a section of the sky only about 1/12th the apparent width of the full moon in the sky, or about the size of the area covered by the head of a pin held at arm's length. The result was a photo that expanded the estimated size of the Universe by a factor of around five<sup>2</sup>—from around 10 Billion galaxies, to more like 50 Billion galaxies. That one image, comprising said tiny spec on the celestial sphere, contained around 3000 galaxies—each with star counts ranging in the 100's of billions!

---

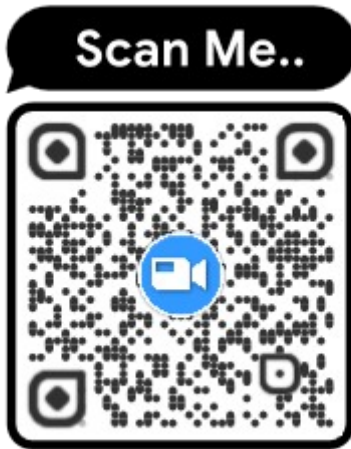
<sup>1</sup> It was quite the gamble. Mr. Williams' reputation was on the line, because, before this little experiment, it really looked like *nothing was there*. If the resulting images were as blank, as most expected they would be, Bob was ready to hand in his resignation—yeah, *big cojones*. There was only the one visible light space telescope, at the time, and it was in *high* demand. To devote 100 of those precious hours to looking at nothing, appeared as a HUGE waste of resources, thus irresponsible behavior from the director! How sweet it must have been, when this game-changing image first appeared!

<sup>2</sup> "With this achievement, the estimated number of galaxies in the universe had multiplied enormously – to 50 billion, five times more than previously expected," wrote John Noble Wilford in the [New York Times](#)

This is known as the Hubble Deep Field image. Here it is:



Here's a YouTube video featuring explanations by Robert "Bob" Williams, himself:



[The 1995 Hubble photo that changed astronomy](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid35](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid35)

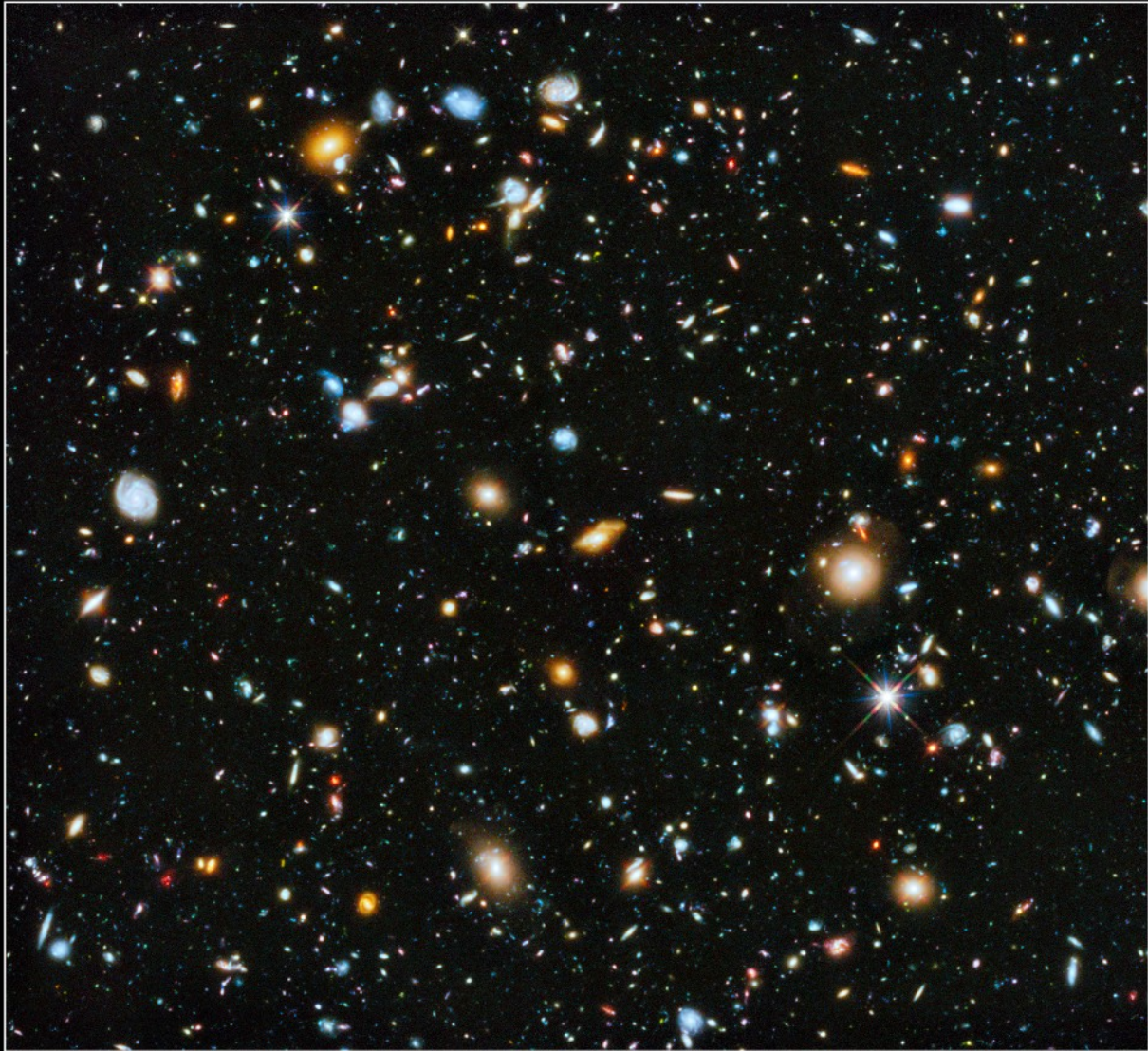
Fired up by this astounding result, the Hubble was trained on various other tiny segments of the night sky, in various other directions—and the results were strikingly similar: Thousands more galaxies we never knew existed—expanding the known Universe even more<sup>1</sup>!

In 2014, the following image was released—a combination of 10 years worth of Ultra Deep Field exposures, taking advantage of technology upgrades to the Hubble Space Telescope [on following page].

---

<sup>1</sup> And, creating the opportunity for us all to laugh at the way Carl Sagan said "billions", on his TV show, The Cosmos.





**Hubble Ultra Deep Field 2014**  
*Hubble Space Telescope • ACS • WFC3*

NASA and ESA

STScI-PRC14-27a

Go to this site for more on the Hubble Deep Fields:



[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web03](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web03)

or Google: “Hubble Deep Field” to see the rest of these amazing images, and marvel over their implications!

We live in a galaxy containing around 100 to 200 Billion stars<sup>1</sup>. And, current understanding is of an observable<sup>2</sup> Universe sporting around 225 Billion<sup>3</sup> to 2 Trillion galaxies<sup>4</sup>! Think about that! Suppose each galaxy in the Universe, contains an average of 100 Billion stars. And, let’s go with the 225 Billion number of galaxies<sup>5</sup>. That’s 100 Billion times 225 Billion, or Twenty-Two-Point-Five-Thousand-Billion-Billion, or:

22,500,000,000,000,000,000 stars!!!

I don’t know about you, but that makes my brain scream!!!

And, even if you can’t wrap your head around such a large number—you’ll undoubtedly still realize, we, here on our little planet called Earth,

<sup>1</sup> Scientists are not completely sure of the number of stars in our galaxy because part of the opposite end of the galaxy is obscured by dust, and by all the stuff going on around the Black Hole at its center!

<sup>2</sup> Because it’s quite likely there’s stuff out beyond even the ability of science to perceive. BTW: the word “Observable” to an astronomer, means all that can possibly be observed with telescopes and such. Which is different from all that can be *observed* with the naked eye. That distinction will become important later in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Based on a study done in 2013.

<sup>4</sup> A 2016 study included all those tiny, fluffy galaxies in the early universe, nobody ever heard of.

<sup>5</sup> Because, come on! Who cares about the early universe with all its tiny, fluffy poser galaxies?!

are IMMENSELY INSIGNIFICANT!!! Now, consider that most of those stars can't even be seen with the naked eye! If you took on the task of, for one whole year, going out on very clear, dark nights, in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres, way beyond city lights, you might manage to see, with your naked eyes, up to a mere **9 galaxies**<sup>1</sup>—*if your eyes are in excellent condition, and you, on each outing, let enough time pass for your eyes to adjust to the darkness*<sup>2</sup> – yeah, a lot of work to see a few galaxies.

Thus, among the Hundreds of Billions of galaxies [or so], in the known Universe, only around a *maximum* of 9 of them are within human eye-shot. That means, there are *an imponderable number of galaxies our naked eyes are INCAPABLE of seeing!* Which means *a whole SUPER heck of a lot of stars our naked eyes are INCAPABLE of seeing!* And, if there are folks out there on planets, revolving around stars, in those many other galaxies, *they, very likely, have eyes*<sup>3</sup> *that can't see our galaxy, either!* Which means, they don't even have a clue our puny little star even exists, let alone our insignificant little planet—unless, of course, they have telescopes of their own...that they sent into space...and pointed towards us...for ten days!

---

<sup>1</sup> Of our neighboring galaxies, the Andromeda Galaxy is the easiest to see. To the naked eye, it's a very dim fuzzy blob in a very dark, moonless, night sky [if you can see the Milky Way, you have a good chance of seeing Andromeda]. In the Northern Hemisphere, in November, Andromeda is high in the sky around midnight. But you can catch it early in the morning, as early as mid to late June. And the months following Nov., more and more it's just up there, in the sky, as soon as the sun goes down—until around, mid to late March, when the sun starts to move into that region of space. You'll, then, have to wait until around mid to late June for your next opportunity, which will, again, be early in the morning. Down south it's a bit harder to catch, and will always hang low in the sky, near the horizon.

It doesn't jump out at you, like the Milky Way does, so you either need to know where to look, or you might happen upon it, like I did, one summer night, randomly searching the sky with binoculars. If you know where to find the Andromeda constellation, you're in the neighborhood. Or, if you're in the Northern Hemisphere, just wait for early November, when, at midnight, at most places on the planet, it will be high overhead!

<sup>2</sup> The cone cells adapt within 10 minutes, but the rod cells can take *several hours* to become completely dark adapted. Any significant light other than *red light*, will ruin this in an instant!

<sup>3</sup> Unless their eyes were pushed by evolution to be *that good*—like, if those Alien/Predator movies are nonfiction?!?

But, even so, that would only provide an awareness of the smear of stars that is our galaxy. Our sun would be but a fraction of a pixel of light in one of their photos—not even a smudge! And, I’m talking about an object [our Sun] large enough to contain more than a MILLION Earths!!

Someone, on some distant planet, orbiting one of those fractions of a pixel, may gaze at one of their photos of our galaxy, and wonder if a similar planet, orbiting a similar fraction of a pixel in our galaxy, is a possibility. But that would be the extent of their awareness of the Earth<sup>1</sup>.

And our insignificance grows staggeringly small when you consider that most of the Universe is *empty space*. It turns out it is vastly easier to navigate through an asteroid field than depicted in most sci-fi shows. You’re only likely to encounter a spaceship smashing asteroid every 20,000 km (12,500 mi) or so<sup>2</sup>. The same is true about the space within the atoms that make up our bodies.



[Can You Really Shoot for the Stars? Would You Ever Hit Any?](#)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid36](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid36)

<sup>1</sup> Again, unless they have some spectacular technology that makes it possible to glimpse our puny little planet, and technology to pick planets out of the quadrillions that could support life. In other words, the odds are against it!

<sup>2</sup> OK, I have no idea if that is correct, but after leaning on ChatGPT3.5, it gave me a guesstimate. Bottom line, the rubble in an asteroid belt is almost universally spaced well apart such that you’d have to actively seek out the bits, to ever encounter any of significant size.

But, I know: Maybe I've romanced you into seeing how trivial your own existence is—for the moment. And, yes, that probably won't last, because everything going on inside us feels so big and immediate. You'll forget about all of this the next time things go sour. In other words, our own personal *drama-verse* tends to dwarf the *actual unimaginably huge Universe*.

But, if I've managed to inspire even a glimmer of humility—that's a beginning. I mean, the bottom line, here, is the existence of way more stuff than your puny senses are capable of resolving. So much more stuff, that the scope of stuff we can actually see, hear, touch, smell, and taste, is *minuscule* by comparison!

And, even better, if I've instilled the grain of a notion that everything going on in that noggin of yours, is an *illusion* of importance—that's huge. The *bigness* of your concerns is dwarfed by your actual *flea-spec smallness* relative to the vastness of *space* that exists around you. And, the *urgency* of your concerns are dwarfed by your actual *blink-of-an-eye minuteness*, relative to the ponderous stretch of time that smears all things into a future that will soon *forget about you, and all your woes*.

And, if you really think about it, this apparent insignificance, compared to the unimaginable vastness of the known Universe, is an allegory for the insignificance of concerns of the self. Our nerve wired bodies draw our attention to these concerns, which is why most people tend towards a more narcissistic bent, and why selfless pursuits are elevated to the heroic, or the saintly. But, based on our comparative smallness, I consider narcissism ridiculous. It certainly seems inharmonious to the reality of scale.

And, finally, when you look at how long the Universe has been banging about, compared to the relatively short time humanity<sup>1</sup> has been around to be bothered by it<sup>2</sup>, and, if there is a *God*, and if *It*<sup>3</sup> is plugged into all things, and if it's a matter of *ratios*, then how is life—one of the most insignificant, by weight, or volume, forms of matter in the Universe<sup>4</sup>—worth even a nod from this all powerful celestial being?

*"There are other forms of intelligence on Earth, Doctor. Only human arrogance would assume the message must be meant for man"*

~Spock – Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home

Or, maybe the Universe was created as a playground, and we are merely players<sup>5</sup>. That would elevate our importance a bit. But, if so, apparently a lot of us forgot to *play*—and is it any wonder, considering how murderous the Universe can get?

---

<sup>1</sup> Since humanity seems to be the first form of life to come along, that gets bent about it all. Or at least the first to truly be able to language it. I guess animals squawk about it, too. But, I doubt they're capable of pondering it.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently, humans have been around some 200,000 years, which, compared to the age of the Universe—some 14ish billion years—is a mere cosmic twitch.

<sup>3</sup> I refer to God as "It" to avoid all the gender gymnastics. Besides, do we *really* know the gender of this Supreme Being, or even if It *has* a gender? What is God's preferred pronoun?

<sup>4</sup> Again, assuming Earth is the only progenitor of life in this vast, seemingly endless Universe. But, even so, the cumulative mass, alone, of all the stars in the Universe, spectacularly outweighs the minuscule amount of matter dedicated to life, even if life is abundant, in the Universe.

<sup>5</sup> "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players" ~William Shakespeare

## Wisdom Of The Self

*"When you move amidst the world of sense,  
free from attachment and aversion alike,  
there comes the peace in which all sorrows end,  
and you live in the wisdom of the Self."*

~Bhagavad Gita

It's a beautiful, and frankly, humbling experience to stand fully awake in your own *presence*—a unique expression of the *pure love* of the Universe.

***But, Steve, how is there “pure love” in a Universe with so much misery, hate, death and reality TV stars?!?***

Remember: Pain, and all its cousins, are phantoms of the nervous system. In the vast cosmos, “nerves” are but mere dust in the wind<sup>1</sup>. Remove the noise of nerves from the experience of all things, and only serene beauty remains—or, if no intelligence exists behind our Universe, then only “is” exists.

I've been miserable in the presence of spectacular natural beauty. As a hungry, shivering, lost, wilderness neophyte, I might notice the glorious colors of a sunrise glancing off ice crystal cliffs; the frozen blue-green furls of a once cascading waterfall; a mist playfully juggling the sparkles scintillating from fresh snow, and have a moment of appreciation. But, the thunder of torment is a jealous mate. The beauty persists, brushing the tender fringes—but despotic *nerves* claim the attention!

<sup>1</sup> A shout-out to Kansas, one of my many favorite bands!

Within you is a place where there is:

No *Language*... only *Being*.

No *Judgment*... only *Wonder*.

No *Apathy*... only *Beauty*.

No *fight*, or *flight*...only *Empathy* and *Compassion* (and maybe some initial *Astonishment*).

This is a place beyond the mental chatter, where *curiosity* and *mystery* are central. The desire to *know* and *understand* still exists, but it functions as *fascination*, rather than a *fear fanned immediacy*. Curiosity effortlessly flows into knowledge<sup>1</sup>, whenever the Universe provides it—and the Universe invariably does.

Have you ever been the target of a child's barrage of questions? Have you noticed the *questions*, in those little eyes, being a chance to ask, are more coveted than any answers you attempt to provide<sup>2</sup>?

Judgment clouds the *way*. We all have access to a journey unfolding in the moment—a beautiful, painful, joyous, challenging, triumphant, death defying, life affirming journey living as one mystery after another, one surprise after another, one transformation after another, an ecstatic acceleration into the full Universe.

---

<sup>1</sup> In fact, it's been my experience that when a curiosity arises, if I leave it as a moment of pondering, the answer soon shows up—on a billboard, or a TV show, or in a book or magazine, etc. It's happened so many times as to be statistically significant.

<sup>2</sup> Though, once, long ago, while working on my car in the communal area of an apartment complex, one of the young boys, from a very large, and very dysfunctional family that lived two doors North, asked me a question. I thought, fine—an opportunity to mentor this troubled child, infamous for destructively acting out. I answered his question, and felt the fluff of pride for doing a good deed. Then, he asked, "Why?" So, I elaborated. Again, "Why?" I explained. Then another, "Why?" I had nothing, so I copped to my void, which elicited another, "Why?" Annoyance began to build in me, charged by the thought that he was f'ing with me. I lost it! He ran away. And, I failed the test.



The only way to “see” this path, is to surrender to the *mystery*. As soon as you judge your perceptions, the path loses clarity, like disturbed water obscuring the painted lanes at the bottom of a competition swimming pool.

While in a state of wonder, embrace the mystery. Let go of the need to *know what’s going on*, and you *become* what’s going on. Though, you may never know all the details. Some of it remains a mystery, perhaps forever<sup>1</sup>. But, the parts that matter—to a totally non-self-absorbed individual—are revealed: As *service* to *Service*.

It’s the inner *animal*<sup>2</sup> that needs to know every detail—needs to *fill in every blank*—even if only *falsehoods*. As long as that nagging disquiet is obviated, as per the creed of the animal mind—as long as all threats are deemed *neutralized*—i.e. the animal mind is mollified—then, all is considered well, even if “well” is a fantasy. Our *inner animal* is satisfied even with a *self-deception providing a delusion of safety*. “This collagen treatment surely restores my youthful allure!” “Gambling will once-and-for-all turn my life to my favor!” “Genocide on Jews will solve all our economic woes, and, BTW, help to restore the supremacy of the White Human Race!”

There really is no such thing as *safety*. “Safety” is a contrivance of biology. In the Universe, *Energy* is neither created nor destroyed—it is merely *transformed*<sup>3</sup>. Dust to life to dust. That’s a scary thought, right? But, what if *worry* is discarded—that frenzied mentality urging one to grope at ways to secure *safety*? If life is, itself, the journey, then the

<sup>1</sup> Though, I suspect, in that purported after death “life review”, we get resolution to some, if not all of our lingering curiosity—but that might only be the case for those opened to higher awareness.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. *lizard brain*.

<sup>3</sup> So, in that sense, there is *nothing* but safety! Because, change is not an issue, so destruction is not an issue.

journey embraces ALL. And, ironically, by being on this journey [this path], you end up *safer* than you would trying to control it all.

Ironic, yes? Consider that the perception of a self-directed life as merely a *delusion* of direction. Shit happens—but it's only *shit* when *judged* to be such. What if it's really just an *unfolding* of what's best for you. In other words, the *pursuit* of happiness winds up being an aimless stumble bound to lead one off the path, and into the woods—where the *authentic* path is found. Happiness is in the footfall—no matter *where* the landing occurs. And THAT, my friend, *becomes* the path!

The sign reads, “Stay on the marked path”. The Forest Service erected that sign to steer the *wilderness neophyte* away from peril. However, the path of the “Spiritual Adventurer,” by definition, tends to stray off the prescribed path. Even if said adventurer is also a wilderness neophyte, bound to stumble into a world of harm, they are still keen to engage and take full responsibility for happenstance. A grisly demise might be their lot—a fate accepted with little or no regret—but more likely, they will survive, learn, adapt, and grow—and come to relish the experience as “Dharma,” the plan all along! Ultimately, this is a way of harmonious living leading to stupid, goofy-faced happiness.

*Destiny or Self Determination?* Are we slaves to *fate*, or can we steer our lives around fate, thus nullifying the very definition? And if *Destiny* has a binding nature, then where does *fate* fit into that equation? In other words, it is *fated to happen* BECAUSE it was *Destiny*? But what if destiny is vulnerable *to fate*?! Or is fate merely *a failure to realize one's Destiny*?! Or is it more conspiratorial, where fate occurs to *foil Destiny*? But, in all those cases, there is ultimately “*what happened.*” Only ONE “*what happened*” can exist. So what's the difference? Maybe *Destiny* is merely something to brood over when *Fate screws it all up*?!

Do things “happen for a reason”? Or is it all *random* and *impersonal*? When someone says, “I guess it wasn’t meant to be,” they are capitulating to a higher power. But, is this power random, or is there a plan?

I’ve, on occasion, in the face of a failed outcome, uttered the phrase, “I guess it wasn’t meant to be,” mainly in my “fake it until you make it” spiritual tyro days. Upon reflection, though, I wonder: If you’re steering a spiritual course, then how is “meant to be” relevant? Do the Gods delight in futzing with us?

*"Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad."*

~Reverend William Anderson

I’ve come to the conclusion that everything is just *being*. Perhaps, instead of some deity shoving us around on some celestial chess board, it’s actually we who make the moves—through our own *choices*.

Such a notion, though, requires us to assume *full responsibility* for our actions. No *deity to blame* or *appeal to in our darkest moments*. Only us, and our whims, our errors, our triumphs, our silliness, and our own genius, or stupidity!

But, consider that *judgment* is what makes it an emotional thing. If there is a *bad* and a *good*, then there is an *emotional consequence*. But, what if consequence is merely *cause and effect*. When an asteroid slams into a planet, does the Universe blame the asteroid? Does the planet swear an oath of vengeance against the asteroid belt?

Really...does anyone care if an asteroid rips a planet? Perhaps only if living beings, watching from the black of space, are aware that other living beings whom they care about, are on the surface being reduced to

smoldering char. But, only *biological beings* are in a twist about it. Otherwise, it seems, there is a whole lot of apathy going on.

There's an old story—you probably already know it—but it aptly illustrates this point of view, so bear with me if it's redundant:

A horse, owned by a farmer, escapes and runs away. A neighbor, in conversation with the farmer, replies, "Oh, I'm so sorry! What bad news!" The farmer reflects, "Good news, bad news, who can say?"

The horse returns, followed by a team of other horses. The neighbor, in a subsequent conversation, enthuses, "What a great windfall!" The farmer reflects, "Maybe yes, maybe not. Who can say?"

The farmer's son badly breaks a leg while working to tame one of the more spirited new horses. "So sorry for your bad fate," says the concerned neighbor.

"Good fate, bad fate, who can say?" is the farmer's monotonous reflection.

In a week or so, the emperor's men come and take every able-bodied young man to fight in a pointless war. But, the farmer's son is exempted, due to his injury.

Good news?!?

The unifying feature in this story is human concern, and how inaccurate it can be. What if the story were about a bunch of pebbles:

A pebble, owned by a jade pebble herder, who itself is a lump of feldspar, gets clipped by a bird, and rolls over a cliff edge, at the far end of the jade pebble farm. A human neighbor, seeing this supposed calamity, addresses the herdspebble<sup>1</sup>, "Oh, I'm so sorry! What bad news!"

---

<sup>1</sup> What else are you going to call a stone that herds pebbles?

The herdspebble just sits there, as stones are apt to do.

“Ahhh...,” replies the neighbor, aglow with new insight, “what you’re saying is: *Who can tell if it’s bad news, or good news?*”

An outcropping halfway down the cliff, where landed the careening lump of jade, gives way, and triggers a landslide of rocks and dirt that crashes onto a log, causing it to teeter-totter a number of new jade pebbles (that just happened to be lying on the other end of the same log) onto the herdspebble’s meadow. The neighbor exclaims with glee, “How wonderful for you!”

The herdspebble remains stoic.

“Oh... right! *This could be good...but it could also be bad.*” reflects the neighbor, while knowingly rubbing his chin.

Most of the pebble herder’s auspiciously acquired jade pebbles, after a night of freezing rain, suddenly split in two.

The strange neighbor, having nothing better to do than sit shivering in the downpour while watching inert pebbles in the neighboring yard, exclaims, “How awful—such a loss!”

Whereupon a different neighbor calls the men in white coats, who rush over to the scene, lash the shivering madman into a strait-jacket, and carry him off to a mental hospital thus saving him from certain death by hypothermia.

Silly, huh? A rolling stone can’t give a shit. It’s only the living that care about how things turn out—because circumstance tends to modify the elements of comfort. The loss of a horse means less revenue, or fewer crops, and thus, less food and ultimately hunger. We need food to remain comfortable and ultimately, to survive. More horses means greater revenue and a greater chance of sustained comfort. A broken leg

is painful, both to the son, and through empathy, the father<sup>1</sup>, and could mean the loss of revenue an able son might have generated. In other words, life assigns meaning, measured by the necessities for life, to events that otherwise have no real consequence to the pebbles at our feet.

"What are men to rocks and mountains?"

~Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

A life of surrender to the Mystery, in a state of perpetual wonder, collapses all of that into: who cares, this is my greatest bliss unfolding before me, in a life of service to Love. The events along the way are all just part of the mystery and wonder. An escaped horse, an equestrian windfall, a broken leg, the vagaries of war—all bobbing in a nebulous context and point of view.

You could call it *fate*, but does it matter? Isn't fate merely the outcome of a chain of choices? Could you have made different choices? Perhaps, but then that chain of choices would be your new fate. In other words, fate only has relevance in retrospect.

Unless, somehow, fate can be known ahead of time. But, then, what do you do with information like that? Use it to change your fate? If it can be changed, then how is it *fate* in the first place? The very definition of *fate* is: it's *unavoidable*.

"2. Fate [noun]: *an inevitable and often adverse outcome, condition, or end*"

~[www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fate](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fate)

<sup>1</sup> And even possibly, the neighbor—assuming he/she is not playing some long con to stay on the good side of the farmer, until he can execute his/her plan to acquire the farm. So cynical, I!

“Inevitable [adjective]: *incapable of being avoided or evaded*”

~[www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inevitable](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inevitable)

Ca sera sera.

So, in other words, if there *is* such a thing as *fate*, it’s merely the *unfolding*. Fate might be interesting, in retrospect, but when one embraces that unfolding, without judgment, and fully in acceptance of the Mystery, then this emboldens one to defiantly scream: “Clotho! Lachesis! Atropos!?! DARE TO DO YOUR WORST!”

A common theme on contest shows like America’s Got Talent, or American Idol, when contestants speak on why they want to win, is to prove to their kids that *their dreams can come true*. Far more of these contestants lose, than win, so what does that say about *dreams coming true*? And, by the way, what exactly is the *dream* they’re referring to? I mean, aren’t they already doing what they love—whether they win or not? I think what they are actually saying, if truth be told, is they *dream* to do that thing they love doing, but with *no further struggle*.

I often wonder if a child prodigy is nothing more than someone who has already honed their talent in one or more past lives. Maybe this is a way in which dreams *do* come true, but not necessarily in one lifetime. A prodigy, in other words, might be a child who initially engaged their passion in a past life, which is why they possess such proficiency at so young an age—it came from a great deal of work in a past life. How much disappointment is generated by ignorance of this crucial little detail, assuming this truly is how life works? Because, clearly, not

everyone's dream comes true before they die. Not everyone has the talent to realize their passion. A tone deaf person is unlikely to become a celebrated singer. A klutz is unlikely to become a dancer of note. A person with no comic timing will probably never be funny—at least not in one lifetime. But, their passion might set the stage (or “energy pattern”) for a future lifetime.

Take me, for example. I'm not the best writer. My command of grammar, spelling and the elements of style are seriously lacking. If I didn't have spell and grammar check [and AI assistance], all of this would be far more of a mess! I definitely do not have a head for writing, but I *do* have the passion. And I have improved considerably since I began decades ago. But, wait until my next life! I fully plan to slip into a body/mind geared for prolific, prize winning authorship! After I die, any of you who survive me, be sure to watch for a writing prodigy, who loves Reese's Peanut Butter cups, Indian Food, and Riding on trains pulled by antique steam engines. That will be me!

Without judgment, there can be no regret, or remorse, or even anger. There is only what *is*, and what *was*, and the *Wonder* of it all.

For most, this all falls apart with *the death of a loved one*. That's a tough one. And I doubt if anything I write here will convince you that such a *terrible* event can be part of the *Wonder*, or that it can even, ultimately, be *Joyful*.

Grief came along sometime after life showed up. It's a creation of biology, and essentially is just another form of pain [which is a delusion of the body, conjured by nerves, and the brain]. But, realistically, I know if I lost my wife, I'd be devastated and likely, inconsolable. I don't even know if I'd be able to recover—or if I'd even want to! I would know how



to grieve it, and perhaps recover—but would I be willing?

And grief can have many layers, thus making it, potentially, quite complex.

When grief is *merely* about loss, the belief that the loved one is no longer accessible (or at least *perceived* as inaccessible), is key. But, when it digs down to the very pit of soulmate level attachment, well, I'm not even sure what to say about that!

Coming up with something to say to a grieving friend, or family member, is another conundrum of loss. A common offering is, "She/He lives on in your memories. As long as you have your memories, She/He is close, and is not really gone."

I always thought that was rather ridiculous<sup>1</sup>. You can't touch a memory! You can't have meaningful conversations with a memory! You can't hug, kiss or do you-know-what with a memory! You can't make new memories with a memory!! It's *just not the same!*

Another one is "They're in a better place."

Well, I'm sorry, but I'm gonna be a bit selfish, here, and say, *I'm not in that place with her/him, so, as much as I'm happy for the elevation if his/her status, I'M NOT THERE WITH THEM, SO YOU CAN GO F' YOURSELF!*"

And, how about, "You can always find another lover—plenty of fish in the sea."

Sure, I'll just, in a magical moment, erase all these feelings for, and attachments to my departed beloved, and... "go f' yourself some more!"

Better, is to get down to the business of grieving. In cultures not so afraid of grief as our culture seems to be, public wailing is accepted.

---

<sup>1</sup> Actually, the word "Bullshit" comes to mind.

Even group wailing. In fact, less likely are comforting words uttered awkwardly, and more likely is the getting down to the business of what *really* needs to happen—like holding the griever, as they wail—deep, watery, snot infused, wailing, from the gut—from the pit of the soul<sup>1</sup>. That’s how to purge grief—how to bring *comfort*. People willing to stand with the griever, *in the grief*, fully exposed to the *raw emotion*, in full contact with *flesh, fluids*, and the *flow of emotional energy*, are people who really have something to offer!

There’s a scene in the STARZ original mini-series “The Spanish Princess” where Spanish nationals Lina and Rosa, both attending Arthur’s funeral, began to wail, very loudly. The mourners are segregated into two sections divided by an aisle. In the British section, the response is confusion and annoyance. Apparently, such raucous and blatant public displays of grief, though quite standard in Spain, was social poison in English society, at the time<sup>2</sup>.

Surrender to your body. It knows how to do it. I get it started with deep breathing—breathing from the depths of the diaphragm. Deep breathing will stir up the emotion and allow it to surface. When it does surface, let it flood out. You won’t die<sup>3</sup>. Rip the BandAid off! I guarantee you will feel *so much better*! And, if you can’t do it alone, try some Reichian therapy [not to be confused with Reiki].

And once will likely not be enough—especially if the attachment is deep, or if cultural or social taboos got in there and blocked a truly free flow<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> I did this when my first wife killed herself – but, I did it alone.

<sup>2</sup> And, probably still is. Even here in the States, it’s largely frowned upon.

<sup>3</sup> Well, you might—but only if you were about to, anyway. Consult your doctor, etc., etc...

<sup>4</sup> Or, because of societal taboos, you haven’t done a lot of past grieving. Along with the current grief, you may be inviting the grief of a lot of other stuff from the past. Just know that there is an end—and a light to reach. Take it one moment at a time, one day at a time, one session at a time, and let it run its course.

And, that's what it is. A free, unencumbered flow of emotional energy.

If at all possible, find some people you can do this with—people that truly understand the process, and aren't afraid of it<sup>1</sup>. Loving people. Like, find some *genuine hippies* 🤪. It will make it sooooo much easier, and deeper, and life affirming.

People have healing power. Most are unaware of this. Most don't know how much they can really do. That's why they stand back, and hurl “*comforting words*” and “*blessings*” from afar<sup>2</sup>—hoping words, or God will save them from the “horrors” of human interaction.

Another detriment in this culture of ours, is the loss of personal power. We are taught to tamp down our power—to keep it to ourselves, lest it annoy others, or make you a target<sup>3</sup>. But, this is a time to risk annoying the hell out of everyone! Your health is at stake! Your well-being is at stake!! Your freedom is at stake!! Your ability to stay in touch with your mystical self is at stake!!! And, hell, your public demonstration might save others from their tight-ass bonds.

When grief is tangled in *guilt* and *regret*, it's all the more difficult and complicated.

- Why was I spared?!
- I should have done more!
- I should have been there!
- I never told her/him that I love him/her!
- It was all my fault!

---

<sup>1</sup> I know. Difficult in this culture.

<sup>2</sup> And, I'm really referring to emotional distance. People can be standing right next to each other, and not be *close*.

<sup>3</sup> Or unnerve the overlords!

- If only I had been a better mother/father/sister/brother/daughter/son/uncle/aunt/brother from another mother/...I could have saved them, or been a better person to them, in life.
- If I only hadn't gone down that road!...or around that bend!...or under that bridge!...or over the ridge, and into that poorly marked pit!
- If I had only gone to work, then they wouldn't have had to take my place—and die the death that was waiting for me!!!

The day before my mother died, I received a “welling up” when I passed by her room. She was sharing our home at the time, due to her advanced age. I saw her, sitting in her favorite chair, doing one of her favorite things: Knitting. I was overwhelmed with a desire that was, also, very much an *urge*—an urge to tell her that I loved her, and that she did a great job raising my brothers and I. This was something she worried about: *That she had been a terrible mom.*

And truth be told, both my mom and my dad were emotionally distant. And I spent a good deal of my young adulthood, angry about that. In fact, I blamed my shortcomings on the fact I didn't get the support I needed as a child. I had a hard time dealing with adulthood, and I blamed that on my parents. And, though it was *true* they were terrible models of human coping, also true was how the emotional pain propelled me into the “spiritual quest” that vastly opened my life, and is now, by the way, the fodder for this book.

I grew to realize my parents did the best they could, with the inadequate support *they* received in *their* childhoods. Which was due to ancestral crappy childhoods going back who knows how far! And my parents really tried. They took parenthood seriously and gave it their all—with the full *personal sacrifice* required to be any sort of decent parent.

So, that eve, prompted by this urging, and from the culmination of decades of personal “work”, I poured out all my gratitude, telling her what a great mom she had been, and what a monumental thing it was for her to take on motherhood, given that her role models provided little foundation, or support.

We cried together, and the smile my mom beamed back at me is, now, my fondest memory of her. And I knew, in the back of my mind, in that place that *knows*—her passing was imminent. I didn’t want to hear that, but I also felt the *wisdom*.

She died the next day.

When it’s time—it’s time. Nothing you do, or don’t do, has any bearing on that. The best you can do is be present to the flow, and join in. Let go of “what if”, and embrace *what is*—and even, perhaps, occasionally, *what will be*.

## After All, It's All Made Up, Anyway!

*Civilization is a limitless multiplication of unnecessary necessities.*

~Mark Twain

I think science gets it right when it says we humans evolved from Apes. I have little doubt that the lives of those original humans, and the life of a typical modern human are, at least on the surface, a vastly different thing. It's highly unlikely the first humans grabbed their lunch pails and hopped into their cars, Flintstones style, to drive to work every morning.

Were we happier, back then? It's pretty certain there were frequent comfort issues, but in a lot of ways, life was simpler. No possessions to lug about—at least nothing one couldn't heft onto one's back, or drag behind them—i.e. no moving vans required. No need for insurance. No need for loans, or even money. No job to go to, because, again, no money. Human relations may have suffered similar emotional setbacks, but no government licenses, marriage counselors, overworked social workers, divorce courts, lawyers, or alimony. A man and a woman would sniff each other's butts, have sex, and more, or less, attend to the ensuing children.

Simple.

But also, no supermarkets, or hot and cold running water, or flushing toilets, toilet paper/bidets. You had to forage for your food—daily. And as for issues of comfort, no enclosed structures to shelter you from the elements, no memory foam mattresses, or comfy chairs with Shiatsu

Massage and Bluetooth Connectivity. And *NO morning coffee!* And who knows if or how they wiped their asses.

The list goes on. And the fact early humans busied themselves inventing all the modern conveniences most of us humans currently enjoy, suggests at least someone wasn't satisfied with the prevailing animal status-quo.

And all these cool modern contrivances *do* tend to make life more comfortable, and generally more convenient. But, are we really happier, as a result? There certainly are a lot of miserable people, even in this relative comfort—just look at the prevalence of depression, the suicide rates, or talk to a Millennial [*rim-shot*].

I'm betting pre-agricultural humans were a lot more in charge of the quality, and direction of their lives, even if in a far more limited scope. I doubt there were any public indecency laws, or jail sentences for public urination. And, once relieved, they likely could go forage, and/or hunt, wherever, and whenever they wanted, with territorial boundaries probably being the only limitation.

But, as history shows, early humans rarely settled for the bare-naked life of an animal. They, repeatedly, build civilizations, and structures of being, and governments to enforce those structures of being. But, it's all artificial. And, the more complex these structures become, the more artificial they are.

In the structure that shapes my lifestyle—the United States of America—many of the necessities of life are centralized, and under the power of a few. If supermarkets suddenly all closed, how would we eat<sup>1</sup>? When the power grid fails, it quickly becomes a local, and even national

---

<sup>1</sup> Most practicing Mormons would be able to hold out for a year, or two.

emergency. When the gas pumps run dry, or don't work because of a lack of electricity<sup>1</sup>, it's yet another emergency. Our water comes to us through pipes, which can break. And if you use natural gas for cooking and/or heating, there's yet another vulnerability.

Most of us depend on these precarious structures. Unless you're "off the grid", you're probably a disaster away from hoping FEMA comes to the rescue. But, all of that is *artificial*. These structures we all accept and depend on, are "man" made. And are sustained by a great deal of energy input, and a modicum of luck.

For example: The modern world is HIGHLY dependent on the satellites that orbit our world (probably way more than you realize). And, these satellites are all vulnerable to extreme solar activity. World communication, GPS, meteorological data, and more subtly, important timing signals would be lost if something happened to them. Such a loss would begin a cascade of breakdowns in many of the services we rely on in our daily lives, including Internet, air traffic, ocean traffic, and breakdowns in Global business that would, among other things, affect food supply. The world is, so far, lucky the perfect "solar" storm has yet to occur, but it's a definite possibility, and has happened before. There just wasn't an infrastructure, yet, so vulnerable to this. Follow this link for an article titled "What would happen if all satellites stopped working?" that covers this in depth:

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web20](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web20)

---

<sup>1</sup> As of this writing, in the wake of Hurricane Ida, many are still without power, causing gas lines, according to an NPR report I listened to, with wait times as long as seven hours! Why were people willing to wait in line that long? They needed gas for generators, to supply electricity, for example, to run air conditioners to keep elderly relatives from dying in the horrible heat that followed the storm. Why were the lines so long? Because, only a few of the gas stations in the area have their own generators needed to run the pumps.



*"I owe, I owe, so off to work I go!"*

~Bumper Sticker

Not too long ago, people were, as a rule, more self-sufficient. They had their own livestock, and grew much of their own food, or relied on local farms, and each other, to fill out their culinary needs. They, also, weren't reliant on electricity or gasoline, and got around on foot, or on horseback, and entertained themselves, and each other. Family members were less likely to move so far away<sup>1</sup> from each other, thus less of a need to go traipsing around the globe.

The bulk of modern humanity traded self sufficiency for "glamorous" lives in the *big city*. They traded a chunk of their personal time, for a paycheck, and for a credit score that provided the leverage needed to feather a superior nest, full of luxury (or at least the semblance, thereof) and shiny things.

But, again, all of that is artificial.

*There is no salvation for us but to adopt Civilization  
and lift ourselves down to its level.*

~Mark Twain

As I'm writing this, I'm struggling with this concept. I'm so ensconced in this lifestyle it's hard for me to think of it as arbitrary, or even superfluous. But it is. And, it's also excessive, in that it's not even, really, required for life. Well...for *my* life it's largely required, because I'm a somewhat flabby, out of shape, old guy, very much set in his ways, and

<sup>1</sup> Lyric from a favorite *Carole King* song.

devoid of much of the knowledge and experience needed to subsist off the grid. For instance, I've never hunted, or even used a rifle.

Also, one could argue our modern lifestyle is required for *tolerable* life, and even *length* of life, and very arguably, for *comfort* of life. But, for the *possibility* of life—even if it's short, miserable and limited?... Not really *necessary*.

I'm not deprecating modern life. It's pretty keen. But, it carries a price tag most are in denial of. Modern life is amassing a debt that each generation, so far, has, largely, passed down to the next generation. I mean, how long can we bury our garbage, or eviscerate forests and jungles, or dump pesticides and artificial fertilizers on the land, or dump excess CO<sub>2</sub>, Methane, and other greenhouse gasses into our atmosphere, or pollute the ground water with the effuse of industry, and drug laced piss? Those are examples of the debt we're leaving our children.

Given free reign, most will satisfy their appetites, with little or no thought of the long term consequences, whether due to ignorance, denial, or something more sinister, or slovenly.

When I was a teenager, our family spent a week camping in the California Sequoias. Every night, the bears showed up looking for human food. The rangers warned us to properly store our food, so the scent didn't reach the noses of these camp crashers<sup>1</sup>.

It was, and still is, a problem, because human food is so much more tasty than the "crap" found in the *forest*. Once they get their first sample of human food, with all that high-fructose corn syrup, salt and trans-fats, bears lose their taste for *natural* food.

While we were there, the bears made a mess of several camps, with one

---

<sup>1</sup> Sorry, Boo Boo, but Yogi Bear was far less than "above average".

incident being easy to predict, due to the telltale, and flagrant lack of clean up after meals we saw when walking around the campground.

We humans, being the animals we are, and having easy access to such delights, are prone to abuse this privilege to the effect of making a mess of the world. We need to be our own animal trainers! But, our circuitry is in defiance of that logic.

Is this “happiness”? It feels good. It’s fun. But, is it *really* happiness? Or, just gluttonous contentment. Aren’t we spoiled—just like those picnic plundering bears?

When I was a young adult, a college health class of mine featured a rather lovely female<sup>1</sup> classmate. My lust for her was the impetus for a conversation that didn’t go in the direction I wanted, but it did provide something I absolutely needed.

As a youngster, my brothers and I had free access to C&H granulated cane sugar. It sat in an open bowl on the breakfast table, within easy reach even of our gimpy, child length arms. Parked in the sugar was a teaspoon used by us to dump piles of the crystalline sweetness on our already sugary breakfast cereal [I’m talking Captain Crunch, here!], and the goal, for me, was to have undissolved sugar grains in my remaining cereal milk!

Yes, I had a sweet tooth. I loved candy, too. Reese’s Peanut Butter Cups, Butter Fingers, and Mars Bars were my favorites. So, giving that up was unthinkable. At least until this lovely young lady told me of her own sugar *addiction* [the term she used], and how getting off sugar made a world of difference in her life, in how she felt in her life, and in the energy levels she had access to for living her life. Plus, she said, she

---

<sup>1</sup> Actually, she was off the charts, supermodel beautiful!

became far less likely to come down with that prevailing cold or flu. So, I gave it a try.

It was HARD!! And I fell off the sugar-free wagon numerous times before I finally reached a crucial threshold. After a month, or two, void of sugar, I noticed I didn't miss it! Which was a prediction of her's that I doubted, at the time.

It turns out, as much as I thought I *needed* sweet things in my life, I *didn't*. Maybe the same is true for all these modern conveniences. Do we need our attachments to things? And though many of the things in our life follow form—after all, *necessity is the mother of invention*—isn't the existence of one, or another *thing*, arbitrary? Weren't humans capable of surviving without them, and if so, were they really *necessary*? Desired, maybe—Ronco built an empire on a desire for contraptions.

*"Our need will be the real creator"*

~Plato

We only have phones because Mr. Bell<sup>1</sup> invented them. We only have radio and TV because scientists and inventors such as Tesla, Hertz, Maxwell, Lodge, Bose, Fessenden, Farnsworth, Baird, and Jenkins, made it a reality. And all those Ronco kitchen appliances wouldn't be filling your gadget drawer, if Ronco hadn't produced them. Pizza? Well, that might be an exception!

Goualougo chimpanzees use sticks they specially modify to fish termites out of the nests they build above ground. I'm not sure if these chimps

<sup>1</sup> Or, actually, he was supposedly the first to secure a patent, but others were instrumental in its development. Such as Antonio Meucci. Some researchers suggest that a man named Elisha Gray applied for a caveat for his telephone design the same day Bell applied for his patent. But, the history of the telephone is rife with controversy.

are happy about that, but I can imagine early humans being quite giddy using such a device—especially if termites are tasty [I wouldn't know]. I can also imagine this as the first “thing” we humans coveted<sup>1</sup>.

Happy with our trusty termite tweezers? Happy without? Was there happiness before the first tool?

The point I'm trying to make is this: if it's modern conveniences that are “making” you happy, then what you're feeling may not be *actual* happiness. Actual happiness occurs despite such things. And, in fact, this is in line with the theme of this book—that actual happiness doesn't need a *reason*.

And, even an old, pudgy, sedentary person such as myself, if pushed out into nature by a partial or even complete collapse of the modern status-quo, could likely adapt emotionally. Especially if that person knew how to take *raw happiness* with them on the way out.

---

<sup>1</sup> Or the femur club featured in the movie *2001 A Space Odyssey*?

## Before Our Minds Were Corrupted

"What does baby say?"

~Jareth — played by David Bowie in the movie *Labyrinth*

Babies seem to have no worries about anything. A baby just gleefully charges towards whatever tickles their fancy, often to the utter horror of some frantic guardian. It isn't until the fire burns, or their hand gets slapped away, or the worried expression on mom's face is etched into their psyche, that a youngster begins to learn *caution*.

We seem to come into the world more in line with the attitude of the Universe: *charge down the time-line without a care*. Few of us, however, take that attitude with us into adulthood. We acquire a neurosis or two along the way—and small wonder with all the needs, desires and threats that impinge on us throughout life.

During those fleeting times when our needs are met, and our desires sated, we're happy. But, is it possible to be happy all those other times—when the chips are down, when nothing is going our way, when we're on the outs with our tribe, or placed on some familial shit-list, and especially in those times we can't bear the pain, be it physical or emotional?

Sally: I love old things. They make me sad.

Kathy: What's good about 'sad'?

Sally: It's happy for deep people.

~Dr. Who—Blink

Or, how about when the Jones' acquire a bigger, better SUV, or invite us over to show off their new, ∞K<sup>1</sup> home theater system with delirious hyper sonic, Dolby Atmos, with eye smacking, surrealistic video resolution, all playing on a screen as tall and wide as Mount Rushmore such that the presidential stone carvings come through *actual size*<sup>2</sup>?!?

Is it possible to maintain happiness while ensconced in envy, or after our lust is thwarted, or before our obsessions are slaked? A baby would simply cry it out, then, look for something else to put in its mouth.

Without that ambient attitude of the *Universe*—that come-what-may, throw caution to the wind, damn the torpedoes full speed ahead, creation at all costs, way of being, you probably won't experience lasting happiness, or even *true* happiness. Am I advising you to be reckless—to risk harm, or even chance the grisly doom of death?

The truth is, *it's up to you*. The Universe doesn't recognize *doom*. The chemicals that make up your body have no concept of *doom*. "Doom" is an invention of *life*. Life is moored to *configuration*. Mess with configuration, and you threaten the *continuance of life*, or the *continuance*

<sup>1</sup> As of this writing, the status-quo for Video Resolution bluster is 4K [the industry wanted it to be 3D, but that kinda fizzled]. By the time you read this, it might be 8K or 16K or a cranial implant. So, I'm generalizing by calling it "infinity K".

<sup>2</sup> Douglas Adams pokes fun at the absurdity of escalation of scale for the mere purpose of increasing one's *frood-cred*, in his book: *The Restaurant At The End Of The Universe*. The Disaster Area plutonium rock band whose music is the loudest noise of any kind, and involves the demolition of whole moons. These concerts are best experienced in a concrete bunker, some thirty-seven miles from the stage.

*of comfort and/or contentment.* Remember: To the matter that composes you, *nothing matters!*

Life is built on a complex organization of chemistry, with intricate structures that must maintain a certain amount of integrity for it all to continue functioning. In other words, the body-machine needs a particular configuration to properly function; this is what makes it vulnerable. Some of the structures are more vulnerable than others. A broken toe is far less of an issue than a bullet to the brain. Though, most of these structures are wired to pain sensors, thus pretty much any tampering with configuration that doesn't kill you, is a miserable thing.

Just go outside and look up. Actually it helps to have a powerful telescope, and a science degree or two, but if we allow the doctorates to inform our observations, we get a picture of a constantly changing Universe, constantly creating and destroying, with no apparent remorse, concern or even glee.

If there *is* a God, I imagine *It* would be like I was as a young boy, joyfully playing in the mud, making little mud bricks and using them to build little mud houses, populating them with little stone people, and then rising up in cataclysmic roars of destructive delight, to stomp it all into the dust it came from.

The key, then, to real happiness? Relate to the maker and not the made. But to do that, you must see the world existing beyond the simulacrum of reality accessed by your five senses.

But, what keeps us from that ultimate perspective?

It must take a toll on a young mind, learning over and over that things are not as they thought them to be. It's no wonder we develop a callus attitude towards it all. Do you remember when in *your* little mind, you





## The World Beyond Your Perception

*"I see nobody on the road," said Alice.  
"I only wish I had such eyes," the King remarked in a fretful tone.  
"To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance, too!  
Why, it's as much as I can do to see real people, by this light!"*  
~ Lewis Carroll—*Through The Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*

And now for a little physics!

I'm going to ask you to be brave, and take a little journey into the complex, and perhaps daunting world of science. Why? To destroy any lingering shred of confidence you might have in your ability to perceive *reality*.

Think of this little excursion into academia as a white water rafting adventure down the Colorado River. The ride is intense, and as you rush over the churning water, fleeting mysteries, such as spooky shapes and eerie lights, may flash in your periphery, but if you can hold on, and ride the roll, you might reach clarity, and even experience an AH-HA! or two.

Radio waves are a good place to start. You're aware they're all around you, right? Most places in this modern world are saturated with human sourced radio waves—if from no other source than satellites orbiting the planet: GPS, Satellite Cell Phone Service, Direct TV, Internet from above, etc. Then there's weather radar, cell towers, radio and TV broadcasts, and any device you're carrying around that does WiFi or

Bluetooth—to name a few. That’s in addition to all of what nature produces. Radio waves you can’t see, or sense in any way<sup>1</sup>. So, how do you *know* they’re there? You could turn on a portable radio and gesture toward the sound emanating from the speaker and say,

“See, Steve... *radio waves!*”

But aren’t you still taking it on *faith* that the sound is actually *coming from radio waves*, and not, say, *a miniature band living inside the radio*?

OK, I realize that’s silly—who ever heard of a band on-call 24/7?!? – *rim-shot!*

When you point your remote at the TV and punch the buttons, doesn’t the TV respond? Yet, you see nothing traveling between the remote, and the TV<sup>2</sup>. Is the TV psychic?!? Is there magic afoot?!

*“Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic”*

~Arthur C. Clarke

If you worked your remote in the vicinity of a scientist or engineer [assuming you, yourself, are not privy to the technology], he/she might tell you about the *Infrared* radiation flashing from that remote, beaming information to the TV regarding the designation of the buttons you’re pushing<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Unless those radio waves are very intense. Back in my Ham Radio days, I had my hand behind my Morse-code Transmitter, and started feeling a curious burning sensation to the very core of said hand. Radio waves of high enough intensity can be felt—mainly because of their ability to burn tissue from the inside out! But, the point is, most radio waves, in your daily life, are benign and beyond your senses.

<sup>2</sup> Unless you’re super-human, or not human at all!

<sup>3</sup> Unless, of course, it’s like certain Roku remotes. Some Roku remotes use radio (RF) to convey that information.

Once again, if you believe this guy or gal, it's on *faith*. And, even if you're the one schooled in all of this, I submit to you it's still a matter of *faith*<sup>1</sup>. After all, didn't you, at some point, get this information from somewhere else? A teacher? A book? A YouTube video? A cosmic download<sup>2</sup>?

When you were first infused with this *knowledge*—what compelled you to accept it as *fact*?

*Well, Steve—why should I believe you right now?!? Maybe you're pulling all this out of your...*

Exactly! Maybe I am full of *shit*. And, in fact, maybe all of science is a bunch of baloney. It's absolutely possible the centuries old line of inquiry into the nature of things that bang about in this universe of ours, is based on a series of errors, and flawed assumptions. It's not *likely*—scientists do a pretty darn thorough job of testing their hypotheses<sup>3</sup>, and ensuring the foundations underlying new science are quite solid. But, *always* be willing to question *everything*! The stuff I'm sharing here, though, is current scientific acceptance, which is backed by a significant degree of rigor. So, even if it's all a bunch of bullshit, it's the prevailing bullshit—bullshit that, so far, is credible enough to produce a world of working technology, and engineering achievements nonpareil in known human history, or natural history. In other words, the mere fact that the science I will be sharing here, has been used, over and over, to make 100% accurate predictions about how stuff in the natural world will behave, I think it's pretty safe to put some faith in its veracity. So, from

<sup>1</sup> Unless you're an enigma, like Tesla (No! Not Marconi! Nor even Edison!).

<sup>2</sup> *Tesla* comes to mind here, too.

<sup>3</sup> No, not theories. It's not a theory until tested by well designed experiments that stand up to the scrutiny of other scientists [*peer review*], all with much redundancy [*reproduction of results*]. In other words, the usual sort of rigor that goes into scientific acceptance.

that I shall proceed.

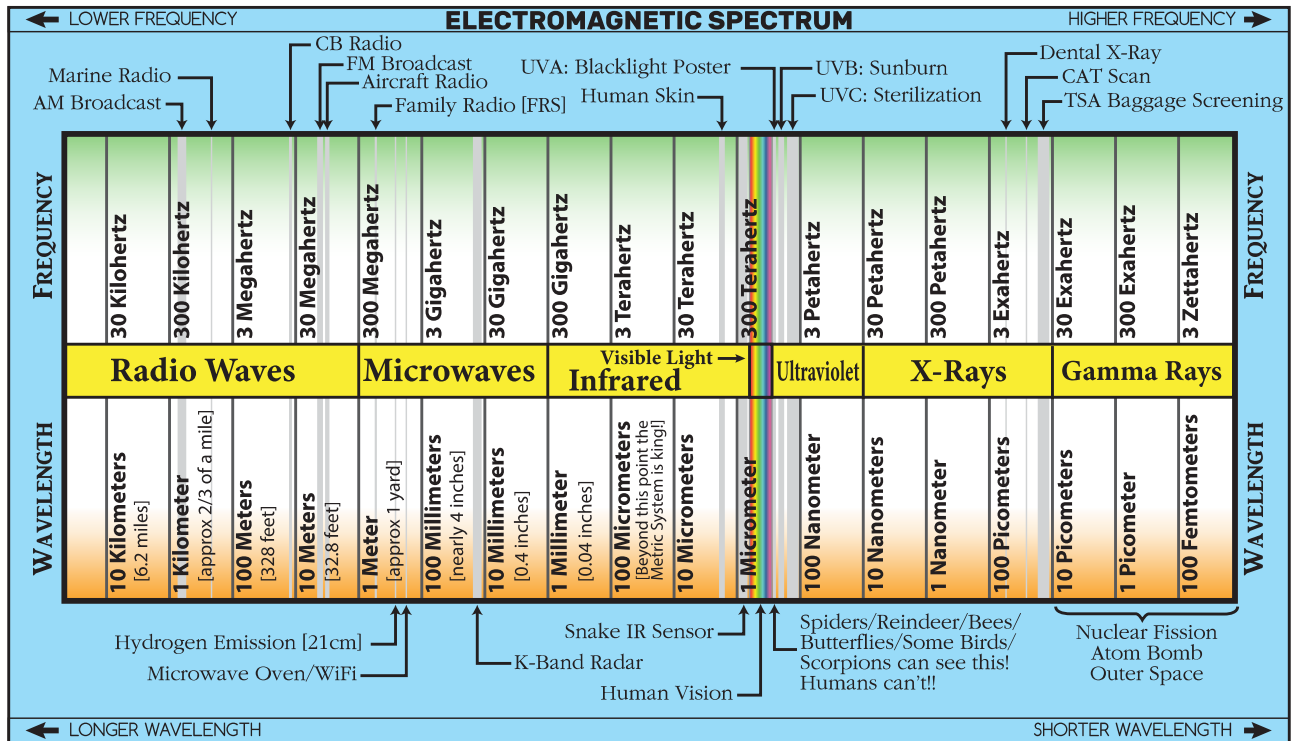
Science tells us, for the typical remote, that stuff invisibly conveying information to your TV, about what buttons you're pressing, is a form of light called "Infrared". And, it turns out, infrared is *similar* to radio waves—each is a form of *electromagnetic energy*. A whole range of electromagnetic frequencies exists, and most are *INVISIBLE* to the eye! In fact, much of what occurs in the Universe escapes human vision, and is beyond *any other* human sense organ as well—though Infrared can be felt by the skin as *warmth* if the rays are intense enough<sup>1</sup>.

In other words, *Radio* and *Infrared* are different *frequency ranges* on what is called the *Electromagnetic Spectrum*. Light, that stuff you *see* with your eyes, is also a form of *Electromagnetic energy*—but the range of frequencies called *visible light* are a mere, minuscule sliver of all the other electromagnetic frequencies flying around our Universe.

---

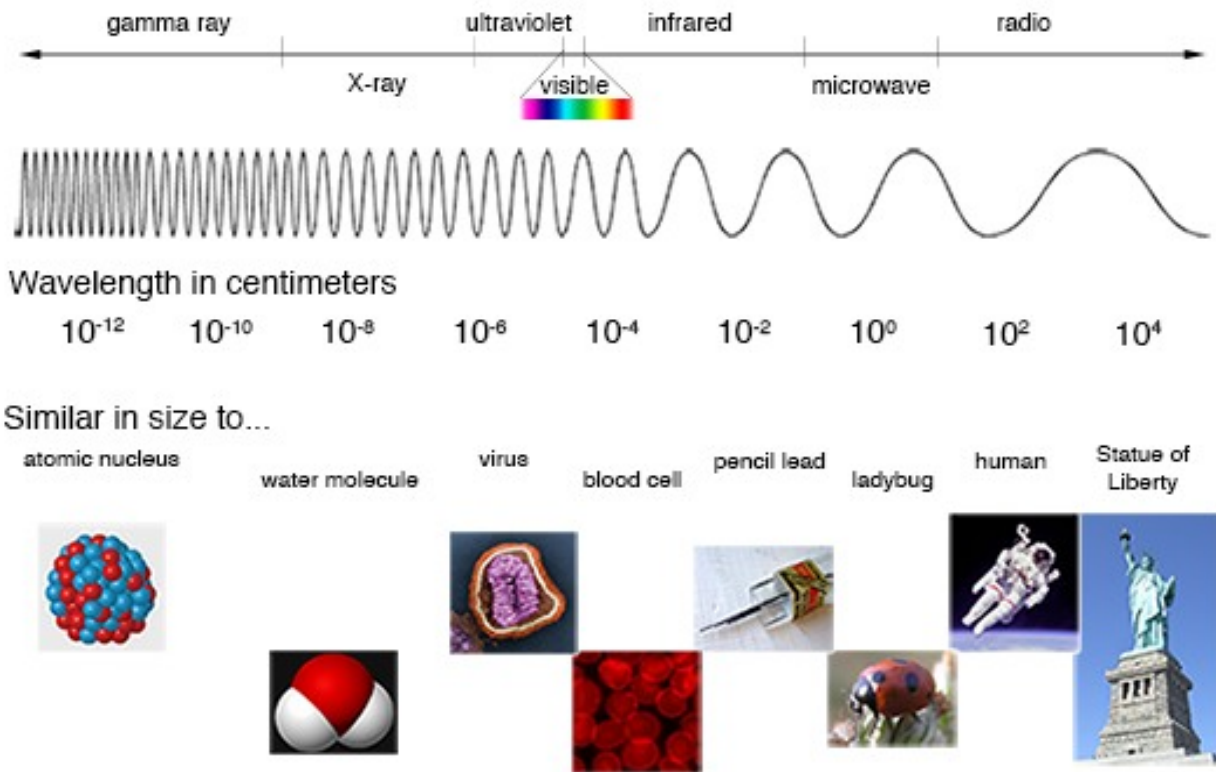
<sup>1</sup>i.e. more intense than produced by the typical TV remote. But, a *radiant heater* can do it! In fact, that's what it's designed to do: *Produce copious amounts of infrared radiation to make you feel all warm and toasty!*

Yeah...you think you see the world with those little eyes of yours? Not even close. Take a look at the following diagram.



That little slip of rainbow labeled “Visible Light”? That’s all we humans can see! All the other stuff is what we *don't see*. A whole whopping bunch of stuff going on that we don't even notice!! In fact, humans DON'T see *most* of what's going on in the world!

Here's another diagram, from NASA's [Imagine the Universe website](https://imagine.gsfc.nasa.gov) [<https://imagine.gsfc.nasa.gov>]. It relates wavelength to the size of actual things [it's reversed from the one I made, with frequencies increasing to the left]:



If you compare the percentage of the visible light spectrum to the colossal span of wavelengths that a “sighted” person can't see, the supposedly non-blind are nearly as blind as the actually blind.

And, what about space aliens in our galaxy? What range of electromagnetic wavelengths might be their “visible range”? If you consider that yellow suns like ours are less common, and 70-80% more common are Red Dwarf stars, then lifeforms on the planets orbiting most of the suns in our galaxy will have larger eyes that are attuned to lower frequencies of light. For us, the shortest wavelength of light we see is violet.



For them, their “violet” might be more like our “red”, and their “red” would likely extend down into the infrared spectrum, far below what we humans can perceive. Maybe that’s why most space aliens avoid Earth—it’s too damn bright, here! If they ever do visit, I would expect them to be wearing sunglasses!

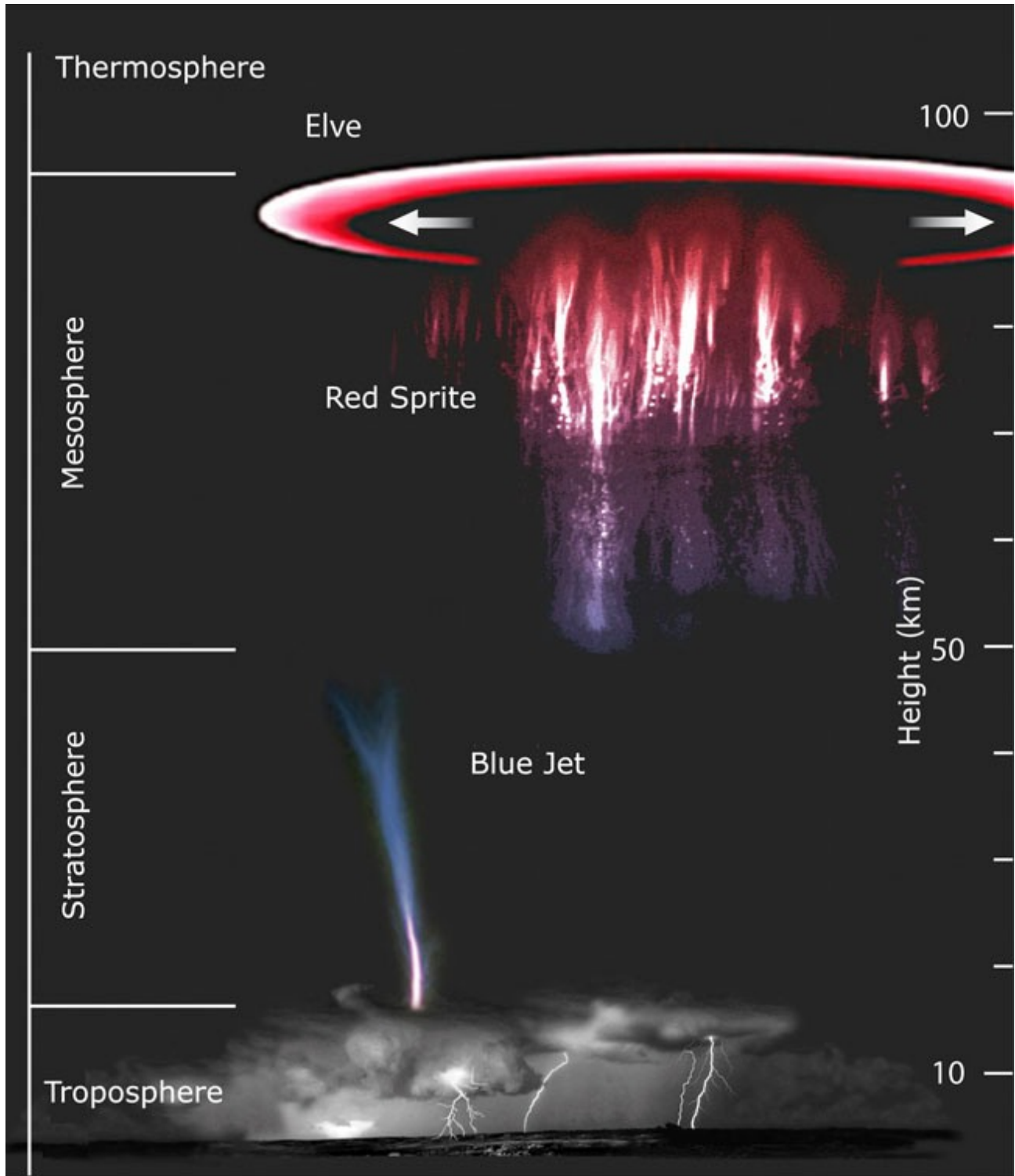
If you could see all of the electromagnetic energy that is all around us, your WiFi would flash through the walls and light up the whole house. Bluetooth would do the same. You would see just how much energy leaks out of your microwave oven, and if you open the door while it’s still running, you’d see a bright flash. The night sky would be far brighter, full of glowing satellites, and all that other “light” that radiates off of stars, which means the Milky Way wouldn’t be so milky, but more like a bright, colorful cloud. Plus, everything would be glowing with the “light” of shorter wavelength radio broadcasts like FM radio, Digital TV, Cell Phone tower radiation, etc. And, as radio wavelengths get longer, they’re more able to penetrate things, which would make everything translucent. Plus, metals would shine in strange ways due to radio energy. You would also see the heat radiating off of everything, and you



could tell how hot or cold everything is based on their “color” (colors we’ve never seen before!). The moon would be a whole different kind of “white”, since you would see ALL of the solar energy it reflects. Night wouldn’t be so dark anymore, and day would be FAR brighter. When people walked out into the sunlight, they would change color as they warmed up (again, these would be colors we’ve never seen before), and everyone’s color would be somewhat seasonal, due to the changes in the ambient air temperature. This would vastly alter cosmetics and fashion. Also, you would be able to see warm-blooded animals at night.

This would make lightning far more spectacular, too. A lightning bolt flashes across most of the Electromagnetic spectrum! All the way from **Radio** [right-hand side of the above diagram] to **X-Ray** [left-hand side of the diagram]—and, even, occasionally all the way to *Gamma Rays* [the scary, deadly stuff making it difficult for even robots to approach the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster!! No worries, though, the gamma ray flash is so brief, and weak, it poses little danger.] In fact, if you could see all of these frequencies, a thunderstorm would be more like a *monster fireworks display* lighting up whole cities, and even whole states, and beyond. A lightning flash even, on occasion, shoots energy *high above the Earth!*

The Troposphere, that portion of the atmosphere from ground level to between 8 and 14.5 kilometers (5 and 9 miles) high, is the domain of fog, most clouds, smoke, fire, etc., and contains the air we breathe. The Troposphere is also where common lightning happens and where thunder clouds build. Above the Troposphere, way beyond the tops of the clouds that make it happen, a lightning strike can become such a phenomenal display that common lightning is reduced to something no more impressive than the carpet sparks you might have annoyed your siblings with.



Lightning in all it's forms.

Frankie Lucena, in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico captured what is called a Jet Plasma Event or Red Sprite, triggered by lightning. Here's a link to his animated photo:



[Impressive Gigantic Jet Plasma Event](https://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web21)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web21](https://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web21)

And, here's a YouTube video, from the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, offering an impression<sup>1</sup> of what this might look like:



[How Scientists Watch Thunder Storms](https://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid03)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid03](https://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid03)

The next time you're near an AM radio while in the vicinity of an electrical storm, turn it on and tune it to a frequency with

<sup>1</sup> I couldn't find a video that does this justice! But, this one is the best of what I found.

*no broadcast*—i.e. one of those places on the dial<sup>1</sup> where all you hear is *static* or *hiss*. This works best if you can listen to the radio while watching the flashes produced by the lightning<sup>2</sup>.

On the next visible strike, you will hear a corresponding *crackling sound* on the radio. That's firm evidence of the blaze of lightning at *radio frequencies*! And, as will be explored, later, the frequencies on the AM radio dial are many orders of magnitude lower than those visible to the eye!

So, what is *Electromagnetic Energy*? And what, exactly, is a *Frequency*?

This lovely lady gives a bang up explanation:



[\*Electromagnetic Spectrum by Rocketboom\*](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid18](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid18)

These two things, *Electromagnetic Energy* and *Frequency*, are fundamental to the very fabric of **all things**. So, if you can bear with me, I would like to take you on a brief journey into the world of these two physical concepts, along with **Simple Harmonic Motion**—for no particular reason other than it's a deeper jaunt into the basic nature of things, providing even more evidence of how amazing the world beyond common understanding is. I promise it won't be *too terrible*—

<sup>1</sup> Dials on radios are going the way of the *dial* on a phone, or that lingering white spot on those old tube style TVs.

<sup>2</sup> A hard-top car [not a convertible!] is a great place to do this. The metal frame is excellent protection from the lightning, and most cars have an AM radio [and, of course, windows].

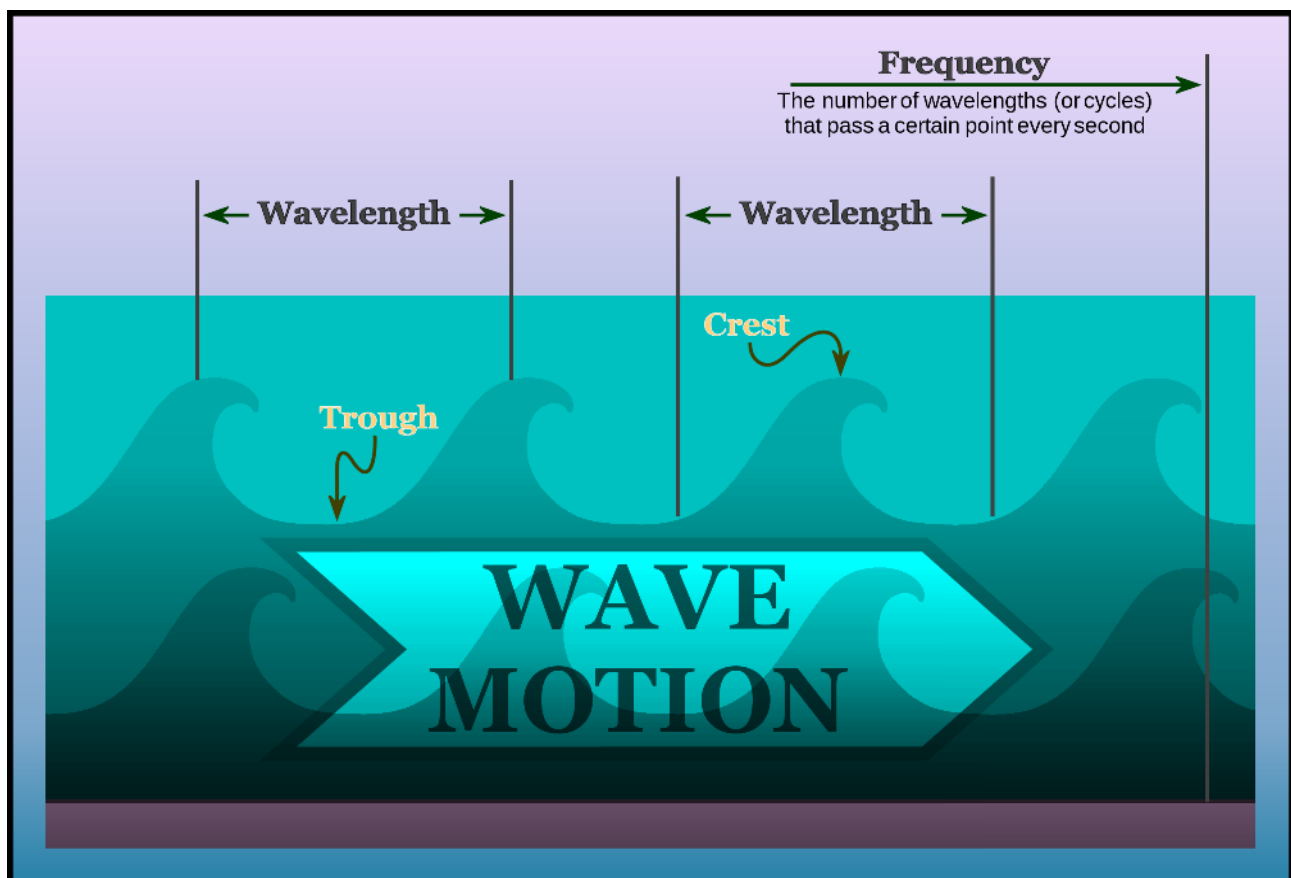
and, in fact, I hope to introduce you to a world of fascination and wonder that might even be fun! With any luck, you'll come away from this with an appreciation for Science Nerds and why they're so into this stuff!

As before, I'll do it in a different font, so you can easily skip over it if you're absolutely too terrified, or too disinterested to go there.

## - ----=<• The Particulars of Periodic Motion •>====- -

The meaning of *Frequency*, is what it sounds like – how *frequent* is the passage of *things* past a *particular point*. For instance: *Waves*.

Think of waves in a giant aquarium – like you might see at Seaworld<sup>1</sup> after Shamu<sup>2</sup> splashes you. Imagine the agitation on the surface of the water as visible through



the aquarium glass. The shapes produced by the surface of the water against the glass are the cross section of *waves*.

The length of a wave can be measured from anywhere on that wave, to a similar

<sup>1</sup> Or, The **Monterey Bay Aquarium**, in *Calif.* – a favorite haunt of mine, even before **Star Trek IV!**

<sup>2</sup> For millennials, and beyond, Shamu was a captive Killer Whale, trained to do tricks, in a giant Aquarium, for the amusement of humans.

point on the next wave—like in the diagram above.

This measurement is called *the wavelength* – i.e. the length of *one wave* in a train of waves. And, the measure of *frequency* is a measure of how many lengths of a wave [how many wavelengths], pass a certain fixed point during a span of one second.

It's like water waves breaking on a seashore. When remnants of a broken wave are rolling up the sand, how far from the sandy foam to the next wave forming out at sea, is akin to the *wavelength*<sup>1</sup>. Probably an easier way to visualize this is to think of waves out at sea. The distance from one wave crest, to the next wave crest, is this measure called the “wavelength”.

And, how many waves break on the shore per second, is a measure of the *frequency*. Though, with ocean waves, rather than *seconds*, it might make more sense to clock the waves in terms of *minutes* or *hours*. For example: 3 waves per minute, or 246 waves per hour.

Or, how about the wag of a dog's tail? The number of wags per second is the *frequency* of the wag—i.e. how *frequently* does the dog wag her tail.

A scientist refers to each wave, rolling onto the shore [or each dog tail wag], as a *cycle*. And, in science lingo, *frequency* is a measure of: *cycles per second*.

For things like radio waves, light waves, and other forms of *electromagnetic energy*, frequencies are better referred to in terms of **thousands** of cycles per second, **millions** of cycles per second, **billions** of cycles per second, **trillions** of cycles per second, all the way up to **octillions** of cycles per second! And, since Scientists work with this stuff a lot, they came up with an easier way to say “cycles per second”:

**Hertz**<sup>2</sup> (abbreviated “Hz”).

---

<sup>1</sup> “Akin” because it's kinda hard to measure. Due to the lack of definition in waves breaking on a shoreline, its difficult to pick where in the foam to start measuring. But, hopefully this illustrates the concept of *wavelength*.

<sup>2</sup> On early radio dials, you might see the abbreviation “KC” or “MC”. The term “Hertz”, or “Hz”, didn't officially replace “C”, for “Cycles per Second”, until 1960—and by 1970, most radio manufacturers had switched over. Thus, “KC” (meaning *KiloCycles*) was replaced by “kHz” for *kiloHertz*, and “MC” for *MegaCycles*, became “MHz” for *MegaHertz*.

Named after *Heinrich Hertz*, one of the scientists who came up with this stuff, Hertz is a term you've probably already encountered: For instance, on a radio dial. **AM** (in the US) is **540 kHz** to **1600 kHz**. And on the **FM** dial: **88 MHz** to **108 MHz**.

**kHz** is an abbreviation for "kilohertz" – which means *thousands* of cycles-per-second – "kilo<sup>1</sup>" being a term meaning "times 1,000").

**MHz** stands for "Megahertz" or *Millions* of cycles-per-second – and "Mega" stands for "times 1,000,000").

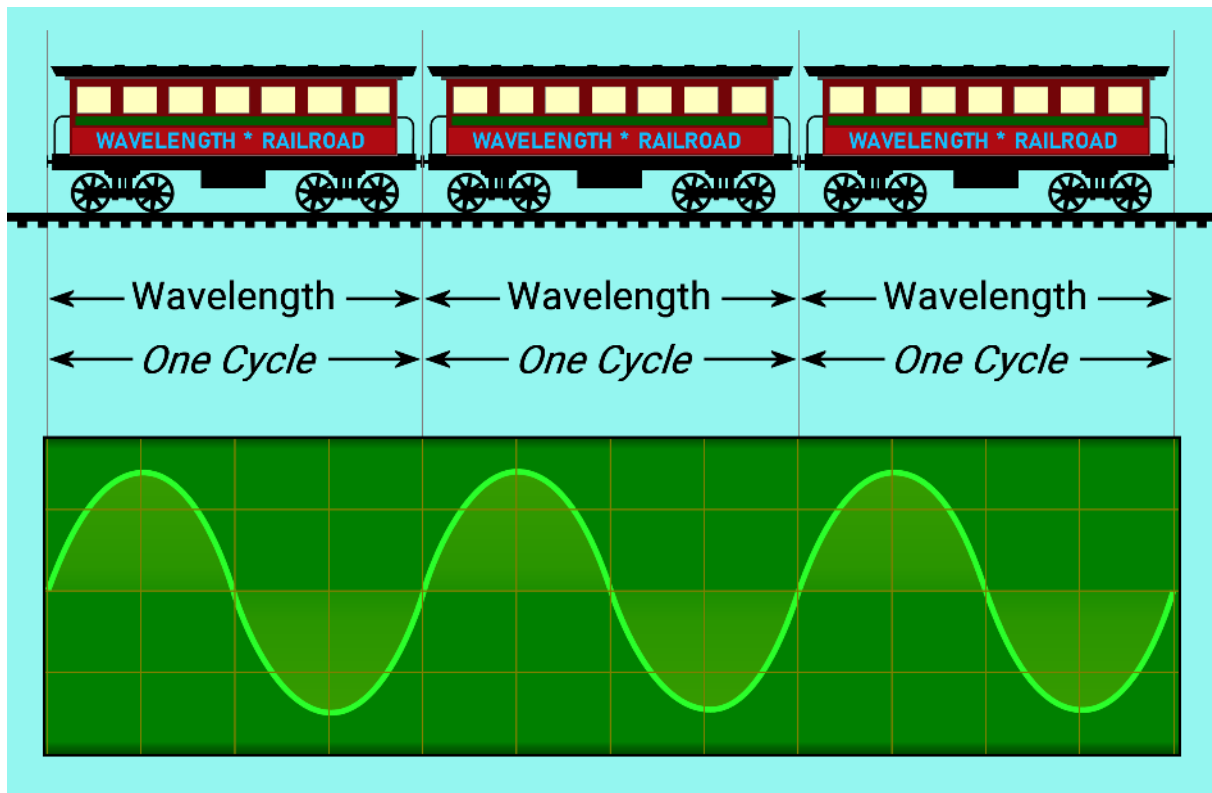
I know that's a lot of terminology in a short space of time, so I hope I didn't lose you. That was one of those informational *rapids* I warned you about, and here comes another—hold on to your water wings, and try to have fun!

The following diagram uses *train cars* in an attempt to nail down these concepts, and relate their motion to the next couple of concepts I want to share with you – the *Sine Wave* and *Simple Harmonic Motion*:

---

<sup>1</sup> Like the drug related kilo in the Movies. "Listen, Al, if I never see you again, I want you to know that I love you very much. I also buried 1,600 kilos of cocaine somewhere in the apartment – right next to the cure for blindness. Good luck." ~Deadpool (2016)





The idea, here, is that waves move on by like train cars, one car after another. Below the train cars, that bright green squiggle, is a very important shape in science known as the *Sine Wave*.

To comprehend the glory and splendor of a *sine wave*, it helps to understand *simple harmonic motion*. Simple Harmonic Motion [SHM] is happening all around you, and even within you—whether you see it happening, or not. Simple harmonic motion literally makes it possible for all things to exist!

A weight on the end of a spring, bobbing up and down; the swaying of a tree in the wind; the motion of a pendulum in a grandfather clock, the wag in the aforementioned dog's tail, all, plotted over time, form more, or less, the pattern of a *sine wave* [more or less because reality is dirty and noisy, thus things in nature are rarely pure, but many things come close, like the swing of a heavy pendulum].

Here's a link to a YouTube video, filmed at MIT, demonstrating this relationship: The

motion of a spray paint can on the end of a spring, draws the *Sine Wave pattern*:



### [The Spray Paint Oscillator](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid04](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid04)

The same motion can be seen in a child on a swing, or the fall and rise of a bungee jumper, or the swirling of air in a tornado, or the motions of the planets around the sun, or the paths of whole star systems around the massive black hole at the center of a Galaxy [including our Milky Way galaxy]. All of these movements can be classified as *Simple Harmonic Motion*.

And all of these motions can be related to a ubiquitous bit of math called the *Sine Function*<sup>1</sup> [or its kissing cousin, the *Cosine Function*].

Here's a link to a fun video showing ALL of these relationships – i.e. how something

<sup>1</sup> The Sine and Cosine functions [typically abbreviated “Sin” and “Cos”] are the foundation of a branch of math called “Trigonometry”. In case you're interested: Trigonometry [or “Trig” for short] is based on something called a “Right Triangle”--that's a triangle with one 90° angle [i.e. a *Right Angle* – which is where the word *Right* comes from in *Right Triangle*]. The two perpendicular lines that form the Right Angle, join with a diagonal line called the “Hypotenuse”, which is always the longest side of the triangle. Like this:

Pick an angle [often represented by the Greek letter theta:  $\theta$ ], other than the 90° angle, and the Sine is equal to the length of a triangle's side that is opposite the chosen angle, divided by the length of the Hypotenuse. So,

$$\mathbf{\sin(\theta) = \text{Opposite/Hypotenuse}}$$

The length of the side of the triangle adjacent to the angle, divided by the hypotenuse is called the Cosine:

$$\mathbf{\cos(\theta) = \text{Adjacent/Hypotenuse}}$$

And, there's a third, called the Tangent:

$$\mathbf{\tan(\theta) = \text{Opposite/Adjacent}}$$

That is Trigonometry in a nutshell. The rest is convenience and elaboration.

turning in a circle, is the same kind of motion as the pendulum on a clock, is the same kind of motion as something bobbing up and down on a spring:



### [Simple Harmonic Motion in All Its Forms](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid05](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid05)

And, if you want to get into more of the *nitty-gritty*, check out the next video, below. Yes, it gets kinda technical, but *Destin Sandlin*, creator of the *Smarter Everyday YouTube* video series, is warm and engaging, and seems to do a bang-

up job of making science and technology accessible<sup>1</sup> – or, at least making it *entertaining*. If you can slide past the technical stuff – more *white water rafting* – you have an excellent chance of getting your mind blown. And you may even come away with a deeper appreciation for this rudimentary building block of the universe – Simple Harmonic Motion – and how it’s fundamental to just about everything!

<sup>1</sup> It’s hard for me to tell, ‘cuz I’m already into this stuff. 😊



### [What is a Fourier Series?](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid11](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid11)

Essentially, depicted in that last video, is the connection between Sine Waves, and how the whole Universe is constructed!

And, check this out: Footage of plucked guitar strings, showing a natural occurrence of the *sine wave shape*<sup>1</sup>:



### [How Guitar Strings Wiggle When Plucked](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid06](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid06)

There's a direct relationship between *frequency* and *wavelength*. In fact, scientists and engineers interchange them all the time. And, here comes the only math in this segment [other than what I

assailed you with in the footnotes]:

$$\text{Frequency} = \text{Speed} / \text{Wavelength}$$

Scientists do a lot of writing on chalkboards, so they don't like spelling things out.

<sup>1</sup> And, sometimes a slightly more complex wave, called a *sawtooth* wave. Such a wave is actually a summation of multiple sine waves. In fact, all *waveforms* are made of one or more *sine waves*! In fact, that's what the Fourier Series is all about – breaking complex vibratory motion down into the fundamental sine waves that produce that motion. Which is another way of saying *the fundamental harmonic motions that sum together to produce the more complex motion*.

Instead, they use *symbols*. For these symbols, they draw heavily on the *Greek Alphabet*. And, scientists, around the world, have agreed on certain symbols to mean certain things. For instance:

- The lowercase Greek letter **lambda** “**λ**” is used for *Wavelength*
- For *frequency* they just use ‘**f**’
- For the *velocity* of the wave they use ‘**v**’ [don’t worry, there will be more Greek letters later]

So, the way a scientist would write the above formula is:

$$v = f / \lambda$$

FAR more compact!

The implication of this little formula is simple: As the *frequency* increases, *waves get shorter* in length. And, as the *frequency* goes lower, *the wavelength gets longer*. Soon, I hope to make this a LOT clearer! But first:

If the concepts of *higher-frequency*, and/or *lower-frequency* are foreign to you, then think of it like this. Different notes, on the musical scale, have different *frequencies* [like I said, this stuff shows up *everywhere*]. When someone sings a high note, they’re producing a *high frequency*. A Bass note is a *low frequency*. And the iconic *opera singer breaking a wine glass with her voice*? That’s a *really high frequency* tone [aka a *high pitch*]!

Let’s have some fun with this by playing with radio waves:

But, first, more Greek! When the math is for things like Radio Waves (a form of *Electromagnetic Energy*), scientists like to use the lowercase Greek letter **nu** “**ν**”<sup>1</sup> for *Frequency*.

---

<sup>1</sup>Looks like a ‘v’, but it’s not! A favorite math teacher, of mine, quipped that learning to draw these symbols is a required course for any Math degree. Not sure if that’s true, but his penmanship [chalkmanship?] was impeccable.

**KLAC** at **AM 570** is a well known sports radio station in Los Angeles<sup>1</sup>. That's a frequency of **570 kHz** [or 570,000 Cycles/Second].

Now, it's time to introduce another symbol scientists like to use: "**c**" -- for the *speed of light*. They use "**c**" instead of "**v**", because "**c**" is a particular speed that comes up over and over in science, so instead of writing the actual quantity, they just write "**c**" and everybody knows it means the speed of light. In *miles per second* **c = 186,282**. An abbreviation for miles per second is: **Mps**. If we whip a little *algebra* on the equation<sup>2</sup>, we can turn it into:

$$\lambda = c/v$$

Aka: The **wavelength = the speed of light / the frequency**

And, using this new form, we can compute the length of these radio-waves:

$$\lambda = c/v = 186,282 \text{ Mps} / 570 \text{ kHz} = \underline{0.326 \text{ Miles}^3!}$$

Or, around a third of a mile! Meaning: The length of a typical radio wave, tuned by an **AM radio**, is on the order of 5 *football fields* long!

Also in Los Angeles, on the **FM band**, is **KLOS**, a well known rock station at a frequency of **95.5 MHz** (or 95,500,000 cycles per second). This is a much higher frequency, so what does that tell you about the wavelength? Let's *do the math*, and see:

$$\lambda = 186,282 \text{ Mps} / 95.5 \text{ MHz} = \underline{10.3 \text{ feet!}}$$

Huge difference! The Wavelength is *much* smaller. So, as frequency goes up ↑...wavelength goes down ↓. In other words, *higher frequencies have shorter wavelengths*, and *lower frequencies have longer wavelengths*.

A good way of visualizing this is with organ pipes! The really *tall* pipes produce the really *low* notes—aka "*really low frequencies*". And the shorter pipes produce

<sup>1</sup> Because I grew up listening to L.A. area radio stations, that's why.

<sup>2</sup> "equation" is synonymous with "formula".

<sup>3</sup> I'm leaving out all the conversion math in these examples, because it looks ugly like this:

$$\lambda = 186,282 \text{ Mps} \times 5280 \text{ feet per mile} / 95.5 \text{ MHz} / 1,000,000 \text{ cycles per megacycle} = 10.299 \text{ feet}$$

the higher notes—aka, “*higher frequencies*”.

In fact, this is why a piccolo is so much smaller than a flute—it needs to be smaller to produce those shrill notes. The same reasoning explains the size differences between the violin, the cello, and the bass. Or the Trumpet and the Tuba.

What about **WiFi**? There are, actually (as of this writing) two WiFi frequency bands: **2.4 GHz<sup>1</sup>** and **5 GHz**, so let’s do both:

$$\lambda = 186,282 \text{ Mps} / 2.4 \text{ GHz} = \underline{4.9 \text{ Inches!}}$$

$$\lambda = 186,282 \text{ Mps} / 5 \text{ GHz} = \underline{2.4 \text{ Inches!}}$$

And, by the way, WiFi is in the region of radio waves referred to as *microwaves*. And, fun fact: This is *why* they’re called **microwaves**, because they’re so dang small—relatively speaking that is. I mean when you compare them to those **AM** waves, which are a *1/3 of a mile* long, *small* is an understatement!

And, another fun fact: your Microwave Oven is named after the “microwave” of radio lingo. Frequencies from 300 MHz to 30 GHz are in the “microwave” range. As you can see, the frequency **2.45 GHz** is near the middle of that range! It’s also very near the **2.4 GHz WiFi band<sup>2</sup>**. Why that particular frequency? Because it makes water wiggle! In fact, it makes it wiggle so fast, heat is generated, the very heat that does the cooking.

But, even microwave radio wavelengths are *huge* compared to *visible light*. The frequency of a beam of *red light* is around: 430 Terahertz – that’s **430 TRILLION cycles/second!** And, the wavelength?:

$$\lambda = 186,282 \text{ Mps} / 460 \text{ THz} = \underline{25.7 \text{ MILLIONTHS of an Inch!}}$$

<sup>1</sup> That’s Gigahertz, for billions of cycles per second! Fun Fact: In the movie Back To The Future, Dr. Emmett Brown (played by *Christopher Lloyd*) pronounced it “Jiga”, like *the jig is up*. “1.21 Jiga-watts” The correct pronunciation is with a “Golf” ‘G’ sound: Giga-watts.

<sup>2</sup> This gets a bit complicated because the range of frequencies are slightly different around the world, but the Microwave Oven frequency does overlap in all cases – between WiFi Channel 8 and Channel 9. So, if you, or one of your neighbors, has a leaky Microwave Oven, which can interfere with WiFi communication, and you can’t afford to get a new one oven, you can get around this, by setting your Router to Channel 1 [but, really, you should get a new microwave oven—before you *cook your brains!*]

Now we're getting down to the size of *bacteria*!!

Dental X-Rays? Based on some extensive Googling, it seems 36 ExaHertz [36 followed by 18 zeros!] is in the ballpark<sup>1</sup>.

$$\lambda = 186,282 \text{ Mps} / 36 \text{ EHz} = \underline{\underline{330 \text{ TRILLIONTHS of an Inch!}}}$$

That's smaller than the average *atom*!

Those are some crazy numbers!!

So, I'm sure, by now, you get the picture: Higher *frequency*, smaller *wavelength*. Another thing that little formula (or *equation*):

$$v = c/\lambda$$

tells us: Since the speed of light, '**c**', is always the same, it makes no difference, really, whether we refer to the *frequency*, or the *wavelength*. Both give us all the information we need—because, knowing that the speed is never going to change [referred to as *constant speed*, by scientists], we can always use that little formula to get one from the other. And, like I said before, for electromagnetic waves, this constant speed is the **speed of light**!

Applying some algebra to this formula, we can convert, back and forth, between the *frequency* and the *wavelength*.

$$v = c/\lambda \quad \text{gives us the } \textit{frequency}, \text{ when we only have the } \textit{wavelength}$$

$$\lambda = c/v \quad \text{gives us the } \textit{wavelength}, \text{ when we only have the } \textit{frequency}$$

In fact, when Einstein was in his heyday: The brand new realization that the Universe enforces a *cosmic speed limit* – i.e. *the speed of light*<sup>2</sup> – led Einstein to postulate all manner of weirdness, such as that the passage of time is NOT a constant [of course we already knew that, right? I mean, try waiting for water to boil!].

This maximum speed, in a vacuum<sup>3</sup>, was measured to be around **299,792,458 meters**

<sup>1</sup> Yeah...I actually didn't know. And, it turned out to be difficult to find—even Google doesn't seem to know for sure!

<sup>2</sup> i.e. *nothing can go faster than the speed of light*!



**per second**<sup>1</sup>. Which is around **186,282 miles per second**... look familiar?

Here's the formula of Einstein fame:

$$E = mc^2$$

It's a formula expressing how much energy is required to form a bit of matter<sup>2</sup>.

**E** stands for *Energy*

**m** is for *mass*

**C** is the *speed of light*.

So, there you go: another place where the speed of light shows up.

Lets play with it:

If **C** is 299,792,458 meters per second, how much is that squared?!? This much!:

**89,875,517,873,681,764**

And when you plug it in to the famous formula:

$$E = mc^2$$

you get the Energy composing every little atom of your being—a number some 90 QUADRILLION times more than the trite number describing the mass of each little atom.

---

<sup>3</sup> Light takes longer to move through things like air, or glass, than it does through a vacuum, mainly because it's diverted from a direct path, as it leaps from one atom to another. And, fun fact, the amount of *slowing* has everything to do with frequency (i.e. color)--that's why a prism spreads light into a rainbow! Google "Light through a Prism" for more information than you probably ever wanted. ☺

<sup>1</sup> This is the value for the speed of light *agreed upon* by the General Conference of Weights And Measures in 1983, from a number of different measurements, done by different organizations. When measuring things like the speed of light, there will always be uncertainties. And, as science gets better at "scienceness", the accuracy of such measurements tends to improve. BTW: Scientists prefer the metric system.

<sup>2</sup>  $E = mc^2$  is actually a simplification of the more comprehensive formula:  $E^2 = p^2c^2 + m^2c^4$ .

If you were to take a mere gram of water and suddenly convert it into its equivalent energy, it would bang like:

# 21,500 Tons of TNT

And, let's say your body weight is 165 pounds. What if all of that matter in your body were to suddenly release all of its atomic energy?

# 1.67 BILLION tons of TNT

Is what!! That's slightly more than:

# *111 thousand 15 Megaton* Castle Bravo Nuclear Bombs!

In other words, the energy in your body, released all at once, in one colossal explosion, may not be enough to annihilate all life on the planet, but it would certainly and significantly ruin the day of everybody who survived, and the effects would be felt all over the planet, for years to come! And, leave one hell of a crater, to boot<sup>1</sup>!

This little light of mine!!

...

Welcome to Nerdom! Now you know a little physics!!

· · ----===<•:+:{☺}:+:•>====- - · ·

<sup>1</sup> It's important to note that a nuclear bomb is designed to be more vicious. The diabolical minds that design such bombs implement methods for directing the blast, focusing it to where it will be more destructive, and deadly. Whereas the sudden conversion of a human's mass into energy would blast in all directions, and thus, possibly, not be as destructive [according to *ChatGPT4*]. But, I don't know... 111 thousand times the yield of said bomb, sure seems like it would do a heck of a lot of damage!!

So, let's put this new knowledge to use and explore more of what you don't see going on all around you!

But, first, how about we scrutinize the very notion of *seeing*. Did you know the color of something, *isn't!* The supposed color of something is the color the thing rejects! For instance, you think a typical plant likes green? Try putting a philodendron in a room illuminated by nothing but green lamps. It will wither and die! Why? The reason the leaves look green is because green is the only color NOT absorbed by the leaf. What a leaf wants is *red* and *blue* light! Generally, blue helps the plant produce chlorophyll, while red induces flowers and fruit. A plant has no use for the color green. So, maybe, yes, a leaf is green, but that's the color it rejects! So, is that truly its color?!?

If you pass sunlight through a prism, out comes a rainbow of colors. When Isaac Newton first saw this, he realized the implication: That white sunlight is composed of an array of colors—a discovery laying the groundwork for understanding why things *have* color. For instance, why does a strawberry appear *red*, or an orange *orange*, or a blueberry *blue*<sup>1</sup>? When white light strikes an orange, most of its co-occurring colors are absorbed by the orange, except the color orange, which is reflected. So, is the orange really *orange*? The same with a strawberry—all but the color *red* is absorbed by the berry. We see *red*, because the berry rejects the color red, and sends it off to be seen by our eyes. So, is the strawberry really *red*? In reality, whatever color a thing appears to be, is the color it's trying not to be!

And now for all that stuff beyond the *typical*<sup>2</sup> human's visual range.

---

<sup>1</sup> Is it *blue* or is it *purple*? A blueberry has a hue appears blue, but it stains like a plum.

<sup>2</sup> Someone with aphakia [the lack of an eye lens, due to genetics or surgery] can see into the UV spectrum, but, being there is no lens, blurry vision and farsightedness is the result.

Snakes can vaguely see *Infrared* light. This is a frequency of light slightly below Red<sup>1</sup>—red being the lowest frequency most humans can see<sup>2</sup>. Snakes can see Infrared just well enough, when it's dark, to view the heat given off by a rodent—really handy when rodents are on the menu.

What is this “color”, a snake sees, yet we don't?

*Sure, Steve...like night-vision goggles, right?*

Wrong. Night-vision goggles work by converting Infrared into *visible* light—usually a shade of green<sup>3</sup>. Why? Because we can't see Infrared, but we *can* see green. So, what you're really seeing is *green*, used to represent *infrared*. You're not seeing *actual infrared*. This is just a trick of science to make it possible for humans to see something humans normally can't see.

Some insects, and most spiders, can see *light* just above what appears to us humans, as *violet*. In other words, they can see into the lower part of the *ultraviolet* spectrum [UVA]. *Ultraviolet* is the stuff lighting up those psychedelic posters from the '60s. And, a slightly higher frequency of Ultraviolet gives sunbathers a tan—or a burn [UVB]<sup>4</sup>. There's also a UVC, which is an even higher frequency of UV. This is the UV used to kill bacteria—i.e. sanitation. This frequency of UV is even more dangerous to the skin and eyes.

What does the color *ultraviolet* look like?

<sup>1</sup> In fact *Infrared* actually means *below red*.

<sup>2</sup> Researchers from Washington University in St. Louis discovered that contrary to prior beliefs, the human eye is in fact capable of seeing infrared light — but only under certain conditions.  
[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/12/141201161116.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/12/141201161116.htm)

<sup>3</sup> A good reason for using the color green is, we can see green better than any other color. By using the color green, an extra degree of sensitivity is automatically gained—a kind of bonus sensitivity.

<sup>4</sup> But, don't worry, there are various kinds [or frequencies] of *UV light*. The kind that makes all those things glow in a Halloween Haunted House is not the same kind that tans or burns.

If red is a particular frequency of light [around 700 to 635 nm<sup>1</sup>], and green is yet another frequency of light [around 560 to 520 nm], and if violet is the highest frequency of light we humans can see [around 450 to 400 nm], then what color is the frequency *300nm*—a “color” seen by insects, spiders and oddly reindeer<sup>2</sup>, but invisible to humans<sup>3</sup>? Can you conceive of such a color? It wouldn’t look like any color ever seen by a human. The color *does* exist—but I doubt any human can imagine it. I mean, if we could meld with the mind of a spider<sup>4</sup> [or a reindeer], as it gazed at an ultraviolet light, *what would that look like*<sup>5</sup>?

What about all those other frequencies not part of the visible spectrum? Remember: Most of the *energy*, in the Electromagnetic spectrum, is *invisible* to humans! What would, say, X-Rays look like. Or radio waves? Or microwaves?!?

In other words, there’s a whole range of colors *none of us have ever seen!*

The point is—our range of experience is quite limited. If not for science, most of us<sup>6</sup> wouldn’t have a clue there is so much *more* going on around us.

---

<sup>1</sup> Scientists like to use *wavelength*, rather than *frequency* when they talk about the physical properties of the colors of light. One of the “units” they like to use is **nm** which is an abbreviation for *nanometer*, or *one-billionth of a meter!*

<sup>2</sup> So they can monitor the urine of their predators, and so their major winter food source, lichens, stand out against the blinding white of snow. Rodents, and some species of bat, also see this form of light, invisible to humans.

<sup>3</sup> Yes, one of those UV lamps used to light up psychedelic posters does look purple, but I assure you, what you are seeing is the tiny bit of purple light at the bottom edge of the full spectrum actually emitted by the lamp—most of which is invisible ultraviolet.

<sup>4</sup> Scary thought!

<sup>5</sup> The purple you see, coming from a typical UV lamp, is only part of the radiation emitted by that lamp. It emits a spread of frequencies. The violet, that you see, is at the very [lower] edge of that spread. The actual UV light is invisible. And, BTW: If you *could* see into the UV spectrum, that lamp would appear a hell-of-a-lot brighter!!

<sup>6</sup> I’m leaving open the possibility that certain individuals, such as Shamans, Spiritual Masters, Clairvoyants, etc. might just be able to view the world in far more detail, and range, than the common human.



***Try this:*** open a camera app on your smartphone—or you can also do this with most digital cameras [if there’s a IR filter installed, then this probably won’t work, so remove the filter, if you can]. Now, grab a TV remote [or any one of the myriad of remotes you probably have lying around—as long as it has a little bulb poking out its front, it will probably work—for instance, the typical Roku remote won’t work, and the lack of a protruding bulb is a dead give away] and point that remote’s little bulb at the camera, and push one of the buttons on the remote. If your camera can resolve infrared, you’ll see, on the view screen, a flashing spot. In most cases it will be pinkish-white. Now, point the remote at your naked eyes, and push the button again. See anything?

There you go. You just did some *science* that proves, positive, there are things going on out there *you can’t see*<sup>1</sup>! Oh...and if you thought you were actually *seeing* Infrared light on your camera view screen—think again! Like with the night-vision goggles, your camera merely converted *IR*<sup>2</sup> to

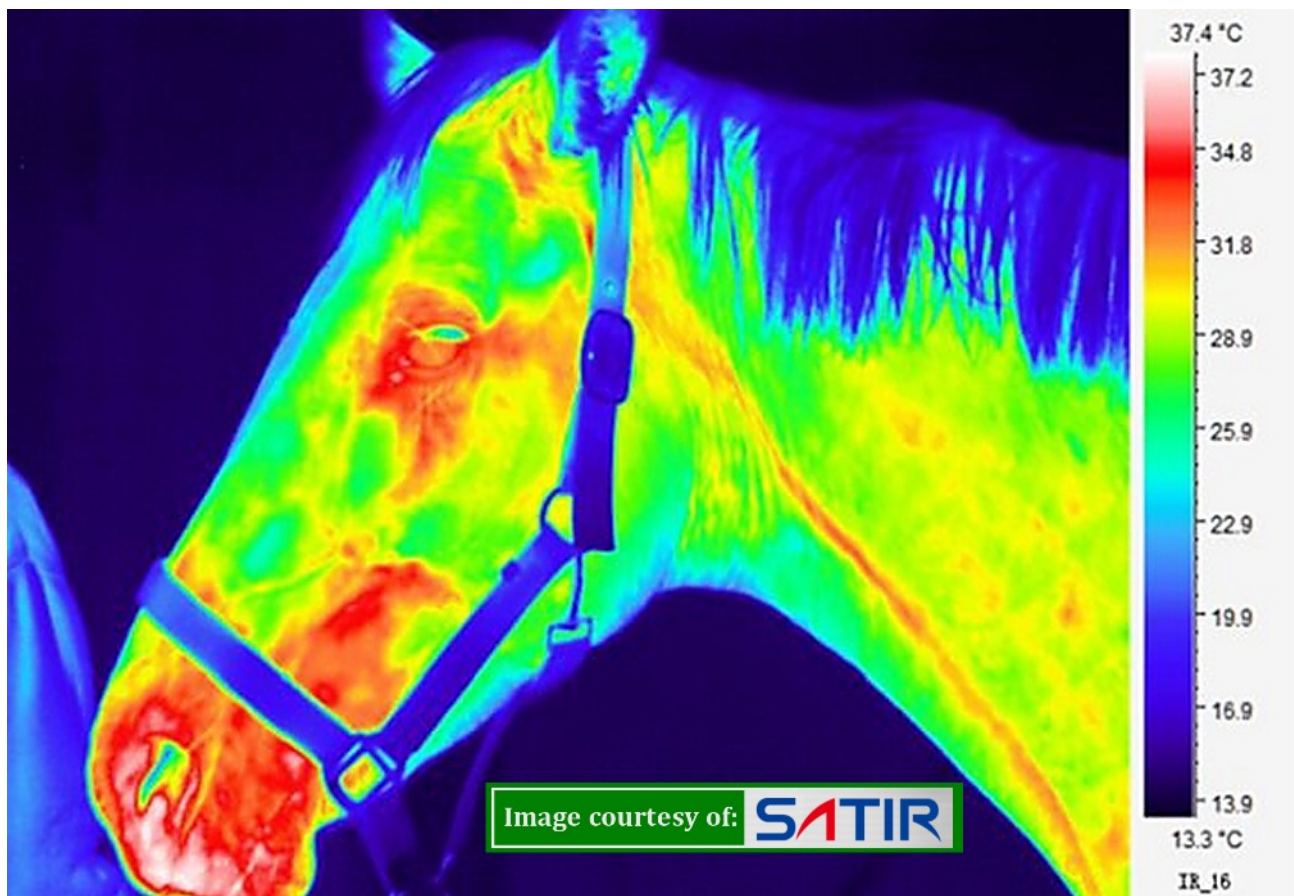
<sup>1</sup> If you did see it, then count yourself among a rare and elite group!

<sup>2</sup> “IR” is an abbreviation for “Infrared”.

*visible light*. Nice try, though ☹!

BTW: The patterns of flashing IR light are what “tells” your TV/Home Theater Receiver/Radio/DVD/etc. what to do with itself.

The green glow in night vision goggles, and that [usually] pinkish flash on your camera’s view screen, are examples of something called *false color*. To make it possible for humans to observe these other frequencies discovered by scientists, a way was devised to “assign” those new frequencies to colors in the range of human vision. In other words, scientists constructed equipment capable of mapping colors we humans *can* see, onto colors we *can’t* see.



A thermal camera allows us to “see” Infrared frequencies. Similar to the night vision goggles, but NOT just shades of green—full color! In other

words, each Infrared frequency is assigned a different “false” color.

Just before the turn of the 20th century, scientists discovered a crazy correlation between *frequency* and *temperature*! And, because each Infrared frequency corresponds to a different temperature, assigning each frequency its own color, provides a way to “see” temperatures!

For instance, in the above photo, temperatures from around 15°C to around 20°C are Blue. Anything that is at a temperature of around 24°C is colored Cyan, Yellow for 30°C, etc.

You’re not *really* seeing temperatures [or infrared]. You’re seeing colors in the visible spectrum that *represent* those different temperatures. [aka, different infrared frequencies]. Scientists would say that each temperature has its own *peak frequency*.

Cooler things radiate in the Infrared spectrum, whereas warmer things emit higher frequencies—frequencies going beyond Infrared, into the *visible spectrum*! This is what “Red Hot” is all about! When an object is so hot that the radiation it’s emitting includes frequencies humans see as *Red*, then that object is “Red Hot”. The Redness is due to most of the frequencies being of the color Red. But, it’s also radiating frequencies above and below that Red frequency, but most of the energy is being created as Red.

If it gets hotter still, the frequencies range higher, making it glow more orange-ish. Even hotter and it becomes more yellow-ish<sup>1</sup>, and, if it gets hot enough, it becomes *white hot*! Why *white* and not, say, *green*? Well, remember that I said that other frequencies, besides the predominant

---

<sup>1</sup> Like the filament in an Edison style light bulb. When electricity flows through that little curlicue of wire, inside that glass bulb, the wire gets so hot it glows a yellowish white. If you’ve seen those car headlights with the bluish hue, that’s a special filament bulb called a “Halogen lamp”, that can get so hot, it glows up in the bluer portion of the spectrum. That is REALLY hot! Hotter than the surface of the sun!!



frequency for that temperature, are being generated? It's because of those other frequencies, that it looks white, rather than green. We see "White" when the eye sees the colors Red, Green and Blue simultaneously. Google "Black Body Radiation" to learn more about that.

Or, let *Physics Girl* explain it to you:



[\*Physics Girl Explains The Ultraviolet Catastrophe\*](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid07](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid07)

BTW: This term "Radiation" sounds scary—and sometimes it is—but, in the same way old people can be *nice* or *really crabby*, radiation can be benign, mildly dangerous<sup>1</sup>, or it can be like a visit to the Bates Motel!<sup>2</sup>

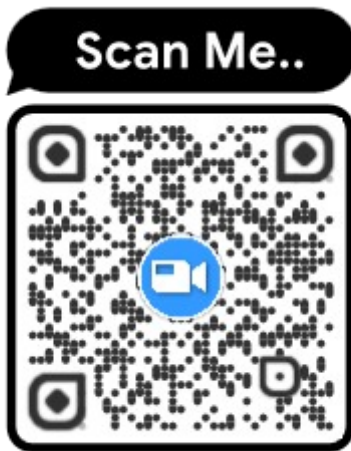
So, in other words, "radiation" is like a *snake*. There are venomous snakes that bite, nonvenomous snakes that bite, and snakes that merely squeeze—which is only a problem if the snake is really big. The squeeze of a larger snake can be deadly, but from a small one it's more like a vigorous hug. Then there is that lizard that *looks like a snake* because it has no legs, or feet, but is *totally harmless*.

<sup>1</sup> Like the UV that causes sunburn – but, it's also the radiation that can cause skin cancer, so, really dangerous?! The distinction has to do with how likely you are to be maimed, or killed by that particular form of radiation. Ultraviolet radiation is at the bottom of the Electromagnetic frequencies that can cause harm. Then comes X-Rays, followed by Gamma Rays, which is the radiation that gives radiation a bad name [it's the radiation that makes Nuclear Power Plant meltdowns so scary]!

<sup>2</sup> Originally the movie *Psycho* by Alfred Hitchcock. Later made into the TV series "Bates Motel" starring Freddie Highmore and Vera Farmiga.

Someone afraid of snakes, tends to be afraid of all snakes—but, in truth, not all snakes are harmful. Just as not all *radiation* is harmful. And, in fact, as the frequency goes down, the harmfulness goes down, as well!

In case you're interested, here's a couple of videos on that very subject:



["Radiation" - I Don't Think It Means What You Think It Means<sup>1</sup>](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid14](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid14)



[Radiation vs Radioactive Atoms](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid15](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid15)

And, how often do we humans conflate a spectrum of properties into the same word? For instance the word *Muslim*. A group of characters, calling themselves *Muslims*, hijack some jetliners and fly them into the World Trade Center towers, and suddenly ALL Muslims are *terrorists*! WRONG! I've been in conversation with *actual* Muslims who consider

<sup>1</sup> Like the word "inconceivable" – YES! Homage to *Inigo Montoya* and *The Princess Bride*

plane crashing *actual* terrorists, as *NOT Muslim*.

· - ----===<•:+:{⊙}:+:•>===---- ·

What's so great about being able to see other electromagnetic frequencies?

Early astronomers only had their eyes for studying the cosmos. In other words: *Only the visible range was available to them*. Even so, with careful observation of the night sky, through very crude optical telescopes, coupled with amazing mental agility, they figured out a great deal about the cosmos. But, a greater understanding of the nature of the universe became possible with every advancement of viewing the night sky across wider portions of the *spectrum* of electromagnetic frequencies—in other words, a whole Universe of understanding was made possible by being able to perceive what humans could never perceive before!

They do this with special cameras—ever so slightly like the camera you used to view that flashing IR LED on your remote, or even more so like the one showing the horse of a different color [rimshot]. Except, the cameras used by scientists are *WAY* more sophisticated. I mean, they have cameras able to see *X-Rays*, and even *Gamma Rays*! And, on the other end of the spectrum: The full spread of infrared frequencies [not merely the meager smidgen your digital camera can see], and even down into the microwave range, and below. In other words, scientists can “see” pretty much every bit of the Electromagnetic Spectrum! Not even snakes, spiders, insects, or reindeer can do that! And, certainly, humans can't.

An example of how the ability to view such a broad spectrum made a huge difference, involves the cloud of dust shrouding the center of our

Galaxy. Visible light is so completely absorbed by this dust cloud, it's impossible for our unaided eyes to see anything within it, or beyond it—even with a powerful telescope. But, certain other frequencies shine through just fine.

In 2003, NASA launched a space telescope named **Spitzer**, capable of seeing across a large band of Infrared frequencies. Here's a *visible light* photo of our Milky Way Galaxy [the way our human eyes see it].



The center of the Galaxy is positioned at the center of this photo [where all that yellow stuff is]. All the crinkly dark stuff is shadows cast by vast clouds of dust between us and the galactic center!

Here's a *false color*<sup>1</sup> photo from Spitzer, of that same region, in **Near**<sup>2</sup> **Infrared** spectrum:



All bright, and clear! Finally, a far better look at what's going on at the center of our Galaxy!

Let's see this in other wavelengths<sup>3</sup>: Here it is at **408 MHz** (a Radio Frequency):

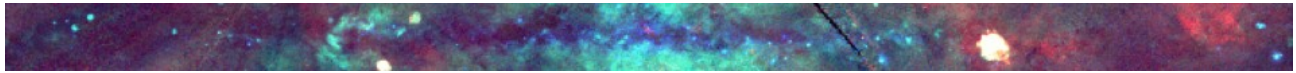


And at **X-Ray** frequencies:

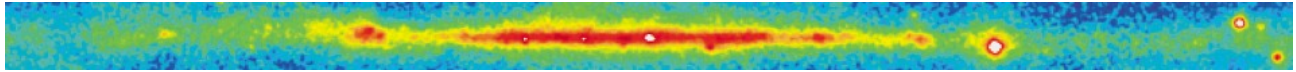
<sup>1</sup> 'cuz, remember, we can't see Infrared light. So, these frequencies have to be assigned colors we can see, or else we can't see them.

<sup>2</sup> "Near" just means it's closer to Red, than other frequencies of Infrared—as in *nearly Red*.

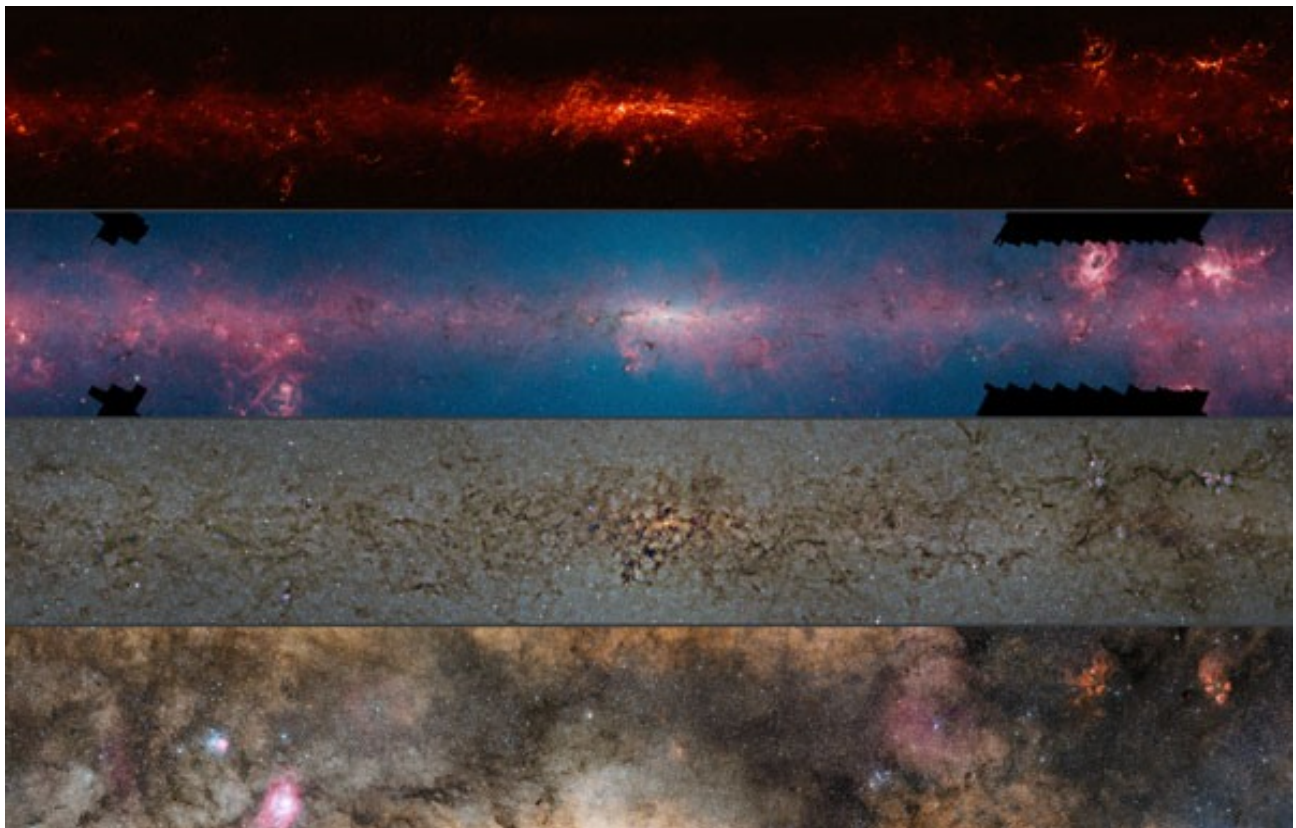
<sup>3</sup> Remember, Scientists bounce back and forth between *frequency* and *wavelength* all the time—mainly because they're synonymous. And, perhaps, sometimes it just sounds better to us one, rather than the other. "Let's see that in other frequencies" is just a little more cumbersome to say than "Let's see that in other wavelengths"!



And finally, into the **Gamma Ray** spectrum:



Here's another cool compilation of views of the center of the Milky Way Galaxy at different spectra—notice how crazy different they are!:



BTW: the bottom stripe is how it looks to the human eye.

If you want to learn more, here's a link to an excellent website full of just this sort of thing:



[UCLA Galactic Center Group](https://www.ucla.edu/galactic-center/)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web01](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web01)

So, in other words, there's a whole lot more going on out there than our puny little human senses are letting on.

*"A whole new world!"*

~Aladdin – Disney

*Great, Steve...but what Earthly good is being able to see into the center of our Galaxy.*

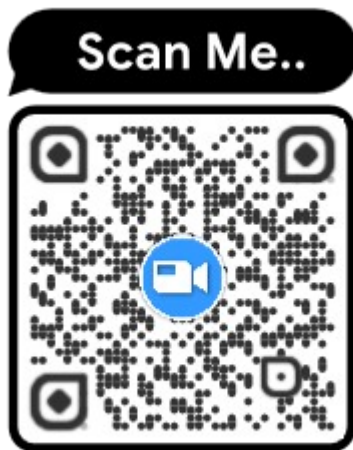
Well, apart from the burning desire gain a sans-religion understanding of where we came from, what's out there, and why the Universe behaves the way it does, firefighters found one of the technologies rather useful:



Notice how, on the side marked “INFRARED,” the unconscious person is easy to spot, whereas in mere VISIBLE light, smoke obscures the victim. Before this technology, the only way rescue workers would find an unconscious person was if they tripped over them!

Another impediment to human perception is, we tend to see what we want to see. I’ve already talked about how our brain filters out a lot of the stuff we see. Most people aren’t that good at observation. I mean, how many of us can flash memorize all the license plate numbers in the parking lot outside of the cafe where the left-handed waitress works, as well as notice there’s a gun in the cab of the gray truck... yeah, Bourne Identity. This is called Situational Awareness."





[The Bourne Identity \(6/10\) Movie Clip - Why Would I Know?](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid48](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid48)

One of my all-time favorite movie scenes is the moment Mr. Gambini finally shines as a lawyer, systematically discrediting the perception abilities of three of the prosecution's 'witnesses' in the movie *My Cousin Vinny*. And, of course, there's the unforgettable expert testimony of Mona Lisa Vito [Oscar winning performance by the then-unknown actress, Marisa Tomei] where she eviscerates the testimony of the FBI's expert witness! While fiction, this vividly depicts the pitfalls of untrained observers—the witnesses—and more broadly, highlights the common errors of perception frequently made by us ordinary folks, and of our unwavering conviction to the veracity of our errors of perception. Basically, seeing isn't always believing, nor is it reliably comprehensive. Much escapes our notice, and taking a stance based on mere human perception is reckless, and the source of much unhappiness. Better to keep an open mind, and assume a more humble attitude—because, more than likely, you missed something.

## Religion vs Happiness

"For man to be able to live he must either not see the infinite, or have such an explanation of the meaning of life as will connect the finite with the infinite."

~Leo Tolstoy

Why are there so many religions in the world? And, how can there [really] be only *one true religion*? Not all religions, on the planet, claim exclusivity over all others, but the one's doing so...*why*?

I was raised by Agnostic parents who "dragged" me to a local Congregational Church<sup>1</sup>. As a result, to my little formative mind, the world was *Protestant*. Bedtime stories were read by my father, from a book called *The Story Of The Bible* [by *Walter Russell Bowie*]. Not exactly the real, honest to gosh, *Bible*, but an interpretation...by an actual *scientist*!

So, I had some early [some might consider corrupted, based on the "science" involvement] exposure to the whole *God thing*. But, the bedtime story book was, as mentioned, written by a *scientist*, and my childhood church, though *Christian*, was *very progressive* (one of the [excellent] teenage youth program leaders, on the payroll, was a gay man, for example).

Though I enjoyed the bible stories, later, I resisted. By the age of around eleven, I regularly ditched Sunday School, and hung out, alone, down by the stream that ran behind the church, where the gospel of the pollywog became my devotional cultivation<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> In Northridge, CA

<sup>2</sup> Some of which I captured, took home, and later chased around the house, when they turned into frogs and hopped out of the fish bowl I was keeping them in.

It was a beautiful church<sup>1</sup>, one I would categorize as “spiritual”, because *religion* for them was a mere dais for unaligned spiritual growth and discovery. Shaped like a pyramid, the building struck<sup>2</sup> an exotic profile against the suburban skyline, and claimed architectural fame<sup>3</sup>. But, I was a child with questions—questions I wasn’t afraid to ponder, or even ask, because this was a church with no *Hell indoctrination*<sup>4</sup> and a general, spiritual openness. But even this broad-minded church couldn’t furnish satisfactory answers.

Questions like, *why is God such a butt? If God is perfect, then why were the first humans that He created such screw-ups? And if God is “Love”, then why is there so much hate and misery in the religious world? And, BTW, where is this God, anyway?!?*

Because of the openness of my childhood church, and my parents lack of religious rigidity, or even alliance, I dodged any sort of dogmatic grip on my psyche.

But, not all religious upbringings are so benign, or free.

As a young adult, a number of co-workers and I, during our lunch break, caravanned to a nearby park, which led to a conversation with *Lynn*. My relationship to her, besides our common employer, was, originally, through her husband, who, being a practicing, semi-professional illusionist, was my connection for entrance into the Magic Castle, in Hollywood, CA<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Still is!

<sup>2</sup> Still does!

<sup>3</sup> Designed by the renowned A. Quincy Jones – a source of some unabashed pride, on my part, having been a member, albeit quasi!

<sup>4</sup> I did develop, by osmosis, some Hell concern along the way. But it never really dominated my thinking.

<sup>5</sup> The *Magic Castle* is, essentially, a famous clubhouse for members of *The Academy of Magical Arts*, established in Hollywood, CA [USA] in 1963. It’s open to the public, but access is limited to those in possession of a *guest card*, or accompanied by a member. Lynn’s husband >>> continued on page 314

During our picnic conversation I boldly [or foolishly] revealed my interest in all things Eastern, including Buddhism, Taoism, Zen, Hinduism and Eastern Yogic Philosophy. The conversation quickly turned to her divulging her 4-Square Baptist background, and the “fact” that all of what I just said was a guaranteed ticket to HELL!

In her religion, there is no room for any other religion, or structure of thought. Every point of view other than her Baptist point of view, was the wrong point of view, and alignment to a *wrong point of view* insured an eternity of roasting over smoldering brimstone.

As far as I can tell, the only Hellish fallout from that conversion was the loss of my Magic Castle connection.

*I was walking across a bridge one day, and I saw a man standing on the edge,  
about to jump off. So I ran over and said "Stop! don't do it!"*

*"Why shouldn't I?" he said.*

*I said, "Well, there's so much to live for!"*

*He said, "Like what?"*

*I said, "Well...are you religious or atheist?"*

*He said, "Religious."*

*I said, "Me too! Are you Christian or Buddhist?"*

*He said, "Christian."*

*I said, "Me too! Are you Catholic or protestant?"*

*He said, "Protestant."*

*I said, "Me too! Are you Episcopalian or Baptist?"*

*He said, "Baptist!"*

*I said, "Wow! Me too! Are you Baptist Church of God or Baptist Church of the Lord?"*

*He said, "Baptist Church of God!"*

*I said, "Me too! Are you original Baptist Church of god, Reformed Baptist Church of*

---

<<< 313 Tom, a card carrying member of the AMA, was my personal connection.

*God!"*

*I said, "Me too! Are you Reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation of 1879, or  
Reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation of 1915?"*

*He said, "Reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation of 1915!"*

*I said, "Die, heretic scum", and pushed him off.*

-- Emo Phillips

The Catholic Church has certainly changed its views over time—often to keep up with scientific discovery and assuage the decline of membership. Changes like: Earthlings no longer live at the center of the universe but instead reside on *an irrelevant little blue green planet orbiting an unregarded yellow sun, in some insignificant region of the unfashionable edge of the Milky Way Galaxy*<sup>1</sup>. Oh, and also, never baptized, dead Catholic babies can now, *thankfully*, go to heaven. And, [finally!] Catholics can eat meat on Friday without risking an eternity in hell.

*"It's not even a sin anymore to eat meat on Friday but I'll betcha there are still some  
guys in Hell doing time on the meat rap, right?"*

~George Carlin

Does truth change over time? Before things changed, was God wrong? Isn't the Catholic Pope supposed to have a direct link to God? Then, why was there ever, in Catholic dogma, errors of knowing? I mean, the Catholic church put people to death for contradicting the Geocentric

---

<sup>1</sup> This is not plagiarism, it's verbal prostration! An homage to the thoroughly awesome book: *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by the late, great Douglas Adams!!

view of the Universe<sup>1</sup>. Is God fallible? Isn't God supposed to be perfect (in every way)? Then, how could God have been *wrong*? I mean, supposedly "He's" up there, where He can see what is revolving around *what*, right?!? Perhaps God is only *practically perfect*.

In the Mormon church (LDS<sup>2</sup>), those of African descent (whether black or white), before 1978, were banned from the priesthood. *But, no longer*.

Again, the mystical morphing of truth? Or, perhaps humanity is skipping around in the multiverse!

Most of these religions have a concept of prayer. And, though not all prayers (it seems) are answered, at least a few, from each religion, have garnered assistance from the targeted deity.

Deficient devotion? Selective succor? Or just chance.

If enough people pray about enough things, sooner, or later, events will sync up with a few of those desired outcomes by mere coincidence, or by the law of averages. Such conflation appears to be Divine attention, but are they?

All the people, surrounding a stretch of tornado devastation, demonstrated divine approval. Too bad those in the debris field weren't as devout! Was devotional prayer responsible for the zigzag path of that tornado, or was it just atmospheric chaos?

Positive outcomes are celebrated as God's loving response, and the

---

<sup>1</sup> Before Copernicus spawned the revolution that would change this perspective, the prevailing belief was in a "Geocentric" system, placing Earth at the center of all things. This also placed the Church at the center of theological importance, which was, of course, the plan. Copernicus, just before his death [Ha! Ha! You can't kill me 'cuz I'm already dead!], published a book that clearly placed the Sun at the center of what would later be known as the Solar System, bumping Earth out of the venerable "Center of the Universe" position. Later it was shown that not even the Sun is at the center of the Universe, and that the Universe, in fact, has no center!

<sup>2</sup> News Flash: Use of the term "Mormon" is now considered a win for the Devil!

absence of reciprocation is considered insufficiency of the supplicant.

Chance? Or, a fickle God, working magic for a favored few?

If it *was* the work of a God, and if prayers were answered across religious boundaries, then what was this God thinking, answering all those heathen prayers from all those other, false religions?!? I mean, why would a Christian God answer Buddhist prayers. Or, why would a Hindu God show mercy to Muslims?!?

Or do a batch of Gods crowd around to help their own? Maybe all that thunder is the banging of titan shoulders.

In my minuscule study of the great religions of the world, I've noticed, at their core, a common message of peace, love, or at least kindness.

*"None of you has faith  
until he loves for his brother or neighbor what he loves for himself."  
~Forty Hadith of an-Nawawi 13 (Sahih Muslim and Sahih al-Bukhari)*

*"And if a man from another country is living in your land with you,  
do not make life hard for him;  
Let him be to you as one of your countrymen  
and have love for him as for yourself."  
~Leviticus, 19:33-34 (Judaism, and all the other isms that cleave to the Bible)*

*"What is hurtful to yourself do not do to your fellow man."  
~Talmud, Shabbat 31A (Judaism)*

*"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love;  
give preference to one another in honor."*

~Romans, 12:10 (Christianity)

*"Love spontaneously gives itself in endless gifts. But those gifts lose their fullest  
significance if through them we do not reach that love, which is the giver."*

~Bhagavad Gita (Hindu)

*"Those who are free of resentful thoughts surely find peace."*

~Buddha

*"Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without."*

~Buddha

*Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at  
someone else; you are the one who gets burned.*

~Buddha

It sounds to me that many of the great religions of the world advocate  
the same basic thing: *Be excellent to one another*<sup>1</sup>!

<sup>1</sup> Thank you *Bill* and *Ted*!



Invariably, though, the words of the original spiritual master that the religion sprang from<sup>1</sup>, are distorted and mistranslated and/or misinterpreted, then mistranslated again, etc. The final result is something that not only bears little resemblance to the original message<sup>2</sup>—it often flips to a completely opposite meaning.

- ☺ *Love thy neighbor* ☹ unless this neighbor is one of those low-life, white trash, trailer park, Welfare bums!
- ☺ *Thou shalt not kill* ☹ unless the miscreant is in your home stealing your TV!
- ☺ *God is Love* ☹ but He hates gays [and anyone else on His shit-list]!

There are so many different religions in the world today. Can they ALL be true? If not, which one has the unimpeachable claim to verity? Or what if it's just *variations* of the same truth, to accommodate human diversity? I mean, look at how many distinct, and unique cultures there are in the world. And considering the vast array of personalities and variety of temperament among the peoples of this planet, doesn't it make sense to have a religion for every disposition?

I imagine a white bearded God, sitting high on his majestic throne, gazing down at Earth through a crack in the clouds, continuously scratching his head wondering what all the fuss is about.

*Since the beginning of recorded history, which is defined by the invention of writing by the Sumerians around 6,000 years ago, historians have cataloged over 3700*

<sup>1</sup> Yeah, I think so. It's fairly clear that Buddhism was started by a mere human named **Siddhartha**. And, whether or not there was an actual burning bush booming the voice of an actual God, the Jewish religion appeared to be started by a guy named **Moses** [or Moshe Rabbenu in Hebrew (מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ, lit. "Moses our Teacher")]. **Kirshna**: Hinduism. **Jesus**: Christianity. Etc...

<sup>2</sup> Though *Buddhism* seemed to remain fairly intact. And if you only pay attention to the basic precepts of Christianity: *Love thy neighbor, Turn the other cheek, Human brother/sister-hood*. And, those 10-commandments are, mostly, pretty spot on – at least the last 5 – though, is it considered a covet if I fantasize about my neighbor's wife?

*supernatural beings, of which 2870 can be considered deities.  
So next time someone tells me they believe in God, I'll say "Oh which one? Zeus?  
Hades? Jupiter? Mars? Odin? Thor? Krishna? Vishnu? Ra?..." If they say "Just God. I  
only believe in the one God," I'll point out that they are nearly as atheistic as me. I  
don't believe in 2,870 gods, and they don't believe in 2,869.*

~Ricky Gervais

If you were raised in one of those religions that claims to be the *one and only truth*. How can you be sure yours is the *correct* one-and-only-truth? Is it because your mom and/or dad told you so? How can they really be sure? Because *their* mom and/or dad said so?

When you were a kid, like all kids throughout natural human history, you saw your parents as the Gods of your little Universe. You *had* to think what they wanted you to think. They were the ones who fed you, bathed you, defended you against the woes/blows of the world, and gave you a nice warm place to live and sleep—had they not, had they left you to the elements, it's extremely unlikely you would survive [though the fictional Mowgli is based on a real person—also named Mowgli—such a thing is rare<sup>1</sup>]. Even if they were abusive monsters, they were still, very likely, your only option for survival.

You knew nothing of the rest of the world. You had no idea there were other opinions, other ways of thinking, other points of view. Whatever your *Parent Gods* said to you, whatever they taught you, whatever they modeled for you, was, to you, the only gospel truth. It seems to me, this is a form of *emotional extortion!* *We'll only love you, if you're a good little* <insert pious persuasion>!

<sup>1</sup> Google: "Real life Mowgli"

And like I mentioned before: Your parents were, probably, just passing on what *they* were fed as children—unless, of course, they were late adopters<sup>2</sup>. In the former case, because of their youthful emotional vulnerability, they unflinchingly sucked down the same strange logic they indoctrinated you with.

Across the world, millions of other little kids, not unlike yourself, were also being infused by their Parent-Gods with some *other* odd religious rhetoric. And, these kids were probably enjoined to hold *their* religion primary to all others, *or else*.

Now that you're grown, and know far more of the world and of its many diversities, aka beyond the sphere of an infant, and now that you know your parents never actually were *Gods*, but instead, were mere *fallible humans*, isn't it time to reassess your convictions? Isn't it time to review what was fed to you, now that you have access to a much broader base of awareness?

I mean, really: Out of *all* the many cultures in all of the world, and all the many various religions, and religious factions that pervade the planet, you just happened to be born into the very one that got it right?!?

My current wife, Sheri, was raised Mormon, and devoted a good deal of her life to the throws of that religion. Over time, little by little, things, for her, weren't adding up. She began to question. And when the church went whole-hog, in California (USA), to defeat a proposition that would ban gays from legal marriage, she decided she'd had enough, and become an activist in support of gay rights. She even wrote a book about it, called **"The Spell of Religion: And the Battle over Gay**

---

<sup>2</sup> In other words, they didn't get their religion from their parent(s). Like, maybe, when the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Hari Krishnas came to their door, they not only answered the door, they actually let them in (literally AND figuratively).

## Marriage.”

It seems to me the problem with many religions is this: they claim a monopoly on truth while being such purveyors of distortion and deceit that any semblance of truth is likely woven into their manipulations. Human agendas, over time, tend to skew and obscure any message of real truth that may have existed at inception.

Spiritual truth is something that usually can only be discovered by the individual. This is typically acquired through meditation, but it can arrive in other ways. For instance, a kind of *flash of insight*<sup>1</sup>, through *devoted service*<sup>2</sup>; by *channeling Chi*<sup>3</sup>; or even through *cultivation of sexual energy*<sup>4</sup>...in fact, it's apparently possible to *think your way there*<sup>5</sup>).

Too often the religious tend to focus on minute and unimportant details while ignoring the more significant basic tenants. For example: The avid campaign against, and hostility towards, the LGBTQ community, based on cherry-picked Old Testament passages that thrash the underlying axiom claiming a God's infinite and universal love<sup>6</sup>.

Or the *Hindu* vs. *Muslim* squabbles over how many gods there are, and whether God, or Gods, advocate the eating of cows.

Or, the Buddhist position that suffering is just the status quo, rather than the curse of Original Sin. *Shame* on those Buddhists for dodging shame!<sup>7</sup> And Buddhists avoid the whole the wrath of God or Gods, by

<sup>1</sup> Morihei Ueshiba – founder of modern Aikido

<sup>2</sup> As seems to be the case for certain Catholic Saints

<sup>3</sup> Tai Chi, for example.

<sup>4</sup> Tantric Yoga – sounds like, perhaps, the path that's the most fun.

<sup>5</sup> Vulcan logic? OK, I know that's Star Trek fiction – but I have no other examples, just stuff I read about long ago from a book I forgot the title of, and that Google was no help in locating! ☺

<sup>6</sup> Christianity, Mormonism, and Islamism all tend to be guilty of this.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas Adams and the comedian Emo Philips, poked hilarious fun at these pointless squabbles between religions.

eliminating God or Gods altogether! The focus in Buddhism is merely becoming a decent person, to one's self, and to others—and finding happiness in the process.

If there is a God, He/She/It has got to be a comedian who is into some seriously dark humor. I mean, big-ass, gnarly, world dominating dinosaurs wiped out by an asteroid, leaving all the small, *meeek* critters to “inherit the Earth”? Animals, eating other animals? And, what the heck is going on in Australia? Giant rats with pouches for their pups, and springy feet, who slap-fight each other for supremacy? That's funny! God must have been in an exceptionally snarky mood when It created the duck billed platypus!

So, no...not original sin. More like Original Grin!

Original Grin is my antidote to original sin. Basically a protest against the legacy of lies perpetrated by the Bible-Bashing religious. Not all religions, mind you. Just the yer-born-a-sinner-so-crawl-to-us-in-shame-while-you-hand-over-all-your-power-and-money kind of religion. I know there are, also, other religions that do this sort of shit, but I'm not versed enough to credibly add them to this rant.

Yeah, I'm angry! This kind of religion is responsible for SO MUCH MISERY in the world. So, I'm just doing my part, here, to save humanity from this nonsense. BTW: It's my opinion that original sin is nothing more than a reflection of original *animal baggage*. i.e. the undisciplined pre-human legacy. Humans are capable of so much more. Original Grin, is the expansion into a new legacy—an opening into creativity and joy!

What about the tussle between the reincarnation folks, and the you-only-live-once, day of reckoning promulgators. What if *both* points of

view are correct.

Thought Experiment: Suppose we're made up of two separate beings:

1. An Ego Self—the personality that walks in the body that everyone sees.
2. A Spirit Self—unseen, mystical presence that transcends the body, but is mystically tied to the body—aka tied to the *Ego Self*.

Think of the Ego Self as the avatar<sup>1</sup> in a video game, and the Spirit Self as the person *playing the video game*. Now, suppose the Ego Self vanishes in a puff of “Game Over!” graphics. This is the part that *never exists again*, and thus has only one life. Yet, the Spirit Self continues on, and in fact, can adopt a new avatar—e.g. be associated with a new and different Ego Self, in a new life, through the process of Reincarnation, the way a game player can assume a new character, or game piece, and play again.

Thus, it can be said that the Ego Self lives only once, yet Reincarnation can still be a *thing*. It's not the Ego Self [the *self* that everyone sees, and that suffers an *end of life*] that gets reincarnated. It's the Spirit Self that hosts a *new incarnation*. And, in that new incarnation, the memories and experiences from previous incarnations live on in the *mind* of the Spirit Self. Thus the connection that makes it a *reincarnation*.

***But, Steve...what about St. Peter, the Pearly Gates, Judgment Day, and all of that?***

Perhaps the Spirit Self *does* stand before a “gatekeeper” named *St. Peter*.

---

<sup>1</sup> In video gaming, the Avatar is the on-screen representation of the character that functions in the digital realm that constitutes the *game world*. The person playing the game, manipulates their avatar using some sort of gaming console. In other words, the person *playing* the game is not the “person” *in* the game.

And perhaps there is a Judgment Day—or more like a *game review*. And, maybe the decision that is made is not of *Heaven* or *Hell*, but more like an assessment--a “score”--something like “productive life” versus “wasted life”, or “constructive life” versus “self-destructive life”—i.e. more *evaluation* than *final judgment*.

Why reincarnation? To further the lesson? Learn a new lesson? Answer for some of that Karma? One might consider it *Hellish* to have to go back down into LIFE, and do it all over again—ala Groundhog Day<sup>1</sup>.

Maybe, in this scenario, after the life review, one passes through the pearly gate to demarcate the end of that incarnation, only to begin preparation for the next incarnation, complete with a new character, and body to match. Maybe, the exclamation, “Oh HELL! Not again!!” was shortened to just “HELL!”

Or, maybe one only passes through the Pearly Gate upon graduation from the School of Life, usually after countless reincarnations. Perhaps, once they cross that threshold, they never have to go back—sounds like Heaven to me! That’s more of a Buddhist concept—the Wheel of Life or Wheel of Samsara.

I think it’s a lot like that 1991 movie, *Defending Your Life*. Judgment day only seems judgmental if the newly departed *feels* judged—i.e. is guilty about events in the life being reviewed, and thus they *feel* defensive. But, that is coming from their own fears, not the reviewers.

Buddhism teaches that life is a constant cycle of birth/suffering/death that can be escaped by practicing the *Eightfold Path*. This is how, they

---

<sup>1</sup> In case you’ve been in a coma since 1992, *Groundhog Day* is a movie by Trevor Albert, and Harold Ramis, starring Andie MacDowell, Bill Murray, and Chris Elliott, a movie I’ve watched some 20 or 30 times—which, I guess, means I’ve really watched it hundreds of times 🤪--favorite line: “Is it snowing in space?!”

teach, one breaks free from the Wheel of Samsara.

Christians are told they are born in *sin* and have one chance for salvation through their *lord and savior*.

The Buddhist point of view is that we suffer because we don't know any better, and offers instructions so we *can* know better—thus the individual is inherently *not* flawed, just *ignorant*.

The Christian view is that the individual is *inherently* flawed and must be *mystically transformed*. The common ground, though, is *human suffering*. The clash is over *why we suffer*, and *how to fix it*.

Are they all talking about the same thing<sup>1</sup>?

If you're encumbered by religion, [assuming you're still reading this—brave you!!] then I implore you, if you can possibly muster the will, find a way to break out of this nonsense<sup>2</sup>! It's intrinsically difficult to be *Happy For No Damn Reason*, when bound up in such dogma! If a religious practice has complete, or even partial control over you, spontaneity, outside of that control structure is pretty much out<sup>3</sup>, as is free thinking.

---

<sup>1</sup> I'm leaving out other religions, because, frankly, I don't know enough about them to make comparisons like this. But, the point is, I suspect there's a lot of fighting over the same flipping message!

<sup>2</sup> Even institutionalized Buddhism has its degree of nonsense. Especially when a ritual practice is made rote by those ignorant of the original intent, or goal of the practice.

<sup>3</sup> Though, through my association with my Catholic first wife, I got the impression certain of their Saints did free themselves from the limiting structure of their religion. St Teresa [don't remember which one] was one of her favorites, as was St. Francis. And, funny, each was elevated to Sainthood despite their impropriety, or perhaps, because of it. Is there an unwritten goal of Catholic doctrine to free oneself from Catholic doctrine?

Back in the days of the VCR, a wonderful adaptation of a Graham Greene novel was aired on PBS's Great Performances [produced in the United Kingdom] starring Alec Guinness, Leo McKern and Ian Richardson, called *Monsignor Quixote*, based on the same theme of finding the spiritual core in Catholic doctrine, and in religion, in general. One of my absolute favorite videos! Later in life I discovered a VCR recording I made of it, and burned it onto a DVD {so HAPPY!!} Don't tell PBS, but I uploaded it to YouTube because it's a sin to deprive Alec Guinness fans of this wonderful [and, yes "Great"] performance. Try searching for it 😊



And being *Happy For No Damn Reason* often has much to do with *both*.

In the “perfect world” I’m proposing, here, we all have faith in our own ability, and the ability of everyone else to find a moral compass. We also believe life will tend to kick our butts until we do, even if that butt kicking must extend over lifetimes. After all, indications are good that the Earth will support life for at least 5 billion more years [the point when the sun becomes a Red Giant and vaporizes the Earth]—plenty of time for even the most adamant profligate to come around!

## Could you be afraid of feeling good?

*"When I'm good, I'm very good. But, when I'm bad, I'm better"*

~Mae West

I took a shower this morning—as probably did millions of people. But how many of those millions took the time to delight in the scintillating massage of hundreds of little spray-fingers, and billions of hot little water molecules, or to relish the liquid caress of a film of water gliding across their skin, or thrilled at the sensation of shampoo bubbles sliding down their back, or luxuriated in the sensual pleasure of a soapy hand slid attentively across wet skin?

And though the shower is a delightful arena for carnal creativity, my sensual shower was not sexual. It didn't need to be.

This is possible anywhere, anytime, with clothes on or off, while luxuriating in a bubble crested hot tub, or while sitting on a bench waiting for a bus.

When you shower, caress yourself. When you dress, feel the softness of the fabric sliding across your skin—if they aren't soft, get some that are. Silk; high thread count cotton; Rayon; Micro Spun Polyester; all feel wonderful on the skin.

Stretch your limbs and feel the surge of energy. Every time you move, every time you bend over to reach for something, make it a stretch—turn it into a Yoga move. Consider taking a Hatha Yoga class if this is

unfamiliar to you.

Allow yourself to seek ways to feel good. This is your animal SuperPower. We can *create* joy—in any moment—at any time—regardless of the circumstances.

Worried about public opinion? Who is living your life? You, or the public?

Worried about ostracism? Do you really want to live among prudes?

As I grew and changed, the people around me came and went. It seemed to be the rule that whenever I changed my way of being, my “friends” moved on, and new ones arrived.

Truly, it’s probably wise to maintain a measure of discretion. Laws regarding public conduct are, in most places, still rather archaic, and austere. So, be discreet when it makes sense, but by-all-means, whenever possible, be good to yourself and indulge your senses.

Worried about religious doctrine? Ah, yes...religion. Religion can be a tough nut. Especially if shame and/or fear of hell (or other such threats of *eternal misery*) are a part of the doctrine<sup>1</sup>.

The sad truth is, a large part of the world lives in one shame based culture, or another. Especially in the good ol’ USA. I once saw, on a broadcast TV channel, cartoon lips pixelated because they mouthed a swear word<sup>2</sup>—can anybody, really, read *cartoon lips*?!?

Shame can be a tough thing to shed, but it’s possible. Especially in a private setting. The notion that it’s not okay to treat yourself with

---

<sup>1</sup> Mormons aren’t even allowed to masturbate, or have any kind of sexual relations, or even touch each other, until marriage! And, actually, I’m sure masturbation isn’t even allowed after marriage. For an example of the level of crazy this inspires in Mormon youth, Google: “soaking” and “jump humping”. Apparently they believe in a rather doltish God!

<sup>2</sup> Which, of course, was bleeped.

tenderness and do things in a way that feels good—to actually take the time to pamper yourself and focus on feeling good every which way you can, is worth challenging. Maybe spend some time in Paris, or Amsterdam!

If you do dare to give this a try, be vigilant for the urge to rush through it. That's your programming. If you're like most, you were programmed to hurry up, get it done, and definitely not linger in luxury—where the *devil* lays waiting!

No wonder people are so stressed! I once did a web search<sup>1</sup> on the word “Telegraph”, and learned that, prior to the telegraph, people took their time with things. And, why not, there was no need to hurry. The grain will get milled, the barrels will get stacked, and *we'll git around to shoein' that horse—mean time, set a spell and give us the gossip.*

Before the telegraph, it took weeks or even months for information to get around<sup>2</sup>. Business was conducted at a leisurely pace. Once the telegraph reached around the world, messages could be sent in a matter of minutes to anywhere the lines stretched. Suddenly, if you sat on your thumbs, competition pulled the rug out from under your lumbering ass. Radio led to even greater acceleration. And now with railways, highways, and jet planes, the world is going faster than the human nervous system was designed to handle.

Everybody is rushing around, and slow pokes are being left in the dust. It's hard to take the time to be good to yourself, or others. The fast pace is drilled into us, making it difficult to slow down and take time to enjoy the scenery or smell the flowers. This is the era of the Left-Brain.

---

<sup>1</sup> I bounce between DuckDuckGo and Google. Google is getting way too interested in my private life, but DuckDuckGo just doesn't produce a consistent quality search result.

<sup>2</sup> It took a minimum of 10 days for a ship to carry a message across the Atlantic. Though, bad weather lengthened that period, sometimes considerably.

Touchy-feely Right-brained concerns and desires are considered worthless indulgences. It's Fezziwig vs Scrooge, and Scrooge is kicking Fezzi butt.

I was called into the manager's office one day due to multiple complaints regarding my work-place emails. Too wordy! I was advised to learn how to be concise and to the point. Alack! The glib tongue of yore, heralded in Elizabethan lore, hath been sundered from the realm of discourse—bestowed, verily, upon the domain of the expeditious!<sup>1</sup>

Reminds me of the joke:

As a fisherman's boat pulled into the dock at a tiny seaside village, a visiting businessman verbally marveled at the quality of his catch, and then asked how long it took him to do it.

"Not very long," answered the fisherman.

"Oh?" replied the businessman, "Then why not stay out longer and catch more?". The fisherman explained that his 'Marvelous catch', though small, was sufficient to meet his needs and those of his family.

The businessman asked, "But what do you do with the rest of your time?"

"I sleep late, play my fiddle, spend time with my children, then take a siesta with my wife. In the evenings, I go into the village to see my friends, play cards, and sing a few songs..."

"Let me stop you," interrupted the businessman, "I have an MBA from Harvard, and I can help you! You should start by fishing longer every day. You can then sell the extra fish you catch, and with the surplus revenue, buy a bigger boat."

"To what end?" asked the fisherman.

"With the extra money the larger boat will bring, you can buy a second one, and a third, until, finally, you amass an entire fleet of trawlers. Then, instead

<sup>1</sup> Thank you ChatGPT 3.5!

of selling your fish to a middle man, you can negotiate directly with the processing plants and maybe even open your own plant. With the extra revenue you'll be able to leave this little village and move to the city—Los Angeles for example, or even New York City! From there you can direct your huge new enterprise.”

“How long would that take?” asked the fisherman.

“Twenty, perhaps twenty-five years,” replied the businessman.

“And after that?”

“Afterwards? Well my Friend, That’s when it gets really lucrative,” the businessman said, with an oleaginous chuckle. “When your business gets that big, you can start selling stocks and make millions!”

“Millions? Really? What will I do with millions?” asked the fisherman.

“Why, retire of course! Live in a tiny village near the coast, sleep late, play your fiddle, spend time with your grandchildren, take a siesta with your wife and spend your evenings playing cards, and singing songs with your friends, and doing what you like.”

Consider this:

- Is there an art and/or music program in your local public school?
- Is artistic or musical talent included in standardized testing.
- In what esteem are artists, musicians, and dancers held in our society. Sure, there’s Andy Warhol, Jackson Pollock, Mikhail Baryshnikov, John Coltrane and Stevie Wonder, but unless you make it to the “big time”, you’re pretty much at the top of the “hated by your in-laws” list<sup>1</sup>. Unlike, say, dentists, lawyers and doctors.

---

<sup>1</sup> When I DuckDuckGo’ed “Famous Contemporary Artists” I found list after list of names I had never heard of, like “Cindy Sherman” and “Mark Grotjahn”.

- If your answer to the first two questions was, “Why should there be?!”, I rest my case!

Buck the system. Let yourself relax. Allow yourself to indulge in some beauty and silence. The Left-Brain is all about chatter. “Yakety-yak.” Evaluate this, judge that, decide whether to fear some weird thing over there, then move on!

**Left-Brain:** “WHY ARE YOU LINGERING?!? IT’S ALL LABELED AND CLASSIFIED! MOVE ON! WE’RE BORED!!”

**Right-Brain:** Put on some soft music. Light some candles. Burn some incense. Learn to meditate. Take up Yoga, or Tai Chi<sup>1</sup>. Tune into the ever-new moment. Go on a walk in nature and admire the beauty around you. Interact with people delighting in their nuance. Take the longer scenic route. Revel in the golden silence.

In other words, give the Right-Brain a chance.

Another resource is the book: *The Artist’s Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*. It’s available at Barnes & Noble in paperback for \$17 (as of this writing – search on “The Artist’s Way”, otherwise you’ll only hit on the more expensive hardback).

Among the many other excellent exercises and wisdom in this book, *The Artist’s Way* describes a practice taught in most beginning art classes (at least that was the case in the drawing class I attended at Pierce Jr. College in Los Angeles, CA):

---

<sup>1</sup> And if you’re an impatient “Westerner”, consider Tai Chi Chih, an “Americanized” form of Tai Chi, developed by Justin Stone, an American t’ai chi ch’üan master. It is far easier to learn, mainly because all of the martial arts aspects of formal Tai Chi were removed, leaving 19 simple movements that, by most accounts, do a fine job of circulating and balancing chi consistent with the more complicated form of Tai Chi, sans the steep learning curve. Most have a positive experience the first time they try it.

It's called *contour drawing* or *blind drawing*. Basically, you move a pencil on a piece of paper, while following the contours of an actual object with your eye. A flower is a good subject. Run your eye along the curves and swirls of the petals while following along, as best as you can, with your pencil. Discipline yourself to not look away from the flower, or whatever it is you are drawing. Resist the temptation to look at the drawing. It's NOT about the drawing, it's about the *exercise*. And, by the way, you don't need any "artistic talent" to justify doing this exercise. Even non-artists can benefit—and who knows, maybe you'll discover latent talent!

It doesn't matter how good (or bad) the final drawing is—the value is in the mental training induced by this activity. If you're like most people, at first, your mind will go nuts:

"OK!"

"*Wonderful!!*"

"A flower!"

"We see it!"

"For kryss-sake, can we move on already?!!"

"Oh, geez...they're still doing it!!!"

"We get it, alright?! It's a friggin' flower!"

"IDENTIFIED!!"

"DONE!!!"

This can go on for up to 15 or 20 *loooooong* minutes. It takes a great deal of self control to endure until that magic moment when the Left-Brain gives up. When the Left-Brain finally shuts up, the contrast is—well—*mind blowing!!*

If you can get to the point where the Left-Brain goes silent, you will not only experience a quiet mind, but you might even begin to see the



beauty in those contours; the nuance of color and texture; the finer details a moment ago you were missing; the whole *visual song* of the thing!

You might get to experience the world the way only the Right-Brain sees it. The Right-Brain only understands shapes, textures, colors and the non-verbal aspects of perception. The Left-Brain, with its impatient cataloging of the world into symbolic references, misses a great deal—which means YOU miss a great deal if your Right-Brain is asleep.

It's like that large "R" I challenged you with in a previous chapter. The Left-Brain immediately labels it an "Uppercase R" and wants nothing more to do with it. The Right-Brain, sees all the contour and spaces, and delights in the beauty of the form.

When we learned to read, most of us lost this appreciation for the beauty of things. They became just *things*. The "moment" became boring and dull. Once everything in the vicinity is identified, categorized, and logged, there is nothing more for the Left-Brain to do. Without the ability to switch to the Right-Brain, one is left with impatience and dissatisfaction.

When I'm in my Left-Brain, something like the following Navajo moving meditation is excruciating:

While taking slow, steady steps, recite the following—one line per step:

*In beauty I walk <step>*

*With beauty to the right of me I walk <step>*

*With beauty to the left of me I walk <step>*

*With beauty before me I walk <step>*

*With beauty behind me I walk <step>*

*With beauty above me I walk <step>*

*With beauty below me I walk <step>*

*With beauty all around me I walk <step>*

*It has become beauty again <step>*

*<repeat>*

In a Right-Brain frame of mind, this is blissful—essentially, a *moving meditation*.

Another example is walking a labyrinth. The Left-Brain will demand you pick up the pace. “If we must engage in this nonsense, can we at least not dawdle?!” But, dawdle you must, or you’ll miss the point: to quiet this Left-Brain chatter so the “moment” can billow to the fore, captivating your consciousness.

Bottom line, annoying your Left-Brain until it leaves in a huff is a key to being *in the moment*, where your Left-Brain might label you *Happy For No Damn Reason*, were it still passing judgment!

## Your Mind Is A Model Maker

*"When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be."*

~Lao Tzu

And, speaking of the cosmos, can you imagine 34 million miles? Here it is with all the zeros:

34,000,000

That's, roughly, the distance from Earth to Mars at the most optimal time to travel there<sup>1</sup>. All this talk about going to Mars may be fun, but really, if you try to imagine such a journey, can you, really? With present technology, the journey would take around 7 months<sup>2</sup>! It's easy to say "34 million miles", but do you *know* what that *really means*<sup>3</sup>?

What about this distance?:

24,925,372,000,000 miles

That's the distance to **Proxima Centauri**, the next known star beyond

---

<sup>1</sup> The distance between us and Mars varies quite a bit, because Mars flies around the Sun at a slower pace than we do—by about half the speed. Sometimes Mars is on the same side of the sun as we are, in which case we're a few tens of millions of miles away. But, when Mars is clear over on the other side of the Sun, from us, it's more like a quarter of a *Billion* miles!

<sup>2</sup> Mars and Earth line up on the same side of the sun every 780 Earth days, or around every 2 Earth years. In other words, that's when Mars is closest to Earth, making for minimal travel time to Mars. That travel time is even lower [better] if Venus is positioned to offer a boost. What this means is, transportation to and from Mars will likely be restricted to a short window that opens, roughly, every 2 years. There is NASA funded development on a Plasma Drive that might cut that 7 month travel time roughly in half, but couples in a long distance relationship will still have to wait two years for their next extraterrestrial encounter—nudge, nudge.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps when people are *actually* taking trips to Mars, that will change.

the Sun. Were the Voyager 1 space probe able to point itself towards this star, it would take it around **74,774 years** to get there at its present speed of **10.6 miles per second** [17 kilometers per second]!

The best you can do is imagine something that feels far away, and apply that feeling to each of these unimaginable distances. In other words, a mental model called “Great Distance” is created by your mind, and used to simulate knowledge of 24,925,372,000,000 miles.

Same for time. 7 months is fairly easy to fathom. But, 74,774 years? I can't do it! But, I *can* conjure up a model of *vast time* and give myself a semblance of appreciation. Just now, my mind did it by pausing for 3 seconds, then thinking, “Yeah, kinda like that!”

*“Essentially all models are wrong, but some are useful.”*

~ George Box – a preeminent statistician

Our only way to relate to *reality* is through the models we conjure in our mind.

For instance, *soap*. We just assume soap is a great thing. We wash our hands with it. We cover our bodies with it when we shower. In fact, most use more than one kind of soap: Shampoo for the hair, bar soap for the body—or, now there's this thing called *Body Wash?!?*

But, is that a good thing, really? What if that stuff gets absorbed into the skin? And, what if it messes with the metabolism and causes obesity? That would explain why there are so many overweight people walking around<sup>1</sup>. After all, soap *is* made from fat—so, doesn't it stand to reason that it would *make you fat?!?*

---

<sup>1</sup> Me included!

Did you believe any of that? Sounded plausible, right—especially when I added that little nugget about *soap being made from fat*—which is true, by the way<sup>1</sup>. I messed with your *soap model*. Sorry! Let me fix your model: Soap isn't significantly absorbed by the skin, and it doesn't make you fat...*or does it?!?*

I once saw a FaceBook ad that wanted to mess with my soap model. It implied that *soap was killing me!*

I have no idea what soap horror story they were pitching, because I never indulge such *Clickbait fear mongering*<sup>2</sup>. But I *do* avoid Fluoride.

Fluoride contains *Fluorine*. And Fluorine is similar to Chlorine. When I was a kid, my friends were like me: Curious, and a bit *Mad Scientist*. For instance: Ray. Soon after Ray's parents sprung for a backyard swimming pool, he started to play with the pool chemicals. He was my best friend, at the time, and validated our friendship by giving me an exclusive inside track to his chemistry tomfoolery, which included the discovery of a particular combination that bubbled out a brownish-green gas. It behaved like a vaporous liquid, in that it collected at the bottom of whatever container it was spilled into. It did this because it's a gas that is around two and a half times as dense as air. When he tilted the container, it poured out like a liquid, so, he of course poured it on things—for instance, a nice, healthy, green leaf—which promptly shriveled and turned brown! *Que evil laugh.*

Next, a flower perished in similar fashion. Then a bug. During this mad-scientist muck-about, an errant breeze made him the victim. A puff of brownish-green gas rode the breeze to his face, some of which

---

<sup>1</sup> At least it used to be true. But, who knows what goes on behind the doors of a modern day soap factory!!

<sup>2</sup> It was one of those Facebook ads that scroll by, which I never click on.

was conveyed to his lungs by his gasp of surprise. A trip to the emergency room led to treatment for a particular kind of pneumonia where one's lungs try to drown themselves.

After a week, or so, he was fine, but we both learned that Chlorine gas was not to be trifled with. Case-in-point: It was used by the Germans to eradicate Frenchman hiding in trenches during WWI. An atrocity some have yet to forgive.

Fluorine is far worse! Combine it with hydrogen and you get hydrofluoric acid, one of the most corrosive acids on the planet. It attacks many metals, as well as rock, ceramic, even glass. It will also eat flesh and bone! But, being a relatively weak acid, it's not really ideal for disposing of bodies, so it's odd that Walter White<sup>1</sup>, a supposed chemical genius, wouldn't choose something more like this thing, in chemistry, called a *super-acid*! Maybe the writers mistook it for fluoroantimonic acid?

Hydrofluoric acid is, however, a nasty poison, and is very dangerous to handle. In gas form it causes permanent damage to lung tissue, and eats away the corneas of the eyes. Get it on your skin, and it will imperceptibly and painlessly soak through the skin and muscle, to silently and slowly dissolve your bones! You can't stop it! You're essentially screwed!! And they put Fluorine, in the form of "Fluoride", in the water!! And in toothpaste!!!

OK, I'm over blowing that. Once Fluorine is in the form called "Fluoride", it's less horrifying. But, check the side of a tube of Crest, or Colgate. You'll find words to the affect:

**Warning:** *If more than used for brushing is accidentally swallowed, get*

---

<sup>1</sup> The main character in the AMC TV show *Breaking Bad*

*medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away.*

EEK! We put that in our mouth?!?

Boom!<sup>1</sup> If you didn't know any of that before, your tooth brushing model just changed! And, maybe even your tap water model<sup>2</sup>!

Was that the first time you ever looked at the small print on a tube of toothpaste? Or, did you just accept it as harmless—because, after all, 9 out of 10 dentists recommend it<sup>3</sup>.

Remember how I called life weird and anomalous to everything else going on in the Universe? That is a model. Another model for the expected ubiquity of life could easily be: *Life is a natural outcome of the dynamics of the Universe*. After all, consider that planet Earth came into being around 4 billion years ago. And, it wasn't long after its formation that life sprang up on its surface, which suggests that, unless it was some odd coincidence, life is a common occurrence, and likely exists on every, or at least nearly every planet in the Universe positioned in that solar system's "Goldilocks zone"<sup>4</sup>, and that possesses all the components needed to support life, such as a magnetic field to deflect harmful radiation, an atmosphere with the proper chemistry, actual water, etc.!

So, there you go. Two diametrically opposed models for the chance of life existing in the Universe.

It could also be that life only exists here on Earth, and it's only *because* it only happened here, that we are here wondering about it. That's a *we're pretty much alone in the Universe* model.

---

<sup>1</sup> No...not Emeril Lagasse. The TV series *Lost!*

<sup>2</sup> Not all municipalities put Fluoride in their water. Ask your local government, if you're at all freaked by this.

<sup>3</sup> I sure would like to find that tenth dentist!!

<sup>4</sup> A planet in the *Goldilocks Zone* is one that is positioned at a distance *just right* for water to exist as a liquid, at least part of the time.

Another model is that life originated elsewhere in the Universe, and like the wind-blown seeds of a dandelion flower, is/was carried through the cosmos on icy rocks that, following a fiery fall to a new planet's surface, causes life to spawn there.

So, that's four different *how life occurs in the Universe* models.

- The *Life is anomalous in the Universe* model
- The *Life is a natural outcome of the dynamics of the Universe* model
- The *Life only exists here on Earth* model
- The *Dandelion Seed* model

Notice how some of these models overlap. The *Life only exists here on Earth* model overlaps the *Life is anomalous in the Universe* model. And the *Dandelion Seed* model overlaps the *Life is a natural outcome of the dynamics of the Universe* model. The models aren't exactly the same, but they have similar features.

We form models for people, as well. And, *your* model for a particular person will likely be different from *my* model for that person. For instance, suppose we have a mutual friend named "Fred". What *you* know about Fred might be similar to what *I* know about Fred. In fact, our knowledge of Fred probably overlaps. But, also, you could probably tell me things about Fred that I don't know, and I could tell you things to get your eyes rolling. I mean—Fred... what a guy, right?!

Suppose you told me *Fred likes Jello*—especially *lime Jello*. I might say, "Yeah, I knew that".

And, then you might say, "Yeah, but did you know that he likes to eat his Jello with a straw? He takes little *core samples*, sucking them up, making a *very* annoying sound!"



The expression on my face, of exalted awe, would expose my previous ignorance of this fact.

Then, digging deep into my vault of Fred tomfoolery, I might offer, “I bet you didn’t know Fred can ride a unicycle, and that his dream, since childhood, is to join a circus.”

To which, while flashing a hint of smugness with your eyes, you might reply, “I did..and specifically Cirque Du Soleil. In fact he actually auditioned, and was turned down because, being afraid of heights, he refused to ride their fourteen foot tall unicycle.”

Neither of us really know Fred—not entirely. And, in fact, all we have is a concept of Fred—a *model*, in our head, that we call “Fred”. In our minds, Fred is an abstract construct. There’s the *idea* of Fred, composed of memories of our moments with the living, breathing Fred, and memories of stories we heard about Fred, and even things we deduced about Fred, based on extrapolations, surmises and best guesses, that wind up influencing our *Fred model*, a lot of which happens without us even realizing it, i.e. realizing that we’re allowing uncorroborated second hand “knowledge” to corrupt our Fred model. As such, it’s unwise to consider any model of “Fred” as a reliable predictor of “real” Fred.

Of course, Fred is a character I made up, but consider how this applies to actual people in your life.

And, what about the things we think we know about Fred, but are actually not true—those *corruptions of the model*? Is Fred really addicted to coffee enemas? Is he really a closet fan of British baking shows? Does Fred really have a secret wife in Smackover, Arkansas? Does Fred have a habit of steering a car with his knee, while, for instance, biting into an

Alfredo's Carne Asada Burrito, one of his favorite foods, ever<sup>1</sup>? And, does Fred *really* refer to his secret second wife as his “stranger with candy”—but only in the company of his closest friends?

My concept of Fred is of a, perhaps, less kinky Fred, who, for instance, likes fusion jazz, and peanut butter filled Bugles “Original Flavor” Corn Snacks<sup>2</sup>.

Perhaps your concept of Fred is far more racy, and licentious. In other words, your version of Fred delights in his personal collection of digital photos featuring naked girls



munching Ding Dongs<sup>3</sup>. Fun Fact: This little hobby led to an embarrassing encounter with tech support, due to his company-issued Blackberry locking up under the onslaught of a malware attack—malware that rode into his BlackBerry on a Trojan [type of computer virus] he inadvertently downloaded from a particularly seedy website featuring Ding Dongs, and naked, young, female Polynesian contortionists. I mean, how can anybody resist such a perplexity of au naturel poses coupled with the most delightful Hostess confection on

<sup>1</sup> They're enormous!

<sup>2</sup> He knows there's a Chocolate Peanut Butter flavor—but, prefers peanut butter without the chocolate, and he likes crunchy peanut butter, and the factory stuffed version is filled with *Creamy*, so he do-it-yourself, one-by-one packs crunchy peanut butter into Original Flavor bugles.

<sup>3</sup> Yes, that's a double entendre!

the planet?! Not Fred!

When you consider how much there is to know about any one person, how can we possibly have a truly complete concept of them, *ever*, in our mind.



In fact, Fred probably doesn't even know *Fred*. I mean, how many people actually, fully know themselves? Consider the implication of that! Isn't your concept of your very own self, really just a mere *model of you*?!

So... what, truly, is Fred to us? Is it *actually* Fred, or our *concept* of Fred? I mean, there aren't two Freds, right? Yet, *your* concept of Fred is clearly different from *my* concept of Fred. In fact, as I told you about Fred, you built a model, in your head, of Fred, didn't you. Yet, I bet, even though I fed you everything I made up about Fred, the "Fred model" you constructed, is different from the "Fred" I described to you<sup>1</sup>. Which means, there are actually three, Freds, right? Your model of Fred. My model of Fred [because I can't remember, at this moment, everything I made up about Fred—plus, I just made up something else about Fred, so the model I was talking about, before, is no longer the same model currently in my head!], and, *third*, the Fred described in these pages [which is different because I doubt either of us has a perfect recollection of what I wrote].

<sup>1</sup> Using the model of Fred I created in my own head, for this very exercise.

Intentionally left blank...for reasons that will soon become clear 😊

## Pop Quiz!

Without looking back, answer the following questions about Fred, then check how you did – the correct answers are on the page following this quiz:

1. True or False – Fred’s favorite Jello flavor is Lime.
2. Fred aspires to:
  - a. Perform on a unicycle in Cirque Du Soleil.
  - b. Binge watch British baking shows.
  - c. Devour Carne Asada Burritos from Alfredo’s.
  - d. All of the above.
3. What kind of coffee does Fred prefer in his enema?
  - a. Colombian Dark Roast
  - b. Espresso
  - c. Sanka
  - d. None of the above
4. Fred refers to his secret wife as his:
  - a. “Foreigner with candy”
  - b. “Stranger with candy”
  - c. “Randy Stranger”
  - d. None of the above
5. True or False – Fred likes the *Peanut Butter* flavor Bugles.
6. True or False – Fred likes to date models in Arkansas.
7. How does Fred typically use a straw?
  - a. To drink a Slurpee.
  - b. To suck up Jello “core samples”.
  - c. To inject peanut butter into Original Flavor Bugles.
  - d. All of the above.

8. One of Fred's favorite foods, ever, is Alfredo's Carne Asada Burrito – True or False?
9. True, or False – Weather Report is a band Fred might like.

## Answers:

1. False [He especially likes Lime, but his *favorite* Jello flavor is one not even commercially available – a flavor his mother used to make: *Gooseberry*<sup>1</sup>].
2. c is the most likely of the three. [The *Cirque Du Soleil* thing is history. After the rejection he gave up. Besides, it was never really established if riding a unicycle was part of his dream to join a circus. As for *British baking shows*, that was one of the things only *possibly* true about Fred. His passion for those monster burritos is real! BTW: it was a 16 foot tall unicycle he refused to ride. You said “14”, but You got it wrong!<sup>2</sup>]
3. d [The coffee enema was also on the lists of things only *possibly* true about Fred].
4. d [Because, there’s no *secret wife* – another nasty rumor about Fred, spawned from something he once said: “‘Stranger with candy’ might be a funny thing to call a secret wife!”]
5. False [General Mills doesn’t make Bugles in a plain *Peanut Butter* flavor, which is why Fred manually stuffs Regular flavored Bugles with peanut butter. You might have confused this with the *Chocolate Peanut Butter* flavored Bugles, which *do* exist.]
6. False [Fred has never even met a *model* in Arkansas – where did you get that idea?!? But, he does have *affairs* in Arkansas. Which is another theory for where the rumor about a *secret wife* came from. The company he works for has a training facility in Smackover, Arkansas, and being one of the top salespeople, he’s frequently sent there to train new salespeople, who, when female and attractive, he tends to go home with, which often leads to the nasty. But, he would never *marry* them!?! Fred!...am I right?<sup>3</sup>]

---

<sup>1</sup> Which is something about Fred that I just now made up! I know!! *Unfair!!!*

<sup>2</sup> Ha! I did it again!! *So unfair!!!!*

<sup>3</sup> Yeah. I’m pretty much messing with you, at this point!

**7.d** [Yes, it's true he likes to take Jello "core samples" and suck them up, making a hellishly annoying sound, but he's also an avid consumer of Slurpees, which he drinks with a straw, and makes yet another annoying sound while trying to suck up the last of the icy slurry at the bottom of the cup—which also involves taking "core samples". And, the way he injects peanut butter, into those Bugles is, in deed, with a straw, which, not surprisingly at this point, is yet another opportunity to take "core samples", which he takes strait from the jar of peanut butter, much to his wife's exasperation. It took couples counseling for them to realize he just needed his own *private* jar of peanut butter! Which was fine with her, because another thing that came out in one of those counseling sessions was her secret preference for CREAMY peanut butter!! [lord help us!!!] Fred prefers crunchy, even if the chunks occasionally get stuck in the straw. This was solved when he discovered Boba straws, designed to allow tapioca balls to flow freely when drinking bubble tea. They're fatter, but still thin enough to fit inside a Bugle snack horn. And, they actually make it possible to fill the horn more quickly.]

**8. True** [Driving with his knee was the bit that was *false* – at least, he'd like you to believe that– unless you think it's *cool*... In which case, YES, he drives with his knee *all the time*!]

**9. True** [Weather Report is a '70s to mid '80s *Fusion Jazz* band. In fact, they were one of the bands that *defined* the genre.]

So, OK...I admit I seriously messed with you, there. Notice if at any time Fred actually seemed real. Or, did you have a sense that Fred was nothing more than a *model* in your mind, and did that model shift as I underhandedly revealed more about Fred in the Answers portion of the Quiz—which, of course, was full-on cheating on my part! And, actually, I probably wouldn't have done very well on that quiz. I had to keep checking back to review what I wrote while creating the quiz "answers".

Also, notice if either *British baking shows*, or *Coffee enemas*, or any of the other *hearsay* things [*Secret wife in Smackover*; *knee steering*; *Alfredo's Carne*



*Asada Burritos*; “*strangers with candy*”], became part of your *Fred model*, even though *none* of those things were ever established as true about Fred. Well, actually, his love for Alfredo's Carne Asada Burritos was nailed down in the Quiz answers, but before that, it was still hearsay.

This was my underhanded way of giving you what I think is a rather realistic experience of the flaky nature of mental models. And the ridiculous degree we go to defend our models, not realizing they are nearly always flawed, incomplete, and *never* fully represent the real person/thing. I purposely made the quiz unfair to showcase this unreliability in our models. So much human misery is due to crappy models driving, miscommunication, misunderstanding, and misconception, leading to unfair accusation, punishment, ostracism, and large red “A”s embroidered on the bosoms of the hastily accused.

I also deliberately rigged the quiz, in an attempt to piss you off over something ridiculous—I mean, did you think you’d win a prize if you got all the questions right—about a person that *doesn’t even exist*<sup>1</sup>?

. - ----===<•:+:{☹}:+:•>===---- . .

And, how about some real-world examples: Did you know that Ann Margaret liked Strawberry Perfume, and would crawl on all fours, mimicking a cat, to make an entrance at her after-show parties? And, at Elvis’ after-show parties he liked to show off his Karate moves<sup>2</sup>. If you

<sup>1</sup> At least, as far as I know. I’m marginally psychic, so who knows, maybe I tuned into some guy named Fred, who really is exactly like I described! But, even so, it’s very unlikely I covered everything about this guy, whoever he is. How weird would it be if you actually know someone named Fred, who is exactly how I described!?! In which case, I guess you are the only one who has ever passed my quiz with flying colors!! And, in fact, you could even tell us more stuff about Fred! Yay, you!!

<sup>2</sup> My wife worked in Las Vegas back in the ‘70s and attended after show parties, rubbing elbows with numerous celebrities as a result—including Ann Margaret, and Elvis!

didn't already know these things, then you didn't fully know these icons. The model in your head, before I told you this, was likely less than what you now know. That's why your recollection of these famous people is a mere model!

I always thought Cass Elliot was the primary talent behind the group, *The Mamas & the Papas*. Turns out that model, of mine, was quite wrong. The last member to join the band, she had to overcome considerable opposition from John Phillips (one of the actual founders and writing talents) over her excessive weight and lower-register voice. John Phillips' wife, Michelle, was the other founding influence, and was the one instrumental in changing John's mind, and the rest is musical history.

Further reading on the biographies of this group, shattered more of my models of one of my favorite bands from the early 70's! For instance, "Mama" is a term used by biker gangs for the groupie women that hang out at the "clubhouse", and tends to have a demeaning connotation. Such was the inspiration for the name of the Phillips band, and the reason why Cass didn't really like the "Mama" sobriquet. There was, also, a lot of drama and sexual tension in the group (Cass had the hots for Phillips)—so much for my model of *purity and sweetness!*

OR

The biography I read could all be rubbish, in which case my model of "The Mamas And The Papas" is now polluted!

.. ----====<•+:{☺}:+•>====---- ..

For the longest time, cow herders expected their livestock to walk a straight line. This was the model for the *proper way* to march cattle to

slaughter. Nobody asked the cows, though—at least not until Temple Grandin came along. She took it upon herself to spend quality time with the cows, getting in the trenches with them, and ultimately, she learned how to think like them.

Of course, the ranchers called her crazy, as one is ought to do when one's models are challenged. Some of the ranchers even got a bit nasty—resisting with a literal vengeance. Too bad this book wasn't available at the time—it might have saved man, woman and cow a great deal of grief.

Among other things, she figured out that cows prefer a particular type of curved chute for shuttling livestock. It calms them because it gives them the idea they're being channeled back to the farm [aka, *home*]. Calmer animals result in less injury, and a more efficient flow. Eventually models were changed, and now lots of people, and cows, are happier, production is up, and sensibility won the day.

My model still suffers from the dangling question, *the cows think they are being herded back to the comfort of home, only to be turned into butcher stock— isn't that a terrible betrayal and how can Grandin be cool with that?!?* But, I'm not a rancher, nor a cow, nor am I innocent of taking culinary advantage.

We protest anything that challenges our models, and often it turns out to be much ado about nothing! And, worse: Kowtowing [pun intended] to our coveted models, even in the light of a new, better model, is us being our own worst enemy! NOT an ingredient for Happiness!

. - =====<•+:{0}:+•>===== - .

What if I told you that I own my own tanning bed. And, that I use it on a regular basis. Would you think me *shallow, bourgeois, stuck-up even?* Or, maybe, having already confessed to being a bit of a dork, perhaps you think of me as a *poser, a wannabe, a hopeless case?*

I do have a lovely tan. With no tan lines! Probably due to my one-eighth French, Mediterranean skin.

This space left blank to foil speedreaders.

Now, what if I told you I use the tanning bed to treat what would otherwise be a rampant case of severe psoriasis? I've had it since around age 10, but lately, without treatment, it gets pretty horrible. Before investing in the tanning bed, the lesions covered nearly half the skin on my body!<sup>1</sup>

Feeling better about me?

Relax. Every one of us harbors prejudices. It's built into human biology and often ingrained through our upbringing and socialization. We naturally make assumptions and pre-judge others based on such things as gender and gender identity, race, social class, religion, age, politics, even what geographical region a person is from. The distinction is in how we manage those prejudices. This propensity stems in part from our evolutionary ancestry, where crude mental models and tribalism offered survival advantages. These animal templates are still part of our mental machinery, and those ruled by these primitive patterns, are more likely to believe in, and/or act on those judgments and prejudices. A more enlightened [aka "woke"] human being is able to discount these impulses applying the veto of wisdom.

. - ----==<•+:{0}:+•>====- - .

---

<sup>1</sup> And, yup, I know about the risk of skin cancer. I've consulted with more than one dermatologist. And, I know about the drugs that have proven to be quite effective in reducing the incidents of lesions and psoriatic arthritis. They're just not for me, at this point.

Probably the most important models are ones you maintain about yourself, your capabilities, and/or how others see you. I like to refer to these personal models as “Fables” or “Cautionary Tales”<sup>1</sup>.

Unless you’re highly self-aware and/or blisteringly honest with yourself, these little tales you tell yourself, are only loosely based on truth, or are even completely false. We author these personal fables based on our perceptions and fears, and if I did my job right, by now you’re suspicious of such things. THAT’S why it’s so important to know how limited your senses are as you parse the world around you.

And, speaking of our models of our own capabilities: Almost always, we shortchange ourselves! More than likely, you’re capable of *far* more than you think you are.

· · ---====<•:+:{☺}:+:•>====--- · ·

Reality is a glut of information—far more information than our puny little minds can manage. I touched on this topic before, and now I shall go into more detail.

For proof of how overwhelmed our mind can get in the task of perceiving, go to a populated area, like a shopping mall [if you can find one!] or a Starbucks at 8:45AM on a work day, walk through the area, stop, take a moment to visualize what you saw, then turn around and see how well you did! Unless you’re one of those mothers with eyes in the back of her head, or you have a photographic or eidetic memory, you’ll likely see all sorts of stuff *that you missed*. For most tasks in life, it’s not necessary to be diligently cognizant of every detail about the materials

<sup>1</sup> For an explanation of *Cautionary Tales* check out #5 **Tune Into Your Feelings** [page 45]

we manipulate<sup>1</sup> when attempting to achieve our goals.

It's not necessary to have intimate knowledge of every grain of sand, when building a sand castle. It's not necessary to ponder the intricate physics involved in strolling across a room, or brewing a cup of coffee, in order to *actually* do it. Unless, of course you're new to *strolling across rooms*, or *brewing coffee*. Ask any baby, or novice barista.

If you've ever built a sand castle, you understand how sand, when it's a certain kind of "damp", sticks together well enough to form shapes. This also probably gives you a sense of the level of detail you can achieve when sculpting castles in sand. If the sand is too wet, it won't hold much of a shape. If it's too dry, the same thing. And, once you finish applying all this intuitive knowledge to your sand sculpture<sup>2</sup>, you know the sand will dry out, and your castle will eventually crumble. You're probably also aware that when the tide comes in, your castle will be eviscerated by the torrent of water. You probably know, too, that it's difficult to build long, thin structures with sand. Things like extended arms, long tree branches, or protruding proboscises.

You know these things because as you built your first castle, you constructed, in our mind, a *model of sand*.

Walking. Easy, right?. You probably don't remember, but there was a time when you couldn't walk. And, it took awhile to get from crawling, to your current adroitness at *walking without any thought of it*.

If you're one of the many who surmounted the challenge of the bicycle, you may remember how much your mind was engaged in the task...until

---

<sup>1</sup> I mean, if you're currently alive [you could be a ghost, reading this over a living person's shoulder, I suppose], you're converting oxygen into carbon dioxide. I think that qualifies as *manipulating materials*.

<sup>2</sup> Even a Sand Castle is a sculpture. I know it sounds funny to call it that, but if you ever made one – heck, you can call yourself a sculptor!

it wasn't. That's how it was to learn how to walk.

In all three cases, walking, riding a bike, and building sand castles, your mind developed a model that it uses to manage these tasks. It does this so it doesn't have to devote further mental effort to it. A sub-process, in the mind, takes over—a process composed of habit and muscle memory. Our minds do this all the time—usually without our notice. It's *hard*, until it's *easy*.

And, isn't that highly remarkable? I mean, walking seems second-nature, right? Tell that to the myriad of fine engineers who've tried to teach a robot to walk—tried and failed! Like in the following IEEE Spectrum video:



[A Compilation of Robots Falling Down at the DARPA Robotics Challenge](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17v17v17v17)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid17](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid17)



It wasn't until AI was used to manage all the variables tied up in taking a step, that robots became nimble walkers, and more:



[Unbelievable Robot Dance by Boston dynamics](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid43](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid43)

Like I said, it's not always necessary to be present to *absolute detail*. Most of the time we can let habit take over—like in the case of walking, or riding a bike. But, it's when we *reason* from a position of *forgetting* what we *took for granted*, that we run into trouble. So many arguments are caused by this sort of lapse. Many arguments are a *clash of models*. Each combatant is certain their model is *true* and *correct*. Yet, models often aren't!

Like if Fred's wife, upon hearing that Fred was passed over for promotion, [*once again!*], gets it in her head that Fred needs a little push.

**Wife:** "That's the fifth time they've given the Regional Manager position to someone else! You need to go in there and demand they give you a promotion! They're lucky to have someone as good as you!"

**Fred:** "Miles is good! He deserved to get it."

**Wife:** "But you're better! Way better! If you cared about me, and your son, you'd be a man, and march in there and demand what's yours!"

**Fred:** "What the hell do you know about it?!? Leave me alone!!"

**Wife:** "How dare you talk to me like that!!"

Fred, having his manhood called into question [another model, BTW] he storms out, making sure to slam the door. He hails a cab and takes it to the local bar where he pounds down a few Dark N Stormys<sup>1</sup>, then, once cooled down and fortified, goes back home to admit that because of his fear of heights, he doesn't like to fly, something he was keeping from her, and thus, something that never made it into her *model of him*. He further explained that when he's called into the field, he finagles a train ticket, whenever possible, which messes with scheduling because of the extended duration of a train ride.

Her model of Fred didn't include that little, rather important, detail. And, upon learning this, she softened to him. "Why didn't you just tell me, babe?" Make-up sex ensues.

Also missing from her model, at that point, was his numerous affairs. At least until she heard the "Strangers with Candy" rumor, whereupon her model adjusted to: *Fred with a second wife*. So much for happier times! Enraged, she hired a private investigator, and got validation that shifted her "second wife model" to a mere "cheating husband" model.

After the divorce, Fred gradually discarded his model of *being a married man* [it was tough, because Fred really does love his now ex-wife], and adopted the new *divorced man* model. He now tours with a local circus, and is happier than he ever was as a salesman, thus, *sad, train riding circus clown*, is his current model.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pour ~4 oz ginger beer [Reed's Premium Craft preferred] over ice (leave enough room for the rum), ½ oz lime juice freshly squeezed; carefully top with dark rum (the darker the better) [e.g. Gosling's Black Seal, Kraken or Woods]; garnish with lime wheel. Upon serving, plunge a swizzle stick, or straw through the ice causing the illusion of angry storm clouds. BTW: The trademarked drink must be made with Gosling's Black Seal rum and Gosling's Ginger Beer, otherwise it's not a lawful Dark N Stormy! But, we have our preferences, right? [Gosling's Ginger Beer has High Fructose Corn Syrup and "natural flavorings" - yuk! Reed's Premium is sweetened with honey and pineapple juice, and uses organic ginger root!]

There! You learned something new about Fred!

Our models seem so real! And that illusion of realness deceives us into believing in the veracity of these models—to the point where we defend them to ridiculous extent! The conviction that our model is *whole*, *complete* and *perfect*, leads to pointless conflicts that send decent people, who otherwise love each other, into nasty tailspins<sup>1</sup>.

Often, our models make us miserable. We tend to blame circumstances, but that's rarely correct. It's really our stubborn adherence to some long cherished model that colors our mood. For example:

- Proper behavior in “society”. The lady is a tramp!
- When a blind date shows up as better or worse than expected.
- Dreams of a *story book wedding* that prevent us from settling for a *Keep it simple* wedding, or opening ourselves to being more versatile, and perhaps, ultimately discovering a more satisfying alternative. We aren't aware of those things we haven't imagined, thus we limit ourselves to what we think we know. Like, the rained out garden wedding that is saved by the discovery of a nearby indoor garden venue with a coincident cancellation. The result is a wedding more magical than ever imagined because of the sound of gentle rain on the greenhouse glass, the sense of floating on a lush flower festooned greenery, the hundreds of butterflies fluttering about, and the fact that aunt Gretchen's lepidopterophobia<sup>2</sup> insured her religion based anti-gay hysteria would NOT be interrupting this very Lesbian wedding.
- When someone's personal-image model falls short, it can be a source of grief, and self destructive behavior. Anorexia is an extreme of this.

---

<sup>1</sup> Though, in the case of Fred, the rampant affairs were, of course, a legitimate point of contention, if for no other reason than he hid them from his wife. Had he acquired her consent, he might have been on better footing. But, then, when is that going to happen?! [You'd be surprised!]

<sup>2</sup> Fear of butterflies.

- The “*perfect family*”. What is it? Norman Rockwell? Lifetime Original Movie? The Addams Family? Little House On The Prairie? The Brady Bunch? Roseanne? In 12-step programs I learned the value of what is known as an “Extended Family”. This was especially healing for those whose natural families were/are a highly dysfunctional disaster [probably the very thing that drove them to 12-step, in the first place].
- The model of the *father of the bride*. Perhaps he could use some help paying for that very magical wedding!?
- Some people’s concept of the *homeless*. Are they, really, all just low-life deadbeats? I’ve met a few, and... no.
- The woman’s role. There’s a model that keeps shifting!
- Maleness. Another shifting model. And, wildly geographical. I’ve attended many a “Men’s Group” where we hashed this out. The lack of healthy male role models is rampant in this society [unlike in my possibly romanticized model of Native American life]!
- First impressions. Typically wrong, right?
- The University Degree. When I hear parents worrying about putting money away for their children’s college education, I wonder at the future drama of a child being pushed away from a vocational career, that might be a better fit for them. Plumbers, electricians, computer technicians, construction workers, etc. can have satisfying, and comfortable lives, with a good retirement. Even harder is the pull towards a “creative” life. How often children suffer under the weight of a parents model of a “secure life” for their child, a model incompatible with the life that would make them *actually* happy. In that scenario, there are two different, and opposing “happiness” models. Typically, in the parents model, comfort and safety (ultimately an issue of comfort) is more of a concern than in the child’s happiness model.
- Who our friends should be. Who our lovers should be. Who we should hate.

Who we should laud. Who we should shun. A societal collective model can wreak havoc on the black sheep who finds it difficult, if not impossible to conform. I wonder if “black sheep” people are actually “teacher souls” who come into life to act as examples of how F’ed up a societal model actually is.

- The venerable “White Picket Fence.” A woman, in Simi Valley, CA, using concrete and salvaged beverage bottles, once redefined the concept of “house” and “home”. Check out Grandma Prisbrey’s Bottle Village @ [www.bottlevillage.com](http://www.bottlevillage.com)
- Ex-cons. We think the worst, but sometimes they’re the best! I’ve rubbed some of those elbows, too: thus my belief in redemption. Also, some of them really are innocent! Also, the war on drugs generated a lot of “false negatives” – i.e. non-criminals treated as criminals. The WOD is policy generated based on some of the worst publicly held models about recreational drug use [Thank you *Reefer Madness*]! There really is a valid distinction between “drug use” and “drug abuse”, just as with alcohol. Should we lock up the social drinker because they *might* kill someone with a car? Yeah, we tested that in the Roaring 20’s!
- Immigrants. Now there’s a bed of hypocrisy! One’s denigrating model for the typical immigrant suddenly changes when the grandparents are included...no? I mean, this is a nation built on immigration, right?. In fact, it could be said that anyone who isn’t descended from the original natives of this land, is an immigrant. And, what about all those Brits who landed on the East Coast back in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries? Weren’t they, essentially, illegal immigrants? Especially the ones that participated in the Aboriginal Genocide, right? Or was murder not a crime back then? Did I mess with your immigration model...much?
- Refugees. These are the ones that probably most need our help! Often the people of a culture are judged by the atrocities of the rulers of said culture, or the worst, most flagrant members of said culture. For instance, Muslims. NO,

they aren't all Terrorists! In fact, most AREN'T. And, for facty-fact: Who started the violence, anyway – can you say “Crusades”?!? And, not all Mexicans are members of a drug cartel. And, people from Central America are mostly just people, not a band of caravaning criminals. Yes, there are a few criminals/gang members within their ranks. I bet there are a few criminals in your own neighborhood. Something my wife [before we met] discovered one day, coming home to police cars and helicopters and word that her landlord, who lived in her neighborhood, was a drug lord! Who knew? She didn't—he was not only a nice guy, but a very generous and helpful landlord [red flag?]. The police were happy, though—biggest drug bust of the century!

- The Fashion industry: Modeling this season's often ridiculous model of *la dernière mode*. What is it? Nobody really knows! And, don't get me wrong, some of it is really creative. I liked Nigel Xavier's creations on “Next In Fashion” [yeah, I watch] – notice that I just expressed an opinion of what should be considered “proper fashion”, which may or may not match your model of “proper fashion”.
- Dance forms. A dance contestant does their best to match the model in the judge's mind. Back in the 70's, holding onto the hope that my dorky self might somehow become popular, I purchased a book called “Hullabaloo” containing dance moves like “The Frog”, “The Jerk”, “The Mashed Potatoes”...all dances that look rather silly, today! Were the models correct then? Or, are today's models correct?!? And, where the heck did Flamenco come from?!? Did someone, one day, say, “Hey, everybody! This is how a flamenco dances! Do it like this, or you're doing it wrong!”
- Famous people. Our model of Bill Cosby sure changed, right?! And Charlie Sheen. And Miley Cyrus. And Woody Allen. And Michael Richards. And Michael Jackson. And Mel Gibson. And Tiger Woods. And Ellen Degeneres [when she came out]. And Britney Spears. And Roseanne Barr. And Winona

Ryder?!? Hey, I'm not judging!

- People with tattoos. Now, there's a shifting model!
- All the other religions that aren't "true". I mean, think about it. If there's only one true religion, all the others are a flawed mental model. And if no religion is true, then they are ALL flawed mental models.
- The "Flat Earth" models [there are several]. This adjusted quite a bit over the decades, but has all but stabilized into a generally accepted absurdity. But, some of the ideas are clever, but still probably absurd.
- Models of adversity. For instance, following a Cancer diagnosis, one's model of the pain, of the process, of the potential [or lack of] for survival, and of the financial impact that might be incurred during a battle with cancer, is just that, a *model*. How often is the model worse than the real thing? Though, sometimes the real thing is worse than ever imagined. In both cases, the model is flawed.

The Summer that marked my transition from 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade was shadowed by dread. Rumors were that Mr. Thompson was a relentless tyrant bent on flunking his students. Mrs. Cince<sup>1</sup>, on the other hand, was FUN! In fact, the previous semester, I got a taste of what her classroom was like. I was one of the few chosen to participate in a school sponsored youth-camp at Clear Creek in Topanga Canyon, CA<sup>2</sup>, and she was the lead. We met in her class before boarding the bus. The atmosphere was of joy and anticipation, and she presented an image of being a really fun person.

I begged and pleaded with the Gods, the Fates, the Alabaster Custodians of Scholastic Assignment, to please, PLEASE!! NOT put me in *Mr*

---

<sup>1</sup> I'm not sure of that name – that might have been my 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, who was also pretty alright! But, I will go with it so I don't have to keep saying "that teacher who" and such.

<sup>2</sup> At least I think that's where it was. I tried to find it on Google Maps to no avail.

*Thompson's class!!!* “I want to be in Mrs. Cince’s class!!! Paaaleeeese!!!!!”

Mr. Thompson, it turned out, was not so bad. He *was* a disciplinarian, and quite creative at dispensing punishment. But, it was clear he cared, and was merely trying to shape us for Middle School and life in general. This man that I spent so much energy fearing and dreading, based on the model I created of him, once called me a “Gentleman and a scholar.” ME!?! The kid who brought modeling clay to school to play with in the concealing book well beneath the desk I was assigned to; the kid who refused to do homework because, hey, that’s MY TIME—it was bad enough I had to waste so much of my day at school; the kid who went out of his way to surreptitiously cause classroom disruptions; *that guy*???...a “gentleman and a scholar”?!?

So often we bite our fingernails [figuratively or literally] over anxiety generated by our mental models. It’s a whole dimension of life we live that is largely false. The elevated mental ability that sets us apart from animals, can be our friend, or a nasty foe. A stark example is the prognosis of limb loss, due to infection, or bone cancer, or the like. What is your mental model of amputee-ism? Mine used to be full of despair and “what’s the point of going on” apprehension [and I was never a candidate for amputation!]. Now it’s FAR less pessimistic. The media is rife with stories of remarkable triumph over the loss of a limb, or even limbs! Not that I’m wishing that on myself! I’m sure you’ve seen the videos of people running marathons on one or more prosthetic legs. It’s amazing how much mobility and functionality one can achieve with a prosthetic. And, with the advances in implantation, AI and brain interface technology, it’s getting even better. There are, now, cases of paraplegics up and walking around, due to this new technology! Model shifted!



It is SO important to understand that ALL your ideas about EVERYTHING are *not* real. They might resemble reality, to one extent or another, but any such resemblance is sketchy and not to be held as a standard, and should be questioned, especially in those moments when accuracy will make all the difference—like when interacting with a loved one, or judging a situation, or holding someone to account, or even when holding yourself to account. EVERYTHING in your consciousnesses, EVERYTHING in your purview, EVERYTHING your senses convey to you become a MENTAL MODEL! EVERYTHING!!! And mental models are never EVERYTHING!

. . ----===<•:+:{☉}:+•>===== . .

Did you know Fred is wanted for murder? Yeah. He killed a man in cold blood—some little girl’s father—put a bullet in his skull, and showed no remorse afterward, either!

*What do you think of Fred, now?*

. . ----===<•:+:{☉}:+•>===== . .

Here’s a real life example of how these mental models lead people astray.

Some who challenge Mt Everest die in the attempt. If it wasn’t a stumble sending them careening into a deep crevasse, it’s likely their lifeless oxygen starved body left where it dropped, for everyone to *step over*—because they have to, often with great trepidation.

What might be missing from your model of all of this is: A proper perspective of rescue at that altitude, in those circumstances, even with

access to modern technology. At that altitude, on such treacherous terrain, rescue is *very* difficult, and usually rescuers can't arrive in time to preserve limbs, or even life.

I have a model of the trek up the slopes of Everest. And my model makes it seem easy. It's just walking, right? And, some climbing, right? And on a clear, quiet, windless day, it should be a stroll in a somewhat inclined park, right?!? So, what's all the fuss about?

The fuss, I remind myself, is the *cold*; the lack of *air*; health issues caused by *high-altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE)*, which is a potentially fatal ailment of the lungs; rock hard icefalls best scaled using toe points that must be kicked into the ice on every exhausting upward step; the overall horrendous physical exertion required in an environment that saps the hell out of one's strength; the need for herculean endurance; the ambient dread of knowing any number of things could kill you at any moment—such as a crevasse suddenly opening underfoot—a falling ice-pinnacle impaling you from above—an avalanche grinding you beneath tons of ice and snow—and if you're not clipped to a rope<sup>1</sup>, one slip can send you bowling down the mountain, or in free-fall to certain death; the extreme mental acuity required to make NO mistakes, under conditions that can severely diminish the mind; the requirement to call up a will to continue against *extreme* discomfort.

But, when I'm sitting in my comfy chair, in my air conditioned home, at a mere 3000 feet above sea level, it all seems a cinch.

Another thing lacking in my Himalaya model is the sheer scale of the thing. The summit is frikin' 29,029 feet above sea level! That's nearly up where jumbo jets fly! And, from the Nepal side, it's nearly 13 miles

---

<sup>1</sup> At certain narrow stretches of the trail, one must un-clip, to get around a slower climber. Many of the falling deaths happen at this point.

from “Base Camp” to the summit. In total around 67 thousand feet, or some 27 thousand grueling steps. The going is over snow, creeping glaciers, steep icefalls, rickety aluminum ladders that span deep crevasses that could shift at any moment, all in sub-zero temperatures, and air so thin, most need supplemental oxygen to remain cognizant enough, or even conscious enough, to not commit a life snuffing error—and all it takes is *one error* to end your life, up there.

If I rely on my model, and forget all of that, I’m capable of thoughts like, “Why not! Sounds like an easy way to gain social boasting points!”, or “What’s the big deal—I could do that in my sleep!” And if I followed my grossly lacking model to Nepal, assuming I could lay my hands on the few tens of thousands of dollars such an endeavor typically costs [plane tickets, equipment, supplies, guides/sherpas, etc], I might make it to one or more of the Base Camps, but the odds are very good I, long before reaching the summit, and even long before entering the infamous “Death Zone”, would add my body to the hundreds currently well preserved in the surrounding permafrost!<sup>1</sup>

And, clearly, I’m not the only one with an insufficient model of the challenges involved in ascending Everest<sup>2</sup>. As word of hikers stepping over ice interred dead bodies, reached the common public, outrage ensued. Why aren’t these people being *rescued*?!

“*Just send some Sherpas up there to carry them down, or heck, send up a helicopter*”—easy peasy, right?!? Well, a helicopter can only fly to around 25 thousand feet. Most of the problems occur in the “Death Zone” at around 26,247 thousand feet—oops!

As for sending Sherpas, even they need nearly half a day to, from Base

---

<sup>1</sup> I am, after all, a fairly sedentary nerd, and thus not in the best shape.

<sup>2</sup> Very much a judgment, on my part.

Camp, get up to where the trouble typically occurs [again, that infamous *death zone*]. By then, the poor bloke has likely frozen to death. It's just not so easy as calling 911 and waiting for the paramedics! Also, much of the path is a single file, clipped to a life-line affair. To pass a person, one has to un-clip. When you un-clip, a single, simple stumble, on slippery ice, can send you over the precarious edge that runs along a mere slip of trail only *really* wide enough for one person—something not even Sherpas are immune to.

Imagine a line of one hundred people [and that's on a slow day] blocking a rescue attempt. Image Sherpas attempting to get to, and then help down, a person, on a stretch of one person wide icy trail, with a multi-thousand foot drop on the cliff side. Each person, on the trail, is clipped to a safety line. For each sherpa to get around each person, requires that sherpa to un-clip, step around that person, with the heels of their shoes hanging over seemingly bottomless air, re-clip, take a few breaths, and do it again. It's just not that easy. But, our ill-informed mental models, notoriously, simplify such things. We get into our heads ridiculous notions of what *should* be possible.

Peoples outrage over apparent Everest apathy, stems from the model in their mind of comparatively minuscule mountains, bright colored jumpsuits, and helicopters lowering ropes and rescue baskets, all full of flowery hope. Not knowing the existence of, nor the fallibility of, nor the deficient quality of our mental models, makes fools of us all and jackasses out of *armchair-experts* leveling harsh criticism at what they consider to be *lackadaisical* First Responders.

· - ----===<•+:{⊙}:+•>====- - ·

What really happened was Fred killed a man who was brutally sexually abusing his own daughter. It was the brother-in-law of his then girlfriend. The guy was gaslighting the whole family, who were aghast when Fred accused the brother-in-law. Fred was ejected, and asked to never return. But, previous to that, in a tender moment, the little girl confided in Fred. After the rebuke, and subsequent ostracism from the family, Fred returned under the cloak of night, and entered the house, at a time coincident with the timetable of abuse revealed by the young girl in the aforementioned conversation. He then, confronted the man, who he caught in the “act”, and nearly got his ass handed to him. The death was more of an accident than intentional murder, a fact revealed by a very good defense lawyer, who managed to get the case thrown out.

*NOW, what do you think of Fred?*

· - ----===<•:+:{☉}:+•>====- - - ·

*“The problem is people are being hated when they are real,  
and are being loved when they are fake”*  
~Bob Marley

And, by the way, did you know that everyone you’ve ever encountered has their own mental model of “you”? And, that every one of those models is different? Every person who has laid eyes on you, has their own idea of who and what you are, even if it was only a glance in passing! There are exactly one more than that many different versions of “who you are” in the world!

Why the plus one? Because, like I said before, you don’t even know who and what *you are*, otherwise you wouldn’t still be learning new things about yourself. And if you don’t agree—if you think you know everything there is to know about who and what you are, then you’re in for a big surprise the next time you notice that you just learned something new and different about yourself!

Willingness to reexamine one’s models, and when found wanting, the ability to modify, and even discard a personal model, has another name: *Beginner’s Mind*.

You know the saying *beginner’s luck*? The first time you cast your line you catch a prizewinning fish, or the first time you hit a golf ball, you get a hole in one<sup>1</sup>. Usually when this happens, it’s because you’re following

---

<sup>1</sup> Likely at a miniature golf court.

directions from an adept. A new model for doing the thing is being formed in your mind. Because it's a brand new activity, there are, yet, no adjunct models contending with the basic dynamics needed to succeed—no ancillary compensations for self doubt, anxiety, defeatist mentalities, etc. On the first try we have access to Zen<sup>2</sup>. Then we lose it to self-doubt, and to running “what-if” scenarios in our mind. The *trying to do it*—i.e. trying to repeat the action gets in the way of *just doing it*.

“Do, or do not. There is no `try`.”

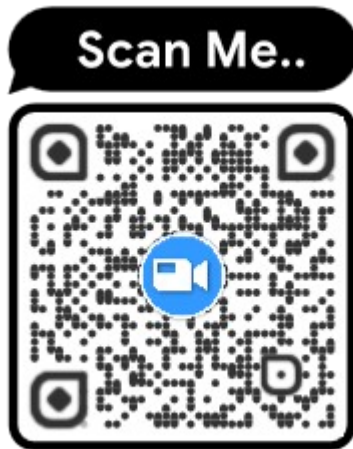
~ Yoda — Star Wars Episode V

“Thinking” gets in there and mucks it up. An example is how most people have difficulty with the simple act of using fallen tree log to cross a river. If you ignore the treacherous drop, it's a piece of cake. Just *do it!* It's the *thinking* you might lose your balance and fall that messes with your footing.

---

<sup>2</sup> I guess, if you want to nitpick, a Zen Master is someone who consistently does it to perfection merely by knowing they can. Thus, not quite a “master”—maybe a *temporary master* on that first try. BTW: Zen is both deliberate and not deliberate, or deliberately non-deliberate(?)

Here's more animals nonchalantly crossing a log bridge:



[The Log 3: Tranquility Amidst the Chaos  
www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid44](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=vid44)

Beginner's mind is similar. When someone approaches a new thing with no preconceived notions, or presumptions of expertise, they have beginner's mind, and are more likely to absorb the lesson with ease.

A young man once asked me to teach him the fundamentals of electronics. Tall order! But, I committed myself to the task. It wasn't long before my student gave up. We couldn't get past the first lesson: The difference between *voltage* and *current*. I explained to him that voltage acts like water pressure. Pressure is what induces a liquid, like water, to flow in a pipe. Electric current is like water flowing in a pipe. Thus, Voltage, being a pressure, causes Current to flow through wires, resistors, and other electronic components, and that Voltage develops *across* resistors, the way differences in pressure occur across constrictions in a pipe.

This clashed with a model that already existed in his mind for how Voltage and Current work. He argued that *voltage* is what flows through wires and resistors, etc, NOT *current*, and I attempted to correct him. "Are you sure?" he asked, "I don't want to learn this incorrectly, and then have to relearn it!"

We went a few more rounds—which included my assurance that I was



correct—that my decades of success in the electronics industry, and my ability to design working circuits suggested that I knew what I was talking about. He remained unconvinced, pointing at instances online of people agreeing with his position. His stubborn adherence to a flawed preconception, and supposed evidence from others in confusion, made him an unwilling student. Had he come to me with beginner’s mind, he might be designing his own circuits by now [he isn’t].

Being able to let go of what you think you know, and adjust your models to a greater, truer reality, is priceless. For an excellent presentation on the subject of mind-models, by an actual expert, check out the TED Talk by *Donald D. Hoffman* called:



[Do we see reality as it is?](https://www.ted.com/talks/donald-d-hoffman-do-we-see-reality-as-it-is)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web27](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web27)

Another example of how the models of society [aka *Societal Norms*] can affect happiness, is the career put on hold, or fully abandoned by societal pressure to

raise a family.

How often do societal norms divert people from their “bliss”? How often do dreams go to die in the crucible of:

- *There’s no way around convention/tradition* [pretty much, there always is]
- *I must be a good provider/father/mother* [good for what, or whom?]
- *God/Jesus/Buddha/Mohammad/The Maharishi/etc wouldn’t approve* [who put them in charge?]

- *This is the way* [especially if you're a Mandalorian 😊]

If you could trace every social milieu back to its origin, you're likely to find consistent motivations for their creation, such as *keeping the peace* or *preventing societal chaos*. or you might find an instigator such as human tragedy, the death of a child, sibling, or spouse, or some other grief inducing event. Humans are *animals with imagination*, which can be problematic. An untrained mind can promote all manner of unrest, and if that unrest annoys the wrong people—namely, control freaks who wield power—they're likely to establish structures that limit behaviors they deem “bad”, and that persist for generations to come. In other words, a legacy of stupid, silly rules that only serve the authority figure(s), and over time, become socially accepted, often absurd structures of limitation.

Consider the old “Roast” adage:

A young girl is in the kitchen, helping with food prep for a family gathering and witnesses her mother cutting off, and discarding, the ends of the roast before placing it in the pan. Puzzled because the pan was plenty large enough to contain the hunk of meat, she asks, “Why?!”

“You know, hon, I haven't the foggiest. It's just how my mom always did it”. In an attempt to assuage their curiosity, they get grandma on the line.

“Because, dear, your dad was too cheap to buy me a pan large enough to hold a standard roast. Wait, you're not still doing that, are you?”

“Well, it's how you...”

“My stars! Why can't you be more of a leader, like your sister!”

Mother gets into the cooking sherry to “medicate” the flareup of pain from living in the shadow of her “perfect” sister, and burns the roast, that

soon becomes a drunken tirade about how her efforts are under-appreciated, "...and you can all just go to hell."

Years later the young girl is fortunate enough to find ACoA, develops a loving extended family among the membership, who support her as she works through her mother-issues. She comes to accept her mother as a flawed human being with bad child-rearing role models, and in so doing, ends a line of ancestral toxicity going back who knows how far<sup>1</sup>.

How often are ample sized pans underutilized in life, and/or protein wasted, just because practices are handed down to those unwilling to question authority?

There is a Jewish practice called Kashrut that mandates the ownership of separate sets of dishes and utensils—one for meat, and one for dairy. Nobody remembers why, but I'm betting Kashrut has to do with the vulnerability of ancient utensils to the absorption of the foods into materials more porous than those in current use. For instance unglazed ceramics [aka *earthenware* or *bisque-ware*], and cutlery made of wood, which both are vulnerable to absorption of bacteria, etc. Today we have access to utensils that completely seal out the food that touches them, such as glazed ceramics, stainless steel, Pyrex, Corningware, dense plastics, etc. We also have freezers, preservatives and dishwashers with a "Sanitize" setting. Is Kashrut really needed, any longer<sup>2</sup>?

You gonna choose the Right Way, even if it's pointless in a modern context, or the Happy Way that places love and sensibility before dogma?

The lady is a tramp! And she's more likely to be Happy For No Damn Reason!

---

<sup>1</sup> Yes, I did elaborate, extensively, on that classic little story. The way I see it, there was more to tell 😊

<sup>2</sup> A Rabbi might argue that Kashrut, though possibly no longer relevant to the original intent, is *still* an exercise in devotion—Baruch Hashem!

## Black And White Thinking

*"Thinking is difficult. That's why most people judge."*  
-Carl Jung

Back in the days of evening radio drama there were the “good guys” and the “bad guys”. Buck Rogers vs Killer Kane. The Shadow and his campaign against evil doers. The Lone Ranger vs Cavendish. Very black and white—even in the way they dressed, and what color hats they wore.

Then there's *The Batman*, originally a DC comic book first published in 1939. This is a character that lives in the nebulous gray area between good and evil. Bruce Wayne struggles to regiment a blackness within his being, turning it to service of the fight against evil, but there is a cost—one that all his riches can't erase—resulting in an ever compounding dark debt that threatens to turn him down a murderous path not even Alfred, his faithful butler and legal guardian, can rescue him from<sup>1</sup>. It's never quite clear if he's doing it for the good of humanity, or to appease a vengeful heart<sup>2</sup>.

Why is this character so much more appealing than the one-dimensional radio-serial characters I mentioned before? Because, in the gray is a wealth of color. With such characters, you're never sure of the

---

<sup>1</sup> **The Dark Knight Saga** by Frank Miller takes this to the extreme.

<sup>2</sup> While still a child of 8<sup>th</sup> Bruce Wayne's parents were brutally gunned down right before is terrified eyes, by a common street thug—though the identity of this pivotal murderer varies throughout the telling. In Tim Burton's first *Batman* film, it was a young Joker that killed Thomas and Martha Wayne—oops, *Spoiler Alert!*

outcome. It's not a simple good-guy defeats bad-guy story.

It's like the movie *Casablanca*. Rick's grief over, and apparent hate for Ilsa, is based on a misunderstanding that when resolved, turns hate into renewed love, only to complicate an agonizing decision. The loss-gain-heroic loss turned to roguish acceptance arc makes for one of the greatest movies of all time.

Life is the same. Republicans vs Democrats. Liberals vs Conservatives. Nationalism vs Globalism. Pacifist vs Militarist. When you look at it that way, you miss a great deal.

I tell the story of Desmond Doss in a previous chapter [Maybe You're Not A Good Fit [page 214]. If your only thought when you hear someone calling themselves a *pacifist* is, "coward," or "traitor", then in Desmond Doss' case you would be doltishly incorrect! He was a war hero, who refused to carry a gun, yet won the highest honor the U.S. Government can bestow: *The Congressional Medal of Honor*. There are also people, who call themselves "Pacifist" purely to avoid the terrors of war. *Cowards*, right?

You might be surprised what can be learned by listening. Knowing a person's story can shape your opinion of them, sometimes vastly. If you're keen to judge someone, don't you, at least, owe them an ear? But, maybe you're afraid of being taken in by a *sob story*, or a con, or maybe you think "tough love" is a panacea.

Jim Carry was a High School drop-out who was booed off the stage during his first attempt at stand-up comedy, and was turned down when he auditioned for Saturday Night Live. What would you have thought about him, had you experienced him back then? Another High School drop-out was Katy Perry. She was also an early career "loser".

Oprah Winfrey could easily have been labeled a *Welfare tramp* for growing up poor and getting pregnant at age 14. Taken at face value, she might not have ever become the icon she is now. With a little listening, one might learn she was sexually abused from age 9 by a cousin, an uncle and a family friend, and that her single mother was a teenager. It wasn't tough love that helped her climb out of that hole—it was the loving care of her father, who helped her focus on her schooling. That “hand out” made it possible for her to win a full scholarship to Tennessee State University. And the rest is history. A Black and White assessment of 14 year old Oprah would likely miss the unflappable spirit that had her generate her own success. All that was needed was a little support, and a foundation to build on.

If you're into Jesus, isn't that what he's famous for? Walking around listening to people?

“Liberal” is another good example. A lot of gray areas exist under that tag. There are extreme Liberals who look down their nose at anyone not in agreement with their Leftist regiment. Then, there are Liberals with more of a live-and-let-live attitude, and everything in between. The same with Conservatives. There's quite a divide between a Reagan Republican, and the extreme views of Georgia Senator Greene. I could be wrong, but she seems even more Right-Wing Radical than Sarah Palin!

It's all very *Us vs Them*. Which is very *Black* and *White*. And, such black and white thinking is the source of a great deal of unnecessary misery—for the “thinker”, and for the thought of.

Rarely does one size fit all. But, it's easy to throw around labels. And, it's easy to lump one set of characteristics under a single tag. It's easy to

believe that people lumped under a particular label, all have the same nefarious traits. But, I guarantee you will be wrong 99% of the time.

It's the Left-Brain that does all of this labeling. The Right-Brain can see the subtleties—the gray areas. I'm certain this is why conservative officials push to eliminate the arts from education. To these Left-Brain dominant folks, “art” is a worthless annoyance. Just ask my mother's father, a Dr of Astronomy, stanch science bigot who shamed his daughter for pursuing a “worthless” art degree<sup>1</sup>—you'll need a seance, or a medium. He passed away in 2000, just months from reaching his goal of being a centenarian.

Not all Democrats are the same, just as not all Republicans are the same. Contrast Senator John McCain with Trump, or with Greene. Each is called “Republican”, but even they would balk at being lumped together. But, maybe you consider McCain a traitor not deserving of the “Republican” appellation. Okay, how about Will Hurd, or Mitt Romney, or Newt Gingrich? Nothing? Or, maybe, to you, McCain is pure Republican, and the likes of Trump and/or Greene are wacko impostors.

It's hard, putting yourself in the precarious, potentially awkward position of getting in the trenches with someone of *difference*. And, it can be intimidating to suspend judgment, where judgment would normally be harsh. Maybe you're stubbornly set in your opinions. But, consider that maybe you don't know it all. Consider that you could actually be wrong. If you've ever been falsely judged, you have a window into realizing how erroneous your own opinion of another can be. But, if you're like many, admitting that you're mistaken can be difficult—even nigh impossible.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ok, maybe that was a little harsh – but the guy could be really mean!! And, in the spirit of seeing shades of gray, he also could be very funny, and often had a delightful twinkle in his eye.

Perhaps you collect evidence to support your opinions, not realizing how tunneled your vision has become. This is a cognitive error. By focusing only on the thing you want to prove, you tend to ignore evidence that debunks your position—it's called Confirmation Bias. As Rumsfeld stated: *There are things you don't know you don't know.*

Conservatives tend to call Liberals *lazy*, but how lazy is it to not take the effort to reexamine one's models—to not give the benefit of the doubt—to avoid interaction that could clarify, illuminate and ultimately, mend rifts? Far safer, and far easier is hiding behind established constructs. And, don't get me wrong, there are Liberals guilty of this, as well. But, it seems to me to be less likely to hear a Liberal use the word "lazy" in the same context.

Let's try something other than politics. How about the "spectrum". I recently learned just how wide, and varied the differences are among those identified as *Autistic*. A great way to experience this is to watch the Netflix series: *Love On The Spectrum*.

Or how about CEOs? Are they all self obsessed, narcissistic fat-cats? Contrast Mark Zuckerberg with, say, Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google. Or, Bill Gates, and Warren Buffett. Or, Elon Musk, who wants to leave the planet, and Rose Marcario, CEO of Patagonia, a company dedicated to saving the planet.

And, revisiting my dog-attack episode, I was very black and white in my judgment of four legged, *murder mutts*. A dog, is *a dog*, is a *vicious child biting dog*, right?!? You can't trust a single one of them, right?!? Especially German Shepherds<sup>1!!!</sup> They are all evil, and should be put to death!! ...right?!?

---

<sup>1</sup> It was a German Shepherd that mangled my lip.



But, we all know that's a bit rash. Some are vicious, some are docile, some are yappy, with a bark that is worse than their bite (usually), and some are very loving and eager to please. My view of dogs has since broadened to include dogs that don't bite, but I still hold to the position that all dogs *slobber*, and want to *spread their dog-germs all over my face!* So, I'm not devoid of black and white thinking.

A common myth is that all cats are aloof, smug, independent, and detached. Not so. Cats can be very affectionate and devoted. Most cats absolutely hate riding in cars, but cats *do* exist that not only tolerate a road trip, but enjoy it. And, believe it or not, there are cat breeds that *like being in water*.

It's not a black-and-white world. Most issues twist in the shadowy shades between bright and dark. People are deep and complex. A *taco* is not necessarily the taco you're used to. A *newspaper* may, or may not actually report the news. And a *pretty face* can hide a multitude of maleficence! Same as an *ugly exterior* can conceal great inner beauty.

There's a vendor that parks in an empty lot on State Street in the small town of Hurricane [pronounced `Hurri-kin`], Utah, that makes a Taco that will forever ruin for you the standard `Americanized` taco.

Unwillingness to think between extremes, and allow for differences that might merit consideration, is the cause of *so much pain*.

- Are those tattoos really a sign the guy your daughter brought home is a reprobate?
- Is he really a two-timing louse for hugging that lovely *other* woman? What if the other woman is, in fact, his sister, or cousin, or platonic friend, or lab partner who just shared in a ground-breaking discovery, or...?
- Yes, that wedding cake that Becky baked is a little lopsided, and it spoils her

friend's dream of providing, for her daughter, a "perfect ceremony", but it's delicious, and the bride is happy, so was it really necessary to call Becky an "incompetent bitch"?!?

Happy for no damn reason usually occurs in the gray areas, where *judgment* is suspended in favor of *consideration*, and *conversation*.

## Reality Never Was Within Your Grasp

*"Reality leaves a lot to imagination."*

~John Lennon

What if the sun were to wink out—go dark—suddenly compress into a barely visible brown dwarf? Would you know about it right away?

There's a different way to frame this *maximum speed of everything* commonly referred to as "the speed of light". It takes light, leaving the surface of the Sun, around 8.3 minutes to reach Earth. Another way of saying that is: *it takes eight and a third minutes for the event of a photon of light, leaving the surface of the sun, to reach your awareness*. Thus, another term for the *speed of light* is:

The speed of *causality*!

So, no.. You wouldn't know right away if the sun winked out. You would have 8 minutes and 18 seconds of blissful ignorance, before your life went completely to hell!

When you look up at the night sky, you're looking into the past, and some of those stars you see, twinkling brightly in the dark void, may not even exist any more! But, *there is ABSOLUTELY NO WAY TO KNOW*<sup>1</sup>!

When some fine scholar says a star is some ump-tee-ump number of *light-years* away, they're saying the star is an ump-tee-ump number of years beyond our *awareness*! In other words, when you look at a star 10

---

<sup>1</sup> Within the current, known caboodle of science, that is.

light years distant, there is no way to know what is going on, in the vicinity of that star, at that same moment you're looking up at it, and you won't know anything about that until *10 years from now* [it probably won't look all that different, though, unless something catastrophic occurred—like the star went supernova or something].

Let that sink in. Nothing travels faster than light. NOTHING!<sup>1</sup> The speed that light travels is the *fastest* conveyance of *information* available to the five bodily senses. There is NO WAY to know what is going on over *there*, until that information reaches you, because *information* is the ONLY way for us to know *anything* about ANYTHING!! We don't notice this for things nearby, because the *speed of causality* is so fast. A firework bursts in the night sky and mere *microseconds* [that's millionths of a second] later, the eyes convey to your brain the dazzle of it. Then, seconds later comes the boom. And the nose might detect the smell of sulfur after minutes have passed—if you happen to be downwind. The skin might even detect the shock wave, if you're within range. But, the light absorbed by the eyes was the first clue. And even that bright little nimble nugget of knowing *wasn't instantaneous*, even though it *seemed instantaneous*!

When a star explodes, assuming it's not our own sun, knowledge of the event will be delayed by at least four years [unless it was some nearby undetected dark star, such as a neutron star or a black hole]. And the upper limit of that delay can be on the order of billions of years<sup>2</sup>, in which case we would have to be living billions of years from now, to notice. But, like I said, even things happening right next to you are in the past by the time you know about it! The further away it happened,

---

<sup>1</sup> Again, as far as Science knows.

<sup>2</sup> Now that the Jack Webb space telescope is functional, we have even more chances to learn about events that happened billions of years ago.

the further in the past the event was! NOTHING you PERCEIVE happens in the same moment you perceived it. It's ALL history! By the time you become aware of something, other things are already happening to it—things you won't know about until some later time!

Radiating away from you is a time warp getting more bent, the further it extends from you. You're seeing the moon around one second later. When Mars hangs red in the sky, the light is anywhere from a little more than 3 minutes old to as much as 10 or more minutes old, though the further away it gets, the less bright it is in the sky, and the more likely it is to be hanging in a daytime sky. Big, bright Jupiter was around 35 minutes ago, when it's as near to Earth as it ever is. Saturn, around 50 minutes ago. Sirius, the brightest of any of the stars that grace the Northern night sky? 8.6 *years* ago!



You can *never* really know what is happening *right NOW!* Not even in *yourself!* The very atoms, in your body, and in your mind, are separated by this *delay in causality!* It's a very minute separation that you don't notice, but it exists.

So, where do *YOU* exist in *NOW?* A popular spiritual meme suggests we "be in the NOW". But, that *NOW* is really *THEN*. So, in truth it's more like *BE in the NOW of PERCEPTION.* To truly be in the NOW of all things would require some sort of mystical perception that includes the depth and span of time. From the perception of a beam of light, all time is compressed into a singularity—in other words, a light beam experiences *ALL time, all at ONCE!* However, it's impossible for matter [or anything with *mass*] to reach the speed of light, but if we have a consciousness that is separate from the body, and if that consciousness is pure energy, then perhaps it has a true experience of *all-time-all-at-once.* In Metaphysical

jargon this is known as Cosmic Consciousness, and, apparently is within the reach of spiritual adepts [and possibly via certain mind-expanding drugs].

Another implication of this is: When you cause a thing to happen, the ramifications radiate away from *you* at the *speed of causality*<sup>1</sup>. No one *else* knows what you do, the exact moment you do it!

City lights can be seen from space, and might even be visible from the moon—especially during a lunar eclipse. Imagine you're on Earth, and you drop a wrench into a transformer bank at a critical power station, causing a huge blackout on the east coast of the United States. Astronauts on the International Space Station, some 250 miles above the earth, would know about it in mere milliseconds<sup>2</sup>.

Colonists on the Moon<sup>3</sup>, while out admiring the Full Earth, would gasp around a second and a third later. Someone on Mars, with a powerful telescope, might notice from 3 minutes, to as much as 20 minutes later, depending on the relative positions of the two planets.

Facebook posts from Mars regarding the event, would start showing up on Earth after another 3 to 20 minutes. By then, the lights could well be back on, but people on Mars would still think the lights were out for another 3 to 20 minutes! On average, it'll be over an hour before the Outer Planets hear of it, but you know those Belters—*anything south fo da belts im na mi concern*<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> And, remember, that's around 186,282 miles/second! Or, 299,792 kilometers/second! Or, 670,616,629 mph!!

<sup>2</sup> A *millisecond* is one thousandths of a second, or *one second* divided by *one-thousand*

<sup>3</sup> It won't be long!

<sup>4</sup> Homage to The Expanse – streaming on Prime Video. I used the *Belter Translator* at <https://lingoiam.com/BelterTranslator>

And, another, perhaps spooky implication: Because there is no way to know about events going on around you, until the information caused by those events actually reaches you, these things could very well not even *exist* before you receive information about them! *Does a tree, falling in a forest, make a sound if no one is there to hear it?* The bug it fell on certainly *did* get squashed—even if no one was there to witness its demise! But, maybe it was the bug who manifested the tree. Stupid bug!

. - - - - - <•+:{0}:+•> = - - - - - . .

You do NOT know *reality*! And you never will<sup>1</sup>! There's no way for your puny little brain to comprehend it all! **Joni Mitchell** sings about this in her song *Both Sides Now*.

*I've looked at clouds from both sides now  
From up and down and still somehow  
It's cloud illusions I recall  
I really don't know clouds at all*

~Joni Mitchell

Reality is structured in a way that makes it impossible to probe its very essence! How can the essence of a thing be used to probe its essence? That would be like water drinking itself! Or a ruler measuring itself! Or, a scale weighing itself!

But, scientists rarely let such things hold them back. Case-in-point: an intrepid effort, by scientists, is under way to “see” atoms.

Why is it so difficult to take a picture of an atom? Because they are so dang small. They're much smaller than the smallest particle of light

<sup>1</sup> Unless, of course, you have a full blown Cosmic Consciousness experience. But, as soon as it's over, it's back to the mundane and mere representations of reality that are modeled in your mind.



visible to the human eye. The scientific way of saying that is: *The wavelength of violet light, the smallest wavelength in the visible spectrum, is still colossally bigger than even the biggest atom.* Essentially atoms are *too small to see!*

Our eyes “see” things by catching the little “photon” balls that bounce off the things we’re looking at. The retina “screen”, at the back of our eyes, catches these little “light balls”, which form an image of the *thing*, as they strike the retina. The brain is informed as to how many of these little balls are hitting what part of the *retina screen*, and based on all those tallies, an image is inferred by the brain.

When a light source is trained on a thing—let’s say a *bunch of bananas*—the source [aka *lamp*, or *sun*, or by *candlelight*, etc.] is, essentially, firing these little balls [aka *photons*] at the object [aka *bananas*]. These balls strike



the bananas and ricochet off their surfaces in directions determined by the shape of the bananas. The balls that fly directly towards the eyes of the person looking at the bananas are the balls—the photons—that they *see*, and are the ones that form an image of bananas [upside down] on the retina. In other words, the retina *feels* these little light-balls when they strike it. And, that *feeling* becomes a signal that is relayed to the brain via a bundle of *nerve wires*. That was a vastly simplified explanation, but the intended take-away is a bunch of bananas is far larger than an atom. So, the balls of light, as they bounce off the bananas are like tennis balls bouncing off the side of a building.

The only reason the observer gets such a nice crisp image of the bananas is, a photon is WAY smaller than a banana—on the order of three fourths of a million times smaller<sup>1</sup>! So, imagine really teeny-tiny tennis balls bouncing off the bunch of bananas and some of them reaching, and entering your eyes..

When someone uses a microscope to look at tiny things, what they are doing is using lenses to limit the range [or “scope”] of photons that reach their eye. Like, if they wanted to look at some of the black spots on one of the bananas. When looking at a bunch of bananas, with an unaided eye, pretty much the whole bunch of bananas fit on the retina. But, when looking down the barrel of a microscope, through all those lenses, the image that shows up on the retina is of a small portion of one of the bananas—and in the case of our example, the portion where one, or more black spots reside. The ratio of the size of a photon, and the size of one of those banana spots is a bit less, so there are fewer photons making up the image of the banana spots.

If a banana spot is, say, 3 millimeters wide, then this ratio becomes a little more than ten thousand. Which means, our view of the banana spot is reduced to 10,000 photons wide. In other words, when looking through a microscope, only about 10,000 of the balls bouncing off that banana, reach your eye [or *eyes* if this is a binocular microscope].

The microscope being used to look at a group of black spots is a particular type of microscope, called an “optical microscope”. Basically, it’s a microscope that uses the actual light bouncing off whatever is being

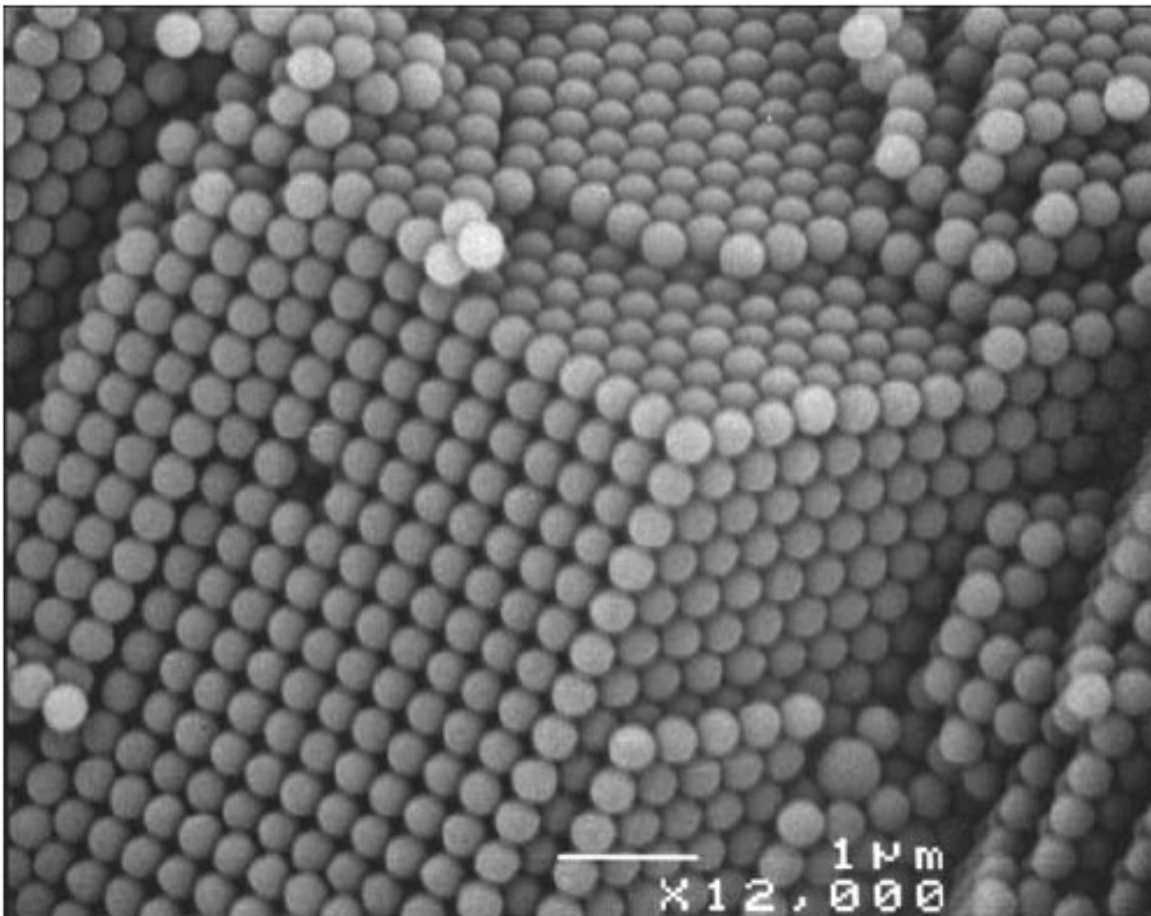
---

<sup>1</sup> Yellow light has a wavelength of roughly 579nm. A typical banana is around 21cm. If we consider the size of a photon to be the same as half the wavelength of it’s frequency, then the ratio of the size of a banana to the size of a photon of yellow light is:  $21\text{cm} / (579\text{nm} / 2) = 725$  thousand, or around a third of a million [that is a *very* simplistic “napkin calculation” and in another context, the “size of a photon” is considered far smaller, but in terms of optics, this *napkin math* is more correct].

looked at, to provide a closer view of that thing.

This works to a point. As long as the object being observed is enough larger than those little balls of light, it's possible to see an image made of actual light. For instance, things like bacteria, and human cells, are still large enough to resolve reasonably sharply. When the size of the item gets down to the insides of a cell, or down to the size of a typical virus, then things start getting fuzzy. At that point, the number of balls is reduced to a few *tens*, and even *ones*. And, as the number of balls is reduced, the relative size of the balls increases. It becomes more like trying to resolve the features on a person's face by throwing beach balls at it. And, when you get down to the size of individual atoms...well, that's more like throwing weather balloons!

So, it's impossible to have an experience of actually "seeing" an atom, because we can only use *light* to see things, and light is way too big to resolve a dinky little atom. But, scientists found a way to cheat. And how they cheat is very much like those false color images I talked about in the chapter titled The World Beyond Your Perception



The photo, above, is of atoms arranged in a crystal.

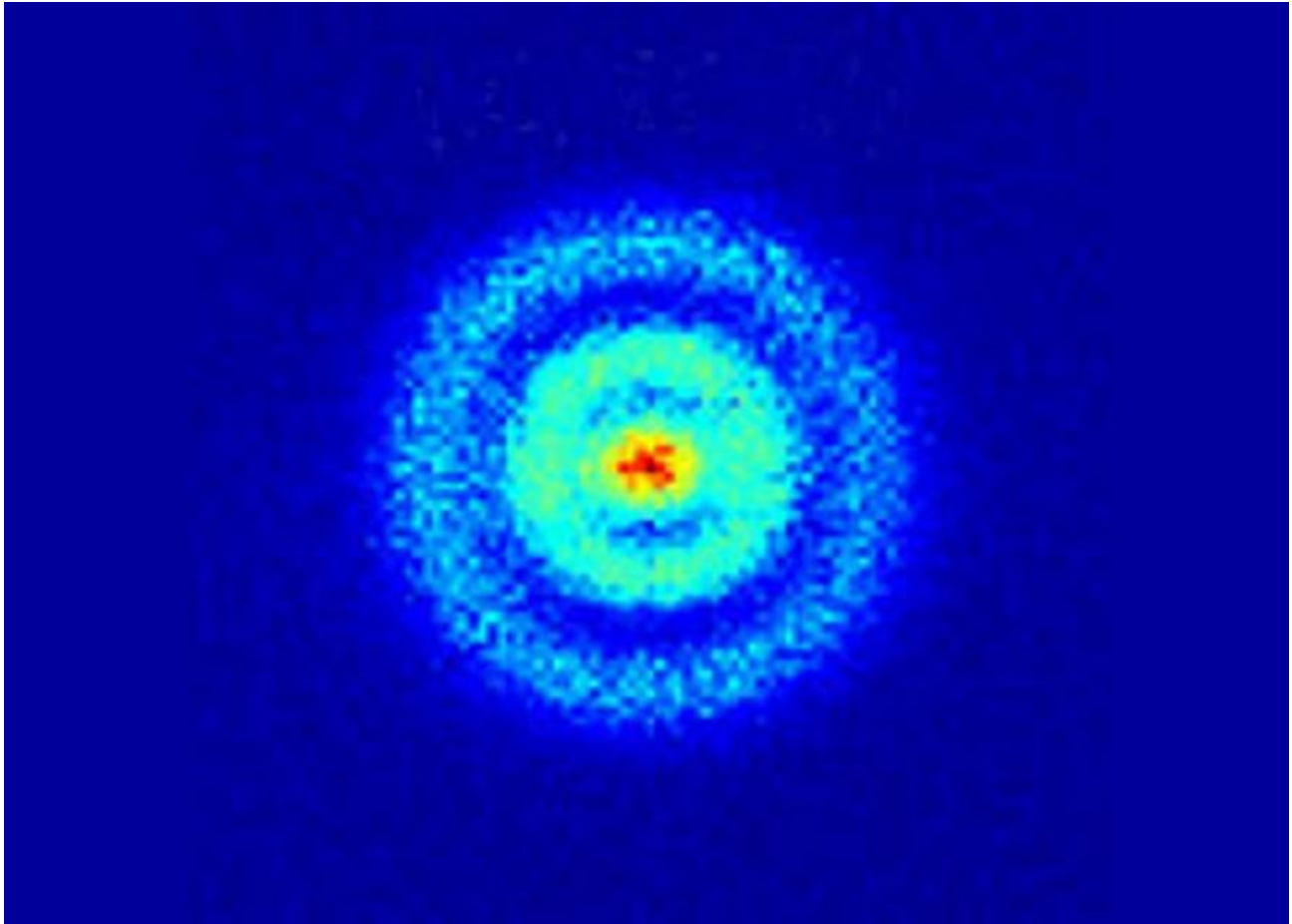
*Wait, Steve, you just got through saying that atoms are “too small to see”! How can there be a photo?!?*

The problem is with the word “photo”. This is actually a photo of an interpretation of data acquired by probing the surface of a crystal. It’s like a blind person using a cane to work out the shape of, say, that bunch of bananas, or a person’s face, and then using a pencil to draw a *representation* of what they felt. To make these photos, an extremely small probe [aka “tiny cane”] is used to trace the atomic surfaces, which generates numbers describing their size, shape and position<sup>1</sup>. Which

---

<sup>1</sup> And, I assure you, that, also, is a very simplistic explanation.

means, the above “photo” is essentially a *graph* of the data points generated during the probing. It’s a *representation* of what it *might* look like. In other words, it’s a *model* of the atomic structure of the crystal. Here’s another:



This is a graphic of a hydrogen atom—the smallest, and simplest atom. This picture was produced using something called a “Quantum Microscope”. This is, as of this writing, the bleeding edge in the art, and science of microscopy! To do this, they had to “fluff” the atom—get its one electron to orbit further from its proton than usual [i.e. further than at its “ground state”]—essentially make it bigger so it’s easier to see. But, even so, it’s still way too small to see with visible light.

Here’s a link to a scientific article describing how this was done [much of

it was gibberish to me, so good luck!]:



[A New Look at the Hydrogen Wave Function](#)

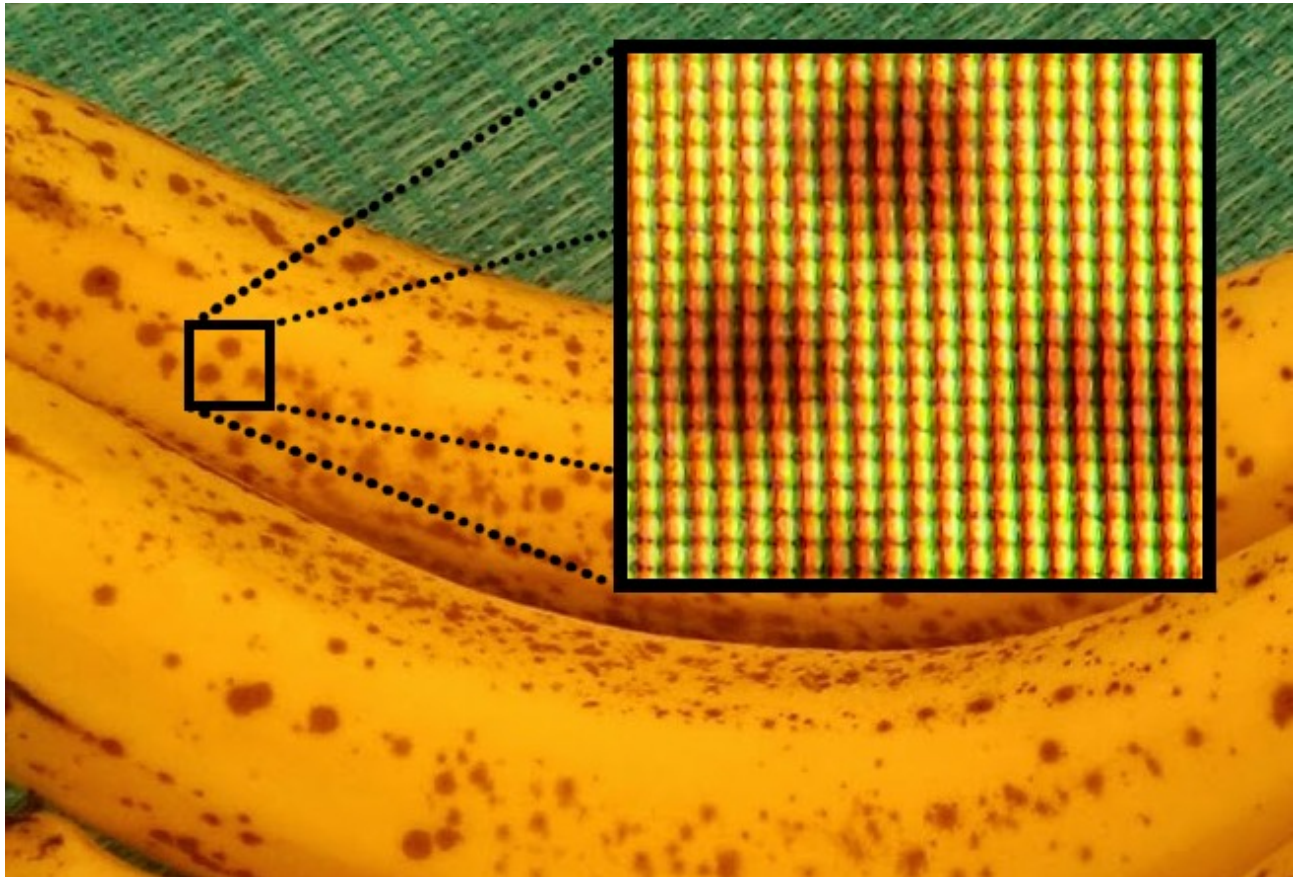
[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web23](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web23)

The colors in this image are *false*. The atom isn't really colored like that. In fact, individual atoms don't really have color—they're too small, remember—way smaller than light—and you need light to have *color*! An atom reflecting visible light, would be like an ocean wave rebounding off a grain of beach sand! *It doesn't!* The grain of beach sand gets shoved around like it doesn't even exist!!

The implication of all of this? Atoms are the fundamental building blocks of all matter<sup>1</sup>. And, this stuff we're all made of is too small for our senses to perceive—even with technological assistance! There are no glasses that will allow a human to *see* an atom. Not the *real* atom. Scientists have found ways to create images of what an atom *probably* “looks” like, but an atom can't “look like” anything! It's too small! Shine a light on a single atom and the light will just pass by—well, that's not entirely true—the light *can* actually interact with the atom—different atoms interact with light in different ways, but not in a way that will assist in the actual *seeing* of it. To put it in scientific terms: An atom will react *energetically* to light, but these reactions do not assist in directly observing the atom visually.

<sup>1</sup> Okay, yes, there are *subatomic* particles that make up the atom, but the atom is the smallest unit that defines the characteristics of a particular form of matter.

So, how do these little things called atoms, then, create the things we see, feel, smell, taste, and hear? Remember that photo of the bananas?



I found that banana photo with a Google search. While it was displaying on my computer monitor I took a photo of it up close—so close I captured the individual pixels that make up the image on the screen. From afar, the photo looks like a solid, seamless bunch of banana-ness. But, that's an illusion. Actually, it's a bunch of tiny bits of colored light arranged to look like a bunch of bananas! Like how a mosaic uses little colored tiles to form an image.

Real bananas are made up of atoms—a bunch of little fuzzy blobs of mostly space—space and energy. Yet, we perceive them as a solid bunch of bananas that taste all sugary, and feel smoochy, and have that distinctive banana smell. It's just like the pixels on your TV screen

forming into Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson taking down the bad guys.

The most an image of an atom can ever be is nothing more than a graphic model of an atom—for instance, a robot drawing a picture of an atom based on what it “felt” while groping the atom!

And what this all boils down to is: The stuff that makes an *eye*, is way too small to be *seen by an eye*! Which makes sense because, that would be like using Lego blocks to build a massive Lego block, and then expecting this overly large block to successfully snap onto a regular sized Lego block. More likely it would just crush it<sup>1</sup>.

The best we can do is create our own mental models to represent the ways of the Universe. These models may *appear* to match the reality they attempt to represent, but I guarantee you, in one way or another they are *lacking*! It might be a minor, inconsequential inaccuracy<sup>2</sup>, or it may be some screaming error based on a glaring goof of perception, or an error of memory, or an unnoticed deviation based on some other flawed conception. One example of a cherished scientific model requiring an upgrade was Newton’s law of universal gravitation. Einstein made that happen. In fact, Einstein radically rocked the boat of scientific models!

Another example, involving atoms, is the history of what the heck scientists thought atoms looked like. It began in 1803 when a scientist named John Dalton postulated that atoms were like solid little billiard balls. He called it the “Solid Sphere Model”. Then, in 1904, J. J.

---

<sup>1</sup> Or, maybe not. Legos are pretty tough, as many have affirmed with their bare feet in the middle of the night.

<sup>2</sup> At least, until it starts failing to corroborate reality. In which case, it’s time to tighten up the model, or create a whole new one. The need for a whole new model is rare these days. But, a contemporary case, where this might need to happen, is in the field of cosmology, where the Dark Energy and/or Dark Matter models may soon falter.



Thomson developed the “Plum Pudding Model”, the “plums” being little charged particles referred to, at the time, as “corpuscles”. Then, in 1911, Rutherford used some “plum pudding” atoms for target practice. He noticed that most of the little “alpha particle” bullets he was shooting at the atoms passed straight through, undeterred. BUT occasionally a “bullet” would ricochet back. Observing this made it clear to him that the “pudding” was mostly empty space with something like a plum pit at the center. Thus, the “Nuclear Model” was born. By 1913, Niels Bohr had figured out that the corpuscles actually orbit around this nuclear pit, like fruit flies circling a rotting plum. And, the corpuscles got a new name: *electrons*, thus the “Planetary Model” was conceived. Then, in 1926, a scientist named Schrödinger [of cat fame] showed everyone just how weird the atom really is! And, to this day, the “Quantum Model” is the one accepted in most scientific circles. Why were there so many different models for the atom? Because, being so small, it’s very difficult to actually know what the heck is going on down there!!

Great freedom is to be had by folks possessing the wisdom, and courage, to question their models, their preconceived notions and even their long held convictions. If scientists weren’t willing to do this, there would be no electricity to drive washing machines and TVs. Also, there would be no washing machines or TVs to drive. In fact, we’d probably still be beating our clothes on rocks down at the local river, and telling stories around campfires for entertainment.

I, somehow, entered adulthood under the misconception that “Ascend” meant to *go down*, and “Descend” meant to *rise*. It was a multi-month long mind freak to get them switched around in my head! And, before I endeavored to correct myself, I argued! *How can I be wrong about this?!?* The notion was absurd to me—*until I looked the words up in a dictionary!*

A more monumental example is the Flat Earth vs Spherical [“Round”] Earth debate. Also, the Moon Landing debate. And the controversy over Kardashian celebrity status. And then there’s Paris Hilton! I mean, should anything these people say, of social or political nature, be taken seriously? Is there any real import, or talent there?

But, this is my *model* of these models [pun intended!], and my model could be lacking, and even downright wrong. And, I’m fully willing to adjust this model, given a credible endorsement...anybody<sup>1</sup>?

Until recently I had a low opinion of Seth Myers. Based on his seemingly awkward delivery during his Weekend Update segments on Saturday Night Live, I thought him of minimal talent. Then I saw him in a Stand-up Special, and what-da-ya-know, the guy can tell a joke! I realized his SNL persona was a bit, and my model of him radically shifted.

Scientists fall into this trap all the time. As arrogant as they can be, a mere glimpse at the history of scientific discovery, reveals a plethora of misconception:

- Before 1861, the year Louis Pasteur<sup>2</sup> proved otherwise, the best science of the time included the notion of the “Spontaneous Generation” of life. *Merely wad chunks of cheese, and assorted bread crumbs, into an old rag, and toss it into a dark corner, and voila! The **cheese** and **bread** turn into **living mice**!! Or, heck, just leave a piece of raw meat on the doorstep, and the meat will magically transform into **maggots**! **Brilliant**!*

Then Mr. Pasteur came along and demonstrated the ridiculousness of these notions. He went on to show that microorganisms cause the formation of cheese, and produce many forms of illness. Not demons or spirits<sup>3</sup>. “Invisible bugs cause milk to spoil, and make people sick?”

<sup>1</sup> A recent news item revealing sexual abuse in Paris Hilton’s past has already altered my model of her.

<sup>2</sup> Known for the “Pasteurization” process.

<sup>3</sup> At least not in all cases – am I kidding?

Ridiculous!!” yelled erudite people of the time. Yet, now we *pasteurize*!! Because Louis Pasteur used irrefutable, and reproducible *science* to prove his case.

- There was quite a tussle, back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, regarding the nature of light. Is it a **particle** [e.g. like a billiard ball, or a bullet], as proposed by Isaac Newton back in 1675? Or, is it a **wave**, like what washes up on a sandy shore, or expands away from a rock thrown into a lake? Thomas Young in 1803, demonstrated the *wave nature of light*, with his “Double Slit” experiment.

Actually it turns out that it’s **both**! Two scientists, Davisson & Germer, back in 1927, revisited the Double-Slit experiment, adding an important detail revealing this enigmatic truth<sup>1</sup>, that light can behave both as a *particle* AND as a *wave*, thus proving all the arguing was just silly.

- Size of the Universe? Back before the invention of the telescope at the start of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, no one even knew the Milky Way is lit by billions of *stars*—the name of our resident galaxy is a reflection of that naivety! The word “galaxy” is rooted in the word “Galactos,” and literally means ‘that milky thing in the sky’.

Then, Galileo pointed his newfangled telescope at the heavenly milk and changed our understanding of it, forever. But that wasn’t even the end of it. At that point in scientific history was that the Milky Way Galaxy defined the extent of the known Universe, beyond which existed only black emptiness.

Hubble [the scientist, not the space telescope], back in 1924, came up with a way to measure distances of things *beyond* the Milky Way, bringing the concept of *other galaxies* into scientific thinking—some even bigger<sup>2</sup> than our own galaxy. It began with Andromeda, thought to be a mere nebula contained within our own galaxy. Against stubborn resistance from the scientific establishment, Hubble made it clear that Andromeda actually is quite separate from our own galaxy, and actually *very far away*—at least by the standards of the time. He estimated around 1.5 *million*

---

<sup>1</sup> Current “truth”, that is. Who knows how that will be refined in the future.

<sup>2</sup> By as much as **10 times**!

light years, but it's actually more like a whopping 2.56 million light years away! Before his work, estimates were more like 15,000 to 500,000 light years, leading the scientific community, of the time, to reject the preposterous idea it could be any further away. We now know how ludicrous that thinking was!

Hubble's work made it clear that many more of those fuzzy little things, believed to live in the local milky expanse, are actually separate galaxies, way out in space, far beyond the bounds of our own galaxy. He also noticed that nearly every one of them is moving away from us, and that the galaxies with greater distance are moving away from us *faster* than the closer ones. This shook the model of the cosmos, coveted by the scientific community, once again, by proving the Universe is not *static*, but is, in fact, *expanding* like a huge inflating balloon. One of those shook-up scientists was Einstein himself!

Then, Hubble [the space telescope, not the scientist], true to its name, grew the known Universe even more. Back in the early 1990's, the *Universe model* went from, roughly, 10 billion Galaxies, to more like 100 Billion! And, if you consider that each GALAXY contains on the order of 50 billion, to a couple hundred billion STARS, that is just a crazy big number of stars!!! And it ain't over, yet. New estimates place the number of galaxies at more like 2 Trillion<sup>1</sup>!

In other words, science got its forehead thwacked, over and over, as the body of discovery grew and was refined. And even, in some cases, got its rear end refuted, and debunked! Proving, over and over: Any position of absoluteness of knowledge, from anyone, let alone a man, or woman of science, regarding **anything**, *is simply ridiculous!* And, that still holds, today!!

In other words: **Arrogance is Ignorance!**

---

<sup>1</sup> But, then, NASA sent a probe out into space that led to the adjustment of that model back down to around 200 Billion galaxies—unless, of course, you take into consideration, really old galaxies that probably don't exist anymore. Who knows what the James Webb telescope will reveal!

. - ----==<•:+:{0}:+:•>====- - .

Notice your models. More than likely they're limiting your life, dulling your perceptions, and driving you to unwitting foolishness. When you can see the models your mind makes—about EVERYTHING—you have a chance to question your models, step beyond those models, and dare to create new models, or improve the existing ones, and generally behave with due humility.

Why not just get rid of one's models? You're welcome to try, but you'll likely find it impossible. There is no way for the mind to know everything about everything. You will *always* relate to the world with incomplete mental models—models that fall short, sometimes significantly. The trick is to know this, and in knowing, not take your models seriously. Certainly, do rely on them when they serve your purpose, but remember they are likely not precisely informing you, and always be ready to update them as you learn new things, and as greater precision would serve. Like getting to know Fred.

The best we can do is formulate models that do a credible job of fitting current circumstances. Like your model of that strange neighbor across the street and two doors down. I once had a neighbor approach me about a neighbor like that. He was concerned at how our mutual *other* neighbor had a mysterious habit of cracking their garage door open at night. And even more strange was a fan, consistently placed so it exhausted air through the crack.

“Do you suppose they've got a meth lab in there?” He was genuinely concerned. “I doubt it.” said I, “I'm sure we'd smell it, if so—especially if they are using that fan to vent the fumes.”

It seems I modified his model of this neighbor, because he became

visibly more relaxed. Soon after that conversation, I started cracking my garage door open at night, too. The curious neighbor never approached me again—possibly put off by the idea I had joined the criminal ranks. I hadn't. It was just a good idea. We live in a desert, and in the Summer, the mercury can top 110°F and more. Also, the sun shines on the garage door all afternoon, which elevates the already high interior temperature. Cracking the door open allows the garage to cool down faster. I'm betting the other door cracking neighbor was doing it for a similar reason.

Models of what our spouse likes, that we use to select birthday gifts, surprise getaways, flower arrangements, and the like; Models of what our kids are into; Models of what it will take to get that promotion; Models of what will get our in-laws to accept us; Models of how competent we'll be at driving if we go for that third drink; Models of how much effort it will be to trim those hedges, that we use to choose between a DIY approach, or to accept the cost of a landscaper—all are examples of the approximations that we use to function in life. Sometimes they're a good fit. Sometimes they fall short and could use a little adjusting—assuming you're the kind of person that can fess up, and can allow said adjusting. Hopefully you are, because that's a formula for contentment. And, someone who can, at a whim, throw out one or more of their established models, and build new ones, is someone who can be *Happy For No Damn Reason!*

## The Sexuality Model

*"If I could have chosen to be gay or straight,  
I think I would have simply chosen to be happy."  
-Kevin Kidwell*

You may soon regret having read this far—but, some vulgarity is required to properly address this topic. Consider this your *warning*.

A little before I reached puberty, a friend opened a Penthouse Magazine to a photo of a reclining, bare-naked woman with her legs spread wide. In full view was the pink, crinkly ridges of skin around her vaginal opening. I gagged at the sight of it.

“Why does anybody find that appealing?”, I asked my friend.

“You don’t like that?!?”, he responded, “It drives *me* crazy!!”

NOW, I appreciate it! NOW it also drives me crazy!! The full-on, buck-naked image of the female form, including the “flower” between her legs that to my slightly prepubescent self had all the appeal of slugs on an eggplant, is now something I crave more than I would like to admit. Male genitalia, on the other hand, has always induced the same gag reaction in me, as does the thought of eating raw slugs<sup>1</sup>.

So what changed? What is it, now, that makes female naughty-bits<sup>2</sup> so madly appealing to me? And, what is it that makes some males prefer males? And some females exclusive to females?

<sup>1</sup> I could be getting myself into trouble, here, since I could, likely, learn to like eating slugs.

<sup>2</sup> Absolutely an homage to Monty Python!

When I see a picture of the ass side of a female baboon in all that red, billowy glory, I'm repulsed—even sickened. It's a *female*, so shouldn't I be turned on by her bulbous crimson butt?!? A sexually active male Baboon would likely be insane for it, so why am I not?!



# BIOLOGY!



Within our mind—male or female—and within the mind of that male baboon, is a template, or *model* of the perfect configuration for sexual attraction. The perfect shape. The perfect sound. The perfect dance, sashay, arch of spine, posture. The perfect odor. The perfect sexual polarity. It's beyond our control, and is another blatant example of the dominance of the primitive brain. An Australian beetle nearly



went extinct because of the dimpled back end of the typical brown beer bottle. Down Under, Spring begins in August, and a young male giant jewel beetle's fancy turns to love, or at least lust. Only the males can fly, a talent the little guy uses to seek out the larger of the species: Female jewel beetles. He is particularly on the lookout for her big, dimpled hind end. Once spotted, he swoops down to “cop a root”<sup>1</sup>.

But, because these males were philandering with the hind ends of larger, sexier brown beer bottles, the actual females were left grub-less. In this case size *does* matter. Even the largest female jewel beetle can't compete with the full girth of a beer bottle, so these beguiled males took to whacking their willies on the glass, instead of “smashing” the real thing.

If you think us humans can't possibly be as dense as these deluded bugs then why have the Kardashians gained such notoriety? They aren't real, at least not within the scope of most of the males, across America, hovering around their TV screens hoping for a lustful miracle (how often

<sup>1</sup> Aussie slang for *having sex*.

does anyone get to actually have sex with a Kardashian?). And, for that matter, also not real is any hope of amorous proximity to Playboy bunnies, Internet porn stars, or Megan Fox<sup>1</sup>. How is this any different than that bugs infatuation with a beer bottle, short of actual banging of man parts on TV screens and computer monitors<sup>2</sup>.

The existence of this inner template for what ignites allure, is also why the gay can't be other than *gay*. Homosexuality is NOT A CHOICE. Just as Heterosexuality is not a choice. It's written in our biology—a program in the machine—an *inherent model*. A model that makes certain genitalia appealing, and the opposite something *I wouldn't touch for all the peanut butter cups<sup>3</sup> in existence!* In other words, *ugly* is merely a *template mismatch*—a *model mismatch*<sup>4</sup>.

Accepting the truth of this primitive bias is a huge component of finding happiness. Awareness of this template allows us to choose to accommodate it, or to circumnavigate it, or to even completely ignore it. It's said that you can get used to anything. And, choosing to get used to a less than exact template match, in order to have an ultimately happier relationship with that comely guy or gal, is a powerful key to taking relationships to a new, higher level. After all, once the glow wears off of that stud/bombshell, if there's no social affinity to back the pact, eyes will wander<sup>5</sup>.

*So what* if they say you're not *pretty* enough, or *butch* enough, or *cut* enough, or the *correct sexual orientation*, or of the *proper skin tone*, or the *preferred nationality*, or your eyes are not a *fashionable color, shape, tilt*, or

<sup>1</sup> I'm not knocking this – I do it too. But, I know the difference, as I'm sure most humans do.. The point is, non-human animals don't know the difference, and thus bugs bang beer bottles.

<sup>2</sup> Is that a thing?!?

<sup>3</sup> Aren't peanut butter cups the greatest candy in the Universe?!?

<sup>4</sup> The Twilight Zone – *Eye Of The Beholder* – Season 2, Episode 6

<sup>5</sup> This is the sort of insight you can gain from Cindy Lu's [The Four Man Plan](#)

*luster*. That's just someone's biological template dictating standards. It's NOT YOU! It's NOT a measure of your worth! Please don't base your self-esteem on the latest fashion, or the ramblings of a celebrity, or the crap you find on Social Media, or the snark of the Popular!

A highly talented female artist friend of mine in High School, made her own clothes, which consistently became grist for the negative gossip mill, cranked by the campus "It" crowd. This same crowd fairly consistently had to eat some crow because my friend had a knack for anticipating fashion trends. Eventually, she gained a positive reputation that struggled under her contempt for "It" crowd personalities.

Understanding this mechanism, knowing your own machine, you can ignore dissent, and insist on a path of your own choosing, and be the merrily fulfilled soul you were meant to be!

Where does *love* fit into this? Quite often, love is a euphemism for *lust*. This is a trick of biology that ensures biology continues, and a mechanism of that trick is to cloak the sex urge in *feelings* of love. In this way nature uses you. The sex drive is a *con*. You are the mark, and the payout is a litter of babies to carry on this strange obsession called *life*.

I'm not saying that's the only reason people create families. For some it's truly their primary dream; and if that describes you, then you have my blessing. But, understanding the proclivity for nature to manipulate your choices can elevate those choices beyond the reach of your primitive mind. Some people aren't really suited to the family life but wind up in the family way, having been coerced by their biology. It's so very easy to get lost in *relationship land*. So often, the smitten end up giving up the very things that really matter to them. You've heard the stories—and maybe it's your story, too: *I was going to be a concert*

*pianist; ...an astronaut; ...join Doctors Without Borders; ...discover new civilizations as an archaeologist, ...fill in the \_\_\_\_\_.* So often our dreams take a dive in service to this ancient mandate to procreate. That's fine for animals, but we humans can realize grander dreams. But, to do so, one must push against the confounded primitive brain, which loves to micro-manage our lives.

My parents are an example. My dad was successfully, and happily pursuing a career as a wildlife scientist. But, babies but a stop to that! Or, at least, the mindset that he couldn't be a father AND a poorly paid scientist, turned him away from what he loved. As a result, he lived a far more miserable life than the one he was on track to live—educated himself to live—preferred to live, if brass tacks were lifted to reveal the secrets hiding in his heart. But, nature conned him into having kids. So, here I am, writing about it.

It happened to my mother's parents, as well. Especially to her mother, aka my grandmother. She was an educated woman, pining for a career...then, oops...my mother was born. Throughout her life, she carried the damage from the rage her parents dumped on her for merely existing.

It is possible to have a mindset of “giving back” when siring offspring. Spawn-of-gratitude—the desire to share life with future generations—the aptitude and desire to sire. Ideally, people would only choose to have children as a willing gift to life. These would be the ones who are genuinely on the planet to *be parents*. Otherwise, sex is best confined to responsible recreation. Bringing unwanted life into the world is a form of betrayal, and thus should be avoided.

This reminds me of a Twilight Zone episode<sup>1</sup> where a pair of neglected kids, Sport and Jeb, discover a portal at the bottom of their swimming pool. It leads to a land inhabited by Aunt T, a “super mom” who takes loving care of all the abandoned and neglected children that find their way to her. It’s an excellent portrayal of what I see as a woman *meant* to be a mom. Thus, a true act of love and a state of being *Happy For No Damn Reason!*

---

<sup>1</sup> Season 5, Episode 36: “The Bewitchin’ Pool”

## Love Is A Many Misconstrued Thing

*"Lust feels like love, until it's time for a sacrifice."*

~Anonymous

I wrote this on the night of Martin Luther King Jr. day. Having listened to public radio much of the day, I was treated to numerous King speeches, a couple I had never heard before. In one of them he said the following: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

But, what is *love*? Real, *unconditional* Love? Not the teen-angst, soap opera sauce, silver screen fantasy concept of "love". And, not even the thing that initiates most relationships. The eye sees a pretty face, a hot body, a charming, alluring demeanor, and the word "love" is thrown about. But, how often is it merely *lust*?

Lust is all about carnal satisfaction. Love is centered in universal fulfillment, and is willing to sacrifice the *self*, for a larger cause.

Love is professed every day, but how durable is this *love* in the wake of, say, a *disfiguring accident*; or a *mood change*; or a *revealed dark secret*; or a *relocation*; or *disparaging words vociferously issued under the burden of stress*; or a *sex change*; or *any number of suspicious behaviors easily dismissed under the barest of scrutiny*. That's the true test—the **litmus test**: *Love doesn't care about image*, but *lust* does. Love survives negative emotion, where lust is quick to walk out in a huff. Love takes a second, and even third look, while lust, being more self-involved, has a short attention span. The

moment one of the partners loses the physical, or emotional appeal that cemented the union, the veracity of their love is tested.

And by the way, lust can *lead* to love, but that doesn't *make* it love. Strife in a relationship has the power to teach love. Lust sets the trap, and strife springs it on the unsuspecting entangled oafs. Will a limb be gnawed off, or will *feral* yield to *genuine emotions* even at the risk of fidelity? I'm being facetious, but when a partner wants to run, isn't the emotional intensity akin to a wild animal backed into a corner, or ensnared by a hunter's trap?

This isn't even about whether professed love is a good or bad thing, or a right or wrong thing. It's simply about intent—about being real. The ability to see the *ridiculous* in matters of lust and love is more of that animal SuperPower I spoke of. It allows us humans to step out of such primitive moments, and discover something more authentic within ourselves, and more conducive to ultimate happiness.

We lust our way into most relationships. Love may develop, but its presence from the get-go is an exception. We fall in love with models. Not necessarily the Cindy Crawford/Tyra Banks/Jacob Osborn sort of model, but mental models of desire—models that obscure our view of the actual person—a model you will very likely refine as you spend more time with this new flame, and get to know them better.

In other words, this bright flame you fell in love with was, quite likely, not the *actual person*, but some fantasy. How often do relationships fail when something new is revealed about a partner, something that pushes a model of them into baboon butt territory? It's the same person, but you never really, fully knew that person. You had an idea of who that person is—a concept of that person—a model of that person—and that,

my friend, is what you fell in “love” with—*not* the *actual* person. In fact, most relationships crumble *because* the actual person, revealed over time, proves a faint echo of the concocted vision—the original model.

It’s *because* most relationships begin with lust founded models, that relationships tend to fall apart. If divorce rates are high, this could be why.

I strongly suspect there’s a deeper agenda in all of this, though—something along the lines of this thing I call *Grace*. I think, for humans, biological lust is *designed* to trick people into entering relationships that surreptitiously play out as *life-lessons* in love. This is *Grace* gradually elevating souls to the kind of love that Dr. King was talking about—the kind of *love* that doesn’t judge, or require anything in return. In other words, the *love* that endures through circumstance, and even death. This is *unconditional love*.

However, I also believe in the rare instance of souls coming into life for the sole and actual purpose of connecting romantically. In such cases, it’s probably love from the start. Yet, I’m betting that there’s a past life where this relationship began, likely spawned by lust.

Another rare case that I suspect is real, are individuals who can see beyond the usual trappings, and peer into the soul of another from the get-go. Another name for this is *love at first sight*. I think this is the *actual* love at first sight, as opposed to what is probably more like past-life *lust* that became love and carried on into the next life. Or, what would more properly be called *lust at first sight*. The former is a case of lovers forming a compact to find each other in the next life. The love is preexisting and only *appears* as love at first sight, but it’s really the *resumption of love at first sight*.



I have personal experience with that latter case: Resumption at first sight, involving reincarnation, i.e. love spanning the death/life cycle, old souls recognizing each other, even souls with a pre-life arrangement or contract. The Christina Perri song, from the Twilight: Eclipse movie – *A Thousand Years*—profoundly touches both my wife and I. Early in our current relationship, I was giving her a massage, and we both flashed into a waking-vision of a previous life together. It announced, to us, the significance of our mutual attraction.

When is love unconditional? In the example of an act that appears altruistic, if the giver *requires* recognition, or even a simple thank you is demanded, it's not really unconditional [the condition being the *requirement* for some form of acknowledgment].

Non-romantic, altruistic, “true” love is offered with no strings attached, and might even be *anonymous*, leaving the giver oblivious to the effects of their gift.

Then why do it? Because it's in harmony with the “energy”, or quality of Grace. This is selfless, *highest vibration* stuff. An individual on such a path (or “dimensional plane”), only takes what is needed to facilitate a life of giving—a life of service. One lives in harmony with the joy of the *one being*<sup>1</sup>. And, often, one is guided into service, which sometimes results in giving without receiving, and at times without any knowledge of the outcome of their gift. If you have ever walked this path, you know that the rewards are beyond measure!

---

<sup>1</sup> From the concept that we are all one being having a diverse adventure in this strange Space-Time thing. Some might call it God—if so, then, in this context, we are all God. It's not science, but my acceptance of this required I side-step science, since science has yet to catch up 😊

There's a famous [115,148,578 *views as of this writing*<sup>1</sup>] Thai Life Insurance video that might make the point. It's available on YouTube:



[Unsung Hero / ไทยประกันชีวิต \(TLI\)](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid08](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid08)

*That* my friends, is a major key to being *Happy For No Damn Reason!* Especially when you're happy without knowing why you should be.

---

<sup>1</sup> I'm probably about 30 of those views—and I tear-up every time I watch it!

## Arguing Is For The Dogs

*I love you even more than I am annoyed by you...  
...which is a lot.  
~someecards.com*

As common as it is in a typical relationship, arguing is not necessary, and in fact is a sign of escalation. A lover's spat is like two dogs barking at each other. Each dog thinks it owns the territory the other dog is standing on, and we all know how that goes: On, and on, and on, all night long! Nobody gets any sleep!! Why? Because none of that barking, no matter how fierce, is likely to sway the other.

When we humans argue, it's because we're in our animal. But, we humans are animals with a retro-fit. The Neocortex, that part of our brain capable of all that higher reasoning, and language, didn't *replace* the animal brain. The word "neocortex" literally means *new rind*, a description of how it formed over the top of the more primitive, animal brain. And, that primitive brain is still in charge. That's why we go into animal behavior so quickly, and why NOT going there takes effort. The Neocortex can override the primitive brain, but the default is *always* pure animal!

If your partner is yelling, then he or she is *triggered*! Being triggered is like having an inner guard dog that flies into a barking fit. It's usually something that scares us—something we perceive as a threat. In these moments, it's like we turn into a werewolf. We shed our humanity

becoming a vicious monster.

The trick is to pause for a moment and consider this: What is up with this partner that you confessed undying love to? Why would they feel threatened by you? Where did the love go? And what the heck, BTW, are *you* doing, anyway?!? Why are *you* barking at this wonderful person?

I like to call it *drinking the Hyde Juice*<sup>1</sup>. One of you drinks the Hyde Juice, and the beast that emerges compels the other to do the same, and all Hell breaks loose!!

Remember: *Actual* LOVE is *selfless*. That shouting beast you've regressed into is all about *self*.

We humans are still, very much, animals by nature. BUT, we have an Animal SuperPower! We have the ability to climb out of our animal and put the beast on a leash, and in fact, we can become the Animal Trainer! In a moment's notice!! Whenever we want!!! But, it's not always easy. It



takes practice, and more than a modicum of will power.

It feels oh-so-good, oh-so-right, oh-so-justified when we're in our animal. That primitive animal logic seems unassailable, but in most cases that's a delusion. These primitive emotions are usually about survival. When a discussion escalates into an argument, buttons are being pushed<sup>2</sup>. It becomes a pushy fight. Each in your corner, in full survival mode,

<sup>1</sup> *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson. A novella first published in 1886.

<sup>2</sup> In case you've never done therapy, or chanced an encounter with this notion of "buttons", here's what that means. Buttons are those tipping points in your psyche, those triggers that send you over the edge and into some sort of rage, or defensive posture. If you're being very noisily contrary, one of your buttons probably got pushed.

feeling threatened by the other, being triggered by the other. In other words, the two of you are *in your Animal!*

**NOTHING WILL EVER BE ACCOMPLISHED IN THIS STATE!!**

Learn to recognize when this is happening! And once recognized, call a TRUCE<sup>1</sup>! Then review the following:

## Argument Deescalation Inventory

1. If you're yelling, *you've let the dogs out!!* You're just barking at your sweetie, so **STOP!!**
2. If you *feel* justified, remember *feelings are NOT facts.*
3. Give up *being right!* Give up *teaching a lesson!!* Give up *hubris* and/or *sanctimony!!!* Ask yourself, "*Self? Is this stubborn stance so damn important as to risk damaging—perhaps permanently—this relationship?*"
4. In other words, ***own your NONSENSE!!!!***
5. Remember the love. I mean, why the hell would you ever want to treat your treasured one like that?!? Or, if it was only *lust* all along, and you've lost that loving feeling, then do the right thing and confess. You have no business being in that relationship. You'll both be better off if you part ways, no matter how much it hurts. Staying in a false relationship is going to cause a LOT more pain!
6. Assuming it *was* love all along, get into your empathy. Get curious about what's going on over there. What has caused this wonderful person that you love and cherish to be *so upset?*
7. Consider the distinct possibility there's a misunderstanding going on. A miscommunication. A misconception. A clash of models. And, rather than

---

<sup>1</sup> In the TV series *How I Met Your Mother*, the married couple, brilliantly played by Alyson Hannigan and Jason Segal, made a pact where either one of them can call "Pause", and the argument temporarily ceases, and they resume their *usual*: A relatively congenial, relationship.

assuming the worst, how about giving that sweetie-pie the benefit of the doubt?!

8. Get out of *hating mode*, and get into *healing mode*. Another way of saying this is: Get out of “**ME**”, and get into “**WE**”. If your partner is upset, why aren’t you concerned? Love is caring for the other person at least as much as you care for yourself<sup>1</sup>. Get over there and care!
9. And above all, find the courage to drop your animal modes by rustling up your Animal SuperPower! Get human! Get compassion! Get wise to your wild ways!!
10. Listen! Listen **to** not **for**. Usually when we listen, we’re not listening **to** the other person, we’re listening **for** what we want to hear, with an agenda for *winning the fight*. Instead, listen with your **empathy**. Listen with an open mind and an open heart, with an agenda to be of *loving service*, rather than *battle nervous!* .  
For more on listening: Go to: Listen to Them, NOT to Yourself pg63
11. When you finally, really *hear* your partner, use what they are saying to reexamine your model of your partner. *Does it need a tweak? ...a revision? ...a complete restructuring?!?* Ask questions of yourself [i.e. get *humble*]: *What am I missing? What is at the bottom of this clash? Could I be wrong about something [you probably are]? Do I really need to defend my “rightness”? Is there something I can let go off? Is there a compromise I can make, here?!?* And, most of all, get interested in what you’re hearing. Become a student of *them*. Open yourself to learning more about *their world, their life, their experience, their needs*. And, if they request your support, be sure to *only* be supportive and *not* a colluding enabler, or a domineering control freak. There’s a fine line between being self righteous, and a selfless mentor who sees something the other is missing. Being a support means getting off your high-horse, letting go of fixing, letting go of teaching, letting go of gaslighting<sup>2</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> Sound familiar, Christians?

letting go of impressing, or one-upping, or dominating<sup>1</sup>, letting go of earning points or appreciations. This is about being a selfless mirror while allowing them to come to their own realizations, while you, as well, come to your own realizations. If you hear an inconsistency, mention it *lovingly* [e.g. “Sweetie, I’m confused. A moment ago you said, `Blah blah.` Now you’re saying, `Halb halb.` Can you explain?”] If you’re both on this wavelength, there is a chance for the two of you to come together and become a problem solving team. But, you BOTH must be willing to face whatever demon, or demons you’re bumping up against. And, then you BOTH must be willing to support the other in confronting each demon, but only when that other is willing to do so.

If the other isn’t ready and willing to face their demon(s), either in that moment with you, or later in the company of a professional, then you have a choice to make. Either be willing to be patient with them, or be courageous enough to end the relationship with integrity. Never is it valid for you to blame them for your supposed woes, because, and I paraphrase: “they *can’t get their shit together.*” You are there by your own choice. Only *you* are to blame if you’ve become unhappy with your choices. And, really, there is no need for *blame*, only acceptance of personal responsibility. If you’re unhappy with the relationship, then do the work to end it cordially. Blaming them for your shitty life is immature, and a sign you are succumbing to fear. If that is the case, own it, and get help. This is an excellent opportunity to recognize and own your own RIDICULOUS.

This is a far more complex topic to be covered in a few paragraphs, but, if nothing else, hopefully I provided a foundation that can either get you to a resolution, or to a situation where a professional can guide you.

---

<sup>2</sup> In case you’re unfamiliar with this term, it refers to a 1944 film called **Gaslight**. Charles Boyer plays a husband tormenting his wife, played by Ingrid Bergman, into believing she’s going insane, by manipulating the intensity of the gaslights in their home, and then denying, to her face, that anything is different. Thus, the term “gaslight” entered the common English vernacular to refer to this sort of psychological attack. It’s a great movie. You should watch it!

<sup>1</sup> Unless, of course, that’s a mutual choice 😊

Of course, if your partner will not talk to you, it's kind of hard to listen. So, if you're still yelling, then you need to stop and do a different inventory.

1. Is it time to leave the relationship?
2. If so, are you afraid to leave?
3. Are you letting that fear stop you from leaving?
4. Were you yelling at your partner because you're blaming them for your lack of nerve? Is this the sort of logic running in your head: *If they weren't such a [insert favorite expletive], I wouldn't be so stuck in this [expletive] relationship, so I'm going to shout at them until they get their [expletive] in order and stop complicating my life!*
5. If so, you need to get honest with yourself and stop blaming her/him for your discontent. Either find the maturity to correct your situation, or accept your fate and find a way to make lemons into lemonade [without squeezing your partner]. Perhaps find someone to talk to. Someone who won't collude with you, but will, instead, listen to you, and help you climb out of whatever mental prison you've put yourself in—yeah, *you did that!*. In most cases this would be a therapist. See if your partner will join you in couples therapy. If not, go alone.

And side note: This is likely a case of *model drift*. Remember, what you fell in love (lust) with was a concept, a model, and not the actual person. That's on you. You're the one who made the model. Don't blame them for not measuring up to your fantasy. Unless, of course, they gave you reason to conjure that particular fantasy, then maybe you have a leg to stand on. But, if I were you, I'd go stand somewhere else, and assess why you're being suckered like that. And, enlist the help of that therapist, should you choose to go that direction.

And of course, if your love partner has found love with another, and the relationship was understood to be monogamous, and your partner is



hiding this little detail from you, then as I see it, you have four choices:

1. Take a self inventory, focusing on what might be the reason your partner lost interest. Then, do the work to win her/him back, which will likely involve inviting honest conversation regarding what went wrong, either on your own, or in couple's counseling.
2. Cut your losses and run.
3. Give *open-relationship* a try. Hell, make it a threesome!
4. Go all Fatal Attraction on the bitch/bastard! **NOT RECOMMENDED!!!** This is about **HAPPINESS**, REMEMBER?!!

♫: *Where is the love* ♪

♫: *You said was mine all mine, 'til the end of time?* ♪<sup>1</sup>

What about all those other relationships? Co-workers, neighbors, patrons of the same bar, and all those other social situations where human interaction can, and often does, go awry. Bottom line, be the peacemaker—even if that means walking away. So often rather than invite a discussion regarding what triggered a person, we just react defensively—we drink the Hyde Juice. But, it's difficult, and sometimes no matter how hard we try, no resolution can be achieved. Be willing to shake off all of that animal retaliatory energy, and *just walk away*. Or, put on your Mr. Miyagi face and ride it out. It takes two to argue. Be a stoic, immovable negative one. After all, nothing they say really means

<sup>1</sup> Popularized by *Roberta Flack & Donny Hathaway*. Songwriters: *Willie James Clarke / Harry Wayne Casey / Richard Raymond Finch / Betty Regina Wright*.

anything.

If this is a work situation, there's a book that might help: **Dinosaur Brains – Dealing with All THOSE Impossible People at Work** by *Albert J. Bernstein & Sydney Craft Rozen*. Get it at **Amazon** [I get a kick-back if you use this link ☺]: <https://amzn.to/3Q6WJ25>

*A donkey and a tiger chanced a conversation [apparently the tiger was of meager appetite]. It was the conviction of the donkey that the grass on the meadow, where they stood during this conversation, was a clear shade of blue.*

*"No, you ass, the grass is green!" was the tiger's acrimonious reply.*

*"I suggest you get your eyes examined, since the grass is clearly blue!" chimed the donkey.*

*"My eyes are keen enough to hunt you from a thousand paces!"*

*"Clearly not, since you can't even see what is at your feet!"*

*This heated back and forth was still raging when the Queen Lioness happened by. Eager to gain a royal ruling, the donkey, after following proper protocol, screeched his petition, "Sire, please tell this tom-fool the proper color of grass, which, of course is blue!"*

*"The grass is, indeed, blue." her majesty decreed.*

*"And, for this dullard's petulance," continued the donkey in a shrill tone, "please pronounce punishment befitting his crime!"*

*"The tiger shall remain silent for a week." The feline monarch proclaimed.*

Hearing this, the donkey brayed with glee, screaming, "The grass is blue! The grass is blue! So says the Queen!!" and soon was off to bray about his triumph to anyone not wise enough, or quick enough to avoid his presence.

In the wake of this cacophony the tiger turned to the lioness and asked, "*Why, sire? You know the grass is green. Why did you side with the ass?!*"

*"I sided with sensibility. The fault, here, was yours for squabbling with an imbecile. It was a waste of your energy, and of my time. If the donkey wants to believe the grass is blue, let him. Be secure in your own grasp of the truth and let it be."*

Realizing his mistake, the tiger thanked the lioness for her grace and wisdom. As they parted, the lioness added with whimsical askance, "In the future, just eat the damn donkey!" and then winked.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In an alternate version of this story, the ass's telling is more of a gloat: "I knew of the tiger's OCD and played him out of eating me! What a rube!"

And, maybe there's another way of relating to that donkey.

[Birds Aren't Real? How a Conspiracy Takes Flight | Peter McIndoe | TED](#)



[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid53](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid53)

Befriend the donkey and be *Happy For No "Sensible" Reason!*

## Aikido

*To injure an opponent is to injure yourself.  
To control aggression without inflicting injury is the Art of Peace.*  
~Morihei Ueshiba

“Blend and Harmonize.” This is a key precept in the practice of Aikido. Blend with any encounter, harmonize with whatever is thrown at you.

I’ve used it to keep the peace while on the road. I’ve applied it to social situations, especially during disagreements. I’ve navigated workplace politics with it and have employed it in all other aspects of my life, when I remember to do so.

For many years I intoned it to myself like a mantra: “Blend and Harmonize”. And, I still do, whenever I notice that I’m forgetting to apply it: “Blend and Harmonize”. These days, it’s pretty automatic—it has become a habit.

“Blend with and Harmonize the components” is more descriptive, but not as succinct or catchy.

The basic skills that became Aikido originated in Japan around the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as a form of the martial art called *jujutsu* or *jiu jitsu*. In the early 20th century, Morihei Ueshiba, an AiKi JuJitsu master, morphed it into the current form.

“Aikido” is actually a Japanese word meaning “way of spiritual harmony”.

Thus, a sparring match<sup>1</sup> between two Aikido masters, strictly speaking, would play out as two goofy looking guys standing and smiling at each other. Friendship, rather than fisticuffs would be the result.

An attacker is best met with “smiles and bows”. Bow to an approaching fist and it will sail over you like leaves in a breeze. Aikido is the art of *not fighting*. It meets *rage* with smiles, *hate* with love, and listens to the heart of the attacker while paying little attention to the spiky veneer.

This is difficult because our survival instincts are in vigorous opposition to such behavior. When attacked, whether with a fist<sup>2</sup>, a verbal assault, or a “behind the back character assassination”, every fiber of our primitive being screams for retaliation and/or domination. It’s in our nature to despise being taken down, taken advantage of, made the fool. Self preservation, and image preservation, dictates that we get the upper hand, clear our name, regain our cool and then teach the SOB to *never* do it again. And, if driven by the *code of revenge*, this has no easy resolution.

Supposedly, Gandhi once quipped, “An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind!” Revenge *feels so right*, but really only perpetuates endless violence. Revenge is animal logic. Humans are capable of a higher logic. There are two ways to end a feud: Bury the hatchet OR risk one “score-settling” sacrifice, to save future generations—no animal can

---

<sup>1</sup> In most martial arts, *sparring* is a form of *mock fighting*, designed to give students experience actually applying the techniques they study. In all but the more brutal studios, actual blows are avoided. For instance, along with Aikido, I studied a form of Shodokan [Japan Karate Association] where we learned to muster and focus a form of energy called “Ki”. This energy can reach intensities that would seriously maim and even kill a sparring partner. This is why in studios that do engage in “full contact sparring”, the participants wear protective gear. Since there is no concept of “attack” in Aikido, a pure sparring match, between two Aikido masters, can only be two people standing and staring at each other. And, in fact, would soon end in mutual laughter and a singing tea kettle. But, to facilitate practice, one of the sparring partners plays the aggressor, so the other can gain physical experience. This is practiced on a mat because it usually involves being thrown around a lot!

<sup>2</sup> Consider “fist” as a euphemism for whatever might get thrown, thrust, fired, etc, by an attacker.

conceive of such a thing. Actually, there's a third way: love affair between children of opposing sides, but with a possible Shakespearean cost.

Aikido seeks to end the cycle of violence, or prevent it from starting in the first place.

To achieve this, the Aikido student must battle with their own self. The external attacker is a mere pussycat compared to the beast within. As an aggressor launches attack after attack, the Aikido practitioner's inner mettle is tested. It's easy to lose one's nerve—or heart—and resort to violent retaliation.

Aikido moves are all about guiding the aggressor's energy around you so neither is harmed—over and over until the aggressor gives up and chooses a more friendly path. But, we like to see results, or the Ego does. Results quell the inner worry-wart's lament: “This isn't working!...Sooner or later they're gonna get us!...Whose ridiculous idea was this, anyway?!...I'm getting tired!...I can't hold out!!...Doom is coming!!!” Thus, waiting for that moment of transition, where the aggressor gives up on aggression, can be nerve-racking to one who has yet to become Master of this inner primitive--essentially, his animal essence.

When we look around and see no one else turning their cheek; eschewing revenge; or befriending their enemies, our resolve can falter even more, and under a barrage of ridicule, it can be squashed flat. Holding an unpopular stance is very difficult. It's challenging to *stand alone in the truth*. Most people are at least nudged by their animal nature. The instincts of animal nature seem like perfect logic:

- All who *attack* are instantly the *enemy*!

- Fight to preserve *self, honor*,<sup>1</sup> and *family*!
- Survival at *all costs*!
- Leave no slight unreciprocated!

It's the rare individual who sees what can't be seen: *The way of angels*.

The practice of Aikido requires repeated self-denial in the interest of brotherhood. Once you witness the transformation of a foe into a friend by these methods, it becomes easier to relax and trust this process. And, especially, when one can truly feel the brotherhood, even in another who assaults and even batters one, it becomes a family matter [*extended family*] that is attended to with utmost love.

Then, it becomes possible to ignore the fist and watch the eyes. One's interest becomes more what is behind the fist. Opportunities open up. Opportunities to listen and perhaps discover the story behind what is driving the fist. Often, the only thing that is needed is a pair of uncritical ears.

I believe that when we commit to love and deny our animal logic, it gives us new ears that can hear beyond scorn, drama, or bad manners. We become peace listeners, and ultimately: Peacemakers—and, ironically, that makes our lives far safer.

But then, the story of Jesus, if it has any actual historical merit, might contradict this a bit. Supposedly, the guy behaved like an Aikido master, perhaps without the moves—a master of *philosophical Aikido*. So, to follow this example, one probably should let go of attachment to survival, and savor the ecstatic span of what might be a shorter life. In other words, it might be more about quality of years, than quantity.

---

<sup>1</sup>“honor,” is a higher concept that I doubt an animal is privy to, but in this context, consider it a non-intellectual honoring of animal code.



And if you don't buy the Jesus story, then how about Martin Luther King, Jr.? Or, Mahatma Gandhi? Or, Nelson Mandela? Also masters of Aikido philosophy.

Or, in the Sci-Fi Universe: *The Doctor* [Doctor *who*? Yes!]

Dan Millman calls it being a *Peaceful Warrior*.

Caring for others is a pretty darn excellent way to live a life. And, is certainly a way of being Happy For No Damn Reason!

## Forgive and Give

*"All beings seek for happiness;  
so let your compassion extend itself to all."  
~Mahavamsa*

The Universe would seem to care little if humans (or any other forms of life) survive, or not. Yet, us lifeforms are preoccupied with survival—survival of the fittest, survival of the species, and for most humans, survival of the family/tribe/clan/religious order/etc.

Due to the discomfort of nerves, and the neurosis of What-IFing, the apparent indifference of the Universe breeds *fear*. Fear drives us to an “every man/woman for him/herself” mentality, and a lot of people get hurt. However, once this mechanism is examined, within one’s own being, and accepted as an inextricable part of our humanity, yet something that is subordinate to who we really are—one can become *captain of the crazy*.

And, as captain, one has the power of choice to access the next level: *empathy*. Once one’s *personal crazy* is realized and championed, it’s not a huge leap to understand *another person’s crazy*.

When *empathy* is on the table, *forgiveness* ain’t far away. And, taking this further, when people can forgive, they can give. And wholesale giving is the road to all-around prosperity.

***Yeah, right, Steve...I give, they take, and soon I have nothing.***

I know. That's the conundrum. Does *pay it forward* work, for instance? Isn't it better to store up *favours*? Knowing that we can always call *Chuck*, who owes us a favor or three? That's far more tangible, and reassuring, than some airy-fairy notion that when adversity strikes, the Universe will provide—or, that *pay-it-forward* karma will hook us up when *our* chips are down [ala, *It's A Wonderful Life*<sup>1</sup>].

But, if giving is its own reward, then does it matter if any of it comes back?

What if we call it *sharing*? Does that make it sound better?

“Hell, Steve, why don't we just call each other 'comrade'?”

How unfortunate that the word “comrade”, meaning *companion, associate, or friend*, gained such a negative connotation.

Knowing only one language—English—I've not read the Communist Manifesto, nor any other works of Karl Marx or Friedrich Engels, nor have I read any translations. My understanding comes from a Wikipedia synopsis, and the movie *Reds*<sup>2</sup>, so, maybe I'm not one to talk, but I'm pretty sure Socialist and Communist ideas are a reaction [perhaps *overreaction*] to a dark period of recent human history, full of oppression and exploitation. Nearly standard in history is the many, subjugated by a dominant, usually avaricious, often cruel few. But, when monarchies began to fall under the force of an emboldened mass of oppressed “commoners”, humanity took a turn<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> A 1946 Frank Capra movie starring *James “Jimmy” Stewart*, and *Donna Reed*.

<sup>2</sup> Starring *Warren Beatty* and *Diane Keaton*.

<sup>3</sup> But, in many instances, it flopped back into an oppressive system. E.g. Russia, following the brutal eradication of her monarchy, fell to another form of autocratic rule when the USSR was formed. Yet, there's the US *experiment*, where the *premiere government* was founded on the idea that *the people could rule themselves*. And, England, who toppled its monarchy and maintained a fair amount of democracy. So, it truly is, on the whole, an important, and provocative >>> continued on page 434

My simplistic understanding is that Communism is, basically, a call to the working class (the *Proletarians*) to band together into a world wide *union*, and force the *owners of the means of production* (the *Bourgeois*), into fair treatment of their workers. At the heart of all of this, is the desire for everyone to prosper and find happiness. This ideology becomes a problem, though, when it's *forced* on people<sup>1</sup>, as is borne out in numerous bleak examples, in recent history, and in current implementation.

My thinking is, if such a thing were to ever work, it would have to be the prevailing attitude. In other words, a large-scale willing demonstration of brotherly/sisterly love for all of humanity, and all of life—everyone choosing to care for each other as friends, and even as a human family...aka “comrades”.

Workers rising up, organizing, and forcing employers to behave like decent human beings is terrifying to those who benefit from a corrupt capitalist system. Especially when that “rising up” also embodies the rage over millennia of abuse, horror and murder.

“It’s good to be King!”

–Mel Brooks – *History of the World, Part 1*

The specter of a population rising up and taking down its own government, scared the crap out of governments all over the world. And, the notion of the working class becoming an organized force<sup>2</sup>, scared the crap out of Capitalists around the world. So, words like

---

<<< 433 turn in Human History! Though, lately, it’s looking like the whole “Free World” is swinging back to autocracy.

<sup>1</sup> For instance, the USSR; East Germany; Maoist China; Khmer Rouge in Cambodia; North Korea.

<sup>2</sup> ala, Unions.

*Communism*, *Socialism* and *comrade* were given a negative connotation through the use of a well-heeled propaganda campaign called *The Red Scare*<sup>1</sup>, which involved making sure the horror of *failed implementations*, such as the atrocities that lived behind the Iron Curtain, further tainted, and vilified these concepts.

The human misery historically suffered during the dawn of the Industrial Age (such as long hours, low wages, poor working conditions, and general exploitation of workers), proved Capitalism, on its own, tends to serve the upper echelon at the expense of the ones busting their butts to make it all possible, aka the lowly workers. The FDR administration's implementation of social safety net regulations and programs (i.e. the "New Deal"), that led to the rise of a relatively prosperous Middle Class in the 50's, was a reaction to this veiled attempt at, essentially, enslaving the working-class, and is an example of successful application of socialistic concepts.

Again, that's probably a rather simplistic treatment.

But, is voluntary *sharing*, or *paying it forward* really in the rank of Iron Curtain horror, as implied by the vilification of the word "comrade"?

There are a slew of YouTube videos that can be found with the search term "The Science of Empathy". For instance, the multitudes of social experiments performed by *SoulPancake*, demonstrating the nature and power of empathy, and ultimately the underlying *Love* that drives it.

Empathy is the key to being able to forgive<sup>2</sup>. And when you can forgive, and not harbor resentment, you free yourself for the possibility of ever

---

<sup>1</sup> Essentially by twisting the darker implementations [e.g. USSR, East Germany, China, North Korea, North Vietnam], into synonymous versions of the words "Communism" and "Socialism", thus vilifying their meaning in the eyes of a gullible public—ala 1984 *doublethink*.

<sup>2</sup> "Forgive" doesn't mean "Excuse". Just as "Tolerance" doesn't imply "Agreement". I forgive, to *release myself*, not to expunge *responsibility*.

present and unmitigated happiness.

Ironically, if everyone lived this way, things like Principled Capitalism would just be the norm, and workers would, by default, be properly compensated out of appreciation for their invaluable contribution to the success of the company. The Dickens character *Mr. Nigel Fezziwig* comes to mind. And, there's no reason the entrepreneurial spirit couldn't thrive in a culture of cooperation and sharing, and still provide *reasonable* compensation for the innovators and risk-takers.

Imagine if the primary goal of industry was the advancement, and betterment of humanity. What would that do to the overall health and prosperity of the planet, and to life in general?

I might be crazy to think that human progress could ever evolve into something so serene and familial! Imagine all those creative people, employed by today's more secretive and exclusive corporations, working together in cooperative innovation, rather than wasteful competition, espionage and gruesome corporate warmongering. Imagine what could be accomplished if everyone supported each other in an atmosphere of mutual respect and elevation of virtues. Imagine a school system that encourages exploration of personal talents, natural abilities and passions, and that supports each and every child in reaching their highest potential, and most rewarding future! Now, that's *leaving no child behind!*

Imagine a society where everyone truly delights in the dreams and joys of everyone else. With a consummate bottom line of mutual respect and benefit, where the *owners of the means of production* truly cared about the well being of those who made their enterprise possible, all the way down to those performing the most menial of tasks. And a corporate

atmosphere of collaboration, mentoring and inter-corporate sharing, where profit is secondary to human advancement and planetary husbandry!

This was Gene Roddenberry's vision. It forms the foundation of his flagship creation: Star Trek. But, for this kind of reality to happen, people will need to get over themselves, or in the parlance of this book: *They will need to own their own RIDICULOUS!* The ability to forgive, and the desire to give, is the key to this sort of future!

And, currently, there's a new threat to all of this: AI. Don't get me wrong, I'm an enthusiastic proponent of AI, but there is huge potential for abuse—the same sort of abuse that has plagued the working class since there were jobs to go to. Already, humans are being replaced by robots.

As a child in the 60's I read a lot of science fiction and a prevalent theme was a future full of leisure due to automation freeing humanity from menial tasks so they could spend their time on creative pursuits—ala The Jetsons. I remember an episode where Jane Jetson was suffering from Button Finger Ache from having to push so many buttons to do her house-“work”. What these early 20<sup>th</sup> century writers didn't consider was how corporate greed would alter that vision.

If I was Emperor, I would mandate that all “Robots” and other AI automatons, must be sponsored by a human. Essentially, people would own their own “Work-Bot” that they would send to the sort of job once inhabited by a human. The “employer” would pay a rental fee to the owner, akin to a “wage”. No factory, or corporate setting, would be allowed to utilize a robot that wasn't owned by a human sponsor. The up-keep of the automaton would be the responsibility of it's owner.

But, before this compassionate vision of the future can be realized, there's an obstacle to surmount: Our animal legacy. When I look at nature, I see animals eating other animals. I see fidgeting and fretting in animals at the bottom of the food chain, which amounts to a lot of time and energy directed towards watching their backs, lest they be eaten. I see animals running in herds, swimming in schools, and flying in flocks to confuse and discourage predators. I see birds laying their eggs high in trees for the same reason.

*"Many were increasingly of the opinion that they'd all made a big mistake in coming down from the trees in the first place. And some said that even the trees had been a bad move, and that no one should ever have left the oceans."*

~Douglas Adams – *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*

I also see an absurd theater of what I like to call “chemical warfare”. Spiders, scorpions, pythons, and what-not, with searing, stunning, and slaying bites and stings for both defense and predation—essentially stabby little critters in a chemical warfare escalation. An animal like the possum, or the mongoose develops antitoxin, so the snake ramps up its poisonous bite. So, yeah: *Escalation!* There are snakes with a bite that can kill an elephant!! How is a snake ever going to eat a whole elephant?!? I doubt they have access to refrigeration or the tools of butchery!

Essentially, nature is a Mad Max style “Thunderdome” where modes of murder, and evasion are tested in a battle of the fittest. And, the worst of this plays out in Australia! Australia has some of the most venomous and vicious animals on the planet! Fitting that Australia is where Mad Max was filmed!!



Also, what I see in nature is a disregard for the physically, or mentally weak. Cripples don't do so well in nature. Predators take gleeful advantage<sup>1</sup>. Also, better not get sick! If you can't keep up with the herd, or swim with the school, or fly with the flock, you'll likely become some predator's *next meal*.

But, humanity has the mental capacity to leave this all behind, or at least confine it to a friendly game in a computer generated world. What human can truly be called "human" who abandons a deformed baby to a pack of coyotes? What human can truly be called "human" who hunts other humans for food, or fun? How cockamamie would it be for humans to slaughter other humans...oh, wait—they do, don't they.

The patterns of *predator* and *prey* can be seen in human history. The predators, in this case were the corrupt monarchs, oligarchs, lords and dictators who preyed on the lowly masses, not as a direct source of food<sup>2</sup>, like a predator in the animal world. No, their "kill" was the freedom and prosperity of the ones they dominated, and the insatiable analogous "bellies" of these human predators were fattened on the hard labor and heavy taxes levied on their subjects—their prey. And, this is still going on today with some variation. For instance there's a new predator on the human savanna: The aforementioned *corrupt corporation*.

*"The real problem of humanity is the following:  
we have paleolithic emotions, medieval institutions,  
and a god-like technology"*

~Edward O. Wilson

---

<sup>1</sup> The word "Gleeful" is probably an anthropomorphism, but I dunno, sometimes it sure looks like animals are enjoying it!

<sup>2</sup> Though I wouldn't put it past, at least some of them.

In other words, human antics are still influenced by animal ways. This is apparent under even mild scrutiny. Like Edward O. Wilson said, we humans have paleolithic emotions. But, humanity has also demonstrated a new paradigm—a paradigm of inclusion, and mutual respect—a paradigm of caring and empathy, with demonstrations of courage and innovation that you just don't see in the animal kingdom. Courage to welcome into the community those normally shunned by the animal code. Innovation that allows the “challenged” to gain more than a semblance of normalcy. Stephan Hawking is a famous example on the extreme end of the spectrum of assisted disability. There is no instance, that I know of in the animal kingdom of such things as a prosthesis, or a cochlear implant, or wheelchairs, or glasses, or robotic voice boxes. The animal solution to disability is *sink or swim*. If the afflicted can keep up, then there's a chance for survival, otherwise *no mercy*.

A bird that frequented the lunch area of one of the three Junior High Schools<sup>1</sup> I attended, had a gimpny claw. It was bent and impaired, thus no more useful than a stump, yet the bird got around on land by hopping on its good leg, and managed a one legged perch when it fled to one of the surrounding trees. Despite the extra effort and adept required, the bird seemed to be doing fine. It was more aggressive than the others—probably a required compensation. This bird seems an exception to the usual grisly fate suffered by the disabled in the animal world. In this case, though, both the generosity, and wastefulness of humans, created a condition of supportive abundance, so not exactly “the wild”.

Humans have a greater capacity to care for their sick and disabled, but not all humans are keen to apply it. Compassion is a choice. Animals

---

<sup>1</sup> Back in my day, they weren't called *Middle Schools*.

don't generally have the capacity to choose mercy, compassion, or even consider any other mode than that dictated by their animal programming. But, humans do. It isn't always easy, though. Our animal nature still has a lot of pull, but that human brain retrofit—unless it's defective in some way—can always intervene. For instance, the deformed baby of a strange mother may fail to move a deeply Conservative heart, whereas a more evolved human will include that child as part of an extended family. With practice, and conviction, though, the human impulse can gain greater control, until the animal urges and compulsions become nothing more than a distant noise. My conviction is that this is the next level in human development.

For instance, I can forgive the bullies of my youth because I recognize their behavior as an analog of the animal kingdom predator. Also, more than likely, their behavior was inflicted by one or more caregivers who were themselves behaving as predator



**Capybara with Yellow-Headed Caracara Bestie**

By Charles J. Sharp - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0,

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=44225987>

analog. My spirit is more like the rabbits they would prey on. Or, actually, I prefer Capybara. Thus, I was the bullied, rather than the bully. Some bullies grow out of it and become decent human beings, while some don't. I've met both, as an adult, and the ones that took the turn

towards decency—aka progressed towards what I would call True Humans—lend credence, in my opinion, to the possibility for redemption. Forgiveness can pave the way to redemption. How? Imagine a former bully is attempting to improve their human standing. Which of the two are likely to facilitate that:

1. Hating the Bully from a position of *never thrusting the SOB, EVER again!?*
2. Cutting the knucklehead some slack on the off chance he/she really is genuinely trying?

And, now it's time to talk about what "forgiveness" really is. "Forgive and Forget," right? Not necessarily. Forgiving is more for the Forgivee, than the Forgiven. The act of forgiving can be summed up with this brief statement:

*I forgive to unbind my energy from the events and identities that caused me pain.*

Forgiving doesn't necessarily mean we ameliorate the forgiven from responsibility. It just means we wash our hands of any need to be the enforcer of said responsibility. Essentially the forgiver is saying, let the Universe balance this out. By forgiving, we are making the choice to move on—to apply our energies elsewhere. We may still not trust the SOB, but we're no longer going to hate them for *being* an SOB (at least until they slight us again, in which case the process may-well start over again).

That shift in the relationship following the act of forgiveness, can have some magical implications conjured by this thing I like to call Grace. By relieving yourself of the burden of their slight on you, you are creating wiggle room for yourself, and that can give them some wiggle room too.

It can shine a light on the soul path of the one you forgave, allowing them to see what they might have otherwise missed—thus, the *giving* that has the potential to follow *forgiving*.

Forgiving is an act of Self-Love that can ultimately extend to the forgiven as well, whether that is an intended outcome or not. Love has that way about it!

## Romancing The Jerk Within

*I drink, therefore I am*

~W. C. Fields

Long ago, I glued magnets on some plastic gears in such a way that allowed them to spin freely, and stuck them to the refrigerator. One of my wife's visiting grandsons<sup>1</sup> discovered the gears and began arranging them—sliding them together so spinning one caused the others to spin in wild and wonderful arrangements of useless, mechanized fun.

This boy's older brother, also visiting, noticed the fun and wanted in. The middle brother was loath to relinquish access, so the older brother, using his size advantage, tried to muscle in. The middle brother was having none of it.

Moments before, the older brother was content. His world was at peace. But, discovery of this delightful diversion, and the subsequent obstacle to immediate gratification, led to emotional turmoil<sup>2</sup>. Brother was pitted against brother—brothers with a history of above average affinity<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> From a partner previous to me.

<sup>2</sup> I didn't handle the situation very well, either, getting angry at the utter futility of the older brother's reaction. Were I a better mentor, I might have calmly pointed out, with humor and love, his escalation from "just-fine", to out-of-his-mind. Were I more skilled at dealing with kids, we might have had a good laugh. Instead, because of my unwillingness to stand in the discomfort of my impatience, I ended up contributing to the *upset*. To my credit, I did catch myself, and apologize. It truly was an important *wake-up call*, in my life.

<sup>3</sup> I guess I should have made more of those fun little gear magnets...and bought another refrigerator to put them on—but then, there was a third grandson, and thus the need for a third setup—nah... better if they learn to share, and to delay gratification. Especially since I had no room for an extra two or three refrigerators!

I've been a similar jerk to my two younger brothers, as I'm sure most older brothers have. My brother, Jeff used to follow me around. His sweetness and devotion annoyed my teenage self. How could I muster even a semblance of *cool* with that going on—as if there was such latitude, I was a bit of a dork!

So, I yelled at him—told him to stop being so needy, so clingy, and to, “stop following me the hell around!” I will never forget the heartbreak in his eyes. It changed him. He lost some of his sweetness, and became more withdrawn, more reserved. Thinking of it brings a pang of grief to me, even now.

The first step to freedom from slavery to your biology is the realization that *you are a slave to your biology*. Once you realize and accept this truth, you have a chance of “harmonizing” with your biology. It's like performing Aikido on yourself.

In fact, the human behavior that often leads to being labeled a “jerk”, is, really, just the kind of self-centered preoccupation that comes from being a slave to your own biology. Nerves don't extend beyond the furthest reach of the body. Most humans<sup>1</sup> can't feel the nerves of another being. Thus, our orbit of concern typically extends no further than our own skin. It takes an elevation of consciousness to have a

---

<sup>1</sup> I say “most” because I, my wife, and a number of other people we've encountered, can relate instances of experiencing the *feelings* of another. As a child, I could feel the oppressive emanations of a bully, before I was ever assaulted. Both my wife, and I, have episodes of *moody* behavior before events of large-scale public unrest. Examples are 9/11, and most of the schoolyard shootings, like *Columbine* and *Sandy Hook*, and public shootings in general, like the *Las Vegas Mandalay Bay massacre*. Also, natural events like the *2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake & Tsunami* (also known as the *Boxing Day Tsunami*). My wife feels it, usually, as doom and gloom before the event, and I tend to experience it as a restless irritation. **Fun Fact:** Our inner disturbance, prior to any knowledge of said event, rules out conspiracy theories that claim one or more of these events were *staged fabrications*—including *Sandy Hook*! If they were staged, then neither of us would have felt them the way we did. I can't, though, using this technique, rule out 9/11 theories that claim things like a *government conspiracy to push a war agenda*.

tangible reason to care a wit about another—especially a perfect stranger.

I was being a slave to my teenage hormones when I blasted my younger brother. That self preoccupation blinded me to an opportunity to be a loving older brother and appreciate the attention offered by him. I missed out on the chance to spend some quality time with him, and perhaps be a formative influence in his life, rather than the source of an emotional wound.

Empathy is like a virtual extension of the nervous system—a form of *reaching out* to another living being<sup>1</sup>.

A family can be thought of as empathy training wheels. And, in the greater sphere of things *spiritual*, it's my suspicion that *family* is a diabolical divine scheme to push this *educational agenda*.

Don't get me wrong, it isn't easy to deny, or even defy one's biology—biology is a powerful force. But, it's not impossible, and with practice it gets easier to curb your *inner jerk*. It can even become second nature to be a decent human being, in all but the most challenging situations<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> But, empathy can manifest as reaching out to inanimate objects, like teddy bears, dolls, Furbies, with unfortunate anthropomorphism. In fact, I predict, as AI and androids become more “household”, such nonsense as PETA extending its reach to Androids, will happen. If PETA changes its name to PETA&A, run for the hills! [BTW: this is not to be taken as a slight on PETA—I mostly agree with their anti-animal cruelty stance—though not always with their methods]. I foresee, for example, PETA protesting at BattleBots [bat t lebot s . com], or dumping paint on people wearing clothes made by “Android slave labor”. If Androids ever DO become sentient, and are proven to be so, that will open a whole new can of worms. How, for instance, to tell the difference between a sentient Droid that truly enjoys the monotony of an assembly line job, vs the tyranny of “coercive persuasion” subroutines. And, hopefully, the prevailing wisdom sees its way to coming up with a new term for sentient androids Perhaps “Sendroids.” Bottom line, when androids enter human society, brace yourself for all manner of stupid!

<sup>2</sup> I believe there is a state that could be called mastery, where ALL torments of the flesh can be overcome, but I doubt there are many who have achieved this. Apparently even Jesus, a purported master that should have been beyond such things, showed evidence of a falter when he cried out “Father, why have you forsaken me?!” Also, it seemed like he was losing his zen, in reaction to those “money changers” in the temple.



You can take command of the process, and not pick the fight. You can, also, curb temptation. For instance, let the other guy have that last Krispy-Kreme doughnut<sup>1</sup>, or honor your wedding vows by not succumbing to the affair. You may not be able to shut off the instigating hormones, or instantly purge them from your blood, but you can ignore what they're urging you to do.

*But, Steve... Come on, if the goal is to be Happy for No Damn Reason, isn't succumbing to the doughnut, or the affair, the very essence of happiness?*

Sure. Affairs and éclairs<sup>2</sup> impart a kind of transitory *happiness*. But, I'm talking about unconditional, sustained, ambient happiness, with no downside, other than it might make some people uneasy and suspicious—I mean, who in their right mind is just happy all the time, for no damn reason?!?

Well...not necessarily *all* the time. But, on the turn of a dime, when it, to others, makes no damn sense, yes. That's what I love about the Tom Baker, *Dr. Who*. Also the Christopher Eccleston and David Tennant Doctors [I'm still catching up and as of this writing, have reached the episode where the Tennant Dr. Who is regenerating. I presume I'm about to meet the Matt Smith Doctor.] That's what I'm talking about, right there! The character isn't always happy, so to speak, but he[and maybe even she, like I said, I'm still catching up] finds his way to it at the most damn ridiculous moments, often when all is going to hell, and the chips seem so down, the sensible thing to be doing is freaking the hell out!

---

<sup>1</sup> Truly one of the more challenging situations! And, a very high echelon of heroism!!

<sup>2</sup> OK, I know an *éclair* is not a *doughnut*, but it's catchy, right? And éclairs are right up there with doughnuts on the hard-to-resist scale, so same idea.

If you crave that doughnut, and believe you need it to be happy, or lust after that lovely other, and can't be at *peace* until you get a *piece*, then it's time to wonder why you're unhappy in the first place. Time to explore what it is that truly expresses the you you're meant to be, and why that isn't a central feature in your life. Then, you might find the key to why you're behaving like a jerk, and have a chance at reining that bastard in.

Check out the following YouTube videos of people, ridiculously happy even as they endure what, to us "normals", might seem like unbearable physical dysfunction:



[Squirmy and Grubs](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid29](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid29)



[Ted Talk: My philosophy for a happy life - Sam Berns](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid30](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid30)



[Ted Talk: How do you define yourself? -- Lizzie Velasquez](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid31](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid31)

If you’ve ever seen the movie “The Gods Must Be Crazy”, you might remember the little bushman, Xi. This is a character that possesses all the adult skills needed to survive in the Kalahari, while still retaining a childlike wonder.

This character illustrates exactly what I’m describing. There’s a scene where he’s locked in a jail cell, for not understanding the modern concept of *property*<sup>1</sup>. Sitting in this stark little room, he gazes longingly at the only portal to a world he’s familiar with—a high up window exposing only a small portion of the sky.

A callus, shutdown person watching this scene might wonder why this little guy is in such distress—and why his interpreter/advocate/narrator, bushman-turned-modern, M’pudi, said: “They gave him the death sentence.”

A “White guy” character, Steyn, reacts with incredulity, “For shooting a GOAT?”

M’pudi: “No. Three months in jail. Same thing—he gonna die for sure. He never seen a wall in his life, now he got walls all `round him.”

<sup>1</sup> For him, a hunter-gatherer, *the wild* is everywhere—on this side of the fence, and on the other. When he killed that goat, there was no concept, in his head, that someone owned it.

Most of us do life with *walls all `round* us. It happens, usually, so very early in life—our inner internment—imposed in reaction to something most of us forgot happened. Most of us wither and wilt, and essentially *die* inside, like M’pudi was afraid would happen to Xi, sitting in that jail cell<sup>1</sup>. And we grow numb to the pain of this *loss of personal freedom*.

One of the things that goes is *curiosity*. Children ask questions, often to the bane of the targeted adult. We adults don’t have time for foolish questions. And, the inability to supply an answer, bangs up against that part of us that denies curiosity, and it rubs the emotional pain that denial is wrapped in.

But, questions still flit through our minds, as if the child is still in there, somewhere. We’re more likely to pay attention to the ones that mesh with our adult agendas. *Is that drug dealer looking guy dating my daughter?! Are there hidden fees on this Credit Card?! Is that a motorcycle cop that’s following me?!!*

But, there are other questions, way in the background—questions a child would ask. *Why are blueberry stains purple? Where does the water come from that makes a river? Why can birds fly, but not I? Why do some clouds look like they’re sitting on a big glass table in the sky? Why does air get so hard, when you put it in a tire, or a basketball? Why is water wet? And why the heck, anyway, is the sky blue?*

But, whether these are the questions of an inquisitive actual child, or the forgotten child within us—we have no time for such foolishness. In fact, long ago we learned to ignore these questions. *The sky can just be blue, because knowing why doesn’t affect my ability to pay the mortgage!* But, what if being in the flow of these questions is the purpose of life? If children are

---

<sup>1</sup> Actually, more like a solitary confinement chamber!

our guide, it would seem *wonder* is a primary component of *being*—and that being in the mystery is an ingredient for vibrancy in one’s life. I mean, isn’t existence a whole lot more interesting to an inquisitive mind?

*No, Steve...it’s a lot more frustrating!*

Yes, but is that because you care more about the answers, than the questions? Maybe it’s the pragmatic nature of adulthood—the need to attend to the politics of survival—the day-to-day grind of churning out a living, that compels answers over questions.

*Exactly, Steve...why ask a question, if not to get an answer?*

Have you ever noticed how a child will seem more interested in their next question, than the answer you are struggling to deliver? Their questions are indicative of their open curiosity. If you respond with “I don’t even know the answer to that,” the standard child, with no chagrin, just moves on to the next question...which may, of course, be “Why?”, but that’s still just a different question. A child’s questions, basically, are just a challenge for you to dive back into the mystery!

I’ve never seen a bored baby<sup>1</sup>. Boredom is a symptom of disinterest—a side-effect of silencing curiosity.

I, once, was waiting for a ride home. The time passed quickly because I spent it on my hands and knees watching the scurry of ants down a patch of dirt paralleling the lawn supporting my bent over body. In opposite directions they ran, occasionally meeting, pausing for a

---

<sup>1</sup> Babies can be distracted—like when they’re balling their heads off because their body is uncomfortable—but, once the discomfort is attended to, they are back to examining everything, mostly with their mouth.

moment, face-to-face, their little antenna wagging about. Some had things hoisted above their heads, and it was fun wondering if they were going to make it to wherever they were going, carrying three times their body weight. Just as much fun was watching a single ant, and noticing that it occasionally stopped, ran around in circles, and sometimes, even, wound up going back the other way with just as much apparent urgency<sup>1</sup>.

In other words—there's a wealth of ways to pass the time, and keep interested—if you live in childlike wonder. Boredom is a personal choice.

Another example is a time I sat waiting to be called into the doctor's little waiting room. Up high, I discovered a window that exposed the passing clouds. Big fluffy clouds offer considerable entertainment, if your mind is free to have some silly fun!

With the mastery of language, comes the majesty of "things", and the muting of the meditative mind. Mystery succumbs to nomenclature. Subtleties of experience are snubbed by snap symbolization. Mental chatter drowns out the still-quiet-voice of creation. Identify-and-go reduces perception to a litany of staccato moments, with long spans of *nothing to do*, that compress reality into an expanse of drudgery.

The complex ballet of a butterfly's flit from flower to flower is jammed into a short description, leaving a mind convinced there is no more to see. A wealth of subtlety is collapsed into a stern review: *Brief beauty, followed by banal repetition*. We become insatiable stimulus hogs, requiring, at the speed of labeling, newness that can be measured and

---

<sup>1</sup> Seeing me down on my hands and knees gave a passer-by the impression I was doubled-over in pain. "Yes, I'm fine," I assured him, "I'm just watching these ants." Furious, he rebuked my folly, angry that I was alarming passersby, like himself. Hopefully it gave him a good story to tell.

cataloged. Once cataloged, it isn't *new* anymore, thus a ponderous quantity of unique stimulus is required to sate a Left-Brain appetite.

The mind of an artist somehow survives this succumb to language. An artist sees a butterfly, and lingers beyond the moment of unceremonious labeling. Instead, a savoring, in silence ensues, of the sinuous lines, the velvety textures, the translucent play of light, the arching peak of antennae, the endless patterns of flight. To the eyes of an artist, the world offers an endless symphony of sights, played in the key of curiosity, with harmonies of insight, and an ever-evolving melody of forms, textures, and light's tantalizing play.

This Right-Brain *Wonder* and *joy* gets ground up in the gears of Left-Brain mediocrity. The day-to-day can drown out the facility of the moment. We live in a Left-Brain world, full of assessment and symbolism. The Right-Brain sees something delightfully new in every cloud and finds endless entertainment in the antics of ants. The Left-Brain screams,

*"Clouds! Next!!"*

*"Yes! Butterfly!! Seen a million of them!!!"*

*"Yup! Ants! You've seen one, you've seen them all! Done!!"*

Once it's identified, there is nothing more of interest to the Left-Brain, because all the Left-Brain knows is labels and symbology. And, once something is symbolized with a label, there's nothing more to do.

Boredom is at the core of addiction. Essentially, addiction is a response to the dismal boredom of losing touch with wonder and joy, and the adventure of *life*. It's an uninformed attempt to climb out of the depression of personal repression.

There is no need for substances when you're plugged into the wonder and mystery of creation. Life *is* the substance<sup>1</sup>!

Ultimately, this is about knowing that you don't have to do what your body tells you to do. This is about knowing that there's a *you*, and there's a "your body". If your body, which includes your mind, is stuck in the doldrums of denial due to habitual avoidance of some ancient pain, then it's up to you to break out of that cycle, and regain its use for exploring the mystery of creation. It's up to you to program new habits [or restore the old habits], so your daily routines include more spontaneity, more openness to wonder, more attention to Right-Brain detail.

And that's the bottom line: *Your body belongs to you*. You, on the other hand, don't belong to your body. You are *its* master—or you have the opportunity to be. And the more you get into *that* mindset, the more your body will *mind you*. And, in fact, the more you'll be able to interact with your body from a position of stewardship. And, in fact, the more you will be able to *choose* to be *Happy For No Damn Reason*, even when it makes *no damn sense to do so*.

You're the animal trainer. You must train your inner animal, or it will run you. In the animal kingdom, humans are an anomaly. We have the power to step out of the standard animal agenda<sup>2</sup>.

- Can a wolf not growl at danger?

---

<sup>1</sup> In fact, it's my belief that life itself is a kind of addiction. A cosmic drug of choice. But, that's another subject.

<sup>2</sup> I doubt insects, spiders, fish, and the like, have any concept of play. But, on several occasions, I've seen crows catching and riding updrafts, and they sure seemed to be having fun. Then there are the antics of pups, and playful dolphins—so, it seems, humans are not the only creatures on the planet capable of extending their experience. But, what animal can write a story about play, or capture its semblance in a painting, or for that matter, point and make fun of another animal's awkwardness [actually, I think I may have seen dolphins do that]?



- Can a cat not paw at retreating yarn or not chase the laser pointer spot?
- Can a spider not spin webs?
- Can a minnow not swim with the school?
- Can a hungry shark not bite?
- Can a pack rat not pilfer shiny objects?

Remember: You have a *SuperPower*! You can be *master of the moment*. Tempted by that Krispy Kreme doughnut, you can, after cringing in front of the inflated numbers on your scale, decide to not indulge.

Or you might even decide to go ahead and eat that doughnut, anyway. And you still might be *master of the moment*. The subtlety is in recognizing who (or *what*) really won. Were you truly deliberate when you chose that doughnut, owning all responsibility in the moment? Or were there *regrets*? Regret is a sign that mastery of the moment goes to your *biology*!

Why is this important?

Yeah, Steve... Why are you making such a big deal out of this?

It's probably more *telling* than it is *important*. But, *importance* lies in the ultimate *intention*. If happiness without reason is a desire, then it's important to comprehend this subtlety—and then, upon comprehending, becoming a true master of your biology.

If you say, “Another won’t hurt!”, and then eat the doughnut, how do you feel about yourself, afterward. Something like: “Dang, I did it again! I’m so weak!!”? If so, your biology won.

Or, was it more like, “I knowingly ate that doughnut, fully aware of the consequence [weight gain/feeling like shit/sugar bomb/the feeling of money wasted on a transitory pleasure/etc.¹] yet, I revel in the experience of the doughnut, with no guilt, because I own my choice, and accept full responsibility for any consequences”, then you *mastered the moment*.

It all comes down to *taking responsibility* for your *own* actions.

Ultimately, by doing this—by eating the doughnut, knowing you are *weak today*, but are being deliberate in your choice, you are, strangely enough, growing *will power muscles*. It won’t be long before you’ll be able to say *no* to the doughnut, whenever you want to—but this only comes from being truly honest with yourself—completely tolerant of your weaknesses—in full knowledge of yourself—and in knowing: *Forgiving yourself*.

Embody your vulnerabilities—everyone is vulnerable. Then, cut yourself some slack. This is a position of strength!

. - =====<•:+:{0}:+:•>===== - .

In Mormonism, consumption of alcohol is taboo. But, what if, being Mormon, you wander into a situation, where a fellow human is in emotional distress, and you have a chance to help this individual, and because of their cultural peculiarities, drinking with them would put them at the kind of ease that would open the door to you gaining their trust. Do you walk away, in compliance with the code of your religion? Or, having mastery over your life, and your choices, can you boldly

<sup>1</sup> And, if you’re a Krispy Kreme executive and thinking of suing me, GO AHEAD!! Not only will it be great publicity for this book, but it will be fun to see how your lawyers spin your fatty, surgery, white flour product as “healthy”. But, then, in this era of *talking money*, and *alternative facts*, perhaps I shouldn’t be so confident ☺

choose to be *bad*, in order to do some *good*?

Or, what if you're Jewish, and you only have a set of non-dairy saucers. And what if all you have on hand that would appeal to the pallet of a feline, is a carton of cream. If a starved cat comes to your door, do you refuse to feed the cat, because it would mean pouring cream on the wrong kind of china?

My first wife, Carol, and I, once visited her brother, who was married to a woman who, late in life, converted to Judaism. Being a person with trust issues, she took no chance of drawing derision from her new flock, by compulsively immersing herself in the dogma. As such, she yelled at her sister-in-law because she used a meat plate to eat some cheese. A second violation caused another eruption of fury, and a request to leave *at once*. Perhaps, had she reached the story of Ruth and Boaz, in her Jewish Conversion Studies, she'd have been more tolerant of Carol's perplexity in fathoming the complicated rules regarding foods and their proper containers. If I had a time machine I would go back and advise Carol to only visit her brother on Yom Kippur!

Was my first wife's sister-in-law noble in her convictions, or merely a slave to her mind. Does the God of Jewish laws regarding cheese, meat and utensils [Kashrut], supersede the act of loving and caring for one another?

The reason for these laws was likely the porous nature of the utensils in use back in biblical times. A dish used for dairy would absorb some of the dairy product. Washing would not remove all of this contamination. Thus, if meat were served in the same dish, the meat would come in contact with the dairy festering in the utensils pores. And God, knowing what was going on at a microscopic level, did retch, and in His revulsion,

commanded that His people do observe better sanitary practices with their tableware.

In the book of Isaiah, the prophet describes the abundance of dairy products in the land of Israel as a symbol of God's blessings. Evidence that God likes cheese, and wants you to keep your damn meat off the cheese platter! Not sure what comes of meat when exposed to a utensil harboring last week's jus<sup>1</sup>, but I'm betting Biblical era stomachs were far stronger than those of today's typical modern human, so, no need to actually throw out the dishes after each meal. This is also further evidence that it's more about God's cheese fetish, than anything else.

I jest.

But, that was all before the invention of *glaze*. Glaze is a glassy film that is used to coat the inside, and often the outside of a ceramic pot, or dish, etc. Glaze is vitreous, meaning *made of glass*, and being glass, things like milk and meat, *can't soak in*. Thus, these laws probably need a review, but God hasn't issued an upgrade in millennia, so the madness continues. Is God a stinker, or a shirker?

Traditions are nothing more than models. And, in a healthy society, models are adjusted to meet current conditions. The negative aspect of *tradition* is resistance to change, even if the original conditions no longer apply. How often is happiness in contention with some outdated tradition? Especially when harsh punishment is the result?!? Forty lashes for being reasonable, or unconventional, or just uncommon?!

. - =====<•+:{0}:+•>===== - .

<sup>1</sup> This is a word suggested by ChatGPT when I requested a word for "meat juice." It comes from French for "juice" or "gravy" and refers to the "juice obtained from roasting".

While watching a video with dance students attempting to satisfy a demanding, uncompromising, even abusive flamenco dance instructor, my rebellious mind wondered about the first person to do a flamenco dance. Did they get it “right” the first time? What was the standard? And, when did it become such a serious thing—such a derision worthy form? And, would the first flamenco dancer approve of whatever it was this instructor was teaching? Since flamenco is meant to be seductive, I suppose the true test would be to gauge the arousal of audience members. Could flamenco be scientifically improved in this way? Are the dance moves truly optimized, at this point?!? And, if it can be optimized, then doesn’t that render rather silly, this instructor’s sternness? *You have no mastery, you pig!!*

This brings to mind a vision of Clockwork Orange restrained audience members, with their eyes pinned open, and probes wired into their sexual receptors of their brain, while they all watch variations on flamenco. In the background, under subdued, pensive lighting, lab coated, clipboard wielding researchers hover over chattering strip chart recorders.

. - =====<•+:{0}:+•>===== - .

See if you can learn what controls you, and then do an accounting: What is the cost of that control? For instance, the cost of enforcing Kashrut on on Carol:

1. The missed opportunity to get to know her husband’s sister.
2. An opportunity to support her husband’s desire to spend more quality time with his sister—who he had not seen for years.

3. And, even, perhaps, a chance to introduce us to this “beautiful religion” she so reveres.

or the cost of a browbeating Flamenco teacher on a free spirit:

1. The loss of a new, more exciting dance, involving the Kookaburra bird!

Where in your life are you bound by non-serving thought forms? What would it look like to be free of that?

I was pretty stupid in my aversion to my younger brother’s admiration. The non-serving thought form in that case was the belief that having a devotional younger brother would make me less attractive to girls. I already had several strikes against me in that department, being a dorky looking, nerdy guy. So, I was extra sensitive about anything that lowered that score. Truth is, kindness towards my little brother might have made me *more* attractive, i.e. might have been a really good optic!

If I could go back, I would give my younger self a thwack, and tell him to stop being such a jerk. If, in that moment I could have a do-over, I would handle it *much* differently. Seeing the pain in my brother’s eyes when I harshly admonished him for being an “annoying little puppy,” melted my heart. If I could take that feeling of grief back to my younger self BEFORE my idiot move, maybe I could have learned to enjoy the relationship more, and could have created some fond memories with my little brother, and not wounded my brother in ways that would negatively impact his future life.

I was being driven by structures that weren’t even all that valid. I had ideas of how I should *be* in order to conform to a society I wasn’t even a good fit for. I was being a jerk, to appease a phantom!

How does one change this—heal from this? It’s all about taking responsibility for your own actions. And, in fact, taking responsibility for your own upbringing(?)

What?!? I know! Ridiculous, right?!?

Assuming you’re all grown up, your childhood has already happened, right? And, unless you have access to a time machine, there isn’t much you can do about it, right? You can’t change it. I suppose you can remain pissed at your parents [or “care”-givers], but what good will that do? Sure, you can use your poor upbringing as an excuse for your shitty life. You can cry *handicap* in life's more trying moments. You can even resort to emotional extortion to manipulate the people around you into giving you a pass or into doing the *hard stuff* for you. “*I’m a victim of abuse, so I can’t!*”

OR...

You forgive your parents [or “care”-givers], realizing they did their best with what they had, and assume responsibility for your own healing and become a parent to yourself—i.e. take on the “re-parenting” of your “inner child”]. And, even better, get into a situation where you can do this with the support of others who are also doing this<sup>1</sup>. Or, under the guidance of a professional. I spent most of my pre-fifty adulthood doing this.

Consider that this applies even if your dad was an angry drunk who beat your mother, you or both; or was a White Supremacist Neo-Nazi who kicked your ass around the block if you showed any signs of weakness, or gayness, or sympathy, or...; Maybe your father raped you, or otherwise sexually abused you; Or, maybe your mother Munchausen Syndromed

<sup>1</sup> You can, often, find this sort of thing in an ACA or AcoA meeting—some of which facilitate target groups that typically follow one of the various workbooks designed for this very thing.

you [by proxy] to get attention from your otherwise absent father; etc.

I know that's a tough nut to crack, but if you *can*, you gain the power to be proactive in your recovery/healing. If you can accept that they perpetrated whatever foul deed to your vulnerable, small self, because they weren't in control of their faculties, due, most likely to similar abuse afflicted by their parent(s)/caregiver(s), when they were a child—by recognizing and accepting this, you open up the possibility of finding justification for forgiving them.

And, be clear: To forgive is not necessarily to *condone*. What they did was terribly WRONG! But, as horrible as whatever that was, their child self was just as susceptible to human frailty as was yours. And, for a human to do ANY terrible thing to another human means, that human is not in their right mind. They were not in control of their morality. And, even if you can't accept any of that, consider this: Forgiving them, and moving on, is the best revenge, because it puts you in the driver seat for your own healing. You get to move on, and have a better life, and even a great life! Getting in touch with what diverts you from the experience of *wonder*—what keeps you from being authentic with yourself regarding that which sparks your enthusiasm, can bring you to a position of clarity, where you can gain the footing you need to use your Animal SuperPower to unravel those impediments, and remove them from your way-of-being.

And, when you get to the core, take advantage of the opportunity to forgive yourself! It *wasn't them*. And it *wasn't you*. This shit has been passed down generation after generation! Be the one who gets all *Gandalf* and yells, “*YOU SHALL NOT PASS!*” putting an end to your particular line of ancestral insanity!



You did that!! How mighty are you?!?

This is a sure-fire way to romance the jerk right out of you so you can find happiness, in the moment, and be *Happy For No Damn Reason!*.

## Conditional Happiness

*"Screws fall out all the time, the world is an imperfect place."*

~John Bender – The Breakfast Club

From the perspective of Physics and Mathematics, the world is perfect. You push on something, and it moves in very predictable ways—perfect ways. You shine a light, and the beam follows physical laws to a tee. When worlds collide, the dynamics of all the bits will be, pretty much, as expected<sup>1</sup>.

So, what does it mean to say we live in an imperfect world? Perhaps it's the imperfection of our expectations? Before life, what existed to make presumptions? What grants "life" the right to go around expecting outcomes? What justifies our demands for things to be a certain way?

And who, or what, exactly, in the scheme of things within the sum of all matter and energy in the Universe, is *upset* when things *go wrong*? And for that matter, what defines this concept we label as "wrong"?

Doesn't it come down to threatened flesh? For the living, the Universe can seem not such a happy place. In fact, happiness tends to be *conditional*. But, if you require something external to show up and *make*

---

<sup>1</sup> The OSIRIS-REx NASA space probe (the same probe that fired a projectile at the asteroid Benu) is now studying the "Yarkovsky Effect" on Benu. The Yarkovsky effect is a force, other than gravity, that influences the paths of asteroids. This is a force caused by the emission of thermal photons from the dark side of a rotating asteroid--a force that makes it difficult to predict the long term trajectories of, for instance, asteroids posing a threat to life on Earth. By studying this with the Benu probe, scientists are hoping to improve their ability to make these predictions, and thus improve their chances of saving Earth from a disastrous impact.

you happy, then, unless you get freaky lucky, that happiness, if it ever shows up, will be *transitory*. In other words, it's a bit absurd to lie in a ditch, and expect happiness to jump in with you.

*"If you can't love yourself, how the hell you gonna love somebody else?"*

~RUPAUL

Sometimes, though, as we lie in our little ditches, it can feel like we've risen from the ditch, but in reality we've only falsely redefined ground-zero.

Do you like candy bars? I do. Pretty much my favorite is the Reeses Peanut Butter Cup. I could eat a whole crate of them and still want more! But, if I did that, I would seriously suffer. Each bite would be a moment of happiness. Each chew a delight in creamy, sugary<sup>1</sup>, chocolaty, peanut-buttery nirvana! But, peanut butter gives me nasty, smelly gas, and the sugar, after the initial rush, makes me feel ill and causes me to crash into a near stupor. And that's after only consuming the two cups in a single package!

It's a transitory happiness. A moment of distraction from the ditch. Life offers many of these transitory thrills, sex being at, or near the top of most lists (at least for guys). And, if one is basing their happiness on such moments of lift, one is going to find it very difficult to perpetuate a state of glee. I'm not condemning the occasional indulgence. Moderation, as they say, is the key. It's when such things are relied upon for contentment in life, that it can be counterproductive.

<sup>1</sup> With a 2% or less of vial, nasty Corn Syrup. That stuff is poison!

There's nothing wrong with a bit of sex, drugs, rock-and-roll, or an occasional peanut butter cup, but if you're using it to *make* yourself "happy", then you're missing the point. Addiction is losing the internal argument between *what is good for "you"* and *what is good for "the beast"*. The beast lives in the ditch, and metaphorically wants you to remain in the ditch. The ditch feels safe. Climbing out of the ditch means facing whatever threw you in the ditch, in the first place. The beast argues that it's SOOOOOO much better to lie in the ditch and do shots, or shoot up, or prowl for sex, or buy nice things, or eat a truck-load of Peanut Butter Cups!

Finding the courage to face down the beast, crawl out of the ditch, and confront whatever is amiss in your life, can be difficult, and often requires help from others. And, sometimes that can ONLY happen with help from others.

- Intervention;
- Incarceration.
- A 5150 hold.
- Mandated rehab.
- Life tragedy.
- DUI(s).
- Health crisis.
- Near-death-experience.
- Even what I like to call, "The scaffold of religion".

These are things that can lead to an existential crisis. In the 12-step parlance this is called *hitting bottom*. And, if you survive it, you are likely

to become a person who walks around far more awake to the range of life's possibilities, and as a result a more loving, inspiring, and generally decent person.

And, BTW: I sorta lumped quite a range of “bottom-out” modes in that discussion. I mean, one probably doesn't need a *near-death-experience* to get off Peanut Butter Cups. But, then, in my case it was a severe episode of Atrial fibrillation that, though not life threatening, it did cause me to pass out and piss myself, all of which jogged me back to a healthier lifestyle, and into facing the grief that prompted my less than healthy eating habit involving those damn Peanut Butter Cups.

And, BTW: In the case of my Peanut Butter Cup addiction, all I have to do is remind myself of the crappy way I will feel after the moment of joy. Is it worth it? Not usually<sup>1</sup>.

When your Peanut Butter Cup is another person, well, this is a reason relationships fall into discord. People get together because they *make* each other *happy*—for a while. That's a pretty tall order; being the baron of someone's happiness. And in a situation where each is in charge of the other's happiness, contentment walks a wobbly rope-bridge over a chasm of disappointment.

***But, Steve, everyone knows that's how relationships work. You do things for each other to prove your love and bring the other person joy!***

Yes. And, there's a word for that: *codependency*. What if each took responsibility for their own contentment, while reveling in the other's success?

***Well, that just sounds narcissistic!***

---

<sup>1</sup> Those, writing this really activates my craving for those cups!!

Okay, suppose I spend my energies and resources on “bringing joy into the life of my beloved” in order to “prove that my love is true”, or to extort their affection, or fluff their ego, or supply their “emotion fix”, or in general, maintain the lopsided balance that is this dysfunctional relationship? Is that really a wise and effective use of my talents and abilities? Why is my beloved not concerned that I’m squandering my gifts, and time, on them, rather than focusing that energy on my own *raison d’etre*?

*"Love rests on two pillars: Surrender and Autonomy."*  
-Esther Perel

Love isn’t for stroking egos, or bolstering pride, or enabling sloth, or placating a damaged psyche. Love doesn’t capitulate to dark collusion, or care only about itself.

I mean, how is such a lopsided dynamic sustainable? It’s a lot of work keeping someone *else* happy. If there is any *emotional accounting* going on, and one feels the other is not keeping up with the relationship *quid pro quo*, it can quickly go to hell. If one, or both, of the partners are required to guess what will make the other’s day [“If you *really* loved me, you’d know!”], unless that one, or both are clairvoyant, someone’s day is going to be full of disappointment and drama. And, in some relationships, where one, or both, are what I would call “drama junkies”, that is the actual point, and how sad is that? I’m telling you: It’s possible to have so much more!

A *healthier*, and unfortunately, *uncommon* dynamic is between two people who *self-generate* their own happiness, and are together because of *actual*



affection. The story involves cherished possessions and the desire to give a gift that augments their partner's possession.

For her, it's long, beautiful brown hair. For him it's a pocket watch, passed down from his father. The story pivots on two sad but comical events. Lacking funds, she sells her hair to buy her husband, Jim, a golden chain for his watch. And he sells his watch to buy her a set of combs for her beautiful hair, combs he saw her admiring in the window of a local shop.

It was, for each, both a noble demonstration of their affection—the willingness to sacrifice a cherished possession for the happiness of the other, and a comical tragedy of errors.

=====

----- END SPOILER ALERT -----

=====

Silly humans! Don't they realize that such gifts are unnecessary? Do they doubt the strength and permanence of *true love*? But, the demonstration has its own value. Especially if the lesson is learned.

Am I saying never give gifts to the one(s) you love? Of course not. It's not the giving of the gift, it's the motive behind the gift. Is the gift dripping with *agenda*, or posing as some sort of love-currency, or compelled by a mark on a calendar, or some cultural obligation, or at its worst, an exploitative ploy or some sort of emotional extortion? Or is it truly an unconditional token of appreciation? Will the giver stockpile resentment, if not duly reciprocated? Or, can the gift go unanswered for eternity? I've always thought the best gifts are spontaneous expressions



detached from any holiday or manufactured impetus.

Conditional?

No one can really make you feel anything. What you feel is your own doing. Here's proof:

. 7&#@4444

..... jk

uuuuuuuuuuuuuj

Holy shit! Who am I kidding?! What a piece of crap this is! And, what kind of moronic title is “*Happy For No Damn Reason*”?!! Why would you even pick up a book with such an inane title, let alone read it! I mean, you must be a pretty shallow and unimaginative person if you can be manipulated by something so ridiculous as this cutesy title. And, the fact that you’ve read this far, proves you’ll believe any exploitative crap that comes your way! In fact it’s like totally proof that you’re the most stupid human being alive! I mean, who believes this shit?!? Earthquake Bonks?!?!? Animal SuperPowers?!?!? Baboon Butts?!?!? What gratuitous bunk!!!!

kkkk..%#\$@&%&\$((&#.....

@#

Did I get you going? Were you shocked, incensed, confused, annoyed? Did I mean it? Of course not!<sup>1</sup> Why would you think that?!? Just because I grew up in the San Fernando Valley<sup>2</sup>, do you *really* think I resort to *valley girl* idioms such as “like totally” whenever I get upset?!? How banal do you think I am?!?!?

Ha! Did you think I blew another gasket?

Any upset a person feels is that person’s own doing. If you reacted, it was from your lizard brain. Wisdom could easily have informed you. Given the context of this book, and the subject matter being discussed, and the preface “Here’s proof”, there was plenty of opportunity for you to realize I was messing with you.

If you did react, then ask yourself, how often do you let your Lizard Brain override your commonsense?

BTW: There were times, while writing this book, when I had similar conversations in my head. *Who am I kidding? Why do I think I’m qualified to write this stuff? I still lose it from time to time! I’m not happy all the time! What makes me think I’m an authority on happiness?!? I don’t even have a college degree!*

This is called *Impostor Syndrome*.

There truly are times when I still lose it. But, in each case I wasn’t far from regaining my “high watch”. In fact, the high watch is usually present even during these meltdowns. *There I go again! Look at me being all hurt. Okay, there’s the selfpity! Look at me, all bent out of shape!*

---

<sup>1</sup> I mean, really! There is nothing moronic about the title of this book – pa-lease! “Cutesy” maybe...

<sup>2</sup> San Fernando Valley, California – home of the original “valley girls”. OMG! I was actually there, at the Sherman Oaks Mall! Like, for real!! [*I made fun of them* – I wasn’t *one of them* – as if!!]

When I'm drowning in Impostor Syndrome, or other forms of upset, I remind myself that the power to step out of it is always available to me, because I know I'm capable. I remember "Puffer Fish". I remember that I have the Animal SuperPower to choose. That I can get back into the driver's seat. It's not always easy, and sometimes I'm not up to it. Sometimes the power steering goes out, and it takes extra effort to turn the wheel<sup>1</sup> and correct my course. But, I'm still in observer mode. I'm still able to notice my own *ridiculous*. And, even while I'm driving down the wrong side of the highway, against traffic, I'm able to forgive myself, and allow myself to be human [or *animal*], in the moment. Being able to do that—to see that—keeps me humble, and informs my compassion, and deepens my empathy for others, and gives me the presence of mind to get my car back on the proper side of the road all the more quickly.

Happiness isn't always guaranteed, but the opportunity for it is. And, being able to watch my antics, and own my own RIDICULOUS, makes happiness possible, even in the middle of the mess. *I'm being a douche right now, but I'm still happy, if for no other reason than I'm also laughing at myself!*

There's a scene in the movie, *The Seven Samurai* (1954 – Akira Kurosawa), where...

=====  
 !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! SPOILER ALERT !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!  
 =====

Kambei stages a test for culling candidates for the altruistic band of warriors he's assembling. He hands the youngest of the already chosen, a long stick, and instructs him to hide just inside the front door and

<sup>1</sup> Have you ever noticed that older, pre-power steering automobiles had larger diameter steering wheels? A larger steering wheel provides the leverage needed to steer a non-power assisted car.

strike the ronin candidate that is about to enter the little room to face Kambei. Kambei is sitting calmly, in full view of the dusty road outside. He further instructs the boy not to hold back, “Give him a real whack.”

With the stick raised like a sword, the lad waited. As this first candidate walked through the door the lad struck, and was handily disarmed and thrown across the room. Kambei jumped up and positioned himself between the angry ronin and the disheveled youngster.

“Please don’t take offense.” Kambei said, and quickly related the story of the farmers, the bandits who were terrorizing them, and Kambei’s mission to rout the miscreants. The first candidate listened, his face scowling with skepticism. When Kambei admitted to the lack of any payment save unlimited meals for the duration of the commission, the first candidate cursed and said, “My ambitions are greater than that,” before storming out.

A second candidate walked to the entrance where the same trap was set, paused before entering, then realizing the trap, chuckled, and said “Surely you jest.” After agreeing to join the cause, he said to Kambei, “But, I have to say that although I understand the farmers’ suffering and understand why you would take up their cause, it’s your character that I find most compelling. In life one finds friends in the strangest places.”

=====  
----- END SPOILER ALERT -----  
=====

I know it’s just a movie, but I’ve encountered this character more than once—a joyful spark that lights up the room and brings peace to nearly everyone present<sup>1</sup>. So, to me, it’s not at all far-fetched. And, because of

<sup>1</sup> Conservative people tend to label such a person as flaky, unreliable, and a danger to civility and even a purveyor of anarchy. Tough audience!

his inner peace, he is present to whatever it is informing him of the pending trap—be it experience, intuition, EQ<sup>1</sup>, second sight, ESP, or whatever. He is quiet inside, thus he can hear the whispers of wisdom. The first candidate had just as much opportunity to attain that level of calm, but chose to generate upset, and then blame others for his own lack of wisdom.

During the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, participants in the nonviolent protest movement underwent rigorous training to fortify their resilience in the face of hostility. This training involved enduring verbal abuse, insults, and simulated physical aggression, which included the symbolic throwing of harmless items such as trash, eggs, tomatoes, fruit, bottles, and small rocks. The intention was not to cause harm but to provide trainees with an authentic experience, preparing them to withstand real-life challenges without responding with retaliation or visible resentment.

This is achieved by knowing that whatever “bubbles up” is of our own making. Knowing that we are the ones creating upset within ourselves is an insight that gives us great power—the power to catch this, often petty, *animal reaction*. As I said before, this is the power to notice when you’re in your *animal*—when your *animal is up*. When you can do that, you can alter this reaction—suppress it—disqualify it.

*"We're human beings with the blood of a million savage years on our hands, but we can stop it! We can admit that we're killers, but we're not going to kill today. That's all it takes... knowing that we're not going to kill – today!"*

~ Captain Kirk – Star Trek Original Series, Season 1, Episode 23 – *A Taste of Armageddon*

---

<sup>1</sup> Emotional Quotient – akin to “IQ”.

Animals react in a predictable manner. Humans have the ability to be unpredictable, creative, and contrary to animal logic. That is the profound difference between an *animal*, and a *human*. And it's the main reason we can, at any moment, *choose* to be Happy For No Damn Reason!



## Fear Of Death

*"I do not fear death. I had been dead for billions of years before I was born and had not suffered the slightest inconvenience."*  
~Samuel "Mark Twain" Langhorne Clemens

I know—the BIG “D”!

I’m gonna die. You’re gonna die. Everything living will eventually die. That’s the Universe being an annoying stickler for *change*. And, it seems to me, irrefutable evidence of the machine-like nature of the body. Death is, after all, the machine failing beyond repair. Or as a physicist might say: *Death occurs when entropy wins*.

Fear of death is built into the machine. It’s part of the programming. It’s endemic to life’s coding going all the way back to that first entity that rose from the muck with the precise genetic pattern to obsess over continuing to be a living entity.

*"Do not pity the dead, Harry. Pity the living, and, above all those who live without love."*

~Albus Dumbledore – *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* by J.K. Rowling

If we didn’t fear death, any moderate annoyance might drive us to jump off a cliff, or walk in front of a bus<sup>1</sup>. It’s called “the survival instinct”, and

---

<sup>1</sup> Have you noticed the ubiquity of the *walking in front of a bus* plot device in TV fiction? How did buses get so mudery?! And, what’s up with all the T-Bone car crashes!? It seems to happen every third episode, or so, especially from 2017 to 2019! OK, I’m exaggerating, but >>> continued on page 480

it's very strong—and one might argue, *necessary*.

An irony of life, at least for some, is the relaxing of this fear with age. And with it, maybe an expansion of the margin for adventure, in a body, perhaps less suited for adventure. Youth truly is wasted on the young!

Fear of death is a colossal limiter for most. It's a key cause for meeting life on squeamish terms. Just imagine what one might venture, if *fear of death* weren't an issue. Might we be more bold? More cavalier?

"Our doubts are traitors,  
And make us lose the good we oft might win,  
By fearing to attempt."

~ William Shakespeare, Measure for Measure

A flight instructor<sup>1</sup> once told me: "There are bold pilots, and old pilots. But, there are no old, bold pilots." But, that assumes *length of life* is the nominal desire. *Live fast and die young* right!? Or, is that the credo of fools? Is desire for *quality of life* over *quantity of life* the better tack? I think it's an individual choice.

Religion can actually provide a tranquil relationship with death, especially for the conservative. In fact, the conviction that a "heavenly hereafter" awaits us when we depart from the body can greatly embolden a life. But, if religious doctrine typically limits adventurism within a confining structure of dogma, this can be curbed. For instance, if doctrine condemns suicide as a sin, then individuals might be less daring lest their actions be interpreted as suicidal. Oh well.

---

<<< 479 still, soon after writing this footnote, while watching "Lessons in Chemistry, one of the main characters...you guessed it...GETS HIT BY A BUS!!!

<sup>1</sup> What I learned from Flight School is I have no business being behind the controls of an airplane! My "scattered focus" is antithetical to the discipline needed to not crash the plane.

So, how is one to thumb their nose at the angel of death? For me it was a nearly lifelong pursuit of the “spiritual”, leading to encounters with proficient practitioners that helped me piece together a pinnacle of inner peace. Currently it’s meditation that moves my life ever higher, my love of humanity ever deeper, and affords the subject of death a greater level of nonchalance.

*“I’m not afraid of death; I just don’t want to be there when it happens!”*

~ Woody Allen

Lingering in me, though, is some trepidation over the more gruesome *paths to death—especially the ones that are slow and painful*. I also harbor a sliver of uncertainty concerning whether the “after life” will actually be an improvement—fueled by qualms about karma, and this thing called “the cycle of reincarnation”, or *samsara*<sup>1</sup>. Then there’s that ingrained *drive to survive* that can evoke dread in even the most intrepid of souls, much like the apprehension one might feel before a parachute jump from 14,000 feet<sup>2</sup>. But, what an adventure!

I’m hoping, once I cross, I can freely explore whatever part of the Universe piques my fancy—assuming I still *have* a fancy. I think, after I visit the local planets in our solar system, next on my list will be the Eagle Nebula. Then, the black hole at the center of the Milky Way galaxy! Can a black hole swallow a spirit? And, if so, what happens then?!? Do you get stuck there until the end of time? Or, are you freed once Hawking radiation boils it down to nothing? Maybe I won’t get too close ☺. With the billions of galaxies out there, though, I’ll certainly have plenty to do! Maybe I’ll go figure out what “Dark Matter” really is,

<sup>1</sup> If one were to pin a religion on me, it would be a blend of Buddhist and Vedic concepts.

<sup>2</sup> I’ve never jumped out of a plane, but I imagine...

and come back into life to win a Nobel Prize! Is that cheating?...



**Messier 16 (The Eagle Nebula)**

Credits: NASA, ESA and the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA)

*Get busy living, or get busy dying.*

~Stephen King

But, while I'm here, in a body, among the living, there's this *life thing* to do.

## What I Learned From My Betta Fish

*"To understand what the outside of an aquarium looks like, it's better not to be a fish."*

~André Malraux

We once owned a blue betta fish named Galileo<sup>1</sup>. From the start it was clear Galileo was a very smart fish. Right away he figured out the food comes from that big, red packet, hefted by the huge fishes that swim out in the *rock-hard-water*.

From the first day food floated down from the sky, Galileo knew, if he was hungry, and the giant fish were in view, he could get their attention by swimming furiously against the beginning of the rock-hard-water. And even though he could never approach these tutelary beings, they would sometimes come to him, and heft the big red food packet, and provide another feast<sup>2</sup>.

In those early days, our little fish was all innocence and trust. His campaigns for food were public. And once his little belly was full, he watched us, fully exposed, when we were in the room. And when he slept, it was out in the open, without a care.

Then came the first bowl cleaning. Galileo was not our first betta fish. We once had a Betta named Dharma, and my routine for cleaning his

---

<sup>1</sup> Named after the silly comment made by Rick Perry ("Galileo got out-voted for a spell.") during the debate held at the Reagan Library in Simi Valley, CA

<sup>2</sup> For all you betta fish owners who are currently shaking your head: We would, actually, shake a few pellets into the palm of our hand and dump that into the bowl. I assure you, we weren't over feeding our Betta, or leaving food to rot in his bowl.

bowl involved a net used to fish him out of the dirty water, and a cup of temperature stabilized water to plop him into while I cleaned his bowl. Finally, the contents of the cup, fish and all, was introduced to the nice, clean bowl.

It always traumatized the poor thing. Small wonder! I was literally hunting him down, entangling him in a net, and incarcerating him in a smaller space while I tore his world apart. I wanted things to be better for Galileo—to keep the psychological damage to a minimum.

I figured that if I could at least eliminate the duration of the displacement, I could minimize the horror. I bought a second fish bowl and prepared it with clean gravel, clear water, and a nice, green, nearly duplicate Java Fern. Then, with a net, I attempted to make a quick capture and rapid transfer.

It didn't go that way. Like I said, this fish was smart. He found amazingly creative ways to elude the net. The chase went on for what in fish time must have seemed hours. Eventually, I outwitted him, and moments later, he was swimming around in his new, clean bowl.

Sometimes intelligence is not an asset. Especially when it doesn't inform us of true intent. When guided only by what is available from our senses, our intelligence is prone to erroneous conclusions, and often sees sinister, what is in truth, the actions of a benefactor.

Following that first cleaning, for the rest of Galileo's life he hid in the fern until feeding time. Any excursions beyond his hiding place were quick, and furtive. He would dart out, snatch a pellet, then hide while gulping it down—repeating this pattern until the ache of hunger was less than the sting of his fear.

Galileo's psychological decline shed light on my own shyness and unwillingness to take risks. The traumas in my own life were not as terrible as my memory deems, and the structures of caution that I threw up in fear of a repeat of those traumas, are ill conceived and are no longer serving me. Surely I'm smarter than a betta fish. Surely I can dismantle those structures and regain youthful freedom in my life.

But, my betta fish, and I are peers in one respect. When it comes down to survival, the part of the brain that ran both Dharma, and Galileo, is the same sort of brain that informs my shyness. It's a clever and stubborn portion of the brain—very difficult to rewire. This is our only real foe. This *survival mind*. This is what gets in the way of our happiness—pulls us away from risk—has us play small and meek.

And what of the higher, philosopher mind? Can this higher mind feed and shelter the body? Can it protect us from danger? Can it ensure the continuation of the species? And, by the way, these are questions the betta fish mind can't ask—because it's incapable of such introspection. But we humans can, because of our *animal SuperPower*.

It's common for me to forget to eat during a creative endeavor. Hunger might lick at the edges of my bliss, but usually doesn't disturb my peace. If not for my *survivor mind* I would likely perish. But, if I did perish, the only regret, were it possible for my creative mind to feel *regret*, would be cessation of the ability to further create—at least in that particular body, in this world of matter, space and time. So, perhaps the survivor mind has value: Preservation of the body so the creative me gets to create some more.

When the *survivor mind* is in charge, survival becomes the central issue. Survive at all cost, even if it means depriving others of *their* survival

needs. But is that really *happiness*? Or, is it merely chasing after *relief*.

The survival mind plays tricks on us to get us to follow the ancient codes—codes like *preservation of the species*. That's what *lust* really is—a trick of the survival mind. Our primitive mind gives us a little party thrill to entice us to procreate. It's all part of the machinery that runs betta fish, and Humans.

There is fear based *focus*, and love based *being*. Fear based focus is the province of the animal body-mind, whereas love based *being* lives beyond the animal—it's an *out of body* experience. And, it's this *human* ability that distinguishes us from our *animal* heritage<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> There's a book by Thea Alexander entitled **2150 A.D.**, that uses the terms *macro philosopher* and *micro philosopher* to make a similar distinction.



## I'm Not Happy 'Cuz I'm Bored

"All sins are attempts to fill voids."  
~Simone Weil, French philosopher (1909-43)

What is boredom? It's the effect of being shut down. Many of us go from inquisitive, life-engaged infants, to various stages of *stoic lump*, oblivious to the splendor of life playing around us. Ironically, because of this, we miss the very events that might, otherwise, keep us engaged.

Each moment is rife with wonder, dazzle and enough enigma to keep an inquisitive mind busy for life. In other words, entertainment exists in every nuance of life, everywhere on the planet. Yet, this liaison with quintessence of consciousness, gets quashed by the minions of practicality—and *ho-hum* replaces *ecstatic engagement*.

Have you ever noticed how easily children entertain themselves? Or, maybe you remember that about yourself. I do. I could spend the bulk of my day, playing in mud, or with “blocks”<sup>1</sup>, or drawing with crayons on the reams of blank newsprint paper my mom would acquire, for free, from the local *Greensheet* newspaper publishing house<sup>2</sup>. I can still remember the “eros” I felt during this play.

---

<sup>1</sup> Made of a blond hardwood of unknown origin, with hundreds of shapes to give us kids much to do for many hours! We [my brothers and I] had so many, my dad made a large wooden box, on wheels, so we would no longer have an excuse to not clean up when we were done playing.

<sup>2</sup> Rather than risk the mess of printing on no paper, the newspaper press operators would stop the press before the last of the paper left the roll, and give away these “End Rolls” to ready mothers who truly love their kids!

How do we get from *every moment a marvel, filled with wonders we yearn to explore [usually, with our mouth]*, to *enduring the dull moments between the occasional distraction*? Spirit-breaking events analogous to a betta fish bowl cleaning is how<sup>1</sup>!

Children are completely, 100% dependent on their caregivers. Mom & Dad, or whomever is in charge of the care of a child, are the *First Gods* in that tiny life. Any break in that trust, no matter how well intentioned, can be devastating.

I remember, as an infant, the terror of feeling abandoned in my crib, late at night. For whatever reason, whether it Dr. Spock, or the Catholic Church<sup>2</sup>, or ???, Western culture adheres to the barbaric and ludicrous practice of forcing their infant children to spend the dark, dark night, out of sensory range. I feel the mental scars from this practice.

Plus, I was born into a double legacy of bad parenting. My mom was an accident, born to a highly intelligent couple with other plans. The resentment, throughout my mom's childhood, was palpable, and pervasive. My dad might, also, have been an accident. His father, a medical doctor and surgeon, was stationed in France to patch up soldiers blown nigh to bits during WWI. Along came a French girl, some 'Oh là là', and 9 months later, my dad appeared.

My "poppy" remembers being happy, until the death of his mother. That happened when my dad was five. Heartbroken, my Grandfather, with son in tow, shipped back to the US, married the proverbial evil

---

<sup>1</sup> A reference to the chapter titled What I Learned From My Betta Fish [page 483]

<sup>2</sup> Anthropologist James J. McKenna, director emeritus of the Mother-Baby Behavioral Sleep Laboratory at the University of Notre Dame, explains that 500, or so, years ago, historical records from northern Europe show that Catholic priests heard confessions from destitute women who had "overlain" onto their newborns, suffocating them in a desperate attempt to limit their family size—they just couldn't support another child. So the church ordered that babies should sleep in a separate cradle until the age of three.

step-mother, and sent his French speaking son [my dad] to American public school, for a conventional weird-kid pummeling.

Under the weight of all this ancestral dysfunction, my parents, to their credit, were determined to “get it right”. So, Dr. Spock [or Catholic rhetoric] owned their ear<sup>1</sup>, and I endured dark scary nights, alone in my crib.

The night terrors were so bad, memories of them survived whatever process it is, that, like baby teeth, typically washes clean the infant brain. In the archives of my brain, are images of my crib, the nursery interiors, and the green hands that reached at me, from those interiors, slithering over the crib rails, coming ever closer, but never quite reaching me—consistently foiled by me waking up, screaming<sup>2</sup>. A few of my mental baby teeth never dislodged.

And, based on what my mom shared about her babyhood, mine was an improvement. While I'm uncertain of the source of her information [perhaps an Aunt], she recounted that her father had a tendency to bellow “Shut up!” whenever her crying episodes exceeded his fatigable tolerance.

It fits. My Grandfather (her father), a *Professor of Math and Astronomy*, at Oklahoma State University [OSU], was reputed, across campus, to be Stern, Stoic and Stingy with his grades. Memories of the few times he was in my presence, are of feeling either distanced, or “overshadowed”, depending on his assessment of our need for some *active intervention*. The guy had a sense of humor, and even a twinkle in his eye, but his glare could desiccate spinal tissue, and turn a sunny day into a dark,

---

<sup>1</sup> In the 1970s, Dr. Spock revised his stance on babies sleeping in a separate room, advising, instead keeping the baby's crib or bassinet in the parents' bedroom for at least the first few months—too late to save me.

<sup>2</sup> This is why I'm not fond of horror movies. I had enough of that in my childhood!

gloomy night ablaze with dry sheet lightning. It didn't help that he towered over us all—being one hand shy of 7 feet.

One day in Canada, while waiting in the lunch line at a 5000 square foot banquet room, a roar from the far wall drew everyone's attention in time to see the sweep of my grandfather's arm wrenching a wall mounted hunting trophy from its moorings. It wasn't a stretch to extrapolate preceding events: while squeezing around large banquet tables, pushed nearly to the wall, his bald head painfully contacted one of the low hanging antler points, igniting the impulse of rage that gave his dislodging of the trophy an ample audience.

Here's my take on the typical progression from inquisitive infant to stoic lump:

1. Most of us come into the world fully engaged in life and all its wonders<sup>1</sup>. Every moment is a marvel, filled with things we yearn to explore—largely with our mouth<sup>2</sup>. When shit happens, we *cry it out*, then resume our mastery of the moment.
2. Further shit happens, and while *processing* (aka crying it out, throwing a fit, etc), it's made frighteningly clear to us that our *processing mode* is unacceptable. Confronted, we shut it down, and thus begins the “chronic cringe” that restricts our human experience. Wilhelm Reich called it *armorning*—a muscular constriction of the *natural flow of emotional energy*. With this flow

<sup>1</sup> It seems there are exceptions—babies with *aberrant* behavior. As a baby, and small child, I regularly woke up screaming, which, I'm sure, drove my parents nuts.

My predominate earliest memories are of the horrible recurring nightmares that dominated my infant nights, featuring *sinister green hands, edged in chilling iridescence, reaching at me from the midnight black walls in a dream room replicating reality in exactitude, as if the frightening events were really happening. Lamps, following a twist of their switch, issued no comforting glow, but produced, instead, more writhing green hands spilling over the lampshade, like a flurry of writhing vipers.*

Probably not a common childhood mode.

<sup>2</sup> I mention this a lot, don't I. Maybe I have some secret fetish I've yet to explore?!

pinched off, combined with the subsequent moratorium on “processing”, the system binds up, resulting in physical and/or mental malady. Instead of being infatuated with the moment, the moment becomes our foe, leaving our surroundings dull and uninteresting. When this happens, our spirit can no longer follow the gratifying life course it signed up for, so it goes elsewhere leaving behind an empty, underutilized shell functioning in the kind of animalistic autonomy I spoke of before (aka the “animal machine”).

3. Cutoff from the wonder and joy of being in the flow of life, we need constant entertainment to stave off boredom. Our loss of connection with spirit leaves us loveless<sup>1</sup> and even jaded, with a large figurative hole in our soul that, it seems, can never be filled. Like a sinkhole, it swallows whatever we throw at it: money, drugs, sex, adrenaline, food, shiny new things, etc. We become averse to just *being*.
4. And, as my wife pointed out, if Religion is involved, such dynamics as being taught to “put on the full armor of God”, or “store all your blessings in Heaven”, etc. can certainly muck up the works and derail one’s optimal journey<sup>2</sup>.

One of the several 12-step programs I attended was Debtors Anonymous [DA]. I learned, in those meetings, that growing up with emotionally distant parents left a “hole in my heart” [also referred to as the “Hole in the Soul”] and I adopted the practice of attempting to fill that hole with *things*. For me, the thrill of *buying things* is a *Drug of Choice*.

---

<sup>1</sup> i.e. disconnected from the ambient Love that pervades creation.

<sup>2</sup> Unless the journey actually *is* to be indoctrinated, and then to win freedom from that indoctrination, as it seems is the case for my wife, who threw off her Mormon shackles.

And, not surprising since my parents, probably to compensate for their inability to show love through touch and attention, instead bought me *things*. I learned to get my “love” from these things, and a part of me had to shut down to make this work. I took the *blue pill*.

But, that ability to absorb myself in play—shifted after puberty. transforming into a lustful pursuit of girls. This pursuit banged up against overwhelming shyness [on a panic-level], amplified by a dorky profile, resulting in little success with the opposite sex. This limited the scope of my carnal pursuits to the lingerie section of the Sears catalog. Yes, I was a sad, pathetic young man—at least until I discovered the Playboy magazine in my neighbor’s tool shed. Then it was just sad and lonely.

But, this quasi celibacy<sup>1</sup> paid a dividend. I learned to sublimate my carnal cravings. I poured that energy into electronics and computers. My memory’s of the Eros I felt building and programming those early computers, and constructing those electronic projects<sup>2</sup>, have a similar *ring* to my prepubescent play, but now I can identify the sexual component. And I realize this is starting to sound like a nerd orgy.

The bottom line is my recognition of the sexual drive in things other than sex, and achieving the ability to utilize my sex drive in these other directions. After all, the sex drive is a *biological agenda*, and being human is all about the ability to monkey with our biological machinery.

---

<sup>1</sup> I mean, I still pleased myself, but the lack of contact with a real person, led to a great deal of frustration, loneliness and yearning.

<sup>2</sup> One of those projects was an Electronic Bagpipe Practice Chanter I made for a high school friend so he could practice his bagpipe melodies [if you can call them that] without disturbing the neighbors, or the other members of his family—since he was still living at home. I put light sensors in the air holes, so when a finger covered it, the reduction in light entering the hole, triggered the sound. It must have been effective since, after only a few months of practice, he placed second at the Pebble Beach, CA [I believe] Scottish Games. (the guy was really talented!)

Cast out of the carefree world of childhood, I suddenly had to provide for myself. I no longer engaged in play. All I had was work, and recovery from the exhaustion of work. I was no longer able to generate that joy. If I tried, it felt awkward and wrong. To play like a child wasn't productive—it didn't put food on the table, or pay the bills. Which is silly, because I had plenty of time to watch TV. But, TV took on a different role: more of another *drug of choice*—a way to escape the despair, and fill the void my life had become. I was bored. Life had lost its luster. Even creative pursuits were unappealing, because it took so much effort to achieve what I used to generate with such ease. And, after opening it all up again, I would have to shut it all down in order to function in the mundane worker-world—a loss that generated too much recurring grief—grief that would get caught in the craw of my inner *deadening*—where it joined the accumulation of unresolved emotion. This all drove a further need for *drugs of choice*. One can only go through so many of these cycles of opening up the creative self only to shut it down again, before apathy descends and currates a jaded outlook on life. In summary, *happiness was fleeting at best*.

And, since there was no established cultural “rite of passage”, I never came to terms with being an adult. No template presented for how to make it a wondrous thing. The model my parents, and the other adults in my life, passed down, was of drudgery and emotional death. The few heroes in my life, such as Ray Bradbury, George Herriman, Walt Kelly, Charles M. Schultz, Bill Watterson, Berkeley Breathed, Robert Heinlein and Ernie Kovacs were out doing the things in life I wished I knew how to do. I yearned to be mentored by them, but they were either inaccessible<sup>1</sup>, or dead.

---

<sup>1</sup> The supposed inaccessibility of my heroes, still living, was, actually, a cautionary tale I told myself. In truth, the only way to know if they truly were “inaccessible” was to go test >>> continued on page 494

It wasn't until I dug down into the grief of losing my childhood self that I began to open up again. It took decades of "inner-child work," along with a plethora of other transformative modalities, and a slew of incredible healers, to restore a semblance of that Original Grin that came so naturally to my baby self.

Ultimately, I realized the bliss of just *being*.

"We are human beings, not human 'doings'"

~Anonymous

When I let go of the need to be doing this or that in order to feel normal, or significant, or of value, or just entertained, I discovered that *being* is enough. I realized that, in fact, *being* is the true normal. When you can just *be*, you can realize far more of your worth than you ever will while *doing* as a mode of *escape*. The ability to just *be*, makes it possible to *do* in a mode of absolute presence. I've owned several cats [or did they own me?]. Often, they would just sit and do nothing. This boggled my mind. I wondered how my cat wasn't interminably bored. But, once I learned how to just be, it was no longer so implausible. I mean, it's still possible my cats were bored out of their little feline minds, but I understand, now, how it's possible they weren't.

Here's an example: The alternator stopped working on a car I once owned. This was back when I did most of my own auto repair work, so I broke out my tools, and got to work extracting the thing. But, soon I was stymied. After removing the two bolts that I could easily see, the alternator was still fastened to the motor. I looked, and I looked for the

---

<<< 493 it—show up on their doorstep—risk a restraining order—show up in their lives and position myself for the possibility of them taking me under their wing. Anything else is life in pure fantasy.



whatever-the-#@\$\* was holding that alternator in place, but I could see nothing!!

Then I remembered what astronomy taught me—the more one stares, the more one sees. Details framed in the eyepiece of a telescope that were always there, but hidden by inexperience, come more to the fore the longer you observe them. So much information reaches our eyes, the brain has to filter most of it out. So, we don't always “see” everything that is before our eyes. The finer details are often only discerned by an experienced eye.

When looking at Jupiter, you will probably see, right off the bat, that long term storm known as the “Great Red Spot”, but you might miss some, or all of the other spots and swirls, or some of the subtleties of coloring. Or you might only see two moons at first (Callisto and Ganymede), then later Io and Europa, which are smaller and harder to spot<sup>1</sup>.

I took a deep breath, calmed myself, and then just gazed at the engine compartment. I allowed myself to just be with it. After about fifteen minutes of that, I noticed something. A flange I hadn't seen before, because it was partially obscured by a radiator hose, and a wiring harness. Because of the obstructions to my *seeing*, it didn't appear to be part of the alternator assembly—at least not from any angle, or perspective I had considered. There wasn't enough of it visible for it to register as anything other than just another bit of the “noise” between everything else. But, ah-ha! Now that I saw it, finding the head of that last bolt, that I could only locate by feel, was trivial. I removed it, and

---

<sup>1</sup> There are, currently, 79 confirmed moons around Jupiter, but only the four are likely visible from a backyard telescope—one of which (Ganymede) is larger than Mercury!

voila, the alternator came loose<sup>1</sup>!

An engineering friend told me a story of a job site conundrum he was tasked with solving. It serves as an excellent example of this. At the time, he was serving as an Industrial Production Troubleshooter, and the particular case involved a mysterious discoloration of metal parts leaving the production line. No one could figure out what was causing the dark patches on the otherwise uniform surfaces. He spent days going over the process, to no avail. Then, on a whim, he took time to look at the spots—really study them. Suddenly, he realized the somewhat oval shape of the spots was consistent with the shape and size of fingerprints.

Being a people person with a jovial personality that pretty much everyone just automatically *loved*, the ladies on the production line, that he questioned, easily admitted that the company issued gloves caused some of the women's hands to itch, leading them to occasionally stop wearing them. The finish on the metal parts they were inspecting, was being damaged by the acidic oils from their exposed skin.

*Seeing* requires actual *looking*, which is why boredom can exist amidst wondrous beauty. A glance is not enough. Much that is judged mundane, and pale, or mere “noise”, has nuance that comes to the fore only after a settling of the gaze reveals the fascinating complexity within the subtle.

*Being* is all about engagement with the moment. Listening to the *now*. And by being engaged and fully present, and fully able to *see*, one is more likely to master the obstacles that life inevitably throws in one's path. If our mind is preoccupied with what *might be*—if we're tumbling

---

<sup>1</sup> Turns out, one of the rectifiers had blown. All I had to do was replace the rectifier assembly, get a new battery, and I was on the road, again!



An extension to *being* is *being with*. Solely *being with* someone, or with nature, or even with your own self. No conversation, no expectation, no games or distractions...just being with the person, or the animal, or even the plant. Enjoying their presence. The ability to *be—just be—*opens a vast dimension to full, satisfying, healthy relationships. The ability to be with another, without needing the other to make you happy, or to entertain you, or please you in any way, is the foundation for probably the happiest, most entertaining, and downright ecstatic, ongoing pleasure ever possible in a relationship!

Now...you probably thought I was talking about human relationships—and I was...but, Temple Grandin [I spoke of her before, on page 353] applied this to cows [in a *non-sexual* way...come on, people! ☺].

She spent time *being* with cows—Avatar<sup>1</sup> level “*I see you*” time. She was doing, with those cows, the sort of thing I was doing with that alternator, and what Astronomers do with planets and nebulae: Taking the time to really *be present*—the time to get “at-one with” what [and *whom*] others see as *mere cattle*. The end result was a set of industry changing revelations regarding the ways of cattle, and how to apply those *ways* to better, more lucrative, and ultimately more humane ranching practices.

True happiness comes from *being*. And *doing* from a place of *being* is the most productive and satisfying *doing* you can do!

---

<sup>1</sup> The blockbuster movie by *James Cameron*.

## Monday Blues

*"Michael. I did nothing.  
I did absolutely nothing,  
and it was everything that I thought it could be."  
~Peter Gibbons, Office Space (1999)*

I was a “working stiff” for most of my life. And, even when I liked the job, there were those days I just wasn’t available. Often, I rebelled—I goofed off, and felt guilty for doing it. In fact, I was even fired from a job for too much goofing off<sup>1</sup>.

I learned later that this lack of “showing up” is natural. We go through rhythms and cycles. This is more noticeable in a woman. Her “time of the month” is pretty hard to ignore. But, there are other, more subtle cycles that affect both sexes.

Sometimes we’re filled with energy, and can probably even get the job done without a chemical prop. Then there are those multi-cup/energy-drink/candy-wrapper pile days that start out with the desire to just crawl back into bed.

The structures of the work week, and mandatory hours are, most of the time, NOT in sync with our natural rhythms, and when they aren’t, it puts unhealthy stress on our body-mind machine.

---

<sup>1</sup> Example: writing a program to run on a robot vision computer that captured an image from the camera, and replaced levels of gray with typographical characters, thus producing a mosaic of letters, numbers and punctuation marks, so when printed, they formed into a facsimile of the captured image. An uppercase ‘M’ for darker parts of the image. A lowercase ‘i’ for medium lightness, a period for almost white. Faces were the most fun—a face composed of letters, numbers and punctuation!

Why do we subject ourselves to this? Where did this come from? Whose brilliant idea was this, anyway?! OK, those last two questions were rhetorical, but here's the basic question: is there another way to be?

When I look at the contrast between what we "modern" humans are doing, and what is going on in the animal kingdom, I notice something very interesting. A bug knows how to be that particular kind of bug. A rabbit knows how to find food, find a mate, and create more little rabbits. A bobcat knows that rabbits are food, and generally has little trouble getting some when it's hungry. But, we humans don't seem to have a particular way of being. We don't seem to be born with an innate sense of how to be a human. We create our own ways of being.

I mean, what does "being human" really look like? A squirrel has its particular, often humorous, way of being. You see a squirrel clinging to the side of a tree, madly twitching its bushy tail, and oddly sounding like a chirping bird, and you think, *yup! That's a crazy squirrel.* But a human? What typifies a human?!?

We humans, across the world, have developed many different cultures, with many different structures and modes of being, and, in our uniquely human way, many different belief systems that color our style of relating to the world.

Not long ago, much of humanity was more self-sufficient. People grew their own crops, kept livestock, managed hen houses, milked their own cows and/or goats. But then, modern industry came along with its factories. The allure of the glamour of city life, with its promise of greater comfort, free time, and nightlife, drew people away from the drudge of rural life.

But, is it really better? Having never lived that self-sufficient lifestyle, I can't really say. And truly, the need to tend to a farm requires its own schedule. And, certainly there are comforts in city life that probably don't exist on the farm, or the ranch. But, clearly, punching a clock is not the only way to go. Our neighbors, to the south, engage in what I consider a very healthy practice: The siesta. Every afternoon, typically between 2 and 5PM, following the midday meal, the Latino population goes to sleep. Mexico got this tradition from its Spanish invaders, but this is not limited to Latinos. Egyptians are known to take a "taAseella," a post lunch nap. Mainland China has a similar nap time after lunch, as does the Indian subcontinent. Meanwhile, here in the U.S.A, we are the backward oddballs who insist on a go-go-go! mentality. But, even here this healthy practice is gaining ground under the humorously grandiose term: "power nap," because silly American Capitalists expect everyone to be in high gear, even when sleeping!

And how is it that corporate America gets nearly **44<sup>1</sup>**% of our free time?!? Studies have shown that people are far more productive, happy, and less burned out with a **4 day, 32 hour** work week<sup>2</sup>. A **4-day** work week is more like a **35%** grab of our free time, which seems a little more fair to me! **Microsoft** tried this, and production went up by **40%!**

Another way to go is self employment. Running your own business puts you in charge<sup>3</sup>. But one still tends to be run by the schedules of modern society. The work week, weekends, national holidays, etc. are still, likely, to impinge on when, and even where, one conducts one's business.

---

<sup>1</sup>  $100 \times 40 \text{ hrs} / [7 \times (24 \text{ hrs} - 11 \text{ hrs})] = 43.96 \text{ hrs}$  – Assuming an average **8 hrs** sleep per night, **3 hrs** for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and a **5 hour** work week. The timing on this will of course vary depending on length of lunch break, whether it's a paid lunch, how much actual time is spent on other meals, and other considerations of what defines "free time".

<sup>2</sup> [www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/11/four-day-work-week-productivity-statistics/](http://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/11/four-day-work-week-productivity-statistics/)

<sup>3</sup> At least until you go public and the shareholders kick you out.

But, animals, in the wild, tend to be free to follow their own schedules. When hungry, they seek food. Having eaten, they lounge, and even nap. A vision of lions, with full bellies, lying around in the shade on the Serengeti, comes to mind.

The lizard wakes and seeks sunlight. Once warmed, it's in better condition to hunt. The squirrel seeks nuts whenever taken by a whim. I once came upon a murder of crows playing in an updraft furnished by a propitiously shaped embankment. For them there was no job to risk losing. No lunch-break constraint. No need to beg for paid leave, or to feign illness. Call them *bird-brains*, but nature was their guide. No 9-to-5 commitment, and nary a Monday to loathe<sup>1</sup>.

How often does the modern structured life wreak havoc on personal harmony, health, and by extension, the very happiness we seek?

---

<sup>1</sup> Though, with some animal species, there are social structures to adhere to, so maybe not 100% free.



## Life Is Absurd, Which Is Probably Why It Isn't

"The realization that life is absurd cannot be an end, but only a beginning."

~Albert Camus

I hear no mumbles of contempt from the gravel under my boots. The existence of matter capable of propelling boots seems like an anomaly. Water behaves like the bulk of the Universe when it runs down a hillside, while the bags of water that constitute the living are known to, on occasion, foolishly defy gravity by *climbing* slopes. Life is the will to push against the status quo, to wind back entropy, to re-engineer the Universe. Dust merely drifts and settles. When life vanishes<sup>1</sup>, ultimately only dust remains. In other words, life is the *absurd animation of dust*.

Of all the things observed in the universe, life is the most complex, by orders of magnitude. The gap between the intricacies of structure composing the living, and the *not living*, is so vast as to make it both remarkable, and strange. And, the fragility of those intricate structures, in a Universe that, by nature, tears down complexity, suggests such a thing shouldn't exist, or at least, not in the long term. Yet, here we are: LIFE—with a legacy spanning *billions of years*<sup>2</sup>, or some one fourth the age of all existence—assuming life only happened on Earth! And, to punctuate this, the Universe has tried, and failed at least 5 times to snuff

---

<sup>1</sup> My little dysphemism for "death".

<sup>2</sup> The latest estimate for the first appearance of life on Earth is 3.5 billion years ago. Hominins, by the current best estimate, showed up around 6 million years ago, and the human form that we all know and love appeared around 300,000 years ago. But, Paleoanthropologists are still out there digging, so that could all change.

out life on this planet (the “Big 5” mass extinction events)<sup>1</sup>. For around 3.5 billion years life has thumbed its collective nose at the Universe!

Most take for granted the foibles of life, such as *wondering* and *experiencing*. Yet, all of our pains and woes, as well as our delights, are nonpareil<sup>2</sup> within the substance of existence. So, what is it that gives the ingredients of a rock, the ability to pick up a rock, turn it in the light of day while admiring its various surfaces and aspects, and perhaps even pondering its composition, history and very existence?

Like I said...Absurd!!

But, is it? Why does the Universe exist, if not to be observed, enjoyed, played with, and/or played in? Life is rather keen to exist. Is that a random sentiment, or is there a design behind the fervor? When you consider all the places life is thriving, or has thrived, including what teams around those 800°F vents some 3 miles down in the ocean deep, it seems a rather serious commitment!

---

<sup>1</sup> or even more than 5 times if you include such events as the Pliocene-Pleistocene Extinction.

<sup>2</sup> “Nonpareil” is a word I learned from a package of Trader Joe’s almonds. Nonpareil is a variety classification given to almonds that are long and flat with a smooth surface—i.e. *blemish free*. These nuts are considered best for snacking, and for use anywhere an attractive appearance is desired. It’s also a word that means *having no equal; peerless*—which is the meaning intended, above. It also refers to a printing slug, made of an alloy of lead, antimony, and tin, and occupying 6 points of space between lines. Such a slug would be used to convey pains, woes and delights, in the form of reversed text used to leave readable ink stains on paper. Another process nonpareil within the substance of the Universe.

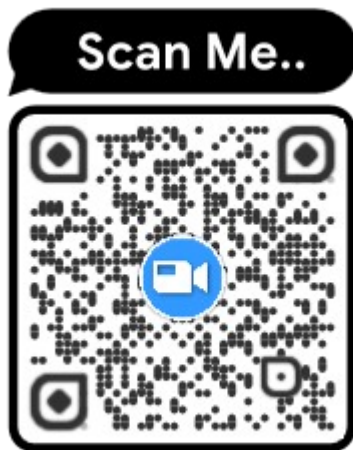
Science has come up with some fairly convincing evidence that the chemistry supporting the creation of life naturally occurred, and even frequently occurred on ancient Earth. When lightning cuts through just the right ingredients, amino acid goo is the consistent result—ingredients that, evidently, were around in abundance at the estimated time life showed up on this planet. But, still, it's quite a leap to go from gooey muck, to the complexity of DNA, and the intricate mechanisms of even the simplest of living organisms! I have huge respect for science, but until a proper, controlled, scientific experiment is devised, that actually produces life through the process of zapping gasses into an amino acid goo, I'm inclined to wonder if the fingers of some intervening intelligence weren't a fomenting factor. Certainly, science has cracked some of the mystery in this process, but still missing is scientific proof of the mechanism of the leap from inanimate to animate—the “mystical spark” if you will—that actually Frankensteined muck into a living thing. And, yes, I know that sounds like Creationism, and maybe it is. Or, maybe it's just Assembly Theory? Let's leave it at: my mind is open!



But, really, how can random processes lead to a flower that can mimic the pheromones of an insect to lure it into its pitcher-shaped digestion pod?!? Or, the Venus Flytrap. And what about the octopus?!? Have you seen what they

can do with their skin—it's like they're covered in video-screen! Then, there's the plethora of mimicry, some of it so specific, it's hard to accept it wasn't designed by some intelligence! Like those pictured, above and below: caterpillar that looks like a snake; insect that looks like a leaf.





[Breakthrough Theory Lets Physics Predict Life - Assembly Theory Explained](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid55](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid55)

It really makes me wonder if life is somehow intended. And, that maybe the Universe exists FOR life, and not the other way around. Is there some entity that is benefiting from life's existence? And, if so, is our happiness, when we experience it, in harmony with that presence? Carlos Castaneda, in his book *Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan*, speaks of the "Jet-Black Eagle," a power that governs the destiny of all living beings, and that devours the awareness of all living things at their moment of death. In Carlos' telling, this presence seems more sinister than I'd like to imagine it is, but then, life can be pretty sinister, too. But then, my wife, from her own ayahuasca experiences, tells of a dispassionate, emotionless presence akin to the Borg [Star Trek Next Generation] that is in control of us all—a presence that abolishes Free Will. In other words: "Resistance is futile!" But, I'm betting that's merely how an Ego perceives it—an Ego that thinks self-determination matters. Does actual "Self-Determination" really matter if we have the *experience* of self-determination? How would we even know the difference? I suspect it's only the *thought* that our freedoms are being constrained, which gives the Ego a fright.

This would explain why the time-line seems impossible to escape. If time is a fourth dimension, why don't we have freedom of movement in that dimension? If we could move around in the fourth dimension, we

could not only jump forward and backward in time, we could, also, go anywhere a vehicle could take us, in space AND time—a vehicle like the Doctor's TARDIS<sup>1</sup>. But, it's not like that. We are shoved along in the *one* fourth dimensional direction, at the *one* fourth dimensional speed, confining us to the inescapable march of time. Is this also an inescapable march of predetermined experience, giving us the illusion of Free Will in a constrained framework?

However, if my own meditation experiences are relevant, the status-quo, at the center of all the chaos in the Universe is *bliss*—a steady hum of *contentment*. And, the only reason any of the nonsense that goes on in the Universe might seem negative, or bad, or limiting, or harmful, or sinister, or evil, is due to signals from the nervous system being interpreted as such, in the context of a “vulnerable self.” That's Ego. Remove the Ego, and all that remainst is *Bliss*. Makes me wonder if the Universe is, by default, Happy For No Damn Reason!

---

<sup>1</sup> TARDIS: Time And Relative Dimensions In Space, is the vehicle piloted [somewhat] by a fictional character who calls him/herself “The Doctor” [Doctor who? Exactly!]

## In Other Words

*"If you ever start taking things too seriously,  
just remember that we are talking monkeys on an organic spaceship  
flying through the universe."*

~Joe Rogan

This is what you're dealing with as a living being: you're a human with a body made of flesh and nerves—a bio-machine descended from animals—an evolution driven patchwork directed not by intelligence, but by dodging life-threatening environmental conditions with little or no regard for quality of life. In other words, you are an impossible, miraculous lump of meticulously coagulated dust, going about doing this crazy, marvelous thing called life, while enduring the vexations of a poorly engineered vehicle (I mean, how many times have you gotten food down your windpipe, for instance? And, what the devil is up with peeing out of the male sex organ?!)

Not only that, life bucks the whole Universe. The Universe naturally flows towards disorder—it's winding down, while squandering potential energy as it goes. To put it scientifically, life struggles to reduce entropy. Which is to say, life runs in the opposite direction. Life runs uphill, building up, rather than tearing down. Like Sisyphus rolling the stone of daily biological maintenance up Entropy Hill, we eat and sleep to maintain our energy levels and body integrity, so we can, one more day, continue our many and varied pursuits until the stone is, once again at the bottom of the hill, and we need to eat more, and sleep more. We do

this over and over until our personal machine gives out and can no longer push the weight of the stone. In other words, life is very fragile and fleeting, and that is exactly because life bucks the Universal status-quo—fights against it—spends every waking and sleeping hour propping up the body’s entropy.

The Universe, on the other hand, lets the stone roll until it finds the lowest bottom, and then it just leaves it there, where it collects the dust of decay. It’s like the Universe is a giant clock that is slowly winding down. Eventually the Universe will become absolutely still, dark, and very cold, like a clock that someone forgot to wind. The scientific scenario for the future of the Universe is for it to reach a state known as “heat death”, called that because there will no longer be any energy left in the Universe. Nothing in the Universe winds the clock—nothing except *life!* But, not even life can wind that Universal clock. Life can only wind its own clock (by eating, sleeping, photosynthesizing, etc), at least until its clock breaks beyond repair. Then, the husk used by that life joins the Universal clock, and commences falling apart like everything else that is non-living.

Another way to express this is: the Universe does everything the easy way, following the path of least resistance. In contrast, Life does it the hard way—pushing against entropy under the whip of discomfort, wielded by the Nervous System taskmaster, along with the cognitive angst its signals generate in the mind.

What we humans gain from all this struggle is the ability to sit up and look around—the ability to take in the beauty and splendor of it all. And, we can use our animal SuperPowers to imagine new ways to see it—new ways to be—ways to augment our experience like no other animal can. For example, by making a telescope that can see further than our



eyes ever could, or a microscope to see the very small. By creating forms of transport to take us around our world, and even off our world. By developing methods for turning night to day, and ways of seeing where the sun don't shine. By engineering instruments for "seeing" all those other forms of "light" our eyes can't perceive, like IR Goggles and Radio Telescopes. In fact, scientists now have access to a slew of instruments making it possible to view the Universe in every known wavelength of "light"—except, maybe, extremely short wavelength gamma rays.

Life bucks the Universal status-quo. Yet, life is loath to just sit at the bottom of the hill doing nothing [well, some life does a pretty good imitation—snakes, cats and my uncle Jack<sup>1</sup>—but if they're still breathing, they are rolling that rock, even if only at the cellular level]. Life functions in defiance of the "easy" that characterizes the rest of the Universe.

At the core, we are matter that thinks all of this matters. And when you get it, that it doesn't much matter, is when the fun can begin. That's when you can be both the director, and the star of this movie called, "Your Life!"

In other words, you don't need a reason to be happy. You really don't. You don't need society to tell you when you can be, or how you can be happy. If you want to wear white after Labor Day, just do it! Tell them it's an exaggerated tint of blue. According to the Farmer's Almanac, the concept of not wearing white after Labor Day started in the 19th century as a way for the upper class to separate themselves from the working class. Do you really want to collude with that!?!?

---

<sup>1</sup> I don't really have an uncle named "Jack", but, it was funny, right?. In fact I don't have *any* uncles—well, I might have a Half-Uncle Robert, but no one I know has ever heard from him.

You don't need corporate rhetoric to dictate your well being, either. Will the next shade of lip-gloss truly seal your happiness? Or, the next Hemi packing pick-up truck? Or, the newest echelon of fancy featured barbecue? How long did that happiness last, induced by the previous "hot new thing"? Notice how this form of happiness is so transitory. Wouldn't you prefer a self-generated happiness not dependent on corporate skills, or popularity, or social norms, or circumstances in general?

You don't even, really, need religion to tell you when and how to be happy. Do you really need some dubiously appointed cleric to tell you the difference between a "sign from God" and "Satanic trappings"? You're reading this right now, so no God managed to smote me, nor did a Cosmic being visit wrath upon the publisher of this book. How powerful is this God, or Gods if It/They can't even stop some idiot like me, from getting a book like this, into your hands?

And, don't get me wrong: I'm not opposed to religion, per se. My objection is with delusions that negatively impact happiness and well-being. For instance, religion tends to be rather harsh on those who fail. Yet, failure is a natural part of life. Some higher power is not the sole province of forgiveness; you can forgive yourself. And, if your religion resorts to threats of Hell to keep you in line, well, I suggest examining the inconsistencies. Would a God made of pure Love have the heart to send It's beloved souls to a place of eternal torture? And, if the argument arises: "Well, it isn't God who sends people to Hell..." Again, I point to the apparent lack of omnipotence of a being that supposedly created a whole Universe! Did this God structure the Universe in a way that It lacks authority over where dead people wind up?! Now who's the one making mistakes?!

Religion can be, and often is, an escape hatch. It gives the devout an out. Buffers them from the bumps and scrapes of life. By making failure a damnable offense, all latitude for learning and improving is scrubbed away. Take off your training wheels and let yourself ride with the wind, God free!

Bottom line, the only person, place, or thing required to make you happy, is YOU!

*“Be the holder of your own Nature  
It is a joyful responsibility.”*

~Eric Fischl

Having the ability to watch yourself be an idiot is classic. As you watch yourself engaging in all sorts of nonsense resulting in you being as unhappy as shit, you have the opportunity to see what an idiot you’re being. You have the capacity to continue to *allow* it, or to *change* it—usually by confessing the fact—something I like to call *pulling your own covers*<sup>1</sup>. In that very moment you realize it’s just all part of playing the role of “You” in this singular story called <insert your name>. Again, this is what I like to call *owning your own RIDICULOUS*. I mean, isn’t it already rather absurd that these marvelous bags of chemicals called “living beings” are up, scurrying around, making mischief, and leaving tracks in all that other, inanimate dust?

Why?!?

I think the Universe got bored. I know! That’s probably the grandest anthropomorphism of all. But suppose there’s an intelligence behind all

---

<sup>1</sup> Exactly like Toto pulling back the curtain to reveal the true “Wizard of OZ”, a puny human cowardly working the controls on a *blowhard intimidation machine*.

of reality, and imagine after a couple billions of years of untold numbers of flaming stars and revolving lumps, the mind of the Universe wanted more. I suspect it wanted a way to crawl around on some of those lumps, and see what comes of it. And, based on the predator/prey escalatory nature of life on our planet, this intelligence relishes the struggle. Makes me wonder if God is rather like a Klingon—perhaps we should all be worshiping Kahless the Unforgettable, who once said, “Klingons should fight not just to shed blood, but to enrich the spirit”! Don’t get me wrong: I have no desire to be Klingon!

Or, maybe there really is a Valhalla. Or, maybe it’s all just chaotic, and this intelligence just likes to watch.

Some humans *enjoy* the struggle, but some don’t. For example: Me. I’m not particularly fond of the escalation. I mean, why the heck does a snake need enough venom to kill an elephant?! When is it EVER going to eat all of that<sup>1</sup>? I’m more into the beauty of life. I mean, this is a gorgeous planet—at least much of it is. I once witnessed a spectacular sunset in Wyoming, featuring sunbeams formed by the gap between the Grand Tetons. The golden shafts of light shot high over my head to illuminate a triple rainbow against the near black backdrop of a raging electrical storm. The sky, from horizon to horizon, was a transition from inky black to billows of Maxfield Parrish peach.

But, the machine-animal does struggle. Some are programmed to graze in the grass, and some are programmed to hunt the grass eaters. The grass eaters switched to leaves and took to the trees to avoid the ones who might eat them. And some of those hunters found ways to get up into the trees, whether by adding claws to their feet, or feathers to their

---

<sup>1</sup> Imagine a snake with a sub-zero freezer unit, or a meat smoker, and what snake has a set of Tupperware?! Or, do highly venomous snakes like to host block parties?!?

front legs and butts. Or, by augmenting the weird physics of the slither, and on and on in a timeless escalation scientists like to call *evolution*.

We humans came late to this game, but we brought a few enhancements<sup>1</sup> never before seen in the animal kingdom. Along with the ability to make our own rules, a lesser known of these enhancements is the ability to catch ourselves in the act. I.e. the ability to notice our own *RIDICULOUS* and own up to it. And, ultimately, to laugh at the silliness of ourselves, and of the play of life in general.

*If only you will remain resting in consciousness,  
seeing yourself as distinct from the body,  
then even now you will become happy, peaceful and free from bonds.*

~Ashtavakra Gita [ch-1.4]

Essentially, humanity is an evolutionary step beyond *conservatism*.

Conservatism was the first *ism* in life. The animal kingdom maintains a dynamic that tends to eschew change—that weeds out the weak and deformed—essentially striving for perfection of the species. If the environment changes in a way that threatens life, this is a pressure that pushes *against* this conservative mandate. Survival, in this instance, is only likely achieved when the traditional ways are forced to change—usually by an opportune mutation—a mutation that, likely, would be rejected in more standard times, but in the presence of environmental pressures, manages to replace the status-quo. This is when the black sheep can have a win in the conservative fold.

---

<sup>1</sup> And, yeah, I'm aware of the irony: Those enhancements are, likely, a product of that *struggle* I just deprecated.

In the animal kingdom, the runt of the litter usually doesn't survive. A wolf that can't run with the pack, because of deformed limbs due to a birth defect will, if not killed right after birth, likely starve. A bird that can't fly will likely be eaten by predators.

However, if that flightless bird happens to be among those visiting a tropical island when a volcano erupts, filling the air, for years, with ash that makes it harder to fly, then the flightless bird might gain a hunting advantage, due to, also, superior musculature in its legs, thus that bird survives while the rest perish, especially since there are no predators on this island. Not sure how the next generation comes into being—perhaps this bird has a romantic liaison with a “normal” bird, and one of them lays eggs and saves the future generations. Suddenly the outcast becomes the savior!

Conservatism, nationalism, racism [or in terms of animal kingdom, perhaps *species-ism*] are all remnants of the animal world. Humans are capable of something new. Humans work to save their deformed offspring. Humans strive to care for their sick. Humans assist the less fortunate. Humans are capable of breaking out of animal norms. Any “human” that isn't, is a human whose *animal is up*. And Conservatives are humans who are chronically in this animal state, and essentially are humans yet to rise to this new paradigm.

And, there's new scientific evidence for this difference:



[Conservative and Liberal Brains  
Might Have Some Real Differences](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web22)

[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web22](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web22)

I hesitate, however, to call this new paradigm “Liberalism.” In my opinion, there are so-called “Liberals” who are very much fear-based, opposed to change, and quite fanatical—i.e. not really all that paradigm shifted! I call them *Right-facing Liberals*. All of this PC madness is an example of Right-Facing Liberalism gone to a ridiculous extreme.

In my memory, this began with the derogatory word “retard.” I’ve been called a *retard*, and I’ve used that word on others. This was back in my youth, in the 1960’s, before anyone considered it *wrong*. I’ve also witnessed a Downs Syndrome child at the receiving end of this word, and they took it bad. Bad enough to cry real tears of emotional pain. That was when I sobered up, and stopped using it.

Soon after, a ban on the word entered the mainstream. Then it became wrong to call anyone a *midget*. *Cripples* became *the Handicapped*, and then *the Challenged*, and now, ferkrissake, it’s *the Differently Abled*. The *elderly* have all vanished, replaced by *old people*. I personally find the word *elderly* has more panache—and I’m one of them so I’m entitled to say!

What if, and bear with me on this, instead of trying to ban the use of derogatory words, we taught our youth to not take it personally? What if

we taught children the nature of name-calling—that it’s an artifact of our animal heritage—that it stems from the primitive discomfort of differentness that originates from that inner template for purity of species? And, what if we engaged our youth in exercises that demonstrate how “different,” is something to relish—to explore? That “different” enriches our experience? And, that all that is necessary to access this positive experience is the patience to endure that initial discomfort of the feeling of “strangeness”.

And, what if adults mentored conversations with those of the deformed, or those of different color, or different mental capacity, or of different gender preference, etc.? What if children were raised to be tolerant and to appreciate diversity?

And, on the other side of the coin, what if we taught our youth to laugh at attempts to dampen their spirit. What if we helped our youth develop strong self-esteem, such that they’re no longer vulnerable to verbal mud slinging? And, ultimately what if we taught our youth the ways of Aikido, such that they deflected all of this nonsense, and treated it with humor and strove to build friendships?

What kind of wonderful adults would we deliver to the world, with no need for Political Correctness [PC] or any other such nonsense?

Another example of Right-Facing Liberalism: Back in the 80’s, at a little health food market/restaurant in Canoga Park, CA<sup>1</sup>, in a conversation with one of the cashiers there, I learned the staff was 100% vegetarian<sup>2</sup>. The cashier’s staunch opinion [and apparently that of the bulk of the staff] was that all meat eaters should face the death penalty!

---

<sup>1</sup> Near Reseda, the city of Karate Kid fame.

<sup>2</sup> The term “vegan,” coined in 1944 by Donald Watson, the founder of the Vegan Society, was yet to gain widespread use, if I remember correctly.



Strategically, I avoided divulging that I was, in fact, a meat eater, since I liked shopping there, and enjoyed dining at their little restaurant. In other words, I implemented a *don't ask, don't tell* policy<sup>1</sup>.

Another example is the staggering number of “Liberals”, many who are self proclaimed “alternative healers”, that bought into the whole Q-Anon fiasco.

In the animal world, population is first controlled by predation. When this fails, resources are taxed, and animals suffer and die—usually of starvation. Imagine *that* in a human community. Imagine a beast that periodically hunts down, kills, and feeds on some poor human sap, all for the good of population control<sup>2</sup>?

This doesn't happen in modern society, as a rule. Fortunately, there aren't many Hannibal Lecters running around. But, without this natural check on population growth, humans must affect their own measures, or face the ugly truth: the tipping point to mass starvation--perhaps on a world-wide scale. As of this writing, it's already happening in many places, such as Bangladesh, Mozambique, and Somalia.

Yet, humans don't have to let this happen. Humans, with their animal SuperPower, can choose a different result—such as voluntary population management<sup>3</sup>. Especially since the human population, on this planet, is already dependent on artificial fertilizers. Without the Haber-Bosch process, which provides an economical way to produce ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) from atmospheric nitrogen, which is used to make artificial fertilizer,

---

<sup>1</sup> They never asked, so I was good.

<sup>2</sup> In such a world, I imagine serial killers would have LinkedIn accounts.

<sup>3</sup> Though I don't condone this in the form of government overreach: For instance China, where the government mandated a 2 child maximum per family. But, like I said before, Communism, as a government, is bound to be a dark and cruel thing. No. It needs to be a collective choice, made by a population grounded in wisdom, with love for all humanity, and life in general.

farmers wouldn't have the resources to feed 8 Billion people! Not even close!! How long, though, will science be able to push back the natural consequence?

Also, there is some question as to the nutritional value of food grown by modern techniques, that deny the value of caring for the soil by rotating crops, growing nitrogen fixing plants during one or more rotations, and allowing some of the land to lie fallow for a season or two. But, it's likely, our current world population couldn't be sustained by such practices. In other words, it seems the world population has already exceeded the Earth's ability to provide by natural means.

Though, I did watch a YouTube video, recently, by one of the videographers I trust (Two Bit da Vinci), regarding farming in the Ocean, so science may not have reached its limit, yet:



[Scientists Want to Start Ocean Farms - This Surprised Me!](#)

[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid54](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=vid54)

It's because of the dominant nature of the primitive animal brain that the utilization of our animal SuperPowers against inherent animal drives<sup>1</sup> takes courage and initiative. It usually requires stepping out of comfort into a mode that alarms the primitive logic of the lower brain, which is why it's something most "ordinary people" avoid. It's far easier to live in denial and hope someone else steps up, or

<sup>1</sup> Aka, the mandate to procreate.

world problems are corrected by luck, or by some magical means, or that science will continue to find ways to bail us out.

And, on the darker side, just beyond polite psyche, the hope that disaster will wait until a later generation, is a ubiquitous stance. In other words, let our progeny deal with it! No one wants to acknowledge this mindset, but the present generation's lack of movement on such issues as overpopulation, propaganda in social media, terrorism, global climate change, planetary overpopulation, environmental pollution, evisceration of animal life, deforestation, the stealthy corporate infiltration of the government, the epidemic levels of mental illness leading to things like school-yard shootings, rampant suicide, depression, autism, etc., is evidence of our collective choice to pass these problems onto future generations. In other words, the proof is in the *pudding* it off [and I'm not even a dad.]

Individuals tend to be powerless against such daunting problems. Collectively, though, humanity could wield a great deal of transformative power.

*"The real problem of humanity is the following:  
we have paleolithic emotions, medieval institutions,  
and god-like technology"*

~Edward O. Wilson

The new paradigm is of humans with a more resilient relationship with the neocortex, thus a greater willingness, and capacity to push against the burning impulse of animal logic. This new paradigm breaks the Conservative mold. For the first time in life's existence, there is the possibility of caring for others outside the family—outside the tribe—

outside of race, color, creed, and nation—all the way to *all of humanity*, and even all the way to *all of life on the planet*. I like the term: *Progressivism* [as opposed to *Liberalism*]. Unfortunately, that term already drips with political sludge. So, maybe *Decentism*?

Just because these *animal SuperPowers* are available doesn't guarantee people will use them or even be aware of the possibility. Humans can become entangled in the nervous energy of fear, and essentially, behave like animals. We tend to get hot-and-bothered over trivial things, forgetting that we're better than that. We're better than pecking orders, petty jealousies, mindless envy, predatory lust, rampant greed, etc. This happens when we neglect to use our neocortex retrofit, and instead allow our primitive mind to run free. I see this as *feral humanity*.

The point is, animal behavior is all about impulse and reaction. Animals just aren't capable of self editing. For instance, I doubt a dog is capable of mercy. I doubt the dog that mangled my lip could ever look at me and think, *you know, I get the impression he realizes what a dick he was being the other day, when he was teasing me—in fact I think I even smell remorse on him—thus, I will refrain from mauling him*. I doubt an animal can execute a long con, or weigh outcomes, or contemplate a greater reward<sup>1</sup>, or anticipate consequences. *Full on diabolical* probably didn't enter "creation" until humans showed up.

We humans are subject to impulse, just like our animal cousins, but we also have the power to override our impulses if we choose to—and we CAN choose! In other words, we can override our *feral*. That's the difference! That's our SuperPower! But, like I said, it's NOT easy. Our animal nature is still dominant, and will run us into hell<sup>2</sup> unless we

---

<sup>1</sup> Though, the Stanford Marshmallow Experiment conducted on monkeys suggests some facility there.

<sup>2</sup> Figuratively [unless there really is a Hell, in which case, *literally*]

intervene. It's not in our nature to intervene. Children tend to act from their animal impulses. It takes training—beginning with adults training themselves. Then, hopefully, teaching their children to do the same.

How is a human's self trained behavior different from the sort of *modified impulse* that occurs in animal training? Because it's more like an override of impulse. I'm talking about a human training themselves to, in the moment, disregard animal impulse and engage their higher reasoning. Thus, it's more dynamic. When a dog is trained to sit on command, I doubt the dog engages in an internal dialog, weighing the appropriateness of sitting in that moment. "My master has asked me to sit, but I get the impression he needs his slippers more." And, come to think of it, there actually might be dogs capable of that level of reasoning. But, can a dog train itself? Can a dog ever realize that barking incessantly isn't working, and then resolve to be more judicious with its barking? I've yet to witness that.

I asked ChatGPT3.5 to "fact check" the paragraph (several paragraphs up) where I state that "animal behavior is all about impulse and reaction". ChatGPT3.5 offered the following objection:

*The assertion that animals are all about impulse and reaction is a generalization and might oversimplify the complexity of animal behavior. While animals do operate on instinct, some species demonstrate advanced problem-solving skills, social structures, and learned behaviors.*

I countered with:

*I would argue that even when animals demonstrate "advanced problem-solving skills, social structures, and learned behaviors", they still are incapable of breaking out of the patterns of their species—unlike humans, who can behave like pretty much any animal. I doubt a dog, on it's own,*

*can decide to behave like a cat, or elevate problem solving to a level that defies it's doggie mentality. We humans can imagine all sort of modes that go beyond standard human behavior.*

And ChatGPT3.5 seemed to agree [or was being obsequious, as it is apt to do]:

*Your argument emphasizes a key aspect of human cognition—the ability to imagine and exhibit behaviors beyond our immediate biological instincts. Humans possess a remarkable capacity for abstract thought, creativity, and the ability to conceive and adopt a wide range of behaviors.*

*Indeed, animals are generally constrained by their species-specific behaviors, relying on instinct and learned patterns. While some animals may display remarkable problem-solving abilities within the framework of their species, they are limited to the repertoire of behaviors that evolution and genetics have provided.*

*On the other hand, humans have the unique ability to transcend these limitations. We can imagine, innovate, and create behaviors and lifestyles that extend beyond what is dictated by our biological programming. This cognitive flexibility allows us to adapt to diverse environments, create complex social structures, and engage in a wide range of activities that aren't strictly tied to survival instincts.*

*It's the combination of our cognitive abilities, culture, and social dynamics that sets humans apart and allows for a level of behavioral variability that is unparalleled in the animal kingdom.*

**Humorous Side Note:** Did you notice the AI's use of the words “we”, “us” and “our”? Who is “we” in this context? Should we humans be charmed, or alarmed by its inclusion with *us*?!? How long before “our” becomes “our overlords?!?!” Actually, AI overlords might be a good thing. Humanity is currently making a mess

of things, and might benefit from a stabilizing mentor. Though, judging by the spate of AI's turning racist and/or sexist and/or generally creepy when left to their own devices, maybe that's not a future we should invite.

It's BECAUSE we have this capacity to transcend animal impulses, that a human training themselves is different. It involves trading primitive instincts for cognitive involvement—enabling us to craft our behavior in the moment with intelligent spontaneity. It's transitioning from being biology's rag doll, to *the one with the teeth!*

Why is this distinction crucial—the distinction between mere animal impulse, and the ability to manage the moment? Because, it's tantamount to recognizing when our *animal is up*. If we're being driven by unsupervised impulse, our animal is *most definitely UP!*

And, let me qualify: being in one's *animal* isn't always a negative thing. So, let me draw a distinction here between being in your animal, by choice, and being *run by your animal nature*, which is what I refer to as your *animal being up*.

BTW: *Rumination* is just another form of animal impulse. We ruminate from impulse. Think about it: From the impulse of fear, our brain mauls over a situation. There's a lack of higher intervention. The only difference between this, and animal impulse is we're impulsing off an *imagined* reality. In other words, we're reacting to something we conjured with our imagination. In other-other words: We What-If our selves into a frenzy—that same sort of frenzy an animal experiences in response to something *actually* happening. This is our higher-mind conjuring up fictional scenarios that our primitive-mind reacts to. These are paleolithic emotions engaging our augmented human mind.

It's all lower [lizard] brain driven. Our higher, human brain is involved, but on a *lower brain* tether. This is another example of the lower brain being *in charge*. Premeditation<sup>1</sup> is a little further removed. It's more of an Animal SuperPower *poor choice*. The power of choice is involved, but the choice is still driven by *animal logic*.

We tend to be more susceptible to animal impulse:

- When we're hungry
- When we're dog tired
- When we're sick as a dog
- When we're drunk or under some other chemical influence.
- When we're pissed, sad, jealous, horny, depressed, elated, insane.

It's *animal impulse* because, really, are you being *you*, when any of that is going on? Suppose you get cranky when you're hungry—is cranky who you are? When the grass is greener where your grass isn't, is being in covetous misery who you are? If you're an angry drunk, isn't your sober self closer to your true self—*though, alcohol removes inhibitions, so maybe not!?* And, what does it say about you when you're being any of those other things? *Who's in charge?*

A well know meme in the spiritual community goes like this:

*We are human beings, not human doings!*

Are you a *farmer*, or a human *being a farmer?*

Are you a *jet pilot*, or a human *being a jet pilot?*

Are you a *bigot*, or a human *being a bigot?*

<sup>1</sup> In the *negative* sense of the word—assuming there is a positive sense.



Are you a *criminal*, or a *human being a criminal*?

Are you a *scientist*, or a *human being a scientist* [mad or otherwise]?

Notice how I set the *label* apart from the *person*. You don't always have to be a farmer. "Farmer" doesn't define *you*. Just as "Criminal" doesn't define *you*. What if you're a farmer who, while in the service, trained as a jet pilot? Does that make you schizophrenic? An important implication of this is revealed by the question: Is there no redemption for criminals?

"Biology gives you a brain. Life turns it into a mind"

~Jeffery Eugenides

A common public attitude is that a celebrity can't be more than one thing. Steve Martin a *banjo player*?!!? Barbara Eden a *dancer*?!!? Clint Eastwood a *director*?!!? Hugh Laurie part of a *comedy duo*?!!? Krysten Ritter a *fiction writer*?!!? Hugh Laurie also *the author of a novel*?!!? Queen's lead guitarist Brian May, a frickin' *astrophysicist*?!!?!? Maybe celebrities are NOT what they *do*?! And, maybe the rest of us are, also, *not what we do*.

Along the way you make mistakes [probably *a lot of mistakes*], but if society pins their labels of fecklessness on you, know there's no truth to any of it. Because of your animal SuperPower, you can shift your labels, or even disregard the labels put on you by society, by tribe, by dogged defenders of tradition, by big brothers or sisters, by surly fathers, or judgmental mothers, or even by oligarchs, or supposed Gods.

Even by white nationalists! And, yes, I realize I'm an entitled white guy, and that shifting labels tends to be far easier for me than those under some form of oppression rooted in bigotry. Such as the stigma of interned citizens. Or, racial discrimination. Or, gender inequity. Or, homophobia.

During Junior High<sup>1</sup>, and High School, my gentle, somewhat effeminate nature drew vicious attacks from homophones. I was assaulted with taunts of “fag” or “homo” or “queer”. Before that, my nerdiness made me bully bait. And, I know this pales next to, for instance, the murderous specter of racism. My white ass is less likely to be profiled by the police, or hung from a tree, than someone with darker skin. But, as relatively benign as it was for me, it gave me a sense of how difficult it is to shift a label under such nightmarish circumstances. But, many minorities have done it, thus proving it’s not impossible.

José M. Hernández, raised in a Mexican migrant farm working family, became a Mission Specialist on Space Shuttle flight STS-128 and spent 11 days on the International Space Station<sup>2</sup>.

The moon landing was facilitated by the mad math skills of a group of African American women:

- **Katherine Johnson** – a pioneering NASA mathematician whose calculations were critical for the Apollo 11 moon landing in 1969. Her work was featured in the book/film Hidden Figures.
- **Dorothy Vaughan** – an early manager of NASA's West Area Computing unit, a segregated group of female African American mathematicians. She specialized in FORTRAN programming.
- **Mary Jackson** – NASA's first African American female engineer who conducted aeronautical research and worked to improve conditions for women.
- **Christine Darden** – an aeronautical engineer who authored over 50 NASA technical papers and worked on supersonic flight research that enabled the Space Shuttle program.

---

<sup>1</sup> Called *Middle School* in some parts.

<sup>2</sup> Check out the NetFlix biopic: “A Million Miles Away”

- **Annie Easley** – a computer scientist and mathematician who made contributions to the Centaur rocket system used for high-energy upper stages.

In my own case, the violence leveled against me pushed me into a spiritual quest that introduced me to the concept of the Androgynous Shaman. And, though I don't claim to be *shaman*, my midpoint between male and female gives me a unique perspective that some call wisdom.

And there are many other examples, including Einstein, who got the hell out of Germany before Hitler grabbed too much political power. Freddie Mercury's family escaped the violence against Indians<sup>1</sup> during the Zanzibar revolution. Madeleine Albright's family did it at least twice: Migrating to England during WWII to escape Nazi oppression, and after returning home to Czechoslovakia, again they fled, in 1948, this time to the US to avoid being trapped in the Soviet Union. Gloria Estefan fled the Cuban Revolution with her family in 1960.

How did they know? How do I know Donald Trump is a skilled conman who cares diddly for anyone but himself<sup>2</sup>? The information is out there, available to everyone, and easy to see from that meta-animal perspective. And, even easier to see when you contact that *you* that sits outside of you. That faculty that can tell you when an earthquake is imminent, or that warns you to get to higher ground because the sea is about to seethe onto the land. Or that thing that nags you not to get on that flight because there won't be a happy landing<sup>3</sup>!

There is a next-step in human evolution. The step up into self-awareness, where one can view "reality" from the projector room. When

---

<sup>1</sup> East Indian.

<sup>2</sup> And one of the most vile and despicable humans to ever inhabit the office of the Presidency.

<sup>3</sup> My wife had that experience.

one realizes the cosmos is merely a play of lights and shadows, one can find themselves in the audience, watching the more or less interactive movie called *Universe*. Even science hints at this. The weirdness of quantum mechanics, and the famous Einstein equation  $E = mc^2$  that suggests that even *matter* is a form of *energy*. This is like the fish being aware of *water*.

How interactive that movie becomes boils down to one's willingness to exist in the *silence*—in the *mystery*. The willingness to be involved in the process of *choice*. Being willing to listen, between half breaths. Being willing to both *act in*, and *direct* one's own life-movie.

There's a micro moment between an inhale, and an exhale. Another, similar moment between an exhale and an inhale. Every breath has two of these infinitesimal interludes of stillness. Hridaya yoga parlays the monitoring of these pauses into a meditation that can open awareness into the subtle silence of being. Ascribed to this is the notion that this stillness is indeed, our true nature. It's akin to the preponderance of space within our atoms—how solid objects in this world are, really, more vacuum than physical. The play of particles and energy, in the science of quantum physics, suggests our world is an illusion. Such a thing was written in the Hindu Vedas many thousands of years before Niels Bohr and Max Plank<sup>1</sup> introduced it to contemporary science

The Proton, that bit of matter that defines the elements, isn't even all that real. It's composed of several smaller particles, called quarks, that create the semblance of matter by spinning around each other at near light speed. Other equations by Einstein tell us that as matter moves, it gains mass, and at near light speed this effect is quite pronounced<sup>2</sup>—how

<sup>1</sup> Scientists who received the Nobel Prize for the founding of Quantum Theory.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, this prevents mass from ever traveling *at* the speed of light. Why? Because, mass must increase past *infinity* to do that!! Also, time actually *stops* for things >>> continued on page 531

pronounced can be felt in the mass of your own body! Mass that only exists because of this strange relativistic effect! Essentially mass from *nothing*! In other words, the world exists due to a lot of subatomic hand waving!

If the matter that we're composed of is mostly void of actual substance, are we not more silence, than noise?

*"In Space no one can hear you Scream!"*

~Tagline for Ridley Scott's *Alien*

The fleshy instruments we use to judge the validity of the substance of existence, are poor tools for the task. Our senses tell only a small part of the story. It's taken many great minds, over many centuries, to broaden the scope of our awareness—an awareness that goes way beyond the span of our paltry senses. Yet, our psyche tries to convince us it knows the truth, and that our sensory experience is, in fact, the true expanse of reality.

We wiggle around in our hydrocarbon sacks, thinking our little thoughts in a cocoon of deception that invariably places at the center of the whole universe, this phantasm we call “self”—a universe that functions quite fine, independent of our puny narcissism. Compared to the vastness of the *known*<sup>1</sup> Universe, we are so incredibly, infinitesimally small, we come close to being nonexistent! In fact, from the next galaxy out from our Milky Way, we're nothing but an imperceptible spec within a smear of light. It's unlikely any naked eyes perched within the Andromeda

---

<<< 530 traveling at the speed of light. Thus, it's quite impossible for mass to reach the speed of light.

<sup>1</sup> Because of the *speed of light* limitation, there's a cap to how far in the distant Universe we can see—even with the most powerful telescope humanity might ever create. This is called the *known Universe*. There may be other Universes, or more of our own Universe, but there's no scientific way to tell.

Galaxy can even pick out the star we revolve around, from the haze of stars that make up our galaxy.

But, we have this animal SuperPower! We can pivot away from narcissism at any time. We can extricate our minds from this self-centered, woeful smallness, and chart a larger course. We can choose a higher view, and make ourselves into whatever we want. We can wrench ourselves away from personal drama, and choose the stillness—go into the quiet—and discover there, a new paradigm.

*"Life squeezes us and these are the noises we make."*

~Richard Feldman – Juilliard School of Acting<sup>1</sup>

Relationships are a path to this. But, take my advice: First, learn how to be *alone*. Then, your relationships will less likely be mired in need, and can be more about sharing, and delighting in each other. More of a sharing of mutual joy. Why? Because, once you're able to *be* with yourself, you're less likely to look for an *attendant*, and more likely to gain a true partner.

Dare to go to a movie, alone. Make a reservation for one at your favorite restaurant. Take that walk on the beach all by yourself. Then, when being alone is as common to you as taking a breath, you're ready to graduate to dating. While being with this new person, you will have the peace of independence. There will be less need to control the outcome, and more freedom to just allow what may—aka, *no desperation*. Far more fun! Such greater potential for an exciting time full of pleasant surprises as you discover the other, while learning yet more about yourself<sup>2</sup>. And,

<sup>1</sup> From a Terry Gross [*Fresh Air*] interview of actor Oscar Isaac where he quotes Richard Feldman, an acting instructor of his.

<sup>2</sup> And if you're a woman, consider following the "Four Man Plan": [www.TheFourManPlan.com](http://www.TheFourManPlan.com)

this applies to your relationship with life as well.

And, you may not even need to date to find that *special other*. Now that you can go it alone, go out and do the things you love to do, alone, and more than likely you'll just meet. That's how Sheri and I found each other, and we've been in a stellar relationship for some twenty years.

Or, maybe alone works for you. There's no reason you have to be in a relationship. The idea that you must be in a relationship is merely a generalized societal norm. Find your own norm. You're more likely to find happiness if you do.

If you're with someone and the two of you wind up in an argument, use your Animal SuperPower to stop! Reexamine what you're defending. Ask the question: *Is this really worth it?* Are you holding on to a ridiculous desire to be *right*? Really? Is it genuinely so important, this position you're fighting for? Does it really warrant saying mean, scathing things to a fellow human? Do you really want to burn bridges over this? Is this position, that you are so stubbornly dug-in to, *truly* so important? Consider getting REALLY HONEST with yourself and examining if, maybe, the thing you're so fussed about isn't really on your side of the fence. Consider that, just perhaps, you're projecting your own shit onto this other person. Then, if so, grow some balls and take responsibility for yourself! Women can grow balls, too! They're *figurative*, after all, for *both* genders.

Also, consider if the other person is just having a bad day, or a bad week, or a bad life. That's all anybody is, who's being a sourpuss. They're hiding behind a blustery facade, spitting wrath like a cornered cat. Why? Because they're afraid. They're afraid they won't be enough, or that their emotional wounds will be jogged open, or their dirty little secrets

will be revealed, or their darkness will be exposed to hypocritical judgment.

One reason we hide is we're wary of the cowardice of others—we fear that, once we come forward—out in the social limelight—others will hang back, and point with perfidious castigation. Fun Fact: There isn't a soul in existence devoid of darker things. We are *all* living in glass houses, and thus if someone is pointing their finger at you, that one is likely a hypocrite. But, even hypocrites deserve love. They've merely been hurt too much by a dysfunctional world. They've given up and succumbed to the dysfunctional modes of their society. The trick is to not collude. Show them you haven't given up, by stepping out of your own hiding place. Give them a safe space to come out into. Then be patient. Trust can be hard to win.

Of course, if the other person is gaslighting you or some other shit, you might need to walk away. But, if you're able to do life alone, you're less likely to walk into situations like that, in the first place.

Animal SuperPower!! Remember!!! Take charge of your happiness!!!!

If it's a significant other you're arguing with, try thinking back to when you first fell in love—see if you can feel that again, and use that feeling to adjust the moment. Or, ask the question, “is this person, maybe, not who I made them out to be?” Maybe you're blaming them for not measuring up to the model you created in your own head regarding who you thought they were—who you wanted them to be. Find the courage to take responsibility for your error—admit it to yourself, and to the other. And then, move on if that's what is needed.

Or, how about you just stop and give your liver time to flush the funk from your bloodstream, and then for gosh sake, *notice your nonsense!*



*Become cognizant to your own RIDICULOUS!* And then *get humble* and *laugh at yourself*. Let this other person in on the joke so they can also laugh at your ridiculousness, and maybe they'll *share* their own ridiculousness, so you two can both get down to the business of healing and loving.

Take a moment to imagine Earth from outer space. Imagine it as that little blue dot from Saturn. That way even the mountains you made out of mole hills become insignificant. And, if that doesn't work, remember that you won't even be here in a few quarters of a century, assuming you're not an immortal, or a sentient Aldabra giant tortoise that can read.

There's a good chance this person you're fighting with, can actually be your best ally, were you to find the courage to pull your own covers<sup>1</sup> in front of them. Be your own Toto and pull the curtain aside, and reveal the absurdity of your inner wizard<sup>2</sup> putting on such a scary display of fire and smoke. Then open your satchel of love, and start doling out hearts, courage and brains, and a way back home!

Notice your NONSENSE!

Reveal your RIDICULOUSNESS!

Own your power to choose to step beyond your LUDICROUS monkey-mind, lizard-brain behavior!!

In all of your human interactions, see if maybe *you're* the one misbehaving. See if *you're* the one being a jerk. And, if so, tune into your biology. Notice what is going on there. Are you being *you* or is your *animal up?* And, if the verdict is *animal*, then call up your Animal

<sup>1</sup> Uncover your own bullshit, in other words. Reveal your absurd secrets! Yes! I guarantee they ARE absurd!

<sup>2</sup> If this makes no sense to you, go watch the 1939 movie *The Wizard of OZ* starring Judy Garland.

SuperPowers, and start behaving like a decent human being. It's called integrity. Being true to yourself and to others. And *frankly*, be courageous enough to own your own *shit*, and stop dumping it on others. You might just discover you aren't the only one full of shit!! And really, if we're being fully honest, here: we are ALL *full of shit*. EVERYONE, at one time or another is an asshole. It's not possible to exist in a body without succumbing to absurdity. That's basically the true meaning of "Original Sin".

Relationships are a form of training for the game of life. You win when you can walk alone just as fulfilled as you might be while in a relationship with another human. You also win when you can be with that person and continually choose love over strife, even in your darkest moments.

I believe we are spirits, originally from a realm I like to call "Original Grin," who come into a body to play out a life in this gross, and very challenging domain of time, space and dense matter that pushes us to SIN with a capital "S". And, curb your enthusiasm all you Bible-thumpers: when I say "sin," I'm referring to the original Hebrew meaning, "To miss the mark<sup>1</sup>".

If it's yourself that you're mad at, or ashamed of, or down on for whatever reason, come on, nobody is perfect. Find a way to forgive yourself. You're a work in progress, just like everyone else.

In Trevor Noah's book *Born A Crime* he describes the transition to democracy in South Africa in the early 1990s. He tells his own story of watching the televised public hearings where F.W. de Klerk and other former apartheid supporters confessed their past ignorance and racism.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word for sin is "chet" and derives from the Hebrew verb meaning "to miss the mark or target." In the Jewish tradition, sin is merely a mistake open to atonement.

Quote: “To this day, I don't know a more brilliant political maneuver than what de Klerk did to end apartheid. He didn't just end it, he got the entire apparatus of the government to publicly admit that the whole thing had been a lie from the beginning. The atrocities, the state-sponsored terrorism, the secrecy, all of it. He got them to confess that apartheid was built not on principles of justice but on racism and fear.”

The people you think you've disappointed, or angered, or slighted, may already have gotten over it. And if they haven't, consider that their grudge may not have originated with you, or even really ever been about you. People project their baggage on surrounding people all the time. Consider you may have merely been within range!

Remember: you, and everyone else, relates to the world through mental models. And, those models are rarely true and complete.

And, if you have a history of unreliability, or poor integrity that you feel warrants contempt from another, maybe look at what compels you to behave that way. It probably isn't your fault. Consider if you were pressed into a role that doesn't suit you. Maybe the only shift needed is what you say “yes” to<sup>1</sup>. A cat can't be a fish<sup>2</sup>. A man of small stature will probably never dunk a basketball<sup>3</sup>—at least, not on their own. And I doubt Kareem Abdul-Jabbar could fit into a hardtop Smart Car<sup>4</sup>. Someone with a talent for art, might not make a good accountant. And, Hulk Hogan might feel out of place at a festival for people who knit.

---

<sup>1</sup> It truly is Okay to say NO.

<sup>2</sup> And, most probably wouldn't even want to be!

<sup>3</sup> Though Muggsy Bogues might disagree! But, seriously, I'm talking Peter Dinklage, Warwick Davis, Kenny Baker, etc.

<sup>4</sup> No longer sold in the USA, but I, from time to time, see them on the road. If you don't know, it's a nearly toy sized, *car shaped* electric vehicle, similar to one of those clown cars, but without the mystical clown absorption powers.

We can't do everything, as much as we might want to. You might as well honor your limitations. Sure, we can grow and change, but I'm sorry Jiminy Cricket, some things are just impossible—at least within one lifetime<sup>1</sup>. So, cut yourself some slack, and forgive.

Probably the best way back to yourself is to find your spark—your passion—and throw yourself into whatever that is. Joseph Campbell would advise you to “*follow your bliss*”. More than likely you will either be joyfully alone, or you'll attract a spectacular partner<sup>2</sup>.

What if you're someone who is just mean? Usually, people who are mean, are people who themselves are in some sort of pain. Own your own pain, and get some help. You might find a community of healing in 12-Step. No, you don't have to be an alcoholic, or drug addicted. Check out ACA or ACoA. Or, try professional help. Or, for a more non-conventional track, check out Getting Help on page 568, below.

Yes! What I'm talking about here, is true happiness, and the ability to be *Happy For No Damn Reason!!*

*"There is no way to happiness. Happiness is the way."*

-Buddha

If you're mentally ill, well that's a tough one. Navigating mental illness is undeniably challenging. Take, for instance, my first wife, Carol, who was raised by a psychotic Catholic. The women in Carol's lineage, going

---

<sup>1</sup> The concept of incarnation opens greater possibilities of wish fulfillment. What you can't achieve in one life, you very likely can achieve over two or three or more lives. This could very well explain the child prodigy phenomenon.

<sup>2</sup> It happened to me. I turned my focus to one of my passions—writing, and Sheri, my spectacular current wife of 20 years (as of this writing), showed up!

back to at least her great grandmother, were known for their considerable intelligence. However, the patriarchal constraints preventing women from reaching their full potential led to rage directed, inappropriately, at their siblings. And, Carol's mother was no exception.

In the intricate tapestry of Carol's known lineage, the women, going back at least to her great-grandmother, possessed a notable intellect that was stifled by the patriarchal society. Despite their intelligence, they were forbidden from realizing their full potential, barred from education and professional pursuits they craved, merely because of their gender.

Carol's mother, Helen Tschoepe, bore the emotional scars of her upbringing under a wrathful matriarch, a woman laden with spite and derogatory sentiments. The era of the Great Depression seemed to intensify this bitterness. Carol's great-grandmother, a victim of the same patriarchal oppression, paradoxically attempted to shield her daughter, Helen, from the anticipated pain and disappointment by wrathfully discouraging her aspirations for education and a career. This twisted effort, fueled by bitterness and resentment, manifested as vicious chiding, as reported by Carol's mom.

Against all odds, Helen defied the constraints imposed by her mother and societal expectations, briefly stepping into the realm of higher education. However, this journey was cut short during her second year, by a male professor, echoing the prevailing chauvinistic sentiments of the time, pressured her with relentless ridicule until she dropped out.

By the time I met Carol's mother, she had already descended into a psychosis fueled by bitterness, resentment, and extreme emotional pain.

The abuse she subjected Carol to, the only daughter in a brood of six, was the same sort of paradoxical attempt at protecting her from patriarchal sanction, laced with a narcissistic venting of unresolved anger. Carol, deeply affected by this tumultuous upbringing, grappled with severe test anxiety. Anything less than an “A” triggered intense suicidal ideation.

Both of our upbringings emphasized impossible standards of intellectualism, which is likely a reason we were drawn to each other. For me, I could only dream of attending a school like CalTech, in Pasadena. Carol had the chops to succeed at any educational pursuit she desired. She was an actual genius, but she found herself constrained by a mental trap that forbade failure. Nevertheless, that didn’t stop her from trying, but some of that apparent spunk concealed her dread of another trap, triggered by any sign of intellectual weakness. It was like living under a sword of Damocles while walking through a briar patch.

Carol had a mind that could remember a phone number on first look. She, also, had an enormous vocabulary, due in part to that fantastic memory, and she pursued higher math to the level of Topology, Number Theory, and Linear and Modern Algebra. The fact that she consistently tested at the “A” level, is a testament to this stellar intelligence. But, panic always filled the days between *test*, and *gratifying result*. She was routinely certain she had done terribly on every test she ever took, and in nearly every instance her dread was unfounded.

I didn’t realize it back then, but she also suffered from anorexia. Early in our relationship, something cracked in her, probably due to malnutrition exacerbated by her anorexia, leading to acute paranoia, and full on raging lunacy. After numerous attempts to find help, we finally hit on something called Medical Psychiatry. They tested her

Thyroid, using a test that is more sensitive than the test administered by a general practitioner. It indicated a slightly diminished thyroid output that was missed by the standard test.

Her thyroid output was diminished just enough, it turns out, to cause the crazy that had her [for example] certain I was plotting against her. If you wondered if that mindset made it difficult for me to convince her to keep the various appointments I made for her—absolutely, yes, it did! On the way to one of the appointments, while stopped at a traffic light, Carol leaped out of the car, and ran, screaming, convinced I was plotting to lock her up in a “loony bin”. The car was pinned in by other cars, impeded by a red traffic light. After an interminable wait, the light finally changed allowing me to pull over and run after her. I found her cowering in a corner at a nearby office building, where I gently explained that I wasn’t trying to lock her up, and that the doctors I was taking her to have an excellent track record for treating the sort of thing she was suffering from. I successfully convinced her to return to the car, and we made it to the office. We were late to our appointment, but they took it in stride, and worked us in.

After her first thyroid pill, the crazy vanished, and she returned to her regular test-panicky self. But, that wasn’t the last of it. Years later, night terrors began, and she developed a penchant for screaming at me, beginning late in the evening, preventing me from getting the sleep I needed, and on a couple of occasions, led to police officers at our door, looking at me with suspicion.

One of her suicide attempts landed her in a mental hospital, but the health insurance supplied by my place of employment only covered two weeks of that per year, so such situations never lasted long enough for the doctors to match her to a medication, or for counseling to be of any

significant help. Which is really sad, because, at least in one of the institutions, the practitioners appeared to be excellent, and she seemed to be making progress.

The end result, after decades of her attempting to earn a college degree, and a bleak outcome from our search for help, that was invariably stunted by a glut of professional incompetence in the scope of low budget practitioners, limited by our lack of funds, coupled with an inadequacy of insurance, exacerbated by my own burn-out, was a very successful suicide, in her mid-fifties. Her test anxiety repeatedly compelled her to either drop out of classes or acquire an *incomplete*<sup>1</sup>. The thing about incompletes: they lapse into a “fail” if not completed. After bouncing from one University to another, she finally could bounce no more, and after a couple of incompletes actually did lapse to “F” status, and coupled with her distress over the belief that her advancing age limited her chances at any sort of career, she found a tall building, and jumped off of it.

So, if mental illness is your bane, that’s a tough nut. If there’s anyway in this hell of a USA medical system, with mental health access severely crippled by that darling of Conservatives, Ronald Reagan, that you can find a good psychologist, and stick with them long enough to work out a drug routine, or even better, find someone who can manage some actual healing, then *make it happen!* Yeah, I know, it’s a catch-22, pulling yourself up by your own boot straps kind of situation. But, do whatever you can to motivate yourself—do it—and stick with it! If you have anyone in your life that is willing to support you through this process, LET THEM!! I swear you’re worth it!! [see Getting Help on page 568, below]

---

<sup>1</sup> An *incomplete* is a temporary “grade”, and is basically a promise to come back and complete the work, otherwise the incomplete lapses into a *fail*.



A common thread through all of this is summed up by the mantra: *Breakdown – breakthrough.*

So often when something goes wrong, fingers fly out and point. Blame wants to happen—it’s a primitive animal brain mode. But, what if it’s nobody’s fault? What if it’s just the nature of life for things to go wrong. What if it’s just an artifact of nerves, and of survival directives, and the fragility of flesh. Life can impose a terrible load, and not everyone’s emotional spine can support that much straw.

And that’s it, modern life tends to be dysfunctional. And, dysfunction usually leads to emotional wounds, which tends to lead to escapist behavior. When one feels the need to escape their condition, one tends to squander their resources on things not in support of their passion. This is the economics of *pain relief vs passion*. And the irony is, when one turns their focus to one’s passion, the pain will likely abate, or fade to the background. But, there’s a hump to get over, and that takes some faith, and/or some loving support, and/or some luck—though I like to call it *Grace*.

And, maybe the point of life, at least human life, is to use this fabulous mental upgrade to figure out a solution<sup>1</sup>. And, maybe instead of whipping out pointy-fingers, we all could offer support, and lend mental power to *solving the problem*, rather than to the creative conjure of conspiratorial accusations.

Shit happens! Make it a This Happens—“This” being Problem Solving.

A vacuum cleaner commercial that played around a decade ago offered a profound slogan:

---

<sup>1</sup> Even if there’s history, you gotta start somewhere, and *now* is a good time. Some believe when we heal ourselves, we heal our ancestors.

*Life's dirty—clean it up!*

Over the some thirty years I was with Carol, we applied this. And, as a result, there were happy moments, and periods of richness in our life together. When things broke down, we found solutions—*breakthroughs*, and were able to restore a semblance of normal. And, perhaps, if I hadn't been held back by my own mental limitations, and burnout, we might even have solved the larger issues, such as her test anxiety and the PTSD of her torturous upbringing.

Speaking of vacuum cleaners, one of the smaller joyful, breakthrough moments involved electrical tape. Upon noticing the damage she had done to the power cord by inadvertently running the vacuum cleaner over it, she went into a terror impelled rage.

One of her dysfunctional modes was to act out the rage of her mother, on herself, and everyone around her. During the process of calming her down, I learned she was flashing back to the horror of her mother losing her shit over something like an expensive vacuum cleaner being ruined. So, I got out the electrical tape and showed her how the rips in the cord's insulation could be repaired. For her this was a powerful triumph over her mother's brutality. She was like a gleeful child as she applied tape to the various bare-wire regions on the cord.

How'd we get from wild rage to electrical tape? First, I refused to take personally anything she was saying—and, due to a panic fueled desire to find fault in someone else, besides herself, it did get rather personal. My primitive, animal self wanted to react, but being with her was an efficacious training! Feelings are not facts, I reminded myself. My feeling *that she was a threat*, I knew was false. Like how I learned that not all dogs are waiting to attack me. I shut that down and allowed myself to

*wait* and *watch*. I let myself be in the *mystery* of what was going on in her, like when I stared at that alternator in my car. And, as I listened, and watched, and waited I began to understand what was going on. A few diplomatic, non-accusatory questions brought it all into focus, allowing me to assure her that I wasn't mad at her for "destroying the vacuum cleaner", and that *she* was far more important than a mere *thing*—*No matter how expensive it is*. And that such an error never deserves the kind of torment leveled at her by her mother! And, by the way, *there's a simple way to fix this—so, actually, the vacuum cleaner ISN'T ruined!*

It's all about being aware of this *me* that moves about in the world, doing human things. Just aware—no judgment. And if judgment creeps in, I remember to recognize that it's not *me* being judgmental (the true "me" that is having an adventure, in a body, on planet Earth). It's merely the ego "me" (that faux self I'm being, in order to have this adventure, in a body, on planet Earth). By exercising the ability to catch, and step out of automatic behavior, I, moment by moment, manage my experience and choose my reality. In fact, my primary perspective is: Playing along with the antics of my ego self, all the while aware of the stage, the lights, and the improvisational nature of it all, with an inclination towards *stepping out from behind the Wizard's curtain* when my ego gets too out of line. Thank you *inner Toto!*

Judgment is the spoiler. When I become judgmental, my "proto-me" is no longer aligned with my "higher" me. Judgment is an artifact of a primitive part of the human brain.

For happiness to exist, judgment must be transformed into *discernment* via wisdom. Once you allow judgment to dictate your thinking, it blurs your view to truth. Remember, *judgment* is an artifact of *life*. To matter, nothing matters. It's only *flesh* that has any need to judge things *good* or

*bad*, which is really a judgment of the level of danger to flesh. Or, to put it another way, we tend to judge based on levels of discomfort. And, comfort is a function of nerves and the mind.

If one can take a lesson from the Bible (and I only refer to the Bible, because it was part of my upbringing, which is hilarious, because I was raised in a family grounded in science<sup>1</sup>), I really think the Snake, featured in the Garden of Eden story, was selling judgment. Adam and Eve were happy because they lived in the *experience of everything*. There was no “what if”, just a reveal of, and revel in, *moments*—much like the way an animal probably experiences life: no *beginning*, no *end*, just *now*. When an animal feels hunger, its intuition guides it to food. When the lion is nearby, the erect hairs on the back of the neck advocate for avoidance.

In this fable, I really think God never actually cast them (“us”) out of the garden. The garden is still here. We just have a different relationship with it—a different perspective. We think, *what if the lion comes and eats us!* Such thoughts create a phantom reality that exists outside the garden, and challenges our faith that we will be cared for. This phantom reality, where an imaginary lion’s pounce is imminent, churns up the same synaptic agitation as an actual encounter with a real lion. Thus, that becomes a tangible experience, even though it’s a fantasy! The lion may be present. It may even be nearby. But, until the lion is upon us, any actual threat is a concoction of the mind.

---

<sup>1</sup> My parents, being the wise and fair minded people they were (something I’ve realized in retrospect), in an attempt to provide me a well rounded exposure to human knowledge, included a form of Bible study, along with the plethora of things scientific. My dad, for a period, at bedtime, read to me from a book entitled *The STORY of The BIBLE* by Walter Russel Bowie. From the Preface, quoting the Editor of The Abingdon Press: “We want a story of the Bible written from the perspective of the best we know to-day about its various books and their relationships, and yet a story which will keep the religious reverence with the Bible has always inspired.” In other words, as close to a “scientific” perspective as possible in this ilk. BTW: I still have the book!

***“But, Steve, isn’t the tendency to ‘what if,’ a practical tool for avoiding being eaten by the lion?”***

In the Genesis story there is a God protecting the first humans from the lion. In that case, do we need such tools? And, even if “God” is an analog for some other facility that protects us, like premonition, or intuition, what I’m saying is, in the Garden, we had access to this facility, and thus, again, no need for “what-ifying”. At least not the out-of-control nervous-energy what-ifying that spoils our cool.

When we live in fear, I think it’s that fear that casts us out of paradise. I think being afraid shrouds paradise from our view, and thus “casts us out” of paradise. A way back into the garden is remembering that *feelings are not facts*, and that *what ifs* are not real. Our way back to the garden is by living in *the mystery without judgment*. That’s when we can receive the messages that will save us from becoming a lion’s meal.

When our attention is distracted by these pseudo fears, the intuitive whisper endeavoring to keep us off the lion’s menu is drowned out by all the mental fear-noise. Because we keep scaring ourselves with mock lions, we drown out the actual alert and stupidly walk right into the lion’s den.

What if, by not being afraid, the lion considers us on par with lions, and thus not a food source. Do lions eat other lions?

Now I want to shift the conversation to collective happiness. Happiness isn’t necessarily limited to a personal choice. A collective choice can have an impact on happiness. Consider the “starving artist”. What if we supported our local artists, rather than funding a few superstars? As of this writing, the net worth of:

- Paul Simon is: \$200 Million! [Forbes]
- Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson is: \$270 Million! [Forbes]
- Mick Jagger is: \$360 Million! [CelebrityNetWorth.com]
- Stephen King is: \$500 Million!! [CelebrityNetWorth.com]
- Elton John is: \$550 Million!! [CelebrityNetWorth.com]
- Bruce Springsteen is: \$650 Million!! [CelebrityNetWorth.com]
- Taylor Swift is: \$800 Million!!! [CelebrityNetWorth.com]
- J.K. Rowling is: \$1 Billion!!!! [Forbes]
- Rihanna is: \$1.7Billion!!!! [CelebrityNetWorth.com]
- Kanye West is: \$1.8 Billion!!!! [Forbes]
- George Lucas is: \$5 Billion!!!!!! [Forbes]

That suggests there is plenty of money to support local artists, if the general public were satisfied with the talent in their own community. But, the collective choice is to send that money to a relatively few national, or international stars. And, these mega-stars choose to set their ticket prices far higher than needed, judging by their ridiculous net worth! Or, they passively allow that to happen. I mean, the artist could refuse to perform until the ticket prices are lowered—they do have that power. William Shatner, during his original Star Trek days, staged such a protest when the network tried to circumvent plans to air the first interracial kiss on public TV. The studio tried to shoot an alternate “safety scene”, void of the controversial kiss. Shatner, in order to foil this attempt, deliberately flubbed his lines. But, his motives were not so noble, being merely an ego driven push to insure he made history. But, it worked, and it illustrates the possibility for these mega-stars to wield power, albeit in creative ways.

And, also there doesn't appear to be a choice to funnel a large portion of that obscene amount of money to lesser known, struggling artists—otherwise, their net worth wouldn't hang so high.

A collective choice to boycott such money grubbing artists, for the sake of local talent, would end all of that, and would end the prevalence of the “starving artist”.

We tend to elect our officials based on money driven ads designed to provoke emotion, rather than choosing our leaders based on actual facts, and/or a track-record of achievement. Romans 16:17-18 warns its readers to avoid those who use *smooth talk and flattery*, to *deceive the hearts of the naive*. We, as a collective, have the power to choose leaders that will serve the common good, and not just those who would serve a select few, or those with power and influence. And, we have the prerogative to ignore the emotions being duplicitously stirred up by sensationalistic political ads. FEELINGS ARE NOT FACTS!! Thus, FEELINGS SHOULD NOT ELECT OUR POLITICAL LEADERS!!!

In the workplace, we accept gross income disparities, rather than band together, in solidarity, to force fair wages.

We put up with half-assed pharmaceuticals sporting long lists of side effects, rather than pressuring doctors to honor their oath to *do no harm*. I mean, what if the AMA said, “Nope! Not good enough! Go find a way!!”, and booted Big-Pharma in the tush all the way out the door?! Would they do the extra work needed to solve issues such as side effects, dependencies, and ridiculous drug names? And, what if we put our collective foot down, and demand that cures for disease not be driven by profit, but be, instead, driven by compassion for humanity. How many potential cures are abandoned when deemed not profitable. How many

natural remedies, or even modes that would prevent the disease in the first place, are discarded or overlooked because of profiteering?

As a kid, every spring, and especially when I mowed the lawn (a chore assigned to me by my father), I suffered from severe allergic reactions—chronic sneezing, itchy red eyes, and a nose that could run a marathon, if snot was “the distance”. This followed me into adulthood. Benadryl was my go to, until I learned from a friend of the power of Grape Seed Extract! Two 100mg capsules per day did the trick. No more allergy symptoms!<sup>1</sup> But, does Big-Pharma want you to know about that? No. They would rather you treat symptoms ad infinitum!

And what about my AFib scare? My heart started behaving in a way that it seemed to me it really shouldn't be. This would generally happen at night when I awoke from sleep. An app on my smartphone indicated crazy heart rates as high as 200BPM. A trip to the hospital resulted in a diagnosis of Atrial Fibrillation or AFib for short. My blood work indicated slightly low levels of Magnesium and Potassium, and at the hospital, they did give me pills for that, but their main recommendation was a *drug*. I took it for a while, but searched for an alternative. I wanted a solution for the cause, not a management of symptoms. I also hoped to avoid having my heart burned in an Ablation procedure.

It wasn't long before I hit upon a discussion group with a member that shared what their doctor told them, “Just take Magnesium Glycinate.” I started doing that, and my heart has behaved ever since. I also take an occasional Potassium Gluconate.

---

<sup>1</sup> As with most herbal remedies, it takes up to a week for relief to begin. Also, dosage, according to the instructions on the bottles I would get from Trader Joe's (they no longer sell it) is the same number of milligrams (mg) as your weight in pounds, or more. I was around 170 pounds at the time, so I took two 100mg capsules. And, of course, check with a doctor first, especially if you're pregnant. This is, in no way, should be a substitute for medical advice.



Would this far simpler, and frankly, *healthier* solution be more standard if medical logic wasn't dictated by profit margins?

We create our world with our choices—both our individual choices, and our collective choices. And that impacts the level of accessibility of actual happiness. I mean, happiness is always available, but the difference is in the level of sacrifice and misery required to obtain it and maintain it. Artists might have a more comfortable living, were collective choices made to support that. Human ailment might be treated at the source, rather than by drugs designed to mask symptoms, and/or persist the condition. Medical bills might be covered by a single payer, funded by a population willing to pay into a collective pot, so their human brothers and sisters will be properly cared for. Employers might provide their workers fair compensation as a show of gratitude, rather than pushing wages down to appease shareholders, or in general to satisfy an agenda centered in greed. And, people might find it easier to agree to higher taxes, to fund the creation and maintenance of beautiful, life affirming communities, where health and well being is a common right, rather than a luxury. Where everyone is assured decent housing. Where quality education is given top priority, and is focused on supporting the talents and passions of individual students, rather than being a one-modality-fits-all where students that don't fit into the prevailing modality fall through the cracks.

And what of mega-stores like WalMart and Amazon. The collective choice to take advantage of the greater purchasing power offered by these Goliaths, results in the loss of local venues that commonly provide greater personal attention, and often support local artisans. It's all in what we choose, as a society.

And, this can even be rolled back to the invention of mass production, and the factory. Nearly gone is the charm of the local craftsman, producing furniture by hand, or the local ceramicist, candle maker, or silversmith. Also, nearly gone is the family heirloom—made possible by quality craftsmanship that used to produce things that stand the test of time, rather than crap churned out by factories that break down on some designed schedule of obsolescence.

*But, Steve, who can afford stuff like that?*

Collective choice affects economics as well. When no one takes too much, there tends to be enough to go around, and things of quality, lovingly produced, tend to become accessible to everyone willing to contribute their share to society. When choices are made to support the collective, as well as the individual, there tends to be collective prosperity.

- Charles Koch & Family: **\$51.0 Billion!** [Forbes]
- Mark Zuckerberg: **\$102.1 Billion!** [Forbes]
- Bill Gates: **\$123 billion!** [Bloomberg]
- Jeff Bezos: **\$142.5 billion!!** [Forbes]
- Elon Musk: **\$221.8 billion!!!** [Forbes]

Think about where all this money came from.

What if corporations cooperated, rather than competed? What if competition was honorable and friendly, and done to promote the common good, rather than bloat the pocketbooks of a greedy few? What if enterprise was an extension of service to life, humanity and planet? And, what if the concept of *breakdown/breakthrough*, was applied

to economics? There I go, What-Ifing again!

When a business fails, what if the people involved were all supported then their efforts to generate new opportunities for prosperity, rather than left to flounder in misery and bankruptcy, while their displaced workers scramble for new employment? Love in the form of Golden Parachutes for everyone, not just a privileged few, is what I'm talking about here.

In other words, what if there was a common agreement to help and support one another? You know, like the New Testament claims is the teaching of this *Jesus* guy.

And, what if the captains of industry acknowledged the contribution of the little guy? After all, they couldn't achieve their industry without the support of the many minions in their employ. The top echelon might have to sacrifice some of their "earning potential", but the souls of these fine captains of industry would remain intact. And, aren't they ultimately richer if they live in a happy, prosperous world?

At a party on Shelter Island, Kurt Vonnegut informed his friend, Joseph Heller, that the host of the party, a hedge fund manager, had made more money in a single day than Heller's total earning from his iconic novel *Catch-22*.

Heller's response: "Yes, but I have something he will never have—*enough*."

And, what of *money*? During the Great Depression of the 1930's, everyone was still there, able to work, able to make it all run. The only difference was the temporary lack of money. Image if, in a climate of trust and camaraderie, people just kept doing what they always did to keep things moving. And, at the grocery store, what if no one was

turned away—essentially, a temporary moratorium on the need for money to acquire the bare essentials? And, what if everyone agreed to take only what they needed, so as not to burden a precarious economy? In other words, a collective honor system, just until things got back to normal. Otherwise, these people were just languishing in poverty, doing nothing except standing in soup lines or jumping off buildings. Why not work to rebuild the system instead? I suspect the whole Depression would have resolved long before warranting the designation: “Great”.

Where did that bread and/or soup come from, that people stood in line for? And, why couldn't that bread be delivered to the local markets, where people could go get it, like they normally would? How would anything be different, if everyone just continued doing what they normally do? The soup and bread were available, and it was given away. Doesn't that prove it was possible to achieve this vision of mine?

An anthropologist showed a game to the children of an African tribe. He placed a basket of delicious fruits near a tree trunk and gave the kids the following instruction: The first child to reach the tree will get the whole basket. When he gave them the start signal, to his surprise, they walked together, holding hands until they reached the tree and then shared the fruit! When he asked them, “why did you do that when any one of you could have the basket for themselves?” They answered with the astonishment of wondering why it wasn't obvious: “Ubuntu!” When he asked for the meaning of the word ‘Ubuntu’, they replied: “How can one of us be happy while the rest are miserable?”

Ubuntu is a word that describes the prevalent attitude in their society: *I am because we are.*

It's, really, all in how things are collectively perceived. It's all in the agreed upon model for how things are done. And the only thing that gets in the way, when society faces challenges like The Great Depression, is a lack of trust, a lack of selfless initiative—a population mired in their animal nature. No one dared to stick their neck out. No one dared to risk putting more in, than they got out. The assumption that cheaters would prevail, stopped what could have been a far faster recovery.

Many things considered steadfast, are actually arbitrary. The unit of time called the “second”, is based on the average human heartbeat. What if a heart rate of 60 beats a minute [BPM] is not normal for some humans? Many doctors consider 60 BPM to be an obsolete standard, and consider a person's heart rate as normal if it's in the range 50-70 BPM.

Check out this webMD article:



[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web46](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web46)

[5 Heart Rate Myths Debunked](#)

The second could easily have been defined by the length of time it takes to say “Wubba Lubba Dub-Dub” [*Rick and Morty* reference]. Or, the time it takes for an apple to fall from the lowest branch on an apple tree [*Newton* reference], or the length of the standard groan while watching a *Pauly Shore* movie [NOT a *Pauly Shore* reference!]

What if 98.6°F is not your normal body temperature.

The medical profession is rethinking 98.6°F. Numerous studies have called into question this supposedly universal temperature. They found that:

- It varies throughout the day, tending to rise later in the day.
- It varies among individuals, and it tends to be higher in women and children.
- It can be as low as 97.5°F and averages at around 97.9°F.
- And it seems to have fallen over the past two hundred years.

Checkout this article in the Harvard Medical School rag *Harvard Health Publishing* called “*Time to redefine normal body temperature?*”:



[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web45](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web45)

[Time to redefine normal body temperature?](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web45)

Yup. Those are examples of shifting models in the medical profession. 60 BPM was merely the prevailing model, before medical studies refined it. Same applies to 98.6°F. These are nothing more than a model, and models tend to shift, or can even be discarded.

The standard human body temperature isn't necessarily *arbitrary*, but the length of a *second* certainly is, as is the length referred to as “one foot,” which is based on the foot of some king. Why should a monarch's big feet define the measure of your height? Maybe you're really 7 little-person-feet tall! And if you base your happiness on 10,000 FitBit steps, consider that the roundness of the number “10,000” is tied to the ten fingers on the hands of a standard human. If most humans had three fingers on each hand, then their six fingers would turn “10,000” ten-finger people's steps into a different set of digits: 114,144<sub>6</sub> steps! And, “10,000<sub>6</sub>” six-finger people steps would be only 1,296 ten-finger people steps<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This involves something, in math, called the “Number Base”. Ten finger people, accustomed to using their ten fingers to count to 10, count in “Base 10”. Whereas, six finger people, accustomed to using their 6 fingers to count to 10, like this: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10. This is counting in “Base 6.” The next Base 6 number will be 11, referred to as “one-one” because it is NOT the same thing as “eleven,” 10 (or “one-zero”) in Base 6, is equivalent to 6 in Base 10. 11 (or “one-one”) in Base 6 = 7 in Base 10. No wonder people don't like math!

This is akin to measurements made in “English Units” versus the Metric system. 1 Mile is equivalent to 1.60934 Kilometers—that sort of thing.

ARBITRARY!!

Look up Beatrice Wood—the “Mama of Dada”, or Georgia O’Keeffe. Both are examples of people who were sustained by their passion(s), and who lived simple, relatively happy lives that some would call “eccentric”. They walked away from the structures their friends, family, and/or society thought they should confine themselves to. But those standards are *arbitrary*! They honored their own path, and walked the less trodden way.

*"I am not eccentric. It's just that I am more alive than most people.  
I am an unpopular electric eel set in a pond of catfish."*

~Edith Sitwell

Beatrice lived 105 years. When asked the secret to her longevity, she responded, “I owe it all to art books, chocolates, and young men.”

O’Keeffe was half way to 99 when she died! In the 1970’s macular degeneration made painting difficult, so she switched to sculpture. And, eventually figured out ways to paint again. Giving up is rarely justified. If your mind is malleable and your spirit determined, you’ll likely find a way.

Bucking the norm is, unfortunately, not the norm. Most are locked into some predetermined, inflexible path to happiness. Maybe that describes you. If so, what is your *I-can-only-be-happy-if*:

- ...I’m fully within the bounds and parameters of tradition! [and I only weep occasionally at the loss of my freedom to be *fully me*]!



- ...I finally have my storybook wedding that I've been pining for since I was three! [even though daddy's going into lifelong debt to provide it]
- ...I find "the one and only" that matches my biological template for the *perfect mate*! [at least until you divorce that one...NEXT! Check out Cindy Lu's [Four Man Plan](#) [[www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web44](http://www.HFNDR.com/fw/?ln=web44)]
- ...I stay with this man/woman even though he/she verbally abuses me and/or beats me, and/or abuses the children—I love him/her! We have good days!! [He/she may well love you and/or your children to death, or at least to severe physical harm, or to mental disability. Do yourself a favor and find an **Abuse Shelter**! National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233 – SMS: 88788 You can begin by merely talking to them. Who knows, they might have answers you never thought of]
- ...I'm satisfying cultural and/or societal norms! [at the expense of who and what you really are?]
- ...I'm staying true to my religion! I must continue storing up blessings in heaven! Happiness will come later...in heaven...because, I will have done God (or Gods) proud! I am sin free, and saved for all eternity!! And, I have the Devil fully on the run!! [I weep for your spirit self!]
- ...I'm a good little consumer who has done my duty to *country and capitalism*! [no matter how far in debt you must go?]
- ...Everything I own is colored **pink**! [Are you sure that's your favorite color, or were you coerced into adopting that color under the pressure of gender bias?]
- ...I have better stuff than anyone in the neighborhood! [suck it Joneses<sup>1</sup>!! Am I right?!]

---

<sup>1</sup> A reference to a phrase that originated with the 1913 comic strip by Arthur R "Pop" Momand called *Keeping Up With The Joneses*. Mark Twain perpetuated the concept in his essay titled "Corn Pone Opinions." Quote: "*The outside influences are always pouring in upon us, and we are always obeying their orders and accepting their verdicts. The Smiths like the new play; the Joneses go to see it, and they copy the Smith verdict.*"

- ...I am in conformity with the decorum and etiquette of upper class society! [while you verily die inside?]
- ...My family esteems me for knowing my place within family/community/country/etc and for conducting my duties with grace and humility! [while your “deadbeat” brother(s)/sister(s) have all the fun, gallivanting with their “freaks” and “hoodlums”?]
- ...I’m certain I have fully hidden all my shame! Appearances are preserved! [not according to the rumor-mill]
- ...I have acquired supreme educational standing! I no longer feel stupid/inadequate/unschooled! I am now in the good graces of my parents and/or forebears! *Or the darker:* I now possess the power to lord over others my learned credentials!!
- ...I have achieved a title! They will call me Doctor, and henceforth I shall have value!
- ...my “White Privilege” is honored and preserved! [You realize, of course, that all “White People” have African DNA in their genome?]
- ...I’ve certified my stellar IQ for either private puffery, or public veneration! ...or, merely the palliative of prestige.
- ...I’ve found my clique – my people – my posse – my crew – my homies! [even if you’re more likely to thrive as a loner, or a drifter?]
- ...I’ve vindicated myself, or otherwise expunged myself and/or my image from public calumny/vilification/obloquy! [and sold your soul to a mundane life of conformity to do it<sup>1</sup>?]
- ...I’ve successfully dodged ridicule [or worse] for being my particular

---

<sup>1</sup> Somebody’s been using their Thesaurus!

- **calumny**: to make false and malicious statements about; slander.

- **vilification**: the act of defaming or speaking ill of someone.

- **obloquy**: censure, blame, or abusive language aimed at a person, especially by the general public.

- caste/race/class/order! [while boxing yourself into some form of self-effacing seclusion?]
- ...I achieve the pinnacle of fame I so crave! [that may prove not as gratifying as expected]
  - ...at long last I achieve the acclaim of promotion! [while sacrificing the integrity of competence—i.e. promoted past proficiency]
  - ...my naysayers and haters have finally shown a change of their collective hearts! [and hell is finally submerged in its first, ever ice-age]
  - ...I grind all my social media trolls into verbal dross! [at the cost of your time, energy and personal space—but, it felt great, right?!]
  - ...I achieve the greenest grass in all the realm! [and how about “drought resistant”. Will your grass also be *drought resistant?!?*]
  - ...I’ve denied my homosexuality and thus disarmed all gay-haters and/or appeased all pray-the-gay-away “healers”! [while you loathe yourself for those feelings that just won’t go away—*maybe you need to pray **harder!**... I’m being sarcastic! Run! Run like hell!!!!*]
  - ...my plastic surgeon makes me pretty again! [I still don’t understand those collagen inner-tube lips]
  - ...I’ve hidden ALL my visual detriments/blemishes/deformities/health conditions! [even if it means being a *plastic person?*]
  - ...I’ve shrouded my insecurity and self-hate with a convincingly perky and amiable facade! [and, how many suicide attempts has that been, so far?]
  - ...I’ve avenged ALL who made me into a social pariah resulting in my exile! [let the missiles fly! --No don’t! Step away from the missiles!]
  - ...I can be the world’s biggest Pauly Shore fan! [You do you, but if you do anywhere near me, I’m getting a restraining order!!!!]

- ...Everyone is placated! [you're either a saint, or a simmering time-bomb!]
- ...???

In all of those instances choice is present. Choosing to go against some *I-can-only-be-happy-if*—that you probably arbitrarily adhered yourself to—is possible when you can freely, and bravely examine the models in your life. Exploring other possibilities, especially if your *I-can-only-be-happy-if* is someone else's plan, that you adopted under some form of duress. For instance, under the duress of parents colluding with a cultural mandate that you give them grandchildren. Or, the duress of following cultural norms, to avoid ostracism. Or, the duress of being ridiculed for being different, weird, frumpy, anti-social, unfathomable. Or, under the duress of your own psyche latching on to some standard gender specific modality, like being a Barbie girl, or pining for a Prince Charming, or striving to be a sports jock, or G.I. Joe rough-and-tough.

But, there will likely be *discomfort*, as you pull away, regroup, and self-examine, at least at first. And yeah, you might be doing *tramp*<sup>1</sup> for a while, at least until “tramp” becomes your preferred lifestyle, after which it will likely be *satisfying*—*hugely satisfying*—and ultimately, a *huge relief*!

I was in my car, recently, listening to a poignant song with the catch phrase, “You hurt me first.” I didn't recognize the artist, but the song touched me and I just wanted to sit with the emotions that arose in me as I listened. Then the song ended and the radio DJ demonstrated a different agenda—a more socially common agenda that obfuscates silence—so, I turned the radio off. That was me taking charge of my own happiness. This is harder to do in a social situation, but sometimes

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Lady Is A Tramp* by Mitzi Green.

politeness is not the appropriate tactic. And, who knows...your abrupt self-care might stand as an instructive/illustrative example to others—a *teachable moment*, if you will. But, you may also be treated as a pariah. You'd be in excellent company, though. Some pariahs in history:

- **Galileo Galilei:** The Italian astronomer and physicist faced condemnation by the Catholic Church for supporting the heliocentric model of the solar system (Sun in the center with planets revolving around it), challenging the geocentric views (Earth in the center with the entire Universe revolving around it).
- **Nelson Mandela:** Before becoming South Africa's first black president, Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison for his anti-apartheid activities. He was initially considered a pariah by the apartheid regime.
- **Mahatma Gandhi:** While advocating for Indian independence, Gandhi faced opposition from both British authorities and some factions within the Indian community.
- **Martin Luther King Jr.:** The leader of the American Civil Rights Movement faced intense opposition, including from some within his own community, for his nonviolent activism and push for racial equality.
- **Oscar Wilde:** The Irish poet and playwright faced societal rejection and legal consequences due to his homosexuality during a time (not all that long ago) when it was criminalized.
- **Alan Turing:** The brilliant mathematician and computer scientist was persecuted for his homosexuality in the mid-20th century. Turing, who played a crucial role in breaking German codes during World War II, was chemically castrated and faced professional and personal ruin.
- **John Lennon and Yoko Ono:** The famous couple faced criticism and public backlash for their anti-establishment activities, including peace protests and avant-garde art.

- **Charlie Chaplin:** The iconic silent film actor and director faced accusations of being a communist sympathizer during the McCarthy era in Hollywood. Nah, he just cared about people.
- **Jesus of Nazareth:** Assuming this guy really existed, and the New Testament is a credible account of his life, he was many kinds of pariah:
  - Jewish officials considered his upstart practice of claiming he had authority to forgive people's sins an act of blasphemy.
  - The company he kept drew criticism. I mean prostitutes, tax collectors, thieves, and common sinners in general?! Pariah!!
  - Preaching brotherly love, forgiveness, pacifism, and the abolishing of traditions that no longer make sense? Pariah!!

What if you just let go? What if you surrendered to the notion that there are things you don't even know to consider—modes of happiness you've never heard of? What if, within you, is a *you* that can see your *better* path, your *higher* path? A *spiritual you*? One living in a kind of fifth-dimensional overlap with your three-dimensional flesh self.

In a 5 dimensional space, an energy self could easily coincide with a lump of flesh in both space and time. It could meld with the synapses of the brain and control that body like someone remote-controlling a droid, or an ambulatory machine. A fifth-dimensional being could stand right inside you and you wouldn't know. I suspect that's what we are—5th dimensional beings riding in 3 dimensional bodies careening down a 4th dimensional time-track.

I already have it on good authority that there actually is a *sixth sense*. A sense that transcends time and temporal existence. I've experienced the magic of telepathy, precognition, and clairvoyance. Unfortunately I can't prove that to you. But I believe you can discover this for yourself, if you take the time to exercise the discipline to go within, sit in silence,

until the silence speaks to you.

It's probably already speaking to you, but your mind is too noisy to hear it—"it" being that "still, small voice" (though, the Bible passage that this comes from is just as unintelligible to me as most Bible passages are. However, my experience of this "voice" is as a quiet whisper, at least until I became attuned to it—either that, or I'm an undiagnosed schizophrenic ☺).

But, it's not surprising that the mind is noisy. It was designed to be that way by that crappy engineering team known as Evolution. The mind lives in a "meaning making"<sup>1</sup> frenzy, constantly attempting to figure out every knock, nudge and flash conveyed to the brain's "little gray cells"<sup>2</sup> by the body's array of flesh-fastened sensors.

- "Is it gonna eat me?!"
- "Is it gonna hurt me, or *kill* me?!"
- "Is it food or water?!"
- "Is it pleasurable, and ooh, is it sexy?!"

Animals have this too, but on a more rudimentary level. I've had numerous cats and whenever something new came into their purview, they would sniff it—sometimes cautiously. If it was something a cat would like to eat, they'd be all over it. If it smelled bad, they'd make that face—a cat grimace. If it was me they were sniffing, and I had 'dog' on me, they would give me that cat's dirty look and walk away.

My fanciful provincial engineers in charge of human evolution took the low-budget option when they tacked higher brain function onto this original animal mind, giving this animal frenzy a whole new dimension of fidget. In the human mind, imagination and rumination, joins the

<sup>1</sup> [Wikipedia: Meaning-making](#)

<sup>2</sup> Tribute to one of my favorite literary characters: Agatha Christie's Hercule Parrot.

quest for meaning, which is why, if animals possess any sort of ESP, and if any of that got passed down (passed up?), it thoroughly gets drowned out by this heightened level of cognitive chatter.

So, I suspect you have it, but if you don't know that you do, or are emphatic that you don't and that nobody does, because such things don't exist, then I invite you to work at quieting your mind. Until you've experienced a quiet mind, and spent some time in that mental solitude, you really don't have a leg to stand on.

Considering all the other things we lost in this marvelous transition from animal into human, isn't there at least a little precedent for the loss of ESP—assuming, of course, it's true that animals possess such powers? For instance, loss of:

- Fur
- Four footed speed (the reason a cheetah can run so much faster than a human).
- Bite strength (due to our flat faces with their low leverage jaws)
- Overall strength (aka Human vs Gorilla, or even vs Chimpanzee)
- Heightened senses (e.g. all those things your dog can smell that you can't)
- Ability to just sit and do nothing, seemingly with no mental anguish. Cats are really good at this.
- Automatic equanimity (allowing animals to walk across a log-bridge without a care, where most humans defeat themselves with all their fear-driven apprehensions).

*"Be the holder of your own Nature  
It is a joyful responsibility."*

~Eric Fischl



As said by the poet George Herbert: “*Living well is the best revenge!*” So, get out there, and be ***Happy For No Damn Reason!!!***

## Getting Help

Most of my life I followed an inner “voice” that guided me to a plethora of venues that helped me deal with the terrible pain and anger of my youth. The following list is derived, mostly, from that quest. I can’t guarantee that you will find the help that you need, here, but if you’re not able to find this inner guiding voice, then perhaps this list can be your guide (roughly in the order of the chronology of my own experience). Otherwise, seek help via the usual medical/professional channels.

**1. Breaking Free** – by Dr. Nathaniel Branden. This is the first publicly available thing that I pursued (before that I consulted various individual and group therapy situations that no longer exist). I read the book, and then found a group in Beverly Hills run by a man trained by Dr. Branden. He was the one who referred me to the Radix Institute (to deal with my intense anger).

**2. Radix Institute** – (not to be confused with *Reiki*) they practice a kind of Therapy (or training) based on the discoveries and work of a protégé of Sigmund Freud by the name of Wilhelm Reich. “Reichian Therapy” was developed by him, and furthered by Charles “Chuck” R. Kelley [a protégé of Reich]. There are at least two camps: the Reichian purists, and Chuck Kelly’s adaptation practiced at the Radix Institute. Maybe the purists are correct, and any other form of Reichian practice is a corruption, but my path led me to Radix, and my life was improved beyond measure, so...

**3. Food Allergy** – This blew me away. I consulted many a doctor for the physical misery I suffered on a regular basis as a young adult, and none had anything for me, until *the one*. He looked over my work up, rubbed his chin, and said,

“Perhaps it’s a food allergy.” He offered me a choice of diagnostic courses, and I chose the “elimination diet” [steering vigorously clear of the one involving many needles!].

A few weeks in, it became clear that my beloved wheat, aka my beloved bread, and all things baked, was the culprit [often the very thing you’re allergic to is the very thing you love the most—ah, the cruel whimsy of life!] The intense, prolonged, stabbing gut pain, the fever like body aches, the pain in the bowls of my molars [in fact, I’m convinced this accelerated the destruction of several of my teeth], and the boil on my ass that invariably showed up a week following any encounter with wheat, ALL STOPPED HAPPENING!

Except when I ate Chinese food! Over and over I developed the usual symptoms after eating Chinese food! I finally figured out that it was the Soy Sauce causing my post Chinese fool misery, which said two things:

- 1) Common USA Soy Sauce has wheat in it[!?!]
- 2) Man, am I ever sensitive to wheat!

Fun fact: From a co-worker, who, as a child in China, helped her mother make soy sauce, I learned that authentic Chinese soy sauce has NO WHEAT in it!

Another food related misery that I actually diagnosed on my own [because, again, doctors had nothing] involved tomatoes. And said diagnosis was an amazing stretch, on my part, that I attribute to something akin to intuition, because the symptoms consistently began a whopping 48 hours after consuming tomatoes. There was great incentive to access ethereal assistance, on this one, because the dilatory result was a severe, head pounding, gut retching migraine, that typically lasted hours, and to over the counter pain relievers, was a powerful adversary!

**4. The Way Of Life according to Lao Tzu** – I didn't understand all of it (be interesting to see how much that has changed, were I to read it again), but the parts that clicked, clicked well.

**5. Self Realization Fellowship** – Founded by Paramhansa Yogananda. Most people discover this organization by reading the book: **Autobiography Of A Yogi**. I found my way to SRF via my first wife, who while pursuing the stacks in a school library, was clonked on the head by the paperback version of that very book—it actually fell from the shelf, above! She read it and excitedly recommended it to me. We became members soon after. I have many warm memories of attending services and classes at the beautiful Lake Shrine in Pacific Palisades, CA. That was back when they were still doing Sunday services in the windmill [occasionally conducted by Dennis Weaver, of McCloud fame]. The annual Convocation, held in Los Angeles was downright magical!

I never did finish the “lessons”--I couldn't get past the Energization Exercises. And, meditation, at that time, was like sitting in a “frenzy beam”. My nerves felt like they were being licked by fire, making the obligatory sitting quietly, for minutes upon minutes, shear torture! It wasn't until the magical sessions conducted by Shastina Free (below), that meditation was ever a possibility for me. Now, it's a delightful dalliance with delirious bliss, except for the 3 to 5 days following a sexual release.

BUT, the wisdom, and warmth, and inclusiveness served me, and my growth, for the several years I frequented their various temples and venues. Especially telling is the Pacific Palisades temple and lake-garden that features shrines to a number of the more prominent religions of the world: Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. In other words, a truly inclusive religion!

Also telling is their lack of proselytizing. The organization has thrived on mere word of mouth, and mystical lure, à la the case of my wife's leaping book head trauma [kidding: it was middling, the book is pretty soft].

Then, there's just the pervasive kindness, and joy! The monks and nuns consistently exude serenity.

**6. Buddhism** – while on a business trip to San Francisco, CA, I was roomed in a hotel that, being of Japanese ownership, offered, instead of the typical free Holy Bible, a book called **The Teaching [sic] Of Buddha**, also free. I read most of it, and resonated with all of what I read. I consider Buddhism to be one of the few religions in the world that preserved the original message of love and unity as it ground through the mill of time. I can't vouch for the treatment at the neighborhood temple [the few I encountered seemed just as human-drama-warped as a typical Christian church], but the book is darned amazing!

**7. Ariel & Shya Kane** – and especially their book: *Working on Yourself Doesn't Work*. This is the book that first introduced me to the concept of living in the moment. There's a story in the book where she burns her bare leg on the exhaust pipe of his motorcycle and he leads her in a focusing exercise that took away her pain long enough for her to endure the wait for medical attention. I've successfully used that technique on myself, and guided others to relief. Truly transformational! I highly recommend everything they have produced [tapes/books/videos/etc]!

Some quotes:

> On the subject of taking time to take care of yourself, and being kind to yourself: "Think of yourself as a delicate flower, and if you bruise the petals, you bring less pleasure to the people around you."

- > “When you disengage from the story of your life, the facts of your past no longer determine or limit what is possible for you now.”
- > “Listening pulls you into the current moment of your life, which is always new and endlessly fascinating.”
- > “If you cannot be yourself in a relationship, you no longer have one.”
- > “Enlightenment is overcoming your bratty nature.”

**8. Way Of The Peaceful Warrior** book series – by *Dan Millman*. Yes, there is a movie...but do yourself a favor and read the book. Then, if you’re as charmed as I was, read the next book: **Sacred Journey Of The Peaceful Warrior**. Or just get the collection.

**9.12 step** – You know...all those umpty-ump Anonymous groups. If you’re an Alcoholic, go to **AA**, if it’s Narcotics, go to **NA**, eating addiction (e.g. Overeating), try **OA**, Sex (yes, sex can be an addiction) **SA**, etc. But, if addiction, per se, is not your problem, try **ACA** (West coast) or **ACoA** (Most everywhere else). And, even if you’re not an Adult Child of an Alcoholic or Alcoholics, go anyway. When you hear them read “**The Problem**”, it might just resonate, and make you feel at home. And, if the meeting is doing it right, they will tell you that if you identify with “**The Problem**,” then you are welcome there.

Then there are the books that are commonly on an **ACoA** reading list:

- > **Bradshaw On: The Family** — by *John Bradshaw*
- > **It Will Never Happen To Me** — by *Claudia Black* — and pretty much anything else she wrote.
- > The books and talks by **Bob Earll**
- > **Codependant No More** by *Melody Beattie*

Those are just a few of the books I remember reading, and/or the tapes I remember listening too [back then we listened to a thing called the “Cassette Tape”], but there are many, and many more that are likely more up-to-date,

since I was into this decades ago.

**10. Andrew Cohen** – For me, it was his books. I met the man once, but never ‘studied’ with him. He didn’t seem like anything special, and I’m not sure if I agree with his crusade against religious and spiritual hypocrisy (not because I don’t agree that this hypocrisy exists, but I wonder if his approach is really getting him, or the world, anywhere), but his **books!! Spectacular!!** Especially, ***Autobiography Of An Awakening, My Master Is Myself, and Enlightenment Is A Secret.***

**11. Unity Church** (not to be confused with Unitarian – not that Unitarian is a bad thing, I just have no experience with them). My introduction to Unity began with *The Daily Word*, a Unity periodical gifted to me by my brother Roger. The issues collected on the toilet water tank, and entertained me on my periodic calls to nature. One day, I was there for a different reason—severe abdominal pain, the kind that prompts appeals to God and prayerful bargaining. My appeals were answered in the form of an urging to randomly pick one of the Daily Word magazines and open it to a random page. I opened to a reminder that we are co-creators able to heal ourselves, which included a “prayer” to access, and I paraphrase, because I don’t remember the exact words, but it involved healing light, which I successfully conjured and drew up my spine until it enveloped me, and in an instant, took away my pain! No shit!

So, I looked up the local chapter and became a Prayer Minister! There I learned the difference between “begging prayer” and prayer that affirms our own co-creator power to manifest, and mitigate, and generally steer our own damn lives. A prayer, in this style, is more like a mutual reminding of our ability to, on our very own, bring about the thing that other styles of prayer ask one, or more God(s) to do for us.

The Daily Word exists to this day, as does the Silent Unity Prayer Ministry [24/7]--and, FYI, they don't pray *for* you, they pray *with* you.

**Daily Word:** [www.dailyword.com](http://www.dailyword.com)

**Silent Unity Prayer Ministry:** [www.unity.org/prayer](http://www.unity.org/prayer) – 1-816-969-2000

**12. You and Money** and the **Being Couch** courses, founded and facilitated by **Dr. Maria Nemeth** – but, warning, this is *EST* inspired, so there's a lot of pressure to "recruit". But, the **Being Couch** training is an EXCELLENT course in true, attentive, effective listening! SEE!? I promoted it on my own!!

I'm not sure if she's even still living, but there's a website: <https://marianemeth.com>.

**13. Church of Religious Science** (not to be confused with Christian Science, which seems founded on sound principals, but in my experience, as a church, tends to be yet another flock of distortion). The **Church of Religious Science [CoRS]** is founded on *Science of Mind*, a book written by Ernest Holmes. When I couldn't make it to Unity, I often attended my local CoRS. I liked Unity better, but that could merely be due to who was running the chapters I attended.

**14. Tai Chi Chih** – an Americanized Tai Chi, created by Justin Stone, which is far easier to learn than Tai Chi Chuan. I don't know if it has the same level of benefit as the more complicated Chinese versions, but, hey, it works for me. In fact, this was another practice that made meditation more accessible – tamed my nerves so I could sit without wanting to go jump in front of a bus.

**15. Shastina Free** – My two greatest spiritual openings were facilitated by this woman. Her "Light Treatments" and Weekend Workshops chiseled away at



the last bit of armor keeping me away from inner bliss and the joy of unconditional love.

During a “meditation” at one of her retreats, held on Vancouver Island, Canada, an ecstatic energy ran up my spine and “blew the top of my head off” (figuratively, of course). In my minds eye (probably my mind trying to interpret what was going on) I saw a billowing, bright white light blasting out of the top of my head like the geyser of a sheared off fire hydrant. The experience filled me with a sweetness and bliss and a sense of camaraderie with all things and all people. It also felt like tiger strength, with all the poise and power of the beast!



This was during the winter—up in Vancouver Island, Canada—and though it wasn’t the coldest of possible Canadian days, it was definitely coat weather. But, on my return home, I, with no discomfort, stood bare armed, on the deck of the ferryboat as it crossed the Strait of Georgia. I was out there in a t-shirt, gleefully snapping away with my little digital camera, at the beautiful play of morning light on the rippled icy waters.

The second spiritual opening began on a beach just north of Santa Barbara, CA. If you’ve ever been to the Brown Pelican, on Cliff Drive, you know the beach. She, being, essentially homeless, relied on folks donating space in their homes for her to do her work. On this day, after a nice lunch at the

Brown Pelican, she was informed that the house she had lined up, was no longer available.

So, what the heck, I had a blanket in the trunk of my car, so we set up on the beach, and spirit showed up like never before (or more likely, I was receptive like never before—despite feeling a bit self-conscious, at first, due to the public nature of it all).

That night, I had my first experience of intense, buzzing, rumbling ecstatic bliss to the point of being not quite sure how to contain it. From my mind's eye perspective, I spoke of before, it was all scintillating blueish white! This was somewhat different from the experience in British Columbia, in that I could, finally, access this amazing energetic bliss on my own, pretty much whenever I wanted to! And it was more full body and far more blissful. Just writing about it is inviting it back to the fore (I mean, it's always there, now, in the background, supporting me sweetly, like an endless love).

You can get in touch with her via:



[www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web25](http://www.hfndr.com/fw/?ln=web25)

## 16. Landmark – basically revised and re-branded *Erhard Seminars Training* (or

“EST”). The experience is quite amazing and I got a lot out of it, but their insistence on recruitment and remaining in the “Conversation” (as if their *conversation* is the only valid conversation), and their apparent lack of understanding of the kind of energetic opening I experienced with Shastina, or the palpable loving environment I experienced at SRF, had me fall away. Landmark, it seems to me, is, in a lot of ways, re-packaged Buddhism, informed by the latest behavioral science and neuroscience. My recommendation is based in their unique method of teaching these principals, to the effect of guiding you to, it seems to me, an actual experience of what Buddhism teaches. But, I was unwilling, as urged (over and over), to commit to a projected number of people I would “enroll” into the program. *Ferkrisssake! Have a little faith that I will share this out of my own enthusiasm, without you needling me to do so. No wonder people brand Landmark as a cult!*

BUT, if you can get past that, the Landmark education could actually, and considerably, improve your life! Especially if you complete the two main courses: *The Forum* and *The Advanced Course* [the third course is more a mentored application, in the real world, of what is taught in the first two courses].

**17. Medical Psychology** – [Look for the real thing and avoid the namesake knockoffs that are more or less mere drug vendors]. For my first wife it was a life changer. Let me explain: Early in our relationship, she had what seemed like some sort of psychotic break. No shock, really, considering her anorexic tendencies, and her brutal upbringing [raised by a psychotic-catholic mother who ridiculed and tormented her from birth, compounded by a sexually abusive older brother, and a non-attentive lackluster father].

Many a psychologist and medical doctor that we consulted, came up with squat in terms of helpful diagnosis, until we tried an outfit in Los Angeles.

They called themselves a “Medical Psychology” practice—i.e. a collection of psychologists and medical doctors, working together to get to the root of what the f’ is going on.

And they did! One of the aforementioned “regular doctors” we consulted had given her a “Thyroid Test”, which indicated normalcy. The Doctor at the Medical Psychology office also gave her a Thyroid Test, but this one was different—more sensitive—because they were looking for things that can cause even minor life-altering ailments, not just things that cause massive life-altering events [typical of a standard medical “check-up”: If it’s not gonna kill you, regular doctors, pretty-much, care squat it].

The test detected a kind of thyroid disorder, too mild to show up on a “standard” test, but, it turns out, severe enough to cause the bizarre, super-loony, behavior she was exhibiting. A couple of thyroid tablets at every meal immediately restored her to a reasonable, mildly neurotic, mostly functioning human-being [since there were other issues impinging on her day-to-day, which, again, wasn’t shocking considering her up-bringing].

So, bottom line, also consider if the thing that is throwing a wrench into your human-machine is not something physical that can be diagnosed by the right kind of professionals, and remedied by the right kind of treatment.