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THE DISCIPLINE OF HAPPINESS

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## Discipline of Happiness

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### Abstract Content

A deeply personal Journey, "The Discipline of Happiness" blends fundamental philosophy with the power of visual art. In a 42-year quest for purpose certain theories have been tried, championed, discredited, and discarded. The distillation of these ideas into my current theory provides, more saliently than the theory itself, a venue for discussion of the creative process. My creativity often manifests itself in visual terms. Through the medium of an extended artist statement I reflect on the virtues of thinking in both a linguistic and spatial manner. Orchestrating the dual modes of inquiry, semantic and visual, into a single narrative highlights the evolution of my ideas about happiness. This journey is aided by a description of the associated artwork following each exposition. The effort clarifies my concepts for critical evaluation while establishing a framework for future innovation. By applying prose and picture to my thought pattern, discovery of the undercurrents of my creative wanderings bubble to the surface. If I understand my process, then better pedagogy may follow. Focus on one set of theories, the discipline of happiness, reduces the chaos of the possible into more quantifiable units of inspiration. Compressed in these theories the meaning of life and the apparatus for learning support, but do not dominate the discussion. Personal history provides context for the generation of creative definitions as well as the Achilles heel undermining the conclusions. Ultimately, I provide no answers; I debunk my own theory, hoping only that the discussion of the process of creativity remains compelling.

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## **I. Intent of the Project**

The following represents the distillation of years of thought, which culminated in a neatly packaged theory nearly ten years ago I dubbed 'The Discipline of Happiness'.

Blending such an integral theory into an artistic expression challenges my notions of creativity, the importance of personal risk, and the power of visual communication. The heart of the project lies in personal risk. Beyond the fact that certain neuroses stall efforts to share my work, the neatly packaged theory, I gradually came to realize, possessed fundamental flaws. The small, but persistent inconsistencies in my self-confessed elegant system prompted much of the inquiries explored during my tenure in the Creative Pulse program. Because the omnipotent logical system which I built broke down, to some degree, I embarked on a search through the emotional, dalliances in the spiritual, and ultimately the hope of creative self-expression as a means to clarity. I vigilantly sought a way out of the mechanistic morass miring my thoughts.

The thirst for knowledge drives me. I used the traditional tools of logic and rational analysis to uncover my own unknowns. Drawing from my own repertoire of talents, however, I found the utility of adapting spatial intelligence to my journey rewarding. Exploration of philosophical constructs via spatial understanding augments the clarity of linguistic knowing in new and interesting ways while illuminating new pathways for

discovery. The orchestration of all the relevant intelligences allows a more profound gestalt of understanding. Coupling written semantic declarations with descriptions of associated visual expression illustrates the synergy developed from both realms of thought. Scrutiny of the divergent areas of thought starts with musings on the meaning of life, moves to delineation of gratitude as the elemental property of happiness, and flows through several methods of sustaining the ideal, collectively this constitutes the discipline of happiness. Once iteration of the amalgam of thoughts coalesces, an analysis of the merits deciphers the flaws in 'The Discipline of Happiness'. Finally, a conclusion drawn from the evaluation of both the visual and semantic apparatus may light the way to more profound quests. Like all wanderings in the realm of creativity, the moment of greatest constriction and easiest analysis occurs at the beginning when the initial state of divergence blossoms from constraints. Proceeding from this point outward along the generation of ideas yields more and more questions and fewer answers. As with many dualist conundrums, I think the orchestration of divergence and reduction fulfill an intellectual dance of discovery performed in tandem better than either procedure by itself.

My creative process usually blends several ideas--philosophical, physical, and emotional--with precepts and perspectives drawn partly from spatial imaging. The delivery often wraps them in metaphor or graph. Some are mathematical; some are process

oriented; and some draw on experiments in life. In order to explore this thoroughly, some background information is necessary. To see how thoughts overlay and transfer from prose to picture a splash of context provides appropriate reference.

A happy by-product of this discourse follows my own creative process covering a fairly profound and somewhat finite set of ideas. Analysis synchronizes creative frameworks from which teaching students one method, in depth, of how to create becomes plausible. In a nation teetering on creative brinksmanship, visa via the nostalgic reverence for IQ tests and standardized testing, introduction to divergent thought bridges gaps in students' 19<sup>th</sup> century bureaucratic public education. Ken Robinson in his book "The Element" elegantly describes the benefits to self and society of encouraging individuals to pursue their passions. He decries the attempt to perpetuate a school system focused on narrow, poorly researched, and antiquated views of intellect and usefulness.<sup>1</sup> Daniel Pink echoes and extends the concept to include the emerging needs of the corporate world for creative people in a market crowded with abundance.<sup>2</sup> While the argument for concerted effort in education is hardly new the exponential nature of current outlooks for knowledge

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<sup>1</sup> Robinson, Ken, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*, Penguin Publishing, NY, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Pink, Daniel J., *The Whole New Mind*, Riverhead Publishing, Albany, NY, 2006.

and the inability to forecast future concerns begs the gathering of critical mass in reform efforts.

Talking about all creativity, or even all of my own creativity, far exceeds the scope of this diatribe. I narrowed my focus to a set of interrelated ideas on happiness for which I wanted to create both a visual and a semantic composition. In some ways this paper comprises part of the art, but it also allows exploration of fundamental thoughts which will materialize in the associated show. In order to refute or extol the processes of creative input, I include a contextual baseline from my background.

## **II. Background.**

I was thirteen when I experienced the ‘trials of Job’. The paradox of a supposed benevolent God refracted in the sufferings of man, rocked the foundations of my faith.<sup>3</sup> A man in our church died of electrocution. A call for the powerline repairman turned tragic in the rain, half-orphaning my playmate. I took it hard-- inordinately hard. I did not know him well. He was a big, balding, kindly man, but for a few teasing words and tussle on the head, I had little contact with him. Piaget and Erickson referenced in Jon Santrock’s book “Educational Psychology”, I am sure, would not be surprised, given my age and stage, but I

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<sup>3</sup> *Book of Job, NIV Pictorial Bible: New International Version*, Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1981

just could not understand how God could leave a family in such dire straits.<sup>4</sup> Pursuits of a logical way out of spiritual hypocrisy fell through. I plummeted into depression. Digging deeper into religion, I covered my raw uncertainty in a blanket of justification. Reading the Bible, all the way through, a couple of times, I generated questions, and developed ideas, which ultimately resolved in the downy softness of free will. I reasoned that God wanted us to love him based on our own imaginings; therefore, he had to provide a venue big enough for our autonomy.

With autonomy, necessarily, came the possibility that actions taken by multitudes of individuals beget some unholy concoctions thus yielding environments rife with chance and disaster. God, to me, after allowing free will but not contributing to the strife could then retain his omnipotence and benevolence and still have some behavior occur outside his purview. As my interpretive capacity evolved and my understanding of the physical world increased, I devised more elaborate systems to handle the vagaries of my Christian theology. Chaos theory met religion.

High school physics played catalyst to my next great leap forward. The theory of relativity mixed liberally with a bastardized philosophical version of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, more accurately described in Kai Bird's text "American Prometheus",

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<sup>4</sup> Santrock, John W., *Educational Psychology*, McGraw Hill, Boston, 2001.

allowed a kind of flexibility and unknown I craved to keep my persistent rational wonderings from disintegration.<sup>5</sup> The principles permitted chaos at the extremities of thought. I noticed logical steps driven towards the unknown tended to have diminishing returns until only a leap of faith could sustain movement. Standing on this precipice of knowledge, not knowing where to go, I wondered. Several possibilities presented themselves. I could give up, or, I could attempt to find new corroborating data to continue the journey. A leap of faith provided a similar enticement of advancement. Conversely, a little reflection pondered the relative applicability of my current position to the questions which began the quest. Thus, I regarded the path I traveled and found my conclusions usually negated much of my original foundations.

I used to wonder about the stars imagining other worlds dotting the strands of the Milky Way, speculating on the time it took their light to reach me. Some flung so far a field must regard earth as a land of dinosaurs. Thus, I only understood them according to their past. The rock of truth began a slow melt. What I perceived of the other worlds and they perceived of me floated through the cosmos as mere photon ghosts. I then wondered about how far back in time I could see. Could I see the beginning? If so, what could I see beyond

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<sup>5</sup> Bird, Kai, and Martin J. Sherwin, *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, Knopf, NY, 2005.



that? I did not understand the physics of time very well then, but the questions crystallized for me the limits of understanding. Curiously, relativism, illuminated by Albert Einstein and clearly defined in Brian Greene's book "The Elegant Universe"<sup>6</sup>, maligned by believers for its corrosive properties to religious fervor, preserved my spiritual resolve in the nebulous universe warped in time and space.

College challenged the principles in all facets of my life, some I weathered well, some not so well. I let most of my otherworldly ideas foment as I debauched my practical values with earthbound hedonism. Reconstruction of principles, during this collegial trial by fire, sported an individual flair mixed with a dash of tolerance. Putting away juvenile pursuits I entered the Marine Corps intent on proving my more noble conceptions by deed instead of thought. By then deliriously wrapped in wedded bliss, rapturously proud as a father, and granted undeserved prestige at work, success bolstered my world view.

All, however, was not well. My marriage grew hollow and my personality did not fit with the Marine Corps. The accumulation of a storm cloud of ideas broke as I led a contingent of Marines to a distant island outpost in the East China Sea. There to practice dropping bombs on unsuspecting imaginary targets, I excelled in my duties. The problem

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<sup>6</sup> Greene, Brian, *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory*, Vintage Books, NY, 2000.

gnawed on the disparity between a belief in my innate goodness and my aptitude for horrific applications of violence. With the help of my aviation friends, I kept a rain of steel on a target, indefinitely. I knew how to create dilemmas, which made any move my target made certain death, including staying still.

Into the brine of deteriorating relationships, professional stagnation, and contextual morality I poured “String-Theory”. String theory mitigated some earlier thread bare innovations in my religious convictions primarily centered on free will and the dichotomy between benevolence and omnipotence. The resolution between the doctrinal view of an omniscient caring active God and a clockwork universe, like the one favored by Thomas Jefferson, and determinism appeared imminently solvable. Marinating in the potentiality of my cruelty allowed Pyrrhonian skepticism as described by Anthony Gottlieb in “The Dream of Reason”,<sup>7</sup> to brake through the mounting layers of justification. I read the bible again, but this time as a skeptic. My deepening understanding of history, the trajectory of ideas, and the capriciousness of nature allowed scrutiny to burn down my philosophical construct. In the ashes of this philosophy elements of the Discipline of Happiness lingered.

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<sup>7</sup> Gottlieb, Anthony, *The Dream of Reason: A History of Philosophy from the Greeks to the Renaissance*, W. W. Norton and Company, NY, 2001.

Until now I have covered my philosophical pursuits in an academic fog. Emotional context, however, on retrospect weaves sublime courses through all my wanderings, mental and physical. To disregard them, particularly given the aim of this discourse, would constitute a grave intellectual error.

I worshipped females, ascribing virtues to them disproportionate to their reasonable potential. I cannot remember a time when a woman's mere presence did not stir my ethereal imagination. From first girlfriend to wife, my reaction to their perceived divinity created untenable expectations. By the time of my dabbling in disciplined happiness, the exoskeleton of my perfect marriage belied the vacuous cavern at its heart. Blame placed on the vagaries of contemporary society is misplaced. The culpability lies squarely on my mantle of idealistic expectations. Viewed through the shattered lens of my fairytale, the most significant changes in my attitudes toward life and love, tainted my philosophical pursuits.

Set adrift in a sea of uncertainty, meanderingly, I sought the holes in my ideas. Exhausting logic, at least until I acquired new information, I wondered about the power of creative self-expression. I also mused over the timing of life and thoughts, and more generally about patterns, which have periods and intricacies occasionally functioning on such a macro level or with such taciturn conviction that they slip by unnoticed. I am still

searching. I am searching with this paper. I will still be searching after the completion of my requirements. While the search goes on taking stock of my ideas sometimes produces a spark of new insight. The discipline of happiness is not perfect, but it provides a scaffold to work from and where I encounter the holes points to new areas of potential growth.

### **III. The Discipline of Happiness.**

The discipline of happiness stems from thoughts on the ultimate purpose of life. I pursued my quest from multiple perspectives - physical, neurological, and spiritual - in order to blend multiple perspectives into some coherent whole. The differing perspectives culminated in very similar questions focusing on origins and purpose. Thinking philosophically, I encountered certain dilemmas and tangents requiring treatment in order for the main idea to remain salient. The search for relevancy not only took on aspects of defining purpose and its essential components, but how to maintain the conclusion as a daily function. I tried to plug, answer, or explore the myriad of logical tangents I discovered along the way. Doubtlessly, I blindly ignored some. The process of discovery, of my central theme and of the tangents, says something about the way I think. This metacognitive knowledge helps streamline my creative process and defines my self imposed walls, which may need scaling to continue growth. When I think, I like to stay on particular paths, if I am considering Sean Carroll's book "Endless Forms Most Beautiful"

and the importance of switches in evolutionary and developmental biology, persisting in that vein of thought until I understand the functional mechanism controlling limb development allows me to establish a base before dealing with the tangential information.<sup>8</sup> Once I understand the concept I generally return to address the sidelights I skipped along the way. My cognitive method tends to be a very linear progression. Knowing I usually think this way pricks my attention when I apply my analytical abilities to a non-linear format like those involved in setting up a video in Adobe AfterEffects. Guarding against tendencies or indulging them comprises just one manner of composing my cognitive tool kit for creative adaptation.

Showing the transformation from linguistic to visual requires the enumeration of certain philosophies. Statements of the fundamental purpose provide reference for the corollaries in creating a logical progression of written communication, but do not suggest that the ideas exist in an ordinal structure. Like life, and much about what I understand of the brain, the ideas from what I call ‘The Optimization of Joy’ and ‘Expectation and Gratitude’ to the ‘Towers of Edifice’ all exist as one mass of interconnected material.

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<sup>8</sup> Carroll, Sean B., *Endless Forms Most Beautiful: The New Science of EvoDevo and the Making of the Animal Kingdom*. W.W. Norton and Co. 2005.

## **1. The Optimization of Joy**

Through asking myself 'why' about everything, I eventually came to some conclusions about life, love, and the omniverse. The inquiry coalesced into three major categories, the outer physical world, the inner biological world, and the unknown of the spiritual world. Cognizant of the difficulties inherent in perceptual screens, employing multiple vantage points seems prudent. Perceptual screens allow people in the same environment to view the same situation with very different conclusions. A former Marine Corps captain like me nurtured in love and abundance regards the border fence with Mexico far differently than a street orphan embroiled in the drug wars just south of El Paso. Ever mindful of the power of subtlety, I know the great disparities are often addressed, the quiet nuances, however, may regenerate with exponential effect.

Relativity loosened my certainty on the nature of matter and time. Combined with the concept espoused in Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, which espoused an ultimate limit of physical knowledge derived from the mere act of observing photons, changes them, unhooked my conceptual moorings from my most concrete associations. From the moment of liberation of mind from concrete certainty I plagiarized physical ideas to adjust philosophical constructs. The possibility occurred to me that through the very scientific world of physics, answers to purpose might derive. I can not do the math, but generally I

understand the concepts, so the incompatibility of theory of the very big, relativity, and the theory of the very small, quantum mechanics, temporarily stultified my pursuit for answers in physics. The nature of my faith in finding a grand unified theory belies the irrational motivation at the heart of all my quests. Clearly the chance of blending the two great spheres proposed by M-theory, (membranes beyond String Theory) stoked my imagination and revived my hope. String Theory is interesting because it addresses time and space through multiple dimensions. The benefit of this line of thinking allows the discord of physics below the Plank length to function in harmony with Field theory indicated by General Relativity. The technical discussions of string theory interest me but for purposes of advancing my philosophical construct, artifacts like the cosmic bounce,



and the nature of time and dimensions provide the most fodder for consideration. Planck length cosmic bouncing and multidimensional pluraverses deftly illuminated by Brian

Greene in “The Elegant Universe” change the tenor of the question.<sup>9</sup> If the universe bounces, reaches minimum size that is not a point and then expands into another universe through a mirror effect, and time is a component of the bounce, then what came before time may lose some of its relevance.

Another branch of thought either String Theory or work beyond the event horizon of black holes, explored by Stephen Hawking, may shed light on the validity of determinism. Physics seeks to define things and their interactions. Pertinent to the discussion of purpose, if physicists find the elemental structure and pattern and it exists without chaos, then everything is predetermined, down to the thoughts in my head and when they occur. Theoretical physics seeks answers at the extremes and therefore warrants consideration in the proof of the meaning of life. Still, somewhat mystically, I ask myself, what created what I already know? I ventured through some strange territory, but the question did not dull. Why does creation exist?

Facing insurmountable unknowns in the physical world I turned my attention inward. Could purpose reside in the heart of life, in consciousness? In the question, why am I here, the ‘I’ portion belongs to the realm of neuroscience. Existence might fuel only a

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<sup>9</sup> Greene, Brian, *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory*. Vintage Books, NY, 2000.



Cartesian fantasy, Anthony Gottlieb reminisced on Descartes' dualism in "The Dream of Reason", and how we know anything stems from our ability to know.<sup>10</sup> I started thinking about what kind of inputs my brain received. A broken reverie via the dappled light from a nearby tree caused a wonder about the inputs my brain receives from my eyes. At some point the images I saw converted into electrical and chemical impulses. What if someone could attach a TV to the nerves responsible for sight? Could someone be tricked into seeing what is not there? Quickly, the thought followed, 'how did I know what I saw'? Even without reverting to quantum physics there existed no way to know I saw, felt, smelled, tasted or heard anything. Later, I learned about behavioral programming, where a computer creates characters ascribed with a set of reactions which then perform independently in changing situations. Extrapolating this rudimentary programming I determined a possibility that I and everyone and everything I knew might comprise an elaborate part of a similar program. Fate tossed me the movie "The Matrix",<sup>11</sup> miffed they anticipated my idea, the concept in the movie illustrated how Descartes' assertion of 'I' constituting the only known thing. New studies abound, with the influx of Functional

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<sup>10</sup> Gottlieb, Anthony, *The Dream of Reason: A History of Philosophy from the Greeks to the Renaissance*, W. W. Norton and Company, NY, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Wachowski, Andy, and Lana Wachowski, *The Matrix*, Groucho II Film Partnership, and Warner Brothers Dist., 1999.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) equipment, changing, dismantling, and supporting notions about how the brain functions. According to Lehrer and Ariely and an interesting article in Popular Science where scientists viewed on a monitor what the patient visualized in their mind, complexity and interlocation between many spheres of intelligence modularize and disseminate various tasks so no one area claims a central role.<sup>12</sup> Yet, certain functions are susceptible to manipulation.<sup>13</sup> Sensation driven realization of the electro-chemical impulse can fool the brain into sensing a world that is not there. Wonder about the nature of memory, the fickleness of attention, the various forms of psychology, and the impact of events, continued to point to questions dealing with purpose.<sup>14</sup> Why create intelligence to understand life? Why create life?

Points of light enter the eyes, and nerves feel through the fingertips but it's the dance of neurons which completes the connection to meaning. How the brain physically develops from the traveling paths of infant neurons to the hopeful stretch of nerve endings, the mysteries of the most complicated instrument in the universe continues to control the

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<sup>12</sup> Borel, Brooke, *Mind-Reading Tech May Not be Far Off*. Popular Science, June 12, 2009, <http://www.popsci.com/scitech/article/2009-06/mind-reading-tech-way>

<sup>13</sup> Lehrer, Jonah, *Proust was a Neuroscientist*. Mariner Books, Boston, MA, 2010.

Ariely, Dan, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions* HarperCollins, NY, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Reed, Stephen K., *Cognition Theory and Applications*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Thompson Wadsworth, Australia, 2004.

secrets of creativity and meaning.<sup>15</sup> Neurology is in its infancy. FMRI and its derivative cousins' probe the brain yielding interesting and novel results<sup>16</sup>. For sight the structure of the cells gathering information are quantified by different systems, some sensitive to motion, another to color and meaning according to the research done by Harvard's Margaret Livingstone in "Vision and Art: the Biology of Seeing".<sup>17</sup> How this information disseminates says something about our unique capacities. It's the plasticity of the structure, how the brain grows, strengthens, and clips information which truly speaks to the promise of purpose. According to Raymond Kurzweil in his 2005 book, "The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology," artificial intelligence will exceed human capacity by 2045.<sup>18</sup> Machine-human interactions may make the distinction between humanity and an external synthetic intelligence nominal. What makes us human? What is intelligence? What is the point of knowledge? If we can do anything, through technology, what do we want to do and why? The questions of the unknown quickly coalesce in to a common conundrum based on the question of purpose.

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<sup>15</sup> *The Secret Life of the Brain* Episode: *Babies Brains: Wider than the Sky*. PBS WNET, 2002

<sup>16</sup> Lehrer, Jonah, *How We Decide*, Mariner Books, Boston, MA, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Livingstone, Margaret, *Vision and Art: the Biology of Seeing*, Abrams, NY, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Kurzweil, Raymond *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*, Viking Penguin, NY, 2005.

Leaving both physical and biological pursuits at the abyss, and delving into spiritual quest seems a plausible venue for further answers. Because spiritual pursuits deal with the unknown, anchoring arguments in this environment requires frames of reference and transparent discussion of logical applications. Raised deeply religious, it seems a natural point of departure. According to Christianity a large well indoctrinated schema mapped out existence. It also impeded the speculation on the nature of God and the cosmos. I speculate nonetheless.

During a most emotional journey, preconceived notions guided, and then thwarted my efforts. The parable of the seeds, where souls analogous to seeds cast among the different soils and rocks yield different developmental yields. The bible admonishes believers to grow in good soil. By interpolation the metaphor warns individuals those souls which stray from good soil, which reach clay, or rock, and then trust in their own creative abilities to surmount problems, fall outside doctrine and possibly outside of the redemptive powers of the almighty.<sup>19</sup> With the threat of eternal damnation looming in the corners of my mind I just couldn't help asking why are we here? What is our purpose? Reasoning that God, Gods, Goddesses, or maybe no one at all, gave us the power of reason

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<sup>19</sup> *NIV Pictorial Bible: New International Version*, Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1981.

and that, if they are powerful, then scrutiny would not diminish them, I began a quest for purpose.

The journey often required guessing the mind of the deity. Beginning with the assumption of the existence of an omnipotent God, I speculated on what 'God' would want with us. It seemed unlikely that He/She needed helpers given the ability to create everything. The list of plausible explanations drew short. It could be for our own good, but then why not just create us good? If Maslow could conceive of self actualization then God must at least be self-actualized, and quite probably that God has no needs. Therefore, only desires and wishes warranted discussion.

Thoughts on omnipotence allowed me to branch off for a while fruitlessly contemplating good and evil, nothing precluded God from being both, but I could not think of a reason why I should care about a malevolent God. Further wanderings deciphered only the possibility that God might not care about humanity as much as I supposed, but have a larger vision in mind. God might have designed us for entertainment, this fits with a desire and not a need. It occurred to me that entertainment could have either a benevolent or a malicious attribute.

The theme of benevolence repeatedly formed the backbone of my questions. If God made us for companionship, then love, the foundational element, must be a force either embodied or exemplified by God, suggesting a rule to which the all-mighty submits. A conundrum developed between the aspects of kindness and omnipotence. If God exhibited kindness, then disease, malice, and even Hell presented a perplexing problem. If God controls space, time, and everything in creation down to the elemental particles, then in some manner God created those forces branded as evil or mellifluent. Perhaps God functions with a grand vision beyond the scope of human concerns, but then a logical course to pursue for individual humans would be one based on self-interest, because the deity would create or allow creation of people with idiosyncrasies helpful to the larger goal.

I then considered the nature of an omnipotent God, without regard to kindness. God could make everything function according to a plan. This argument expends its energy quickly. If determinism reigns then everything, actions, thoughts, and feelings will occur as they are preordained. Nothing is original. Further, nothing would be unknown to such a deity having the advantage of being beyond and in control of time. God would know the outcome prior to development. Taken a little bit further, God would know the outcome of everything immediately and always, leaving little value in creating anything. Why create something even as entertainment if the outcome already fills every essence of knowing

now and forever? Creation would be an act of futility of monumental proportion. From a human standpoint changing attitude or behavior is irrelevant, all are preordained. Even if one decides to enjoy the ride, that thought was also preordained. Creation, ironically, proves the limits of divine power.

So I pondered a limited God, a God, and therefore a world, subject to randomness and free will. Various studies support this notion. In neuroscience a test with dyed genes of insects shows how gene transmission propagates into the next generation unevenly, defying the mathematical and presupposed theoretical assumptions by allowing the random baths of chemicals, RNA among others, to effect the dissemination of the spliced genes. The genes glowed specific colors, by counting the different colors in the next generation, researchers noted the process of gene transmission.<sup>20</sup> Physics, too, struggles with determinism. In looking for the elemental particles positivist assume that complete understanding of all random actions reduce to a fundamental formula. String Theory offers some comforting respite from such strict interpretation. The concepts are convoluted but at the genesis of form, multiple dimensions develop, which are not the same for every universe. Different mixes of dimensions applying different properties to different outcomes

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<sup>20</sup> Carroll, Sean B., *Endless Forms Most Beautiful: The New Science of EvoDevo and the Making of the Animal Kingdom*. W.W. Norton and Co. 2005.

thus adding to randomness. Even the vary fabric of space is a broiling mass of randomness. Additionally, in our own universe, as black holes tear the space/time continuum, a bubble into other universes may occur. The conclusions of String Theorists, for now, uphold the ideas of free will and random chance. God then plays by some rules.

The freedom of will allows God the luxury of creating without perfect understanding where the project may lead. Creation might fulfill either entertainment or companionship. If God does not care about the plight of humanity, and entertainment like characters in a play forms the purpose of existence then satisfaction the requirements assumes the much diminished criteria of personal purpose. In fact, if God does not care, then I deduced that the mantle of responsibility falls to human self-interest. A God who cares, conversely, then by definition cares about the well-being of His creation. Discovery of the nature and nurture of well-being, therefore, becomes important. Because intellect allows humans a potential for discovery of their own purpose, free will confers the responsibility for uncovering a mode of living commensurate with God's purpose to the individual, -mostly. The final supposition I entertained, dealt with the possibility of absence of a deity. In this case, humanity, again, assumes the responsibility for deciphering purpose. Outside of



determinism, every wandering path ended with the question-what is the purpose of existence? Why are we here? The prime factor for all answers was fun.

The answer was joy. Aristotle might call it eudemonia according to Kwame Appiah in “Experiments in Ethics”, but the distinctions I find most compelling center on the achievement of joy by both individuals and society.<sup>21</sup> I used a Socratic drill, continuously asking why, finding consistently a common ground in joy. Joy answered why a powerful being would expend the effort to create. Joy gave reason to the actions of men absent a deities embrace. Why climb a Mount Everest? The satisfaction of accomplishing something few have done. Underlying every action dwells a satisfaction. Even selfless acts, like those of philanthropy release dopamine in the purveyor of the kindness, indicated by the FMRI study referenced in Jonah Lehrer’s book “How We Decide”.<sup>22</sup> In studies using the power of money researchers viewed the excitations in the brain during the commitment of an act of altruism. The subjects soon experienced the reward of euphoria typified by the release of brain chemicals responsible for happiness.

At first I balked at the Epicurean tilt toward full blown hedonism the pursuit of joy implied, but as I reflected and realized the nature of joy must include a social element. The

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<sup>21</sup> Appiah, Kwame Anthony, *Experiments in Ethics*, Harvard University Press , Cambridge MA, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Lehrer, Jonah, *How We Decide*, Mariner Books, Boston, MA, 2010.

possibility of loving the thrill of the killing exists, but submits to the concern of inhibiting the joy of another and the consequences of retaliation, (except for sociopaths). Assuming the egalitarianism of God's love, then one individual's joy can not come at the expense of another's. Further, usurping the rights of another will engender consequences, which inhibit further acquisitions of happiness. The stealing of beautiful young maid for nefarious purposes will provoke the actions of her father, brother, and boyfriend. Their response might include some rope, a blunt instrument, and a shallow hole. Deprived of years of happiness on both sides of this horrific, but often repeated story the total quantity of euphoria for both the perpetrator and victim falls far short of potential.

In a collective format, if a society values order to suppress the ravages of individuality, the method of achieving it usually subverts freedom by implementing the instruments torture, murder, and imprisonment. All constituents of these societies then find self expression, and even bodily integrity curtailed eliminating much of the quality of life. A balance between the competing priorities of individuals and societies invokes greater capacity for joy than either extreme. Therefore, joy means personal happiness with a dash of social responsibility.

I want to enjoy life. Because I am social creatures and much of my enjoyment rests on collective ideas and systems, joy needs to encompass not only personal desires, but the needs of society. Under every action, patriotism to capitalism, enlightenment to mysticism, rests the desire for storing up joy. When asking why I strive for concepts of freedom, kindness, or altruism, the answer invariably reflects the desire for more joy. In the military I would have given my life for the freedom and safety of others. What's behind freedom that is so important? I believe with freedom comes the ability for loved ones and strangers alike, to enjoy life. The roots of action, the roots of motive find nourishment in the fertile ground of joy.

#### **a. Visualization of the Optimization of Joy Artwork.**

I chose the word joy to mean something more profound than mere hedonistic pleasure. I borrowed a simple idea from math to summarize my results called 'linear programming'. It shows the boundaries of questions with multiple solutions. Some questions can be answered in a number of



ways, but not others. Where those answers change are the boundaries. If I ask a myriad of

questions I create a multitude of boundaries. If some answers are inside all of boundaries then they answer all of the questions at once. Some answers make better sense than others. The best answers are called 'optima', because they get the most out of the results. In this case, the optimum I deem most important is joy.

Adaptation of a concept like the 'Optimization of Joy' into physical artwork began simply by showing the linear programming function. Prosaic aesthetically, I determined to revamp the model until it took on a more appealing manifestation. The aesthetic reasoning afforded by rotating the graph in three dimensions adds to the metaphor. It speaks to the possibilities of multiple universes, parallel time continuums, and the vastness of divergent thought. The problem of stretching the metaphor to ludicrous proportions, however, tempers my enthusiasm.

The problem of subtlety tugs at the message strapped to every creative project. If the idea beats the audience over the head with its message the work often settles in mediocrity. On the other hand, a work too obscure fails to communicate, due to lack of cohesion or overshooting the zone of proximal development, so elegantly portrayed by Leo Vigotsky as referenced in L. R. Gay's "Educational Research".<sup>23</sup> The idea, although simple,

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<sup>23</sup> Gay, L. R., *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed.*, Merrill Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1996.

possessed some esoteric qualities and carries greater weight than the finished piece, so I deemed a work augmented by a clearly written explanation more preferable than making people guess. An element of research and appropriation affected the final outcome. The philosophy overtime lent itself to the mechanistic clockwork form.

## **2. Expectation and Gratitude.**

In my deductions I struck upon what I think undergirds the foundations of happiness, the strength of gratitude. Practice of this one concept constitutes the whole enterprise of this philosophy. I noticed how expectations whether fulfilled or dashed, would affect my mood.

Mood dwindled to resignation by the end of a month-long exercise, simulating battle conditions over rough terrain during my time in the Marine Corps. With sparse supplies, my battalion shuffled into combat town. The conglomeration of cinderblock buildings used to simulate urban warfare environments, defiantly loomed in the glow of twilight, black windows betrayed the lack of creature comforts within. Smiling, however, I agreed with the levity of a young Marine in my command. He exclaimed, "Whoo hoo! We get to sleep on concrete tonight!" Far from being facetious, he meant this as a good thing. By comparison to the last three nights of not sleeping, and the night spent in a foot and half of lava silt,

which sank my sleeping bag in a quagmire during a midnight rain, the prospect of four hours of rest in a relatively dry spot sounded heavenly.

Happiness is relative. During my tenure with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 3<sup>rd</sup> Marines, a group of foot soldiers over 1000 strong, I noticed they appeared happier than Marines from my former aviation unit despite enduring worse living conditions. The difference was attitude. They did not expect much and consequently were ecstatic with what they received. Happiness is tied not to material possessions but to relative attitude.

I tied this idea to Darwinian evolutionary thinking and noticed a boom and bust cycle in contentment, the elation of accomplishment lapsing into familiarity, which presently breeds contempt. Humans want the things they do not have and lose interest in the things they control. It helps the species succeed, but does not make people very happy.

Expectation, anxiety, contentment, and contempt, comprise the cycle. I get a little jolt as I walk toward the yawning doors of Costco. I know I do not need anything now, but in a few minutes I will want something. Occasionally, during my weekly grocery shopping I walk by items of desire, like a big screen TV, or table saw, or digital camera, and I want. It starts the cycle. I know I can not afford it, but I want it. So I start saving. When at last I purchase the camera I do not need, I am so happy. But then, I read in Popular Science

about a new camera with a 100 mega pixels and HD video for the same price and my ecstasy wilts, and the cycle begins again, except this time from a new vantage point.

Expectation requires imagination of something better and a desire to get it. Anxiety provides fuel for the motivation to achieve some new thing. Contentment in acquiring it, functions as the reward while contempt over time starts the process all over again. Unfortunately, this leaves individuals unhappy most of the time.

To break the cycle I divorced expectation from the motivation and searched for another means to happiness, one unencumbered by vicious circles. On more than one occasion, in the midst of feeling sorry for myself from under my wallow I witnessed the heroic efforts of another. I saw my father-in-law accept the challenge of parenthood for his grandson. A point made more poignant as he let the boy ride the back of his wheelchair. I watched my Mom, fuss over fixing lunch for my Dad even as she was dying of cancer. The contrasts exalt how much I have.

Gratitude is part of the process. Gratitude is the source of happiness. A long and much explored route for me, but eventually I understood - I do not deserve anything; everything is a gift. Gratitude makes the difference between what we expect to have and achievement of goals.

Not long ago a doctor told me I needed a bone scan, right away. I knew they used bone scans to hunt for metastasized cancer. After feigning unconcern the gravity of a bleak future hung low disquieting my sleep. A fretful week later the clarion call of banality issued forth profound relief. I was deliriously happy. Recognition of the disparity between what is and what could have been produces euphoria, at a moral and physical level.

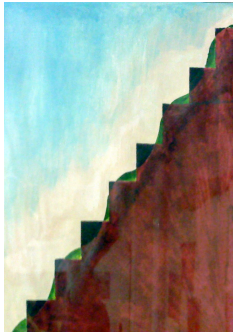
If I am thankful for opportunities, then my well-being increases. It just takes practice. We are not designed to be grateful all the time, thus necessitating lots of consistent practice. I lumber out to Greenough Park and wander among the trees. Soon I start counting my blessings. The walks, where I count my blessings from the most immediate to the most essential, provide fundamental and daily cognizance of gratitude. Being able to see, among others, always appears in this accounting. The empirical basis for trumpeting the benefits of gratitude I experiment with everyday. The longevity of the spirit of well-being I have sustained seems to uphold the hypothesis. Gratitude can be practiced and taught. The effects of the effort makes every taste sweeter, every relationship more stirring, and every effort more effective. Gratitude which manages the attributes of expectation and goal setting provides the vehicle to profound and sustainable happiness.



In gratitude beats the heart of the philosophy. Through the pulsing of gratitude the ever elusive optimization of joy flows. Gratitude means giving thanks. Thanks for the riches I control, for the freedom to live, for the tools nature puts at my disposal. To be thankful an understanding of not only relative merits, but the absolute quantities of blessings must be kept in mind. People can be thankful that they have enough to eat for dinner, an absolute quantity. If that dinner is lavish then thanks may come from an understanding of how much better this food is to other dinners, a relative merit. Gratitude can take advantage of both relative changes and absolute fulfillments because gratitude does not hold a single set of evaluative criteria. However, the differing sets are not equal. If I concentrate on the fulfillment of my needs, thinking in absolute terms not bounded by the material wealth of others, I am generally pleased and avoid many of the pitfalls of dysphoria. Comparisons create the animosity between the have and the have-nots. Too many times I lamented about how old my car was by comparison to my peers, or how my salary reflected so little respect compared to individuals with similar education levels. Always during these bouts of self pity where I concentrated on the differential, my heart sank. Yet, immediately afterward an epiphany revived my spirit. I can go anywhere in my car, I can support my family, and live a modern, leisurely life on my income, further I live where I want and how I want. When perceived in absolute terms, I know contentment.

Material possessions have merit in their ability to satiate a need, not in how much better they are than something else. When an individual no longer feels entitled, the freedom to enjoy the gifts they receive seeks a root in absolute merit rather than comparative appeal.

**a. Visualization of Expectation and Gratitude Artwork.**

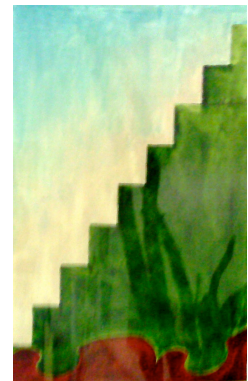


**Expectation**

In visualizing the interplay of expectations and the acquisition of material goods I saw stairs. I saw stairs which showed the achievement of goals as a series of plateaus. I liked how the visual communicated the occasionally disjointed treks to accomplishment my life has taken. At the moment of acquiring a new height, I decided I would use the color

green to signify contentment. As I spent time on the plateau, I noticed how dissatisfaction grew, partly around my stagnate growth, but also in response to my expectations rising beyond my current disposition.

Using a complementary color with connotations of passion seemed like a logical choice. Fighting to figure out how to portray the drop in expectation and the difference noted by gratitude, I pondered the



**Gratitude**

connection. Witnessing interactive sculptures, the thought that placement of a handle, particularly one with a spring might involve the viewer and drive home the concept of having to choose to act on happiness.

### **3. Choose Happiness.**

I choose happiness. Happiness unlike Newtonian physics does not achieve a state of rest. Entropy always acts on bliss. Only vigilance, effort, and an attitude independent of material goods can maintain the happiness. How I approach a situation affects the outcomes. A set of circumstances elicits discordant emotions if I start with bad, entitled feelings. The same set of circumstances brings blissful contentment if I maintained an air of gratitude. My attitude also influences the results. Untying happiness from physical things, and associating it with an esoteric concept, produces a state of bliss obtainable in nearly any circumstance. The Marine Corps prides itself on utilitarian functionality. They can do more with less. The Marine Corps often executes this utilitarianism in climes and places far afield from hearth and home. I slept in culverts, flew hours in airsick stupors, ate little and marched much. I missed my family, my home, my food, and my sleep. But if I decided to approach each day as glorious, then it usually was. If I did not muster such a positive attitude the same circumstances rendered my life unbearable.

I learned that every situation affords multiple ways to view it. Each perceptual screen holds different and sometimes contradictory assumptions. I find that rarely do situations exist where one perspective invalidates all the others. So choice exists. How one chooses to see events and how one experiences the outcome depends heavily on the viewer's attitude.

If given a choice of lots of perceptual constructs, I tend to choose the one with the happiest results. When the Marine Corps offered me the opportunity to fly helicopters, for example, I could have disparaged their judgment which left me out of jet school, or lamented about the loss of an airline career after denial of a fixed-wing cargo transport school. Instead, I rejoiced in the chance to fly an interesting platform in an interesting way. I counted myself lucky that helicopters left me airsick free. All of the responses possessed validity, but choosing to adopt the precept laced with positive associations made the rest of my Marine Corps career appear guided by good fortune. The danger of delusion, however, keeps me vigilant of the balance between multiple perceptual screens, and reality.

#### **a. Visualization of Choosing Happiness Artwork.**

To show the power of attitude on situation, I usually use the straightforward metaphor of the prisoner liberated by the facilities of his imagination. Images of an old

prison, with old political prisoners reminiscent of the Count of Monte Christo provides the overlay for imagining this work. Often I will hold two or more ideas in my conscious thought so connections, blending, and omissions flitter through my Prefrontal Cortex.<sup>24</sup>

The Prefrontal Cortex forms the brain region where both creative and rational thoughts occur. This region, unique to humans, evolved much later than the other thinking apparatuses of the brain. Like all new features a couple of limitations constrain the potential performance. One major impediment deals with the amount of discreet bits of information Stephen Reed discusses in “Cognition: Theory and Applications”.<sup>25</sup> The Prefrontal Cortex manages data in chunks, seven plus or minus two normally. More information causes confusion and hampers the beneficial functions according to a study using cake and fruit in Jonah Lehrer’s “How We Decide”.<sup>26</sup> Prefrontal Cortex functions make up, however, for any limits in capacity.

The task of interest to artists is creativity, the development of unique and multiple solutions to new situations. Valuable insight into how creative processes develop can aid in

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<sup>24</sup> Lehrer, Jonah, *How We Decide*, Mariner Books, Boston, MA, 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Reed, Stephen K., *Cognition: Theory and Applications, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed.*, Thomas Wadsworth, Australia, 2004.

<sup>26</sup> Lehrer, Jonah, *How We Decide*, Mariner Books, Boston, MA, 2010. and Lehrer, Jonah, *Proust was a Neuroscientist*. Mariner Books, Boston, MA, 2010.

innovation by allowing the individual to use known processes efficiently and in tandem in ways which create synergy.

I read slowly, and lately fall asleep whenever my book falls open, but when I collect information I can weave most of it into fully cinematic experience in my head. Further, my daily responsibilities limit the time I have to read. Understanding my physical limits and my lifestyle constraints allowed me use audible books to play to my strengths, the movie I created in my head during times unused before. This ingenuity of combining limits with talents devours texts setting my mind whirling with new ideas. The same application of appropriate methods with inherent constraints clears the path to new horizons regardless of subject or problem origin. If I know that creation only happens with a few select pieces of information I can design a project so that at any one point the process presents me with only a few variables. More efficient focused innovation springs from intelligent use of limitations, which is the heart of divergent thought.

#### **4. Balancing Perception**

Perception includes all the ways people interact with the world. Perceptual screens describe the limited individual understanding of reality due to ignorance, preconceived notions, or inattentive observation. A perceptual screen refers to the unobserved filter

each person brings to a situation. In psychology the common use of the Joharri Window describes the things known and unknown to a person by themselves, and by others.<sup>27</sup> The perceptual screen functions in the domain of the unknown. I grew up in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, telephones hooked to the walls and had cords, but they existed. The difficulties of imagining how the communication apparatuses of my pioneering forbearers affected the



conduct of their relationships speaks to the vast differences in background. I can not, because of my ignorance of the nuisances of the systems they lived with, fully understand the adjustments to their emotional states. A formal greeting or turn of phrase may express the eternal joy that a loved one is alive or it may betray the lack of concern for life awash in the familiarity with

death .

My own experiences color my understanding of everything I study. To date no one smart claims perfect knowledge; the ones that do scare me. They can construct rational arguments upon their convictions which reach some appalling conclusions. The Nazis

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<sup>27</sup> Santrock, John W., *Educational Psychology*, McGraw Hill, Boston, 2001.

proved this for all time. Subscribers to chaos theory and those of us enthralled with Confucian proverbs see the advent of greater inspection coincident with increased complexity. The more we know, the more we know we do not know, thus ensuring the presumption no one person or society understands reality perfectly.

Uncertainty requires vigilant evaluation through two important disciplines necessary for maintaining happiness. The first realizes the balancing act between the multiple layers of perceptions required to sustain a workable grasp of reality. Rational decision making offers predictable and, therefore, workable systems. I can draw up plans and build a house. Barring a tornado, the door to that house will be there to walk through for years to come.

The second discipline, counters the concrete world and stubborn thought by sprinkling a healthy dose of skepticism on the situation. The question of why an apple falls to the ground perplexed thinkers for millennia. Hundreds of hypotheses offered what are now considered strange solutions. Isaac Newton proclaimed gravity the culprit, but gravity, a force, is invisible and still mysterious to humanity, though at a much more complex level. The cognizance of the unobserved dominates much of the necessity of philosophy and has been argued from Plato to Bertrand Russell. Somewhere in the loop of observation, orientation, decision, action, and evaluation, the possibility of imperfect knowledge leads to



the fallibility of our plans. Effort to stay balanced in reality is tempered by the knowledge I could be wrong. Uncertainty also thwarts the deterministic universe, flowing responsibility back to individuals.

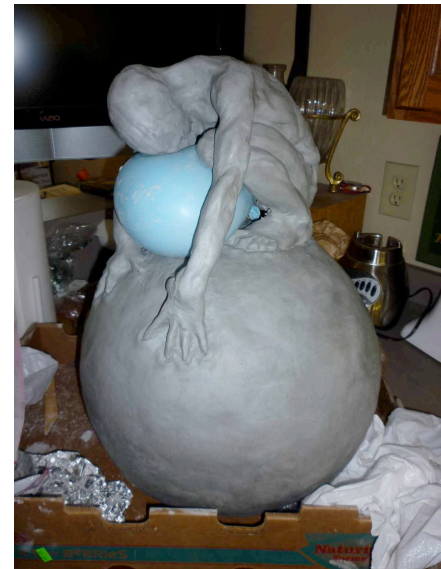
### **a. Visualization of the Balancing Perception Artwork.**

In an effort to expose how consideration and extrapolation are necessary for comparing perceptual screens in defining what is real, I positioned a man on a ball of reality, working to maintain his balance. The ball is a none-to-subtle reference to ancient

philosophical concepts of Platonic perfect forms and the sphere of immovable reality suggested by Parmenides.

Anthony Gottlieb traced thought through its iterations in such a manner that conceptualization of the overall pattern winks at me from 2500 years of discourse.<sup>28</sup> The

idea that Parmenides needed to speak about the impossibility of 'not' and that Democratis later



manipulated this idea into atomism using mainly void and immutable tiny forms, shows

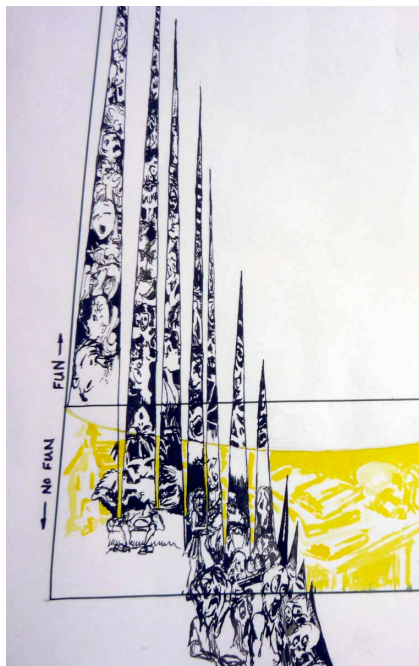
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<sup>28</sup> Gottlieb, Anthony, *The Dream of Reason: A History of Philosophy from the Greeks to the Renaissance*, W. W. Norton and Company, NY, 2001.

how thought bounces around in a strangely biological manner. First it tries on one idea like discussing intangible forces and then philosophy uses that form as model for new innovations. It indicates a rather determined effort to know reality with clarity. The thinking part of man is separated from knowing the ball of reality because the fallibility of his senses and history.

## 5. The Fun Meter.

The fun-meter maximizes fun over the long-haul. Fun, used euphemistically here,



should take on the more profound characteristic of ethical bliss. Application of a temporal element permits analysis of the broad area of joy stretched across a lifetime. This one aspect of the 'Discipline of Happiness' suits the concept of discipline better than almost any other. In seeking the maximum area under the curve of fun, I demonstrate the efficacy of a delayed gratification or in other terms the

very essence of discipline. The graph itself consists of a time component stretching 70+

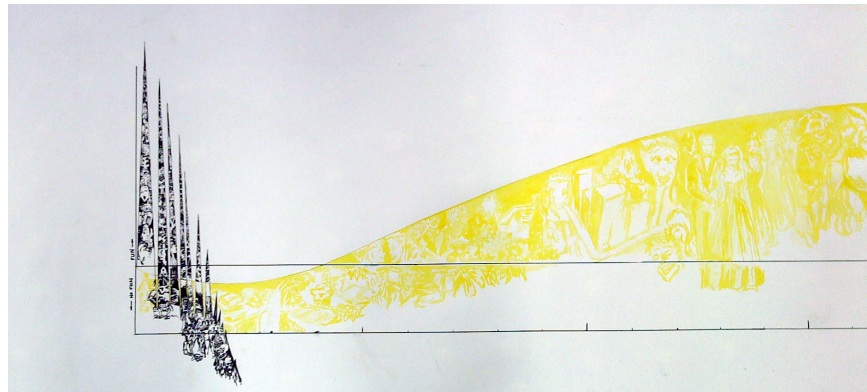
years, and a vertical component showing the amplitude of fun achieved by specific events.

If events have lingering penumbras of fun, these too can be measured, although, the perfect

delineation of fun is about as accurate as medical pain chart. Still, like functional areas in geography, discussed in Michael Kuby et. al. in “Human Geography in Action”, a core and periphery allow for a preturbative assumption.<sup>29</sup> The contrasts between some activities are so great perfect accuracy is superfluous. The graph simply measures the area under the curve carved by fun throughout a lifetime. To embellish the deep chasm of possible outcomes, I use two polar opposites: drug use and education.

#### **a. Visualization of the Fun Meter Artwork.**

Measured by anecdotal and chemical scales, cocaine yields a period of extraordinary fun for about 10-20 minutes according to Dr. Drew Pinsky.<sup>30</sup> Repeated use yields similar results, but



with diminishing returns. The depression following these experiences coupled with the

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<sup>29</sup> Kuby, Michael, John Harner, Patricia Gober, *Human Geography in Action, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., NY, 2002.

Jordan-Bychkov, Terry, and G. Mona Domosh, *The Human Mosaic: A Thematic Introduction to Cultural Geography*, 9<sup>th</sup> Ed., W. H. Freeman and Company, NY, 2003.

<sup>30</sup> Pinsky, Drew, and Todd Gold, *Cracked: Life on the Edge in a Rehab Clinic*, Harper Collins, NY, 2004.

destructive attributes inherent in acquiring illicit substances leads down a grim path.

Pursuit of this form of happiness in any serious capacity soon drags the user below the euphoric neutral line and into a realm populated by skeletons and nightmares.

Education, on the other hand, involves a heavy dose of delayed gratification, resulting in discomfort early in the process. Learning, confronting of the unknown, is uncomfortable. Only after individuals adjust their schema to embrace change and find challenge interesting, do genuine feelings of joy begin to develop. This effort, however, pays dividends. Year after year the knowledge accumulated allows for the advancement in relationships and in the hierarchy of society. High School leads to college. Theoretically, college leads to prestigious and well paying jobs as well as a pool of self motivated scholars with whom beneficial relationships develop. Assets allow for secure futures not only for the purveyor but for his or her offspring. At multiple points, this system invents other opportunities, which feed back into the mounting joy.

## **6. Event Inertia.**

Closely related to the understanding of long-term benefits, event inertia shows how one event influences the next. In fact, often, the accumulation of a series of like events produces an even stronger motivation for shaping the follow on events. This sort of systemic historical motivation sets up a cycle, which perpetuates and amplifies future

situations, referred to as a positive feedback loop.<sup>31</sup> These loops occur over a lifetime in both healthy and unhealthy vectors.

An obvious example of a positive feedback loop with negative consequences issues from the abuse of narcotics. A dalliance with marijuana puts a young girl in contact with traffickers of that substance. The breaking of the initial principle of forgoing the use of drugs, makes a second occurrence with possibly a more aggressive drug, more likely. Continued use builds an addiction. Addition leads to financial difficulty. Lack of resources begets acts unspeakable just months before. A girl winds up dead in a back alley and no one cares. Not every path will follow this progression, but the tendency of one action to lead to and amplify the next warrants consideration.

Similar examples have been referenced in the study of the chain of events leading to airline disasters.<sup>32</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, Jonah Lehrer, and Dan Ariely all reference advances

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<sup>31</sup> Stahler, Alan, and Arthur Strahler, *Physical Geography: Science and Systems of the Human Environment*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2002.

Jordan-Bychkov, Terry, and G. Mona Domosh, *The Human Mosaic: A Thematic Introduction to Cultural Geography*, 9<sup>th</sup> Ed., W. H. Freeman and Company, NY, 2003.

<sup>32</sup> Gladwell, Malcolm, *The Tipping Point*. Little Brown and Co. NY, 2008.

Lehrer, Jonah, *How We Decide*, Mariner Books, Boston, MA, 2010.

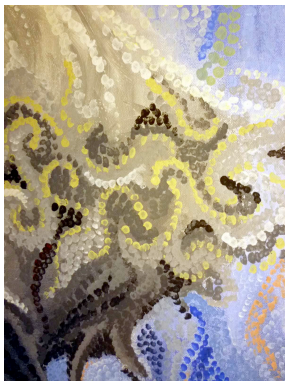
Ariely, Dan, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions* HarperCollins, NY, 2008.

in cockpit crew coordination which have drastically reduced the incidents of pilot error in crashes. When an aviation accident happens the investigation attempts to establish the chain of causal links leading to the mishap. In several accidents addressed by these authors the common thread of hierarchal management threw light on the social structure of cockpit management. After sifting through the mountains of data a proposal to adjust the interplay of power and communication during flight created a cooperative environment. The decrease in disasters plummeted providing a shiny example of social engineering. In essence the change flowed ultimate power away from the senior pilot and placed the onus of safety on the collective crew. Disrupting the chain of causal events through the application of redundant responsibilities during flight averts catastrophic accidents. Awareness of the power of these vectors provides the impetus for my piece on event inertia. Nurturing healthy systems and applying a dampening or even a reversal of fortunes for the destructive paths seeds the development of a better future.



**a. Visualization of Event Inertia Artwork.**

The significance of feedback loops warrants careful consideration. Feedback loops are positive if they serve to perpetuate and enhance the system which begat them. They make the loop run faster and stronger. Positive feedback loops do not necessarily function in a positive ethical, material, or biological manner. Loops that increase the amplitude and severity of pain or anguish, by feeding on one's own despair, fit the definition of a positive



feedback loop. Conversely, negative feedback loops tend to diminish the systemic characteristics of the original consequence. Apparently, individuals who wish to live well should strive to create positive feedback loop environments which serve his or her life plan while employing negative feedback loops to counteract behaviors heading in the wrong direction.

The inertia of events themselves may dictate the manner and form a life takes. Some consideration of how to manage the chronological as well as the opportunistic cycle allows for optimization of joy when considering the macro environment of one's life. Perception of this problem will look clearly different to individuals involved in this



cycle. Those who have positive feedback loops where negative events lines up other negative events will rightly feel the world has been stacked against them. In the book



“Outliers” by Malcolm Gladwell, genius Chris Langan, blames his inability to receive a college degree on the structures and bad behavior of society.<sup>33</sup> His unfortunate story also includes reference to a difficult childhood. Further evidence points to a group of children selected by a researcher for their testable genius and then documents their successes and foibles through out their lives. The result befuddled and amazed the researchers showing that social factors predicted ‘success’ more accurately then intelligence. People with



negative experiences with the systems of societies exhibit frustration with events and distrust of governments or other authority figures. Oddly, they docilely accept mandates from these institutions without trying to bend the system to their will. People whose event inertia spins them from one opportunity to another greater one see the world as their

playground. Self-advocating comes second nature. They live in abundance.

## **7. Wave Theory of Effort.**

The next step in discipline, after envisioning the long-term, requires well-timed effort. When to apply work to a problem goes beyond gross application of effort into

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<sup>33</sup> Gladwell, Malcolm, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Little, Brown, and Company, NY, 2008.



working smarter. I use a surfing analogy to explain effort in time. My friend loves surfing, so I tried to love it too. Looking forward to the non-threatening Okinawan waves I paddled out to meet my friend. To get passed the breakers I needed to point my board into the wall of water ducking under the cap and coming out paddling to meet the next. For a novice just getting to deep water made my chest heave and shoulders ache. Once bobbing on the backs of the waves my friend showed me the line of potential rides heading shoreward. He says the trick is in the timing. He flashes me a grin, he has a big boyish grin, and proceeds to paddle hard with his belly on the board. He crests the wave just as the water starts dumping over the top and soon disappears. A second later, the back of his head pops up and starts skinning across the wave weaving delightedly. I think, 'this must not be so hard', and seeing a likely candidate, I start paddling. I paddle hard. Faster and faster I plunge my hands into the top of the wave, yet the crest stays just beyond my reach. Panting, and beginning that uncomfortable saltwater sweat I see my wave break before me.

Disappointed and tired I begin I sit up and look over my shoulder. Then I see it. The wave behind me blots out the sun. As the waves approach the beach their energy compacts forming great bulwarks of water before they expend themselves on the beach. This wave had reached its zenith right over my head. It pitched me up and sidewise, rolled me over, and slammed me into to the shallow water at its base. Then its forward thrust balled me up

and held me down as I skidded along the coral festooned bottom. Tumbling, bruising, and unable to swim or breathe in my froth prison I pondered how long I could fight the urge to inhale; turns out, not long. Breathing water is not fun. I have done it a couple of times and never felt better for it. Bleeding, battered, and coughing the wave spit me out in heap. Only the humiliation of standing up in a foot and half of water which so nearly killed me assuaged the indignity of losing my board.

In surfing one needs to catch the wave by paddling after it as it passes. If one does not time their strokes well they miss the wave and forebodingly place themselves in an untenable position for the next wave, which falls upon them. Nastier still, they get bigger close to shore engulfing a person in a mixture of air and water instead of sending them gliding along its free spirited surface. Getting caught in the falls is no fun. It's been near life threatening for me on more than one occasion, while surfing, and career stultifying when the analogy applies to my professional life.

A laconic youth from Montana, the belligerent ways of the Marine Corps misunderstand my polite requests as weak and irresolute. My fitness reports, consistently, reflected "lack of force" as an admonishment. Such criticism stunts officer careers, in the inflated rhetoric of performance evaluation. I learned late that I needed to change my

method of issuing orders, but even with adjustment I could not thwart the set perception. Thus I worked harder physically and administratively but received less respect than my lazy, but boisterous comrades.

Another side effect of a late paddle, prophetic of life, emanates from the amount of work expended. Many people end up devoting monumental effort to enterprises yielding little gain. Had they started working earlier on the same task, in the same manner, they would have been pushed along by a mountain of synergy.

**a. Visualization of the Wave Theory of Effort Artwork.**

Built on a graph with two individuals at different points on a wave function where the horizontal axis connotes degree of success, and the vertical axis connotes effort expended, the artwork embraces the narrative format of a graphic novel. Split parallels will show the surfing analogy juxtaposed with the professional one. By presenting the work in this manner and with the background incorporation of the aforementioned graph the story transforms from an anecdote about surfing to a metaphor concerning work ethic.

## 8. Lunacy.

Lunacy refers to a simple but undeniable obstacle. Biological components, chemicals in the brain, can affect mood. Jonah Lehrer gives a harrowing account of the affect of pharmaceutically enhanced Dopamine cravings on a teacher with early Parkinson's disease. She gambled her life savings and marriage away after adhering to her prescription regimen.<sup>36</sup> Perception of these physiological components outside the normal introspective insights can help regulate responses.

Dopamine, which is powerful enough in lab rats to cause their blissful starvation, can alter how one thinks, Lehrer explains.<sup>37</sup> Naturally occurring chemicals can have cycles, which a journal and a little diligence can distinguish. When the chemicals are in control, a prudent method for maintaining relationships may require the postponement of a response until a less artificially charged moment arrives. In my childhood, after Mom was diagnosed with Epilepsy and Multiple Sclerosis, the drugs the doctors prescribed required adjustment and had psychological effects. Ducking virulent mood swings, I recognized that, although

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<sup>36</sup> Lehrer, Jonah, *How We Decide*, Mariner Books, Boston, MA, 2010.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. Lehrer.

Mom screamed at me, her behavior did not mirror her intent. I protected my sister and myself from this chemically induced wrath.

A more relevant, artistic, example reveals the cyclical nature of my creative spurts. Through years of introspection and recording I noticed the week to two week spans when ideas stumbled over themselves for expression followed by barren tracts where simple tasks appeared insurmountable. To adjust to this pattern, I write down my ideas during the period of plenty, developing a set of plans to follow during the periods of cognitive drought.

**a. Visualization of Lunacy Artwork.**



**Lunacy**

This piece tracks the inner swirling of feelings for a month. Inspired by how nonverbal facial expressions indicate mood better than talking, I decided this icon could designate the passage of time. I controlled the composition to emphasize differences. I, also, used a male head to mitigate gender bias.

## 9. Acquiring Two Standard Deviations.

Slightly tangential but still worthy of note, due to its potential for undermining self-esteem and its attendant motivation, how we view our own latent intelligence effects efforts towards improvement. Two characteristics of the visual I made challenge popular impressions on intelligence. The first argues the need for speed as a component of intelligence. Tests, particularly of the general intelligence quotient variety Jon Santrock explains in “Educational Psychology”, tend to evaluate among other erroneous factors the speed at which students acquire knowledge.<sup>38</sup> I say erroneous, because in applications of knowledge having significant effects on life it matters only that a person acquires the knowledge not how fast that process occurs. I teach students how to use shading to illustrate an object. Once they have the idea they shade as well as any other person I know. The time it takes to learn the process is irrelevant to their ability to complete the task.

Using the familiar bell curve, a person reaching two standard deviations away from the starting point of any subject knows 95% of the information on the subject. Adding multiple bell curves into the composition shows the expansion afforded by Howard Gardner and his theory of multiple intelligences. This theory refutes the faulty, but

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<sup>38</sup> Santrock, John W., *Educational Psychology*, McGraw Hill, Boston, 2001.

popular, assumptions on general intelligence.<sup>39</sup> Exploding the paradigm allows students to contribute to society in a way most suitable to them. It further allows students room to fail in some respects while succeeding in others. The fringe benefit of this type of thinking helps individuals and society by placing people with passion in positions exploiting their efforts.

Howard Gardner further refined his earlier work by indicating how proper application of the multiple intelligences increases with the disciplines of the “Five Minds of the Future”.<sup>40</sup> Individuals stop trying to be great at everything and flow to the things they do best reflecting the gist of Ken Robinson’s book “The Element”. Through anecdotal evidence Robinson argues that the best society develops from individuals following their passions.<sup>41</sup> Daniel Pink seems to amalgamate both Robinson’s and Gardner’s ideas and apply them to the current corporate environment desperate for innovation.<sup>42</sup> All three of these authors make compelling cases for adjusting the prevailing paradigm of intellectual

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<sup>39</sup> Gardner, Howard, *Frames of Mind: the Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, Twentieth-Anniversary Ed., Basic Books, NY, 2004.

<sup>40</sup> Gardner, Howard, *Five Minds for the Future*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston 2006.

<sup>41</sup> Robinson, Ken, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*, Penguin Publishing, NY, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Pink, Daniel J., *The Whole New Mind*, Riverhead Publishing, Albany, NY, 2006.

worth. By recognizing the mix of strengths and weaknesses, social tolerance increases creating a nurturing environment for growth.

#### **a. Visualization of the Two Standard Deviations Artwork.**

I could not help mixing my metaphors by including a tide and boats, suggesting that a rising tide of intellect in one form helps lift the intellect of another area. This is somewhat misleading; I think the effect has a greater degree of influence based on the kinship of intelligences. For example, greater acuity in math may not significantly adjust athletic performance, but it might parallel performance in the musical sphere. The degree of transference provides fertile ground for creative research.

#### **10. Towers of Edifice.**

Doing the best I can with what I have, means education never stops. Repeated experiences dull overtime, so does the memory of them according to Proust. Capturing something new in the fleeting folds of the mind rejuvenates interest. I subscribe to a constructivist view of education reverting to the views of William James and John Dewey, specifically a continuous constructionist. Where Piaget sees plateaus and stages unrelated to each other, I see coincidental markers based on the vectors of accumulated thought from



a similar starting point.<sup>43</sup> I sweep out the unknown from a point of origin and build foundations upon which towers of knowledge rise.

How the construction develops speaks to the manner in which a mind works. The towers refer to the knowledge of a particular subject. The plethora of buildings reflects the multiple intelligences ala Howard Gardner's "Frames of Mind" a decidedly astute look at the historical concept of intellect. How the differing minds interconnect or not defines individual aptitude. Crumbling artifices and remnants of old buildings show the difficulties inherent in creation and timing, as well as the erosion of history, tradition, and change. The example of the movie "Sliding Doors" addresses the relevance of when events occur on a timeline particularly adeptly. The story splits the experiences of the protagonist based on a minor fluctuation in whether she made it on to the subway or not.<sup>44</sup> Following both tracks of time the narrative reaches some very different conclusions.

When things happen in the compendium of time matters, likewise, how long an idea has had to establish itself also matters. A cult in Judaea, who worshiped only one god,

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<sup>43</sup> Gay, L. R., *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed.*, Merrill Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1996.

<sup>44</sup> Howit, Peter, Writer/director, "*Sliding Doors*", Intermedia Films, 1998.

Yahweh, predicted the might Assyrians would not penetrate the city. The Assyrians gave them a cursory poke but, lack of water and plague encouraged them to move on to more lucrative targets. So the sect solidified because they were right. Thirty-two years later the Assyrians returned and conquered the city, but because the cult incubated for so long it survived the forced immigration to Babylon.<sup>45</sup> Where would Judaism, Christianity, and Islam be without the period of solidification afforded by three decades of growth? History and tradition preserve ideas through time, but growth involves change.

Change often follows the process of evolution, where an initial condition provides a platform to morph into new configurations. As a child I went to church. My family forms the backbone of the Polson Presbyterian Church. I believed the doctrines set forth, including the creation story. Evolutionary theory and some fundamental inconsistencies in the text of the bible began a journey which altered my original assumptions. Because I did not abandon the knowledge accumulated from biblical study, evolution and later genetics, the evo-devo revolution referred to by Sean B. Carroll in “Endless Forms Most Beautiful”, nanotechnology, and cybernetics, but only uprooted my original assumptions I recognized how knowledge can exist in a nebulous world where both the origins and the point of

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<sup>45</sup> Cowley, Robert, and William H. MacNeill, *The Collected What If: Eminent Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*, G. B. Putnam and Sons, NY, 2001

furthest advance represent the borders of the unknown.<sup>46</sup> The tearing of the foundation away from terra firma reflects the nature of extremes as they change perspectives on the original premise.

#### **a. Visualization of the Towers of Edifice.**

To show the conglomeration of ideas embracing change and tradition, growth and destruction, multiple intelligences and the process of creation I conceived a floating island of towers. The Towers represent Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences to varying degrees and in various states of repair. The towers symbolize the construction of knowledge and hint at the methods. Some towers are masonry to coincide with a brick by brick analogy, and some incorporate steel frame and concrete construction to illustrate the scaffolding approach to knowledge



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<sup>46</sup> Carroll, Sean B., *Endless Forms Most Beautiful: The New Science of EvoDevo and the Making of the Animal Kingdom*. W.W. Norton and Co. 2005.

accumulation. I added in bridges and connecting railways to indicate my belief in the interlocation of different disciplines as well as the nature of nerve fiber connections in the brain.

Unused, crumbling or burned out constructions represent the ghosts of paths abandoned, and the floating island of the entire structure indicates the nebulous



unanchored knot of knowledge afforded by vantage points at the apex of the towers of knowledge bent in regard to the nature of the original assumptions and stymied by the impenetrability of future deliberation. An example of impenetrability residing in

Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle.

#### **IV. Unexpected Results.**

It works. But, maybe it works too well and not for all of the reasons I espoused. I put into practice the disciplines of conscious gratitude, delayed gratification, cognitive development, perceptual adjustment, and chemical timing. Treating my emotions as an evolutionary byproduct, something to be tamed by reason, I mastered the concept of living with chaos. The results amazed me. Weathering divorce, my most challenging predicament, with grace, I found a way to be happy almost every day, all day. Malice and

the rollercoaster of emotions diminished. Learning to manage pain, by distraction and/or knowledge of the cycle and timing made possible conquering both the uncomfortable and frightening. I learned discipline in my studies and achieved more with greater ease than I ever had before. Some purpose even returned to my life. In short I was so enamored with this concept that I thought I should write a book and share the knowledge.

Like all bouts of arrogance in my life, I was ripe for a fall. It was not a violent overthrow of the theory. It crept in silently, no fanfare, wending its way past the bulwarks of my now battle-tested theory. Years of slow entropy eroded my resolve. Something just was not quite right. Ethical discussions often wander into the realms of intuition. Like an anecdote in one of those discussions, I felt the problem before I could articulate it. In a nutshell, the problem was mechanization. I felt mechanical. I could discipline my way into happiness, but I could use the same tools for avoiding other emotions as well.

In the Marine Corps I learned mental toughness. I became aware of how fundamental paradigm shifts could alter my whole perception of life. I found I did not really have an innate filter for decency, which prevented me from doing horrific things. I could switch from a life-centered mode of operation to a mission-centered outlook allowing me the potential to kill without compunction. I no longer believed in my innate goodness. I could be programmed.

Much of the philosophy I delineated parallels cognitive psychology. Stephen K. Reed's text "Cognition: Theory and Application" revealed the wonders of thought. I learned about attention, the primacy and recency of memory, and the cataloging of data.<sup>47</sup> The minute understanding of how the mind categorizes, files, manipulates, and stores data

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<sup>47</sup> Reed, Stephen K., *Cognition Theory and Applications*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Thompson Wadsworth, Australia, 2004.

leaves little room for emotional or spiritual purpose. As my marriage fell apart, I applied the principles previously enumerated and my Marine Corps discipline to the problem. As a romantic, I carried the most idealistic notions into the relationship, steadfastly maintaining childish wonderment for the duration of the marriage; in the end, I turned to my intellectual box of coping tools to override my marriage's decay with discipline. I examined and reexamined the difficulties, and, eventually, I controlled my emotions, desires, and my heart. Now everyday if you ask me, I will answer quite honestly, that I am happy, but I lack passion and carry a pernicious mistrust of relationships. I am happy, but still something is missing. My hunch rests on the dismissal of the emotional and spiritual as inferior remnants of an evolutionary past. So I endeavor to explore.

Could emotions be more than a method for binding people together long enough to care for helpless children? Parts of this argument influence Dr. Arthur Janov's treatise on the brain chemistry of love in "The Biology of Love".<sup>48</sup> Ironically, I engaged this problem with a purely analytical, academic fashion. I recognize the folly of this. Emotions and spirituality may require a toolbox designed from its constituent parts for proper illumination. The difficulty of understanding something without rational analytic thought with operatives like addition, subtraction, distribution, factoring, compounds the

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<sup>48</sup> Janov, Arthur, *The Biology of Love*, Prometheus Books, Amherst NY, 2002.

acquisition of knowledge, confuses me, but perhaps suggests a venue for other functional areas of thought. Generally, it's through logical actions that the essence of things distills. The problem of the Heraclitian river trickles through my mind, torrents of ideas drift by, and although similar to previous observations, none manifest in the exact same way, so when I pierce the surface using my accumulated logical tools, the actual waters of thought differ from the ones I am accustomed. My tool box of ideas may not suit the shifting ideas in the water, though the Heraclitus referred to by Anthony Gottlieb in the "Dream of Reason" was probably as confused as I am.<sup>49</sup>

To aid my feeble attempts at emotional understanding, I began to study. I signed up for the Creative Pulse, I saw a psychologist, and I have tried to create. So far my attempts are grasping and inconsequential. But the Creative Pulse addressed some issues impeding my development. I was shy. When introduced to the five year old next door, who would become my best friend, I slid behind my Mom and pulled her dress over my head. Counter intuitively, I made demonstrable efforts at inconspicuousness. I spread my legs so my head gradually disappeared during the church school play, and everyone noticed. There was no logic to my actions. This pathological shyness affected my relations with peers and adults. It spun awkwardly out of control at the least hint of dating. Naturally, any creative work,

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, Gottlieb, Anthony.



which invariably presents the soft underbelly of my thoughts, found the trash can instead of a wall.

Presenting work incurred double indemnity due to the addition of personal pride. Shyness amplified the stakes of sharing my work because art comprised the one thing I did well, any presentation of this skill reflected the best I could achieve in any respect, I thought. Therefore, perfectionism stymied my repeated efforts to portray myself as venerable. They fell short because I constantly reasoned that the finished product poorly reflected my true capabilities. This follows a common line of thought contrary to the professed inferiority of shyness betrays the vanity wading in deep pools of arrogance. I want to show the world I can do better than my perceived expectation.

The Creative Pulse addressed this reluctance by ignoring the self-conscious foot-



dragging and requiring students to do something and share it.

Action breaks the ice, shattering the myth of a myriad of possible approaches. Before doing anything its possible to be the best, the greatest, that has ever been, or the worst. Once that perception shatters, a new schema develops based on the

item presented. Repetition and familiarity generated by shared experience and multiple requirements to share conjures a safe environment for creative search. Here familiarity

and its attendant contempt, works in the favor of creativity. Just as important as breaking the ice and repetition, is the requirement to create. Given a temporal element in the Creative Pulse the expectation of creating on a daily basis helps develop a habit as well as providing practice. Mastery does not come without work.

The work of making art, though, provides the forum of greatest theoretical promise particularly, if I attach some emotional, visceral affect to the piece. I feel while I work. Not only do I feel it, but I engage my rational Prefrontal Cortex through imagination and logic.

Trying to find this hybrid of emotions and logic, or, better yet, an orchestration of these

thought patterns, fascinates me. Curiously, something about

whimsy holds a key to my inner struggle. Something in the

aesthetic or something about the juxtaposition with the

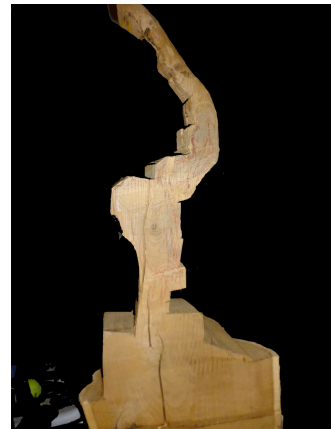
facades I erect in my life, Marine Corps/pseudo intellectual,

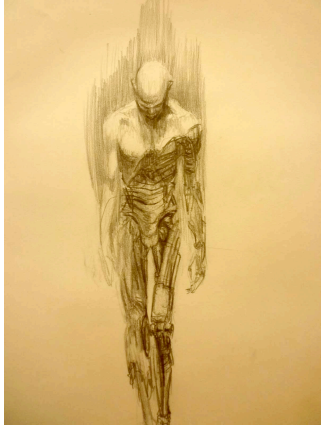
versus child-like sensibilities keeps tugging at the strings in

my mind. Maybe I am just whimsical and have always been. Afraid, however, to show

whimsy to the world, I cover it in heavy content, in words dripping in profundity, and in

actions of deadly seriousness. I do not know, but finding out hints at a spectacular journey.





To date, the bias against emotionalism manifests itself in my art. I try to be deep, to have meaning because that is the mantra of fine art. This show to a large extent typifies this desire. Academia is part of my worldview and should be part of my art. I am not sure if I can help it, even if I wanted to. However, to expand my

philosophy, to explore creativity, I think I need to step out of my comfort zone and into emotional art. The conclusion pieces in this show represent this attempt. Cliché though it might be, I use significant emotional events. I will attempt subtlety later.

#### **V. Assessment of Significance.**

Shortly after the initial acceptance of responsibility a well tended happiness takes shape. An opportunity for greater optimization materializes in deepening day to day experiences. Movies can transform into cinematographic delicacies when you understand the references. Life, too, gains many varied colors by study. The innumerable gifts of accumulated knowledge from attitude adaptability to context sophistication belie the necessity for careful consideration.

Knowing how I did something, and what methods of thought I applied inform the way into the unknown. New collaborations of the tools I already use and their effectiveness streamline the creative process. Evaluation of how I conceived of last face I drew, knowing

that different groupings of shapes will lead to different concentrations of style, I constantly suffuse my artistic journey with new and sometimes contrary material in order to initiate growth. Piaget believed in a discontinuous childhood development according to Santrock's book on "Educational Psychology".<sup>50</sup> I think he was wrong. Born of conjecture on my part, a model built on accumulated knowledge combined with an information inflow rate of nearly similar proportions would yield similar stages based on human cognitive ability for absorption, without disconnecting one thought stream from another. In the development of knowledge, the interplay of theory and experiment set up a fundamental need for creativity, particularly creativity set in the functional framework specified by the nature of our cognitive architecture and the interlocking strands of an accumulating knowledge base.

I sleep, I wonder, and I walk at the beginning of an art project. Often there are too many variables to consider all at once. The peripatetic wandering gives me space and time for imagining. Later as the project progresses I find certain areas where I need to find an inspirational fix. Sometimes a mechanical system of which I have little experience fills the requirement, sometimes the application of a skill I have mastered by am applying in a novel way suffices. Other areas require tedious rote effort. I plan time for those tasks during

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<sup>50</sup> Santrock, John W., *Educational Psychology*, McGraw Hill, Boston, 2001..

periods when I can engage in multiple tasks. The more I am in tune with my abilities and how they function together the more efficiently and satisfactorily I create.

Creativity allows for expansion beyond current understanding, provided the individual adheres to the principles of uncertainty. Because creativity involves predominantly divergent thought, trying to encapsulate all aspects leaves room in every explanatory sentence for holes and errors. To mitigate this difficulty, I approach theories attempting to quantify creativity in a general to specific manner. This way the most general statements although saliently anemic are broad enough to include most possible outcomes. In reverence to Ockham's razor, I will omit certain tangential arguments.

Borrowing a visual from Lewis Carroll's consideration of rabbit holes, a way to manage my creativity emerges. Metaphorically, one can pursue the depths of the rabbit hole by adding and perfecting concepts close to those already known. Conversely, when one reaches a plateau or dead end using this narrow line of pursuit, expansion into unknown arenas via imaginings beyond the scope of personal knowledge and occasionally, all knowledge suggests new directions. Pursuit of perfect realism in drawing, for example, has always stoked my artistic fires. Yet, after attaining competence in shading and proportion my drawings still lack something. Focusing on composition as the culprit, I found that making my drawings better relied on understanding abstraction. How the lights

and darks played off of each other, and how the entire surface was treated altered and improved the aesthetics of the presentation. I could not pursue realism without expanding into a field nearly completely opposite. To balance, more precisely, a seesaw between fleshing out the skeletons of accepted concepts and the acquisition of new ideas beyond the bounds of common understanding yields a systematic path of advancement.

Expansion starts the process. Some imaginative leaps establish new theory to explore. Ideas, both natural and nurtured, form basic foundations on which the mind begins to work. Initial ideas tend to set some systemic assumptions which affect future constructions. Sometimes these parameters are capricious, the subtle errors may be amended or developed into the source of fundamental collapse. Time subjects pedagogical structures to the human preoccupation with power. The perpetual arguments of tradition and change influence the trajectory of history. Increased time aids tradition and occasionally prevents the demolition of faulty towers. On the other hand, too much change can squelch a concept before maturity. In all things; balance.

After developing a floor for a concept and sweeping its contents out until boredom, necessity, or curiosity shifts focus toward new challenges, people begin building on the knowledge they uncovered. How they build says something about how they think specifically, but also about the ways construction can take place in general. Blocks of

knowledge may be stacked one on top of another. A simple mathematical example places one brick on top of another brick allowing the mason to count two bricks. A slightly more sophisticated approach exists in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. One brick with two laid on top of them equals three bricks. Intellectual units can be substituted as the variables. I read one piece of information, and then I read another piece of information related to the first. I can now combine them, or place them next to each other, or store them for future use. As unremarkable as laying another brick the slow accumulation builds mighty fortresses of knowledge. Conversely, an engineer of some repute may seek to build a structure from which to hang other layers of knowledge. Teasing out the steel framework of concepts needed for this process tests the limits of the question 'why' in the search for the essence. With the framework completed specific cases may fill in the gaps.

The Constitution of the United States illustrates this format. A written structure, it combined the knowledge of 150 years of self-rule with all the examples of government, ancient to contemporary, into a structure that is deliberately vague. It explained who could mint money, but not how. The Constitution defined the branches of government but allowed room for the executive to establish advisors and programs on its own based on specific and sometimes local needs. Written plans often provide this scaffolding, as they

represent plans of rational thought. Attending school and studying provide cognitive frameworks based on the work of others. Even Isaac Newton acknowledge that he achieved by standing on the shoulders of those who came before him.<sup>51</sup> Veritable leaps in idea construction, through metacognition, as well as developments of more sophisticated methods of filling in interstitial space make the manufacture of knowledge more efficient.

New perceptions afforded by the additional height permit new ideas about the nature of knowledge. That view may challenge the methods of construction which attained the current altitude allowing the perception. Eventually, a builder reaches a physical limit. Often a person will determine that continued construction is possible only if the knowledge base is expanded. The tower of constructed thought needs a bigger foundation. Rationally, one understands that early intellectual development lacks sophistication. Returning to enlarge the foundational knowledge the learner may use more advanced techniques recently obtained to spur future growth.

Finally, the chaos chance creates effects the composition of knowledge built by people. Without luck the five minutes in battle of Midway which proved the turning point for naval operations in the Pacific during WWII, might have had a very different outcome.

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<sup>51</sup> Greene, Brian, *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory*, Vintage Books, NY, 2000.



Without chance, Chicago or London might not have burned.<sup>52</sup> Whole civilizations can trace their existence to some pivotal moment in their history.

While turning points pivot the decisive trajectory of events, slow hard work shoulders the weight of humanity. The patterns of the continuum of growth show where constraints bottle-neck and then move apart.<sup>53</sup> Both pivotal events and accumulated hard work need consideration along with the initial states and permissiveness of the environment to get an understanding of why one person's constructed intellect looks the way it does.<sup>54</sup> A person naturally disposed to tolerance, but caught in the middle of the holocaust during their formative years might have a very different outlook than a person growing rich on the backs of slavery. The variables of both hereditary and random DNA compounded with circumstances brought by time and place cast each soul in different albeit occasionally similar directions.

The concept of work in making art to some seems pedestrian. The traditional assumption touting originality springing from artists without effort vastly simplifies and dishonors the process of creativity. Artistic greatness may start from flashes of inspiration,

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<sup>52</sup> Cowley, Robert, et.al., *The Collected What If: Eminent Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*, G. B. Putnam and Sons, NY, 2001

<sup>53</sup> Roberts, J.M., *History of the World, Updated*, Blackstone Audio, 2007..

<sup>54</sup> Robinson, Ken, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*, Penguin Publishing, NY, 2009..

but hard work forms them into a coherent whole. In fact a lifetime of effort may precede the inspiration. A life specifically nurtured for such sparks of brilliance. In Malcolm Gladwell's book "Outliers" the author references a study on musicians conducted by the psychologists K. Anders Erickson and associates, which distinguished the astonishing correlation between virtuosos and 10,000 hours of practice.<sup>55</sup> Art requires effort before, during, and after a project. Fortunately, this makes art accessible to anyone with the will power to put in the hours.

Another pragmatic revelation regards the focus of thoughtful pursuit. For a long time I explored the extremes of whatever idea or philosophy struck my fancy. Pursuit of the extremes, the constant effort to look deeper and deeper into a subject, lead to some interesting fundamental conclusions, but endless pursuit of the extremes does not complete the story nor even embody the most interesting or sophisticated part. When approaching the edges of subjects, the premise and the future become somewhat fuzzy and often irrelevant. In the middle, where the laws of the space-time continuum do not significantly warp life nor does religious fervor render existence obsolete, a beautiful complexity swarms. Finding the symphonic understructure of life in the teeming masses of the middle promises even more fruitful discoveries.

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<sup>55</sup> Gladwell, Malcolm, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Little, Brown, and Company, NY, 2008.

## **VI. Conclusion.**

The pursuit of happiness aimed to codify my philosophical wanderings. Having divined a course through the uncertain waters of science, philosophy, and religion, I sailed to lands of simplistic, yet flexible resolutions regarding purpose. Optimization of joy, where joy simultaneously holds individualistic and social concerns, required the identification of the key to happiness as well as the means to maintain it. Along the way certain parameters of the nature of bliss adjusted perspective and commissioned continued research. Gratitude needs to be practiced to sustain joy. Perspective shifts and brain chemistry affects the efficacy of the discipline. Believing in ones aptitude, understanding the process of educational development and knowing when to work hard all help me decipher the myriad of opportunities present in the ever changing pinnacles of joy. Finally, long-term vision accompanied by the nurturing spirit of feedback loops amplifies the achievement of a lifetime goal of maximal joy. With such uncertainty interlaced with this philosophy, chaos must seep in as the only exception to the adage there are always exceptions.

Sometimes when researching a subject for a long time I decide, 'well, I probably have enough to start writing'. This solidifies my resolve. Ironically, and rather typically, as I finished the paper I came across new and pertinent data. This data, encapsulated in

several books – Jonah Lehrer’s, Kwame Appiah’s, and Sean B. Carroll’s books in particular- blithely solved great swaths of my conclusion making major portions of my work superfluous<sup>56</sup>. Jonah Lehrer wrote a book about “How We Decide”, and while expounding on recent neurological studies he extolled the virtues of the emotional mind. Asserting and supporting with neurological research and double blind studies the capacity for the emotional mind to quantify, analyze, and direct appropriate action more efficiently in particular circumstances than the rational Prefrontal Cortex thus demolishing my paradigm. The dopamine dumping centers of emotional intelligence makes better decisions concerning learned patterns with a myriad of variables than its rational counterpart. He goes on to purport the application of these two systems, emotional and rational, in concert creates a synergy far exceeding the abilities of either independent source of thought.<sup>57</sup> This symphonic attitude coincides with my artistic view which delights in the intelligent patterns in life at both the macro and micro levels, at the extremes and particularly in the middle.

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<sup>56</sup> Lehrer, Jonah, *How We Decide*, Mariner Books, Boston, MA, 2010.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony, *Experiments in Ethics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2008.

Carroll, Sean B., *Endless Forms Most Beautiful: The New Science of EvoDevo and the Making of the Animal Kingdom*. W.W. Norton and Co. 2005.

<sup>57</sup> Lehrer, Jonah, *How We Decide*, Mariner Books, Boston, MA, 2010.

I am pleased with the information. I concur with Lehrer's assumption that neurological science remains in its infancy, but the insights already gained refine, turn, and crop my perspectives of life and the mind significantly. Of particular interest, the Prefrontal Cortex - the center of rational thought - also appears to produce creative solutions. In this area, overlays of dissimilar ideas allow the manipulation of connecting data as well as divergent thought patterns. Creativity forms quickly as patterns blend and variables compare in the brine of rational forces. The result occasionally feels like an epiphany according to Lehrer.<sup>58</sup> I want to know how 'feeling' interacts with rational creativity. In orchestrating different cognitive systems how does creativity develop? Can rules or boundaries, which explain or constrain the process of creativity, be defined? If definitions develop, can quantifiable actions be applied to these definitions? Can creativity be systemized?

Creativity comprises the latest attempt in a discipline of happiness to uncover meaning. While mastery of the Optimization of Joy through the maintenance of gratitude never rests, the pursuit progresses towards creative development. Temptation to break this down into life stages making my efforts pedestrian abound, but something more dances on my intuition. Something in creativity, in communication, in social requirements,

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid Lehrer.

and legacies rests at the heart of meaning. I hold no illusion that I will codify some grand unified theory, but in the wondering lurks quite a beautiful adventure.

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