<u>**Dedication**</u>

Dedicated to my two wonderful daughters, who inspire me more than they will ever know.

Dedicated as well to all those who hold the line against chaos, especially those who risk--and sometimes sacrifice--their lives, physical health, and peace of mind, in the service of our country, all that it has stood for, and will yet, as we lead the creation of a better world.

One man I knew—SSgt. Josh Hagar. May he rest in peace, and may this book further the cause in some way for which he gave his life.

Acknowledgements

This book is a result of an on-going, life-long effort to wrestle successfully with issues of philosophical importance. Consequently, it may come as a surprise that the most proximate consequential influence on my work—on my ability to do my work—has been a program of physical fitness, called CrossFit.

Creation is a struggle, struggles are pain, and CrossFit has enabled me to redefine what I am able to endure and push through. This has been enormously helpful, and I would therefore like to thank Coach Greg Glassman, his wife Lauren, and the CrossFit community as a whole for their support and, it must be said, tolerance.

In this regard, my other significant formative factor was the University of Chicago Divinity School, which taught me that thinking is hard work, and there are no shortcuts.

Prologue

Years ago, while pondering the depths of the decay in our philosophical certainties, I happened in my mind upon an image, which has remained with me.

For most college graduates, you will have been exposed to ideas which state in effect that there is no up and down. We float, as individuals, like tiny bubbles in an endless dark ocean, unable to see where the surface is, or even if there is one. Am I upside down, or is that person over there? We cannot know.

Some people curse the darkness, and out of sheer frustration curse their neighbors. If they cannot know what is true, then all is lost, all is futile.

Others, with more wisdom, see a lot of others like them, and realize that we are all alone together. We may not be able to know which way is up, but we know in what way we relate to one another. By giving to one another, by using one another as reference points, we can feel less alone.

And then the darkness is not so bad. It is warmer, and a little light intrudes.

Our task is to expand that light. We can't know what will happen, but love feels good, and that much is real.

Introduction

If Innocence—childlike wonder and joy--were a drug, would you take it? How much would you pay for it?

Would you reject it with contempt, well knowing the hurt that being vulnerable can cause?

If you could forget all you know now—and forget that you forgot--and go back to that time, maybe when you were 6 years old, and you got just what you wanted for Christmas, and couldn't imagine being any happier, would you do it? Just for one minute, to remember something pure without the dross of long adult years?

Do you, now, sometimes hate that kid for being stupid, and not knowing what you know now, how the world "really" works? Do you sometimes, now, hate naivete and idealism in others?

Perfect innocence cannot, in all but the mentally feeble, last past early childhood. Soon enough, we come to know that the world is often cruel and unfair, that pain is frequent, and the meaning behind it unclear.

For some, their religious faith strengthens them in adhering to ideals of love, compassion, and the pursuit of wisdom. For some, it is an effort to help the less fortunate that compels their actions.

For many, the only conclusion to be drawn is that we are all all alone, and it is best not to be weak, and best to seek known realities, such as pleasure and power. These things are concrete. They are tangible.

Many people go lost. They drift, not knowing quite what they want, or why. They keep hoping one day the answer will come to them, but it rarely does.

My purpose here is to help you the reader rationalize doing the right thing, regardless of your starting point. Pursuing, in effect, an enlightened self interest. I will argue that doing so is the best path to happiness, and that no matter how corrupt you may consider yourself to be—or how Good—that the path that leads to bliss in this world is never ending, and can always be trod further and higher. You can always be happier, and can always be a better person.

My method is to develop a chain of logic, coupled with many discrete ideas I will argue to be true. In order to derive benefit from this book, it is not necessary to agree with, or even fully understand, every step in the chain.

Many, many of these ideas are potentially life-changing, and merit considerable contemplation. They are "deep", I believe, and I honestly believe there are probably ten or more seed ideas for other books in here. You could, in fact, simply scan random pages, and on most pages you will find something worth pondering.

In the course of developing my argument—my rationalization—I will address many questions of fundamental importance that people ask, and rarely receive adequate answers to. I won't necessarily call this out, but you should sometimes get a flash of insight that was perhaps unexpected. Go with these flashes. Follow your own Muse.

I sometimes seem to impress people as being intelligent. Believe me when I say that there is no idea in this book that you the reader cannot potentially develop further than I can. Interact with the text. Argue with me, or—if you agree with me—take the logic or the emotion of one of my points farther than I did. Expand it further.

Or contract it further. You may look at the sum total of what I have to say, and draw slightly different conclusions. This is OK. This is my intention. I don't want people to be more like me. That would be ponderously dull. I want you to be more happy in being—really creating, and recreating—You.

In fact, this is the process of Goodness: developing your own uniqueness. All bad people are alike, but Good people are good in their own ways. Somewhere along the way this got confused.

Given this, I really don't offer concrete advice—certainly not dogmatic and specific commands--on any large moral issues, although I do offer a few opinions, in the context of showing a perceptual process of the type I'm trying to teach.

What I mainly want to do is create an explanatory rubric, a system of thought tools, that --like hammers and saws and nails--allows you to build your own thought structures, your own perceptions.

I'm not going to try to convert you to any stance with respect to Religion. If I have done my job properly, this text should be equally useful to Christians, Muslims, atheists and agnostics alike. My intention is to bring people together, without diluting their fundamental identities. In fact, my hope to help enable Christians to more perfectly realize the ends of their own faith; likewise with Muslims, and likewise with Jews.

For atheists and agnostics, this system might be one of the better ethical frameworks you will come across, that does not depend for its validity on any metaphysical beliefs. At some points, my interpretations of current science may make you a bit uncomfortable—at least the believers in the doctrine of "No God"—but as I will show, true, healthy skepticism is best expressed through curiosity, not hostility to new information.

Regardless of our beliefs about how our universe is put together, my hope is that most of us can agree, at the end of the book, that the happiness that matters is best found through struggle—through the complex, richly textured character and sense of self one develops in struggle--and that the direct pursuit of happiness alone leads almost inevitably to misery. This truth is perennial, but benefits from regular watering and fertilization.

For example, is love easy? Perhaps passion can compel effort, but love is effort nonetheless. It is finding the energy and direction in the eyes of another—finding them, as they really are, connecting with them--as unique people--and in so doing releasing your aloneness, at least for a time.

It is not something designed to calm your mind without exertion, and not something you can consume, only create. It is something you give, and in the process of the giving only, are able to honestly take.

As I will be arguing, true joy is best found in the quiet dignity of facing life with courage, tenderness, and persistence. That joy is the best purpose of life I can come up with, and it is tied inextricably with Goodness, as I am using the term.

The best structure that has occurred to me, in expressing my large, large number of ideas (1,000 pages in Word) in a manageable space, is that of sutras. Taken from the ancient Indian language of Sanskrit, the word sutra conveys "verse", with the difference from, say, a Christian Biblical usage, in that the originals have extensive literature associated with them, in the form of commentaries.

Someone will have written, in this tradition, a set of aphorisms or suppositions, and developed them approximately in a line, in such a way that a coherent philosophy is expressed. For example, there is a Yogasutra. Generally, this body of thought is pithy to the point of being opaque.

After the initial exposition, commentaries are written, and then commentaries are written on the commentaries. A relatively simple set of verses can in this way acquire, over many centuries, a voluminous body of associated ideas, often contradictory or disputative, much like our own Common Law tradition.

Likewise, I myself have been accused of being the ideational embodiment of "Brownian motion", which is the random but constant movement of molecules in any liquid or gas.   This is true in that my focus and patterns of interest are varying, deep and broad. This is inaccurate in that my thoughts are in fact ordered by recurring interests, and recurring conclusions.

Be that as it may, my system here has been to create a skeleton, a framework, upon which I can "hang" a vast quantity of discrete ideas, which will gradually acquire form. It is not dissimilar to the process of constructing a building, with the understanding that interior remodeling will be needed from time to time.

I will (have) write my own commentaries, but my plan is also to accept feedback from readers. This is not Wikipedia—where anyone of any or no qualification stands on equal footing with anyone else--and I am the sole editorial judge, but I expect changes to be made. The great virtue of publishing with lulu.com is I can change the text constantly, and still have it printed and sold.

This fits my personality, and it also underscores an important point: people want Truth to be constant, not moving, but it isn't constant, and it can't be pinned down.

Truth, I think, in the psychology of most, represent rest. In the whir of motion that is life, it is an excruciating and tiring demand to constantly be wondering about what is True. Most people just want to make a decision, and be done with it. This is rest. You are a Christian. You are an atheist. You don't care. All of these are a form of rest. It is in constantly reopening these issues—dealing with constant and changing ambiguities--that most people go nuts.

Be that as it may, we can think of Truth in two ways. The first is intellectually, as in "What is Truth?", or "How do we know Truth?", or even "Does Truth exist?".

Those are formal questions. They exist within a body of procedure and history, and define the discipline of philosophy. I will not be reviewing this history, and am frankly not qualified to do so. In any event, it's been done, by Will Durant among others.

What interests me is functional: what does this notion of Truth DO for people? What does it ALLOW them to do? In short, what emotions does it allow them to express, what ordering effect does this notion have on their behavior?

It seems to me it tells them two things: where they are relationally, and what to do. These are historically the domains of religion, but really need to be addressed in any complete system.

The first relates to identity. Your truth tells you who are and your place in the universe. It includes your family and community identity, your understanding of proper relations with others, both within and external to your group, and how the Universe came into being, and how it is put together. "You", as you understand yourself, from the momentary flux of emotions that shows clearly that You change constantly in small ways, up to highly intellectualized understandings of things like what stars are, and how God is (Gods are, for some), if he exists.

The second, what to do, relates to morality in all its forms. It relates to proper employment, how hard you should work, how you should treat people around you, and what you believe should happen to people who transgress these codes.

Both relate to what is Sacred, and both are seen in all known cultures.

In this respect, an often overlooked fact in analyzing religions, particularly those of others, is the nearly universal reinforcement of belief through ritual. For most religions, the ritual is by far the biggest expressed part of their faith. Sacred stories—which we as scholars read in translations—are normally only fully comprehensible when understood within a ritual context. They are told at certain times, for certain reasons. If you fail to take these into account, then you have missed something fundamental.

Ultimately, though, one must see what is expressed through religious and other ritual as indicative of ideas. Ideas create actions. What we hold sacred in our minds dictates what we do, and is the means by which we assess what others do.

The Sacred is, in short, the principle factor in social order.

But in the last 200 years or so, what ought properly to be held sacred has been brought into severe question. Historically, of course, the sacred had to do with religious beliefs. During the Enlightenment, humanists were able in many cases to substitute Reason for religious belief, as something universal, and God-given.

(In my view, a fair and orderly democratic election is an example of an Enlightenment ritual.)

The focus on reason gave way, in part, and to varying extents, to the glorification of Experience, and Passion, and Compassion, and noble suffering, and tragic death.

This movement is Romanticism, as perhaps best expressed by Lord Byron, who was openly transgressive of traditional morality, and who died in the course of fighting for the liberation of Greece, in much the same way people of similar temperament would fight and die in the 30's fighting for the Communists (although not called that then) in the Spanish Civil War.

Today, my sense is that America is an Enlightenment nation in its ideals, but largely Romantic in its expressed tendencies. We appear to have given up on sobriety and self restraint as fundamental, sacred, virtues, and instead live for pleasure, and self fulfillment.

Before being accused of being a Church Lady obsessed with Satan Claus, I would like to complete the circle (you will see a lot of these; they are a bit like driving the countryside rather than the highway, in that you get to the same place, but you see a lot more) I started in discussing the style of this text.

In our modern Academy, and among most modern intellectuals, the possibility of a rationalistic, universal Truth has been rejected. What remains is the sacrality of passion, specifically compassion.

Within this world, all narratives—which would include all art, literature, science, history, and writing or expression of any sort—are broken, to the extent that they claim to reflect unwavering truths. A lot of time is spent showing how they are broken.

I'm going to roll with this. I'll admit it: my text too is broken. I broke it, and have to believe in any event that there are presumably subtexts I haven't considered.

However, coming up on the other side of that water obstacle, I will point out that if ALL narratives are broken, so is that of Deconstruction (aka Postmodernism), which is the word most often used for this habit of certain classes of academics. I am going to use their idiom to destroy or weaken their idiom.

If nothing is true, then that statement—"nothing is true"--is not true.
If we posit that everything BUT that statement is untrue, then we have developed a rational system based on our assumption of the truth of the statement that "nothing is true".

How, one wonders though, would one go about proving this? Is this not more of an emotional decision to give up on the search, than an empirically and rationally defensible position?

This is a neat little gimmick, but it reveals, I think, the very real fact that we cannot give up on trying to be rational, since rationality is the best gift humanity has given itself (or been given) in all of known time.

You have to have principles. The principle of No Principle is still a principle. So you may as well dedicate some effort to doing the thing right, or as well as you can.

In my case, I am going to posit that movement is universal, and Truth is positional. What is true in one time and place may not be true in another time and place. That doesn't make it less true, since we don't live in the abstract. We live in a place where we must continually decide what to do, and our notion at that moment of truth is what directs us.

What is True is what is useful, and what is useful is that which furthers our ends.

I call this basic pattern of thought **Telearchy**—by which I mean an order based upon desired ends--and I am proposing it as a solution to many of the pointless gyrations we are currently seeing among people mistakenly who call themselves professionals—my principle but not exclusive target being those who use the Humanities to further political ends which decrease human freedom and happiness--and whose only output over the last 40—maybe 100, 200 or more--years in most cases has been depressing failure.

Given this, this book—my Truth—is bound to change, and I see no reason not to allow it to. This is likely confusing to many, who think of texts as something that is done, and then analyzed forever after. They want stationary targets. But living things move.

(Just as a fun little exercise, imagine we hired a group of talented writers to periodically change small parts in major novels, and placed them in libraries throughout the world in varying forms. On first glance, it might seem like a train wreck, but if we posit that art is supposed to be useful—defined below--then such a thing might open up hitherto unanticipated perceptual possibilities. What if we made copies of major art works, hung them out in the open and allowed members of the public to make changes?)

"Philosopher X wrote such and such in such and such a year: what do you think?" To me, this common process resembles nothing so much as an autopsy. How could so and so 200 or 2,000 years ago have been able to comment in

detail on something happening today? How can we even imaginatively put ourselves in that person's place well enough to truly understand what problems that person thought they were solving? (Plato, for example, must be understood within the context of the defeat of the Athenians in the Peloponnesian War).

Even if we accept certain general ideas as true, how do we properly contextualize what they said, here and now, without rewriting and reimagining their work? We can't. We are forced to borrow what we can, and place it in use as best we can today.

This is not a problem, though, for if we posit the existence of some form of enduring contingent Truth, then that Truth is perennial. This means it can be "reinvented"—really, rediscovered—in every age and time, but it is vastly preferable if it (or they: why posit only one Truth?) are created in the terms suitable to that time, and not those of another age, with different problems and different sensibilities.

Truth heals, in the right dosage. Both too much, and too little truth can harm "patients", and as all doctors know, they have to ask questions first.

I need to ask questions in this text. I need to solicit feedback. I need to find out what is helpful, and what is not. I need to find out what is clear, and what is fuzzy. I can only do that if I don't glaciate my words in a manner which stops all movement.

My argument here is simple: movement is universal. This applies to perception. Resistance to movement—to change—causes perceptual inflexibility. Inflexibility leads to perceptual failures, which lead to bad ideas, and bad ideas have to be compelled because they can't be sold.

Every form of stupidity, in short, leads sooner or later to violence.

 For example, Communism was and is a stupid idea.   It killed 100 million people in the 20th century. Nazism wasn't even close in terms of sheer homicidal evil. What Hitler did to the Jews, Stalin did to an entire nation—that part of the Soviet Communist Empire called the Ukraine. If history were taught accurately in our schools, Hitler would be a footnote to Stalin.

But that story has barely been told, and almost entirely ignored in our popular media. I cannot think of one movie that has done justice to the sheer scope of the brutality of Stalin and Lenin's regimes, not to mention those that followed. The story is worth telling. It would though, perhaps, conflict with the political identities of some, and one would likely be well justified in considering that most

of those who make films—here and around the world—tend to come from that class of people for whom truth-telling is problematic.

To return to my main line of thought: Stupidity—the result of a perceptual failure—results, through resistance to change, from self pity, and lack of effort.

Self pity is that emotion which discourages effort. More on this in Part 2.

One can argue that there are really three principle stages of psychological development: the rejection of self pity, the development of the ability to persevere in the face of difficulty, and the lifelong development of the ability to perceive the world and understand it operationally.

Perception here is to learn to manage, through understanding, ones own emotions; interact harmoniously with others; to understand the world and how it works; and to develop a sense of wisdom which is an intrinsic source of meaning and joy.

For me, goodness is the effect of the successful cultivation of these three principle attributes.

To feel self pity is to be stuck; to reject self pity is to move.

To quit is to stop; to persevere is to continue.

To be stuck or to stop the process of perception is to begin to fail; to begin to fail is to start a path towards violence, through bad ideas; therefore to maintain constant motion perceptually—perceptual breath—is to avoid falling into obviously flawed paths.

Mistakes, of course, are inevitable. Persisting in them is not.

From these "primary colors" can be built all of the virtues.

Courage, for example, is the combination of the Rejection of Self Pity, coupled with Perseverance. The presence or lack of fear is irrelevant. Courage is doing what needs to be done, because it needs to be done.

Love arises from all three. People who feel sorry for themselves want to be mothered, and don't exist sufficiently to give love. People who quit when things become inconvenient are more damaging than people who give nothing. And people who lack the capacity to see others as they are, and not how they want them to be—and who are still capable of accepting them—are indulging their own narcissism, with a partner.

Finally, the process of perception itself requires the Rejection of Self Pity, so one can tell oneself unpleasant truths, and it require the Persistence of continuing and dedicated effort.

I will start the book with a short but I believe powerful summation of my basic argument. I will lay out a formal definition, contextualize it, and discuss it in a high level way. Then I will begin the body of my text, which could best be viewed as supporting argumentation. I will finish with what might be termed cases studies, in which I build various systems, using the tools I have developed.

As I mentioned, the notion of sutras are a clear influence, but I will add one other: Geometry.

Baruch Spinoza—writing roughly during the Enlightenment period in European history—wrote an ethical treatise (Ethics) modeled on geometric proofs. If A, then B. If B, then C. If A, therefore, then C. That sort of thing.

This basic concept, of deducing necessary human truths from basic principles, made a significant impact on me. Ultimately, I could not grant to him full success in his enterprise, but the audacity of the effort was intriguing to me, and much of his text—many of the discrete points—were quite worthwhile on their own merits. Whether he drew his line of reason fully taut or not, it was a good read.

Likewise here, I have presented what I have tried to make a reasonably straight line, but which is in all likelihood a fairly dense thicket of related but often incompletely tied together ideas. In the manner of an antique store, you may just find yourself unexpectedly coming upon something that strikes you, and merits much more attention.

Paying such attention, in all aspects of life, is the cheapest and most rewarding investment you can make.

Follow me, dear reader, on paths less traveled, untravelled, and invisible. It isn't an adventure if its all known in advance. Lets see if we can't flush out some rabbits, chase some deer, and find a hidden and still mountain stream at the heart of it all. If I get lost, maybe you can help me.

We're all in this together.

Part 1—Goodness—an introduction

When you think of a Good person, what and who do you think of? People who donate their time to charity? Mother Teresa?

Are you good, by your own standard? Somewhat yes, somewhat no?

If you're like most people, you thought immediately of a bunch of things you meant to do, but never quite got around to. Things you would do, if you had the time. Then you thought of the many positive things you have done and continue to do, and felt better.

Maybe you thought of some decisions you've made in the past, you would prefer to forget, then you countered all of that with some better memories.

Everybody, ultimately, wants to be able to think of themselves as Good, as beneficial in some way. Dale Carnegie started his famous book "How to Win Friends and Influence People" with the story of Two Gun Crowley, who murdered a cop in cold blood for no good reason, but still thought of himself as a good person.

Even the Marquis de Sade (the very paradigm of cruelty, from whom we get the word sadism, and about whom we will talk later) wanted to pass along his ideas to humanity as a whole, as somehow liberating, as somehow helping people realize what little felicity was possible in what he viewed as a corrupt and broken world.

I will be honest: people that are moralistic, and who want to tell me what to do, make me angry, and repel me like the odor of a skunk standing on a pile of dung.

You know the people. I just had one knock on my door. I didn't answer, because they were all carrying binders full of literature and smiling much too much. Nobody can be that happy, and I don't think they were either.

At the same time we need this notion of Goodness. That word is rarely used, but we all know what it means, on some level. It symbolizes the beautiful, the pure, and all too often acquires an almost other worldly tint, like it is too refined to exist in this world filled with violence and dishonesty. It is a proper topic of children's cartoons, but not for adults.

With all the difficulties one faces in life, compromise is inevitable. Maybe we should admire saintly heroes, but it's hard being a single parent feeding two kids

to do anything but survive. Maybe you feed them mac and cheese every night because you don't have the energy for anything else. Maybe you collapse and cry sometimes from sheer exhaustion. Saints, you're sure, don't do that.

It's hard being a soldier in a war zone, and to carry through a clear cut sense of right and wrong, and unambiguous faith in everything that is done in the name of freedom. You've seen and done too much. Even if you have done your job flawlessly, it is in the nature of the fog of war that innocents sometimes die.

Quite often, in contemplating morality, what we see is a template that is clear, and unbending. We create a digital divide, and a yes/no dichotomy. If you are moral, then you do x,y, and z. You are perfectly strong, you are perfectly attuned to your duties and carry them out. You are somehow above and beyond ordinary people. You are something like the Terminator, which knows no pain, no fatigue, no fear.

And no joy, either.

People like that, when they break, break hard. They are, in my view, actually weak. Strength includes the ability to bend when needed, without breaking. It is useful.

The Chinese Taoist philosopher Chuang Tzu once wrote: "Perfect Goodness is crooked".

His teacher (scholars think) Lao Tzu once wrote: "Renounce Sainthood. It will be a thousand times better for everyone".

What should we make of this? Ought our sages not to be teaching us to perfect our virtue?

I will answer with a very short anecdote. Last night I had a few beers with a friend of mine who is a member of the Air Force Special Tactics community. He underwent two years of some of the most grueling training that exists in the American or any other military. A basic weeding process is that of "water confidence", which consists in part of swimming 50 meter repeats, underwater. All of them at some point see "The Wizard", which is that point where you are close to passing out. In many respects, it is a form of torture, designed to get rid of the quitters.

Later, in my understanding, they actually do torture them in the course of teaching them counter-interrogation skills.

He told me that his own approach to managing fear is to admit it openly. Within the past couple of weeks, he had to do a nighttime jump from 25,000 feet, and he told everybody around him he was terrified. His thought was that his teammates were depending on him, and he wanted them to know where he was at.

Then he jumped. That's the part that matters.

One of my principles—indeed a core premise of my whole argument—is that Goodness is always approximate. You can't BE good. You can't achieve Goodness.

What does a perfect Bonsai Tree look like? Is it straight? Or is it harmonious, and balanced? Is not every Bonsai Tree slightly different? Do we need, then, to pick the ONE perfect shape, the ONE tree against which all others should be compared?

Of course not. So much evil has originated from unbalanced, dogmatic constructions of Good that we have in effect reached a point in our cultural evolution where most academics working to teach our children morality in the public sphere have abandoned the notion nearly entirely, as pernicious.

For this reason, I have chosen an indirect, non-linear, systemic approach to defining Goodness. In some respects, it is "value" free, but it represents a container which shapes whatever content you choose to put in there, in beneficial ways.

Specifically, I have isolated three values which, when considered sacred, and treated as such, will, I believe, allow people to become more completely themselves, more unique, and yet also more complete members of the human community.

Those values are the Rejection of Self Pity, Perseverance, and Perceptual movement (or more precisely Perceptual Breathing, as I will define it.)

In my view, they are best understood as combining together to create the effect, the Emergent Property, of Goodness. True happiness, in turn, is understood as an Emergent Property of Goodness.

Formally:

Goodness is an emergent property of the free interaction of the principles of

1) **The Rejection of Self Pity**
2) **Perseverance**
3) **Perceptual Breathing**

Qualitative Joy is an emergent property of Goodness.

Corrollary: the potential depth of a principle is defined by its potential breadth. Depth is defined as the latent complexity created by the movements of the system, and is equal to the potential information contained within the system.

Since these principle relate to what all people think, feel, and do, I believe they are the most general possible. They apply both to the individual--which is the smallest unit of consciousness of which we know—and to social orders of all levels of size and complexity.

This implies that, being broad, these principles are deep. Being deep, they are informationally--and therefore qualitatively--rich.

What do I mean by this?

As some may recognize, I am referencing a body of work summarized by James Gleick in his classic book **Chaos**. In that book he described the development of mathematic models that depicted things like weather. The process turned out to be much more complex than anticipated.

When computers were first deployed for scientific use, one of the first areas of investigation was weather. The then prevailing thinking was that weather was a linear system (x causes y which causes z, reliably), so that in theory all they needed was vastly increased computational ability to be able to predict the weather into the indefinite future based upon sufficient initial numerical inputs.

However, what they instead discovered was the so-called "Butterfly Effect"—technically "sensitive dependence on initial conditions"—which in effect meant that very small changes in parameters led to massive, non-proportional changes in outcomes. They had thought that if temperature, for example, varied by say 4%, the result would be plus or minus 4%. Instead, they found they could achieve 100% variance with that small change, for non-linear, unclear reasons. This was Chaos.

Digging deeper, they found that they could still model chaotic systems mathematically, approximately, because behind the apparent "chaos" there were yet more latent recurring patterns of order. In the stock market, for example,

we can't say with certainty exactly when it will go up or down, but we know that on average it goes up. It is ordered, just not over the short term.

Just as one can map out stock prices over the last 100 years, one can develop visual portraits of most chaotics systems, that show recurring patterns. One famous one, the Lorentz Attractor, even looked like a butterfly.

Thus, although chaotic systems never trace exactly the same path twice, they are still somewhat ordered. Patterns emerge, which are referred to as "Strange Attractors". Such attractors, in my understanding, can be considered Emergent Properties.

Order, in other words, emerges from chaos, and cannot be understood as the linear result of the sum of its parts. It is a higher level order that can be described, but not precisely predicted. This order is "negentropic", which is to say it is an order that apparently flies in the face of known physical laws, which state that normally systems tend to DECREASE in order with unchecked movement:

"Systems with emergent properties or emergent structures may appear to defy entropic principles and the second law of thermodynamics, because they form and increase order despite the lack of command and central control. This is possible because open systems can extract information and order out of the environment." **http://wapedia.mobi/en/Emergence#6**.

In my argument, then, these three values, combined together and randomly, work to create virtue and happiness.

This virtue and happiness is inherently more complex than linear understanding of Goodness, which largely consist of external conformity to behavioral norms of varying complexions and hues.

There is more information—or quality (I will use the two terms interchangeably)—in joy than in sadness, and more quality in Goodness than evil, as I will define it.

Joy is expansive. It can be amplified through connecting with the experience of others. It is energizing, and organizing. The highest form of joy is the most potentially expansive, because that is the broadest possible application, which in turn yields the greatest potential depth, and qualitative richness.

The purpose of our lives is to increase our own qualitative joy, and a principle means of doing that is helping to increase the qualitative joy of others. Through

love, in the sense I use it, of wanting what is genuinely best for others, working for it, and deriving pleasure from success.

Goodness represents, in my view, a solution to the problem of pain. Although I will discuss it further in Part 2, I would like to briefly outline my argument.

No matter how poor or rich, how fortunate in our parents or cursed, all of use have challenges in life. In overcoming these challenges, historically our social orders gave us sacred beliefs, which were in effect tools—or weapons—against the dark anomies of facing injustice, heartbreak, physical suffering, and death. What, for example, was chivalry, but a sacred code for which the noble fought and died?

Typically, the sacred was found in religious beliefs. It was what created merit in the willing endurance of pain.

Through complex social processes I won't get into at the moment, our faith has been greatly weakened. Our family structures are collapsing (what else to make of 50% + divorce rates), and the question of what to believe in has become inordinately difficult. Unambiguous answers are rare at universities, and in my view this failure of what might be termed our pain-reduction systems manifests clearly in well documented, widespread, and growing rates of depression:

"Major depression is the No.1 psychological disorder in the western world. It is growing in all age groups, in virtually every community, and the growth is seen most in the young, especially teens. At the rate of increase, it will be the 2nd most disabling condition in the world by 2020, behind heart disease." http://www.clinical-depression.co.uk/Depression_Information/facts.htm

Why is this? We have conquered so many pains, so many ills that were thought to be the causes of human misery. We have developed technologies to provide light, heat, cooling, safe food, easy transportation, and freedom from war. We have largely conquered through sanitation, vaccination, and antibiotics most of the diseases that killed entire generations of our forebears, who lived incredibly miserable, short lives.

What has changed, in my view is our perceptual relation to pain. Pain, now, is considered aberrational. If we encounter difficulty, it is a systemic violation of the principle that we are meant to be happy, and it is only the pains of life that prevent it (nod to Garth Wood there). Solutions proposed are greater wealth, and drugs to ease our own sensitivity to difficulty.

My belief, on the contrary, is that pain operates, systemically, as a goad to qualitative growth. It is what stirs the pot, and compels the movement that leads to systemic complexity and adaptation.

Provided people learn the lessons and are not thereby overwhelmed.

Marco Bischoff, in his book Biophotonen, offers a very elegant model of evolution, using an illustration which differentiates systemic chaos and coherence. He maps a line showing how fixed structures must sometimes go through periods of breaking down, in order to emerge on a higher level, in much the manner of a caterpillar, which literally turns to mush in the process of becoming a butterfly. On the graph, you see the line wiggling above and below the F=1 line (where F represents the threshold between order and chaos).

Pain is an entropic force. It tears down structures in you. If you then choose to rebuild them, they will become more complex, more refined, and better. Pain happens, you go below the line, and then rebuilding happens, and you go back above the line, altered in the process. For this to happen requires energy, and it is in my view no accident that one of the words Aristotle used for happiness was energeia.

This, too, is the basic notion of the materialistic version of evolution seen in Darwinism. It is precisely the struggle to survive that enables progressively more complex forms to emerge. Darwin himself believed to have uncovered in this mechanism the basic "thought process" [my phrase and my quotes] of God, in creating a world with so much obvious violence and apparently pointless pain.

Given this, we are missing wonderful opportunities to enrich ourselves. It's a waste that dwarfs whatever we may or may not be doing to our natural resources.

And this waste results not from some genetic mutation in the human race, and not from increased difficulties, at least materially. It results from IDEAS that are in my view misguided—even though in many cases well-intentioned—and just plain wrong.

The process of thinking will, therefore, get considerable attention.

We can build something better, something beautiful. I've seen it in my dreams, and the starting place, for me, and hopefully for you, is here.

I hope you enjoy the next section. I have done my best to make it clear, but my own mind is also somewhat chaotic, and I seem to work best when I let the

circles and gyrations run their course. They always cover roughly the same material, but I would be hard pressed to do it the same way twice.

Part 2—Goodness, the argument

1. Our lives consist of perception and experience.

Commentary 1: "Life" is a reification of the input obtained from our eyes, ears, dermal and muscular nerve endings, tongue, and nose. If there are additional senses, they are generally obscured by the others, and it is to these 5 main senses that we look to learn about ourselves and our world.

Our "Self" consists in a means of interacting with the world. I see my Self in my mind as my remembered (consciously, or latently) history, current experience, and plans. "Life" and "Self" both arise in sensation. Both are constructions, per postulate 3.

Commentary 2: In the Buddhist text, The Heart Sutra, it is written

"Form does not differ from emptiness; emptiness does not differ from form. Form itself is emptiness; emptiness itself is form. So, too, are the feelings, cognition, formation, and consciousness."

What to make of this? Clearly, here we see implied the famous "No self" (Anatta in Pali) doctrine. If the self is a form, it is also not a form. Feelings have form, but they are also lacking in form. Consciousness has form, but is also lacking in form, empty.

We tend to think of ourselves as unitary wholes. In many respects, this is a sanity preserving fiction. When you are drunk, or low on blood sugar, and act out in an angry fashion, is that you? Have you ever said to someone, this is not who I am?

Are you more yourself when you are depressed or happy? When you are neither of the above? If you didn't eat for 2 weeks, would you be the same you you are today?

A great many of the things that prevent progress, which prevent the dissolution of one state in favor of another, are tied to fixed conceptions of who we "are".

In contemplating texts such as this, one must understand that the intent is not necessarily to build a lasting truth, but to offer a contingent truth, that aims to render you able to absorb a further truth. In order to build up a vessel fit for the highest possible happiness, you must be willing to abandon your current shape. For this reason, form is also emptiness. It is something that can be abandoned, and having been abandoned, can be reformed.

This relates to the notion of Reversibility, discussed below. As Ruthy Alon said: "Your stability is as good as your willingness to risk and lose it, trusting yourself to reach stability again in a different position."

2. **<u>We are conditioned in our perceptions</u>**. We appear—to the extent we can determine—to be affected in the content of our experience by a number of factors:
    a. Chemistry expressed through biology;
    b. Past experience, as reimagined through memory;
    c. Past experience, as retained through systemic behavioral adaptations to both acute and chronic stimuli.
    d. Capacity for capturing and retaining present experience consciously;
    e. Imaginative capacity;
    f. As yet unknown (unobserved by me) factors. These must be posited since, as humans, we cannot comment from a qualitatively higher level on ourselves.

Commentary 1: We do what makes sense because action is needed for survival, happiness, and all states in between.

It is not necessary to conflate the mind and the brain. The brain can be viewed without theoretical contradiction or insult as an antenna for thoughtwaves originating in a differently material space. This would explain the effects of drugs and brain lesions on apparent human mental capacities. Solid arguments for the existence of a soul were made over 100 years ago, and remain unrefuted, to my understanding, although of course much maligned. (1).

It is not necessary to conflate experience with reality. As Bishop Berkeley argued, since all evidence of "reality" comes to us through our senses, we are defined by and, possibly, confined by this limitation. When I dream that I am drunk in my dream, and wake up sober in a new dream, then wake up sober again in my bed, can I be certain that my awakening process necessarily stops here?

An appeal to material perception can only be made within the domain of supposedly material perception. If it is flawed, it can still be flawed consistently and in detail. We can, for example, develop detailed biochemical understandings of mental processes, which can still be understood in effect as highly detailed dreams.

To put it in Pop Cultural terms, there is no reason to suppose it impossible that we do live in a Matrix of the sort envisioned in the movie of the same name. This line of thought in fact is consistent with many mystical traditions.

This argument cannot be refuted, but it can be ignored.

Commentary 2: When we are tired, we see things differently than when we are wide awake. When we are drunk, we perceive things differently than when we are sober.

When we remember, there is no reason to suppose our memories are fully accurate, so in many respects, the past is lost to us. We fill in the blanks as best we can.

When we experience trauma, adaptation is necessary. For example, if one is a child in a threatening and violent home, one adjusts one's expectations to include fear and violence as ordinary. This enables one to avoid the added pain of perceived helplessness, in that if one admitted simultaneously that the condition was intolerable and also unavoidable, it would amplify the pain tremendously. Once, however, that situation is altered, ones behavior patterns rarely change back to suit new circumstances, and for this reason people who have had to adopt to violence often recreate it, because it has come to define their personal ecology.

When we perceive the present, we only perceive a small fraction of what is possible. Of what we perceive in any form, we only retain consciously a small portion of that.

The future is an imaginary dimension of experience. The content and vividness with which it can be "experienced" will vary from person to person. Our imagination is also limited by the perceptual constraints we place on what we consider to be possible. Much of cognitive therapy is enabling patients to imagine—to perceive—alternative possibilities for themselves and their behavior. Almost anything is possible, but most people cannot imagine very much at all.

We must stipulate, always, that factors exist for which we have not accounted. For example, the effects of solar radiation, or the cycles of the moon, or magnetic activities in the earth, etc. We can never know what we don't know, but if we fail to create a perceptual place for the unknown, we decrease exponentially the chances of perceiving it.

Commentary 3: An extended quote from William James on the possibility of immortality. I will note that belief in immortality is unnecessary to my principle argument, and dedicated atheists may skip this part, although they might still find it interesting. This is the best summation of the issue I have found, and I have quoted it at length because of my fondness for his rhetorical style.

"One hears not only physiologists, but numbers of laymen who read the popular science books and magazines, saying all about us, How can we believe in life hereafter when science has once for all attained to proving, beyond possibility of

escape, that our inner life is a function of that famous material, the so-called "gray matter" of our cerebral convolutions? How can the function possibly persist after its organ has undergone decay?

Thus physiological psychology is what is supposed to bar the way to the old faith. And it is now as a physiological psychologist that I ask you to look at the question with me a little more closely.

It is indeed true that physiological science has come to the conclusion cited; and we must confess that in so doing she has only carried out a little farther the common belief of mankind. Everyone knows that arrests of brain development occasion imbecility, that blows on the head abolish memory or consciousness, and that brain-stimulants and poisons change the quality of our ideas. The anatomists, physiologists, and pathologists have only shown this generally admitted fact of a dependence to be detailed and minute. What the laboratories and hospitals have lately been teaching us is not only that thought in general is one of the brain's functions, but that the various special forms of thinking are functions of special portions of the brain. When we are thinking of things seen, it is our occipital convolutions that are active; when of things heard, it is a certain portion of our temporal lobes; when of things to be spoken, it is one of our frontal convolutions. Professor Flechsig of Leipzig (who perhaps more than anyone may claim to have made the subject his own) considers that in other special convolutions those processes of association go on which permit the more abstract processes of thought to take place. I could easily show you these regions if I had here a picture of the brain([3](#)). Moreover, the diminished or exaggerated associations of what this author calls the *Körperfühlsphäre* with the other regions accounts, according to him, for the complexion of our emotional life, and eventually decides whether one shall be a callous brute or criminal, an unbalanced sentimentalist, or a character accessible to feeling, and yet well poised. Such special opinions may have to be corrected; yet so firmly established do the main positions worked out by the anatomists, physiologists, and pathologists of the brain appear, that the youth of our medical schools are everywhere taught unhesitatingly to believe them. The assurance that observation will go on to establish them ever more and more minutely is the inspirer of all contemporary research. And almost any of our young psychologists will tell you that only a few belated scholastics, or possibly some crack-brained theosophist or psychical researcher, can be found holding back, and still talking as if mental phenomena might exist as independent variables in the world.

For the purposes of my argument, now, I wish to adopt this general doctrine as if it were established absolutely, with no possibility of restriction. During this hour I wish you also to accept it as a postulate, whether you think it incontrovertibly established or not; so I beg you to agree with me today in subscribing to the great psycho-physiological formula: Thought is a function of the brain.

The question is, then, Does this doctrine logically compel us to disbelieve in immortality? Ought it to force every truly consistent thinker to sacrifice his hopes of an hereafter to what he takes to be his duty of accepting all the consequences of a scientific truth?

Most persons imbued with what one may call the puritanism of science would feel themselves bound to answer this question with a yes. If any medically or psychologically bred young scientists feel otherwise, it is probably in consequence of that incoherency of mind of which the majority of mankind happily enjoy the privilege. At one hour scientists, at another they are Christians or common men, with the will to live burning hot in their breasts; and, holding thus the two ends of the chain, they are careless of the intermediate connection. But the more radical and uncompromising disciple of science makes the sacrifice, and, sorrowfully or not, according to his temperament, submits to giving up his hopes of heaven.

This, then, is the objection to immortality; and the next thing in order for me is to try to make plain to you why I believe that it has in strict logic no deterrent power. I must show you that the fatal consequence is not coercive, as is commonly imagined; and that, even though our soul's life (as here below it is revealed to us) may be in literal strictness the function of a brain that perishes, yet it is not at all impossible, but on the contrary quite possible, that the life may still continue when the brain itself is dead.

The supposed impossibility of its continuing comes from too superficial a look at the admitted fact of functional dependence. The moment we inquire more closely into the notion of functional dependence, and ask ourselves, for example, how many kinds of functional dependence there may be, we immediately perceive that there is one kind at least that does not exclude a life hereafter at all. The fatal conclusion of the physiologist flows from his assuming offhand another kind of functional dependence, and treating it as the only imaginable kind.

When the physiologist who thinks that his science cuts hope of immortality pronounces the phrase, "Thought is a function of the brain," he thinks of the matter just as he thinks when he says, "Steam is a function of the tea-kettle," "Light is a function of the electric circuit," "Power is a function of the moving waterfall." In these latter cases the several material objects have the function of inwardly creating or engendering their effects, and their function must be called *productive* function, just so, he thinks, it must be with the brain. Engendering consciousness in its interior, much as it engenders cholesterin and creatin and carbonic acid, its relation to our soul's life must also be called productive function. Of course, if such production be the function, then when the organ perishes, since the production can no longer continue, the soul must surely die.

Such a conclusion as this is indeed inevitable from that particular conception of the facts.

But in the world of physical nature productive function of this sort is not the only kind of function with which we are familiar. We have also releasing or permissive function; and we have transmissive function.

The trigger of a crossbow has a releasing function: it removes the obstacle that holds the string, and lets the bow fly back to its natural shape. So when the hammer falls upon a detonating compound. By knocking out the inner molecular obstructions, it lets the constituent gases resume their normal bulk, and so permits the explosion to take place.

In the case of a colored glass, a prism, or a refracting lens, we have transmissive function. The energy of light, no matter how produced, is by the glass sifted and limited in color, and by the lens or prism determined to a certain path and shape. Similarly, the keys of an organ have only a transmissive function. They open successively the various pipes and let the wind in the air-chest escape in various ways. The voices of the various pipes are constituted by the columns of air trembling as they emerge. But the air is not engendered in the organ. The organ proper, as distinguished from its air-chest, is only an apparatus for letting portions of it loose upon the world in these peculiarly limited shapes.

My thesis now is this: that, when we think of the law that thought is a function of the brain, we are not required to think of productive function only; *we are entitled also to consider permissive or transmissive function.* And this the ordinary psychophysiologist leaves out of his account.

Suppose, for example, that the whole universe of material things - the furniture of earth and choir of heaven - should turn out to be a mere surface-veil of phenomena, hiding and keeping back the world of genuine realities. Such a supposition is foreign neither to common sense nor to philosophy. Common sense believes in realities behind the veil even too superstitiously; and idealistic philosophy declares the whole world of natural experience, as we get it, to be but a time-mask, shattering or refracting the one infinite Thought which is the sole reality into those millions of finite streams of consciousness known to us as our private selves.

Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity.

Suppose, now, that this were really so, and suppose, moreover, that the dome, opaque enough at all times to the full super-solar blaze, could at certain times and places grow less so, and let certain beams pierce through into this sublunary

world. These beams would be so many finite rays, so to speak, of consciousness, and they would vary in quantity and quality as the opacity varied in degree. Only at particular times and places would it seem that, as a matter of fact, the veil of nature can grow thin and rupturable enough for such effects to occur. But in those places gleams, however finite and unsatisfying, of the absolute life of the universe, are from time to time vouchsafed. Glows of feeling, glimpses of insight, and streams of knowledge and perception float into our finite world.

Admit now that *our brains* are such thin and half-transparent places in the veil. What will happen? Why, as the white radiance comes through the dome, with all sorts of staining and distortion imprinted on it by the glass, or as the air now comes through my glottis determined and limited in its force and quality of its vibrations by the peculiarities of those vocal chords which form its gate of egress and shape it into my personal voice, even so the genuine matter of reality, the life of souls as it is in its fullness, will break through our several brains into this world in all sorts of restricted forms, and with all the imperfections and queernesses that characterize our finite individualities here below.

According to the state in which the brain finds itself, the barrier of its obstructiveness may also be supposed to rise or fall. It sinks so low, when the brain is in full activity, that a comparative flood of spiritual energy pours over. At other times, only such occasional waves of thought as heavy sleep permits get by. And when finally a brain stops acting altogether, or decays, that special stream of consciousness which it subserved will vanish entirely from this natural world. But the sphere of being that supplied the consciousness would still be intact; and in that more real world with which, even whilst here, it was continuous, the consciousness might, in ways unknown to us, continue still.

You see that, on all these suppositions, our soul's life, as we here know it, would none the less in literal strictness be the function of the brain. The brain would be the independent variable, the mind would vary dependently on it. But such dependence on the brain for this natural life would in no wise make immortal life impossible - it might be quite compatible with supernatural life behind the veil hereafter.

As I said, then, the fatal consequence is not coercive, the conclusion which materialism draws being due solely to its one-sided way of taking the word "function." And, whether we care or not for immortality in itself, we ought, as mere critics doing police duty among the vagaries of mankind, to insist on the illogicality of a denial based on the flat ignoring of a palpable alternative. How much more ought we to insist, as lovers of truth, when the denial is that of such a vital hope of mankind!"

Commentary 5: The idealism of Berkeley functions, here, in effect as an effort in thoroughness. In the act and effort of perception, all possibilities must be considered. As such this train of thought—which we might call the "Matrix Conundrum" operates as a stopgap on the habit of assuming that everything that is, is perceptible currently, or in ordinary awareness. Again, this is an exercise in perceptual reversibility, with reversibility defined below.

3. We have no choice but to work to perceive our world as accurately as we can, understanding that Truth is tentative and often approximate.

Commentary 1: In his book "Quantum Reality", Nick Herbert describes a process of wave transformation such that any given set of sounds or other waves can be broken down in terms of other waves, using Fourier Transformations, a mathematical translation system. He states that traffic noise can be "deconstructed" such that it is interpreted as a cacophony of tubas, if the waves are broken down properly.

All human perception works like this. There are an infinite number of things to perceive, but we do not consciously perceive everything. We focus on what we need, using heuristics--tools for organizing the content of our thought and perception. These tools are almost necessarily reductive, in the sense that interpreting traffic noise as tubas is inaccurate, even though it is mathematically possible.

I propose we call such heuristics "tubaforms" so as to make this process explicit. By making it explicit, we can work to refine the quality of our tubaforms, which is to say the quality of our "thought tools".

All economic processes can be reduced to, what? The action of the market, the exploitation of the proletariat, the promptings of avarice, etc, etc. All of these are tubaforms.

Our goal in developing tubaforms is enabling predictions of increasingly broad reach. General Relativity is about as ambitious as tubaforms get. It is still a tubaform, a heuristic reproduction in symbolic language designed to order experience.

We do not mistake tubaforms for Truth. Truth cannot be known definitively, given the limits of human experience.

Commentary 2: We can take it as axiomatic that nearly any phenomena can be analyzed or deconstructed, in terms of nearly any other phenomenon.

For example, one can analyze the history of the 20th Century in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis, and attribute to the Nazis psychosexual deformities that compelled them to act as they did.

One can deconstruct modern Republicans in terms of the same purported psychosexual pathologies, or in terms of naked greed.

One can deconstruct modern Republicans in terms of their continuity with the best of American traditions, and view them as the best hope for the survival of our nation.

One can analyze economic processes in terms of their systemic capacity for the creation of wealth, or solely in terms of their effects on the "underprivileged".

In short, whatever bias one may have, whatever one believes is at the "root" of something, one can create a model in terms of which everything is explained, internally consistent, and accounted for.

Since everyone can do it, it is not particularly clever, and in general it becomes nearly impossible to alter these sorts of perceptual progressions, once they are far along. Becoming stuck on one mode of perceptual analysis is to become blind to other, potentially equally good or even better, counter narratives.

For this reason, I would like to add the term "negative tubaform", which connotes an explanatory paradigm which is explicitly oriented around the REJECTION of varying alternative explanations. It does not know what is right, but it, perversely, still claims to know what is wrong.

Generally speaking, this form of "perception" uses a heuristic based almost entirely on emotion—typically that of outrage, which is always right at the point of boiling—and reference to ones peer group. That this basically irrational process is considered rational is overlooked, since emotion IS the heuristic, and it would require a recourse to dispassionate contemplation to see this.

One sees this everywhere, but the most pernicious use of it appears to emanate from academic deconstructionists, who claim to see in nearly everything America does latent evil. What is nearly always implied, and nearly never openly admitted, is that the de facto tubaform is that of Communistic radical politics.

One of the most famous practitioners of this "art" was Jacques Derrida, who wrote long, nearly incomprehensible texts, whose principle purpose seems to have been to erode the foundations of rationalism. Since it is logically contradicted to use reason to deconstruct reason, he was forced to create "arguments" even his followers don't appear to have really understood. Nonetheless, he died a celebrated and widely admired—in some circles—man.

As I will argue consistently throughout this text, the problem has never been rationalism, per se, but the misappropriation of rationalism—really, intellectual dishonesty masquerading as Reason—which has been at the root of the problem. As we shall see later, the categorical nadir of the abuse of Reason occurred not

in the Third Reich, nor during the Cold War, but during that period still glamorized by leftist intellectuals, the French Revolution.

In sum what defines, for me, the best in our western liberal tradition is the effort to reconcile, through joint, diplomatic dialogue, what is MOST LIKE what we actually see.

To complete the analogy, we could always go outside and see if the sound waves we are deconstructing actually ARE tubas, or cars honking. This is a functional, pragmatic approach.

From this point on, I will be proposing—as of course I have already been doing—provisional truths, which appear to me to offer utility for reasons I will articulate.

4. All form is created through motion.

Think about it. How did the house or building you are sitting in come to be? Were not the raw materials gathered from all around and put into a sustainable form by the motion of workers? Were the plans not the result of efforts—movements mentally and physically—of architects and designers?

Were you not conceived in motion, and is not every cell in your body in motion at this moment? If they moved differently, you would not look like you, would you? Cancer, of course, is famously a dysfunction of cellular replication, itself a form of movement.

When do you feel still? Self evidently, when you are not moving. When does your mind feel still? It never does, except possibly in deep meditation, and the very acme of meditational accomplishment is to lose self awareness, which is to say to lose your form, by stilling your incessant mental movement.

One can't say you feel still when you are asleep, since if you are in a deep sleep, you don't feel anything, and if you are dreaming, you are moving.

For this reason, existing cannot be distinguished from becoming, since what we ARE, is created through movement.

Darwinian natural selection can be deduced from two simple principles: movement (understood as imperfect genetic replication) and adaptability (suitability for survival). Adaptability is itself a question of the relation of a given form, with the forms of movement around it. Some forms survive, and some do not. Some animals get eaten; some can't feed themselves; some get ill and die; some can't reproduce.

Although I am not a fan of orthodox materialistic versions of Darwinism and its intellectual descendants—for reasons I will discuss--I do believe that this basic notion of form-building and motion is extremely useful.

To it I would contrast the essential Essentialism of the faiths which until recent times entirely dominated Western thought and cultural life.

When I say "Essentialism", what I am referring to is the habit of using the word "is". What the word "is" does is puncture the possibility of perceiving the process of becoming, as well as the considerable ambiguities which inhere in all human experience. Consider the following two statements:

John is a sinner.

John is not a sinner.

How can we manipulate these statements? Can we rank order them, in order from true to false, which implies neither is fully true? Can we draw a continuum, in which John is placed somewhere between Mother Teresa and Joseph Stalin? Can we add the facts that while John drinks and smokes too much, that he is an excellent father and dedicated worker? Can we counterbalance the fact that while he cussed out his mother a few years ago, that he brings her flowers every week now at the Retirement home?

Can we not, in short, make statements which better sculpt the reality we can observe, without recourse to unnecessary digital yes/no divides? Of course.

"Is-ness", as I use it, may be defined as "form without motion". Marxism and other humanistic religions are just as guilty of it as any conventional religion.

D. David Bourland, Jr. has actually proposed a version of English he calls "E-Prime", which eliminates the use of the variants of "to be". "Evolution is fact", for example, becomes "The process modeled by Charles Darwin of random mutations combined with natural selection appears at the present time to best fit available evidence as an explanation of the genesis of biological speciation and diversity."

Ideas, I will argue often, have feelings and textures. The feel and texture of orthodox Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are that you are either righteous, or not righteous. You are a sinner, or you are a member of the flock. In the latter two faiths you are either going to Heaven, or Hell (although the Catholics cleverly added Purgatory).

In short, you "are" something. Man, as a whole, "is" something. He is fallen. He committed Original Sin, and in the Christian version the only expiation is the substitution of a human being for the sheep and other animals normally used in sacrifice, so that God can correct his own inability to forgive us our sins. This sacrifice is remembered in the ritual consumption of symbolic human blood and flesh.

(Although not directly relevant now, I should add I am fully sympathetic to the Christian doctrine, but believe that Paul screwed up the message Jesus intended completely, which I will discuss in Part 3.)

Such thinking leads directly to compulsivity, in that the price one pays for failure is enormous: eternal damnation. Logically, there is a line somewhere. There is a line below which you go to hell, and above which you go to heaven. But how can one know where it is? This is the basic Protestant problem. Solutions are relentless effort, and predestination.

Predestination, of course, is the ultimate "is-ness". It states that you ARE categorically, and regardless of what you do, either saved or not saved.

This notion is in my view enormously unhelpful in the task of increasing Goodness in the world, and so should, along with the heaven/hell dichotomy, be discarded as lacking in pragmatic applicability. If you go to heaven if you are good, then figure out how best to be good. That's my task here.

Leaving aside for a good long while theological speculations, let me say simply that who we "are" is who we are becoming. This is a function of the decisions we are making, and why. My entire goal in this book is to clarify how to make such decisions. My apparent blasphemies or apostasy notwithstanding, these ideas will help even those who cling to the heaven/hell dichotomy be less sinful.

To conclude this section, let me comment briefly on one background that is highly relevant.

The French Existentialists—who for some reason seem still to be viewed by many as having offered something useful, which baffles me—famously agreed with versions of the idea "Existence precedes Essence".

The idea was that as we summon forth our very Romantic notion of the noble man standing forlorn on some cliff top in the Scottish Highlands, braving the wind and risking the rain, staring down "existence" itself, what we discover is that we can't feel any preconditions for our existence. Sin has no tangible quality, and we can't feel any "is-ness" about what we "are" whatsoever. This means we are free to do what we want to do. We can cast aside the shackles of

tradition, and convention, and do whatever we want without consequence. To use this freedom, we are told, is to be brave and noble. To be "authentic".

And they spent a lot of time worrying and fretting if they were actually being "authentic" or if they had somehow been duped, somehow been led into the "false consciousness" of group conventionality. The interesting—really, the amusing from a certain 20,000 foot perspective—thing about this is that their own thought led to their inability to define their thought, and consequently their actions.

Let me put it this way: "To be free is to live without context". On the face of it, this could, to some minds, make sense. But how, one wonders, does one eliminate context? Context is other people (Sartre famously said "Hell is others", and presumably this thought was part of the context of that thought). Context is your childhood and what you have read. Context is your past decisions. In short, only by not existing can you not have context, and thus the only way to be free is to be dead.

But being dead doesn't seem very free either.

The whole texture is about how to tie oneself in inescapable knots through the process of seeking freedom. It's silly.

In practice, of course, their inability to escape their contexts—their own manifest subjectivities—led to choosing contexts other than those which were conventional. The argument, implicitly, was that the only way one could show one was not trapped by false consciousness (in other words, and to use another paradigm, to show that one was meritorious and predestined for Salvation), was to attack and subvert prevailing norms.

This led to a very general acceptance of Communism as a saving doctrine, even though it became known in the 50's that Josef Stalin was just as brutal--and much more prolific, numerically, in his crimes--as Adolph Hitler.

In this context, I would like to make a brief comment on brainwashing. Brainwashing is the process of breaking down personality structures. Based in no small measure—at least historically—on the work of the Russian Ivan Pavlov on dogs, it involves stressing people (or animals) to the point where they have a nervous collapse. At that point, new behaviors can be taught that are nearly ineradicable.

Alduous Huxley discusses this process in "Brave New World Revisited":

"Psychological stresses can be produced in many ways. Dogs become disturbed when stimuli are unusually strong; when the interval between a stimulus and the customary response is unduly prolonged and the animal is left in a state of suspense; when the brain is confused by stimuli that run counter to what the dog has learned to expect; when the stimuli make no sense within the victim's established frame of reference. Furthermore, it has been found that the deliberate induction of fear, rage, or anxiety markedly heightens the dogs suggestibility. If these emotions are kept at a high pitch of intensity for a long enough time, the brain goes "on strike". When this happens, new behavior patterns may be installed with the greatest of ease.

Among they physical stresses that increase a dog's suggestibility are fatigue, wounds, and every form of sickness."

The question must be asked: why would well meaning people support systems of government that are manifestly tyrannical, unjust, and violent?

In my view, what happened in France, when even the revelations of the full scope of Stalinist policies was revealed were unable to force reevaluations of their beliefs, is what is happening today on many American College campuses. Quite generally, most Humanities departments are staffed by political radicals, who teach values that are—when evaluated objectively—illiberal, and contrary both to the best of American tradition, and to the continued growth of freedom and human rights around the world.

Consider this, though: what happens when you sit in a college philosophy, or English class, and your professor teaches you that everything you have ever believed about the world is wrong? The American government is an agent of evil. We kill more people and are responsible for more suffering than any nation in history.

Moreover, unambiguous notions of right and wrong have to be jettisoned. "Good" has to be placed in quotation marks, just as "evil" does. What do we really know about the lives of child molesters and even child murderers? Are they not victims too? How can we say that what they did was wrong when we ourselves probably would have done the same thing if we had had the same experiences as them?

All crimes can be forgiven, which means that no laws and no values are sacred.

EVERYTHING YOUR PARENTS AND YOUR CHURCH TAUGHT YOU IS WRONG.

As one obvious example, the pseudoscientific ideational structure of psychoanalysis—which for example gives us the words "anal", libido, and "ego"—tells us that we are all basically intractably corrupt, and that the only reality is that we want sex (possibly death), and that all of culture and all of our efforts to be good can be reduced to nothing but rationalizations designed to disguise this "fact".

This is a Deconstructionist narrative, and one which is often used in turn to deconstruct other narratives, like the possibilities of moral virtue and innocent pleasure. Implicitly, it authorizes self indulgence in gratuitous and meaningless sex, since according to the tenets of this belief system, this is "authentic". You want to do it anyway, so why not be honest? This is the thought process, and anybody who has attended nearly any university since the late 60's knows exactly what I am talking about.

According to most studies I read, rates of depression have steadily climbed since 1960, particularly among college students. Bouts last longer, they start earlier, and they affect more people. This appears not to be a case of increasing diagnosis, but increasing absolute rates of illness.

You take a kid, you puncture all his core beliefs about himself and his society, disabuse him of any "naïve" beliefs in human goodness, and add depression, you have a brainwashing candidate.

That is what we are seeing, in my view, in the increasing prominence of radical, discredited, and generally nonsensical politics in our mainstream discussions. You take away other reasons for living, other sources of meaning, all that is left is politics (and sex). If you need politics, you need problems to solve. If you can't find any, you create them. Life is intrinsically imperfect, so you always have candidates for status as "victims", who therefore presumably need your "help".

You now know why to get up in the morning: to STOP THE WAR, of course (you have, of course, a bumper sticker that reads "I'm already against the next war"). If you are unfortunate enough to live in a period of peace, you can find something else, like rich people, to wage your war on.

To wrap up the discussion on the Existentialists, let me say that my formulation is that **"Becoming approximates Essence"**. You "are" what you are becoming. Your identity "is" what you are pursing, who you are choosing to become, and what you idolize. You cannot avoid "context", but you can choose it. You can choose what you believe, and what you do, and by extension who you are and who you become.

Obviously, our political activist has generated an identity—often a new identity—based upon movement, in his/her case, a political movement. As posited, this is best understood as a Form.

Pain Compels motion, and is also the ability to generate force, and hence form.

 The sage confronts difficulty and thus never experiences it.

If we look at form from the side, so to speak, what we see as wind currents hit it is constant small alterations in form, shrinking, or growing. Your pain tolerance will dictate how large, and hence how latent your capacity, your form can become. We wonder why the religious saints are so self abnegatory. This is why. Self denial creates form. But what is the point of this?

Notion of wind, and pain tolerance as a wing.

Notion of quantum or pereceptual or qualitative steps in form, so that you can only see who you WERE when you become someone new. (ponder dream of Norm and others, my family is screwed up)

4. For many people the shift from Absolute to Relative or contingent Truth occasions fear, anger, and ultimately self pity.

Commentary 1: There is no objective "condition of modernity", as some writers suggest. To suggest otherwise is to be self contradictory, since that alleged "condition" itself consists in the rejections of such perduring reifications as the "condition of modernity".

Rather, it is a habit—distributed preferentially among "thought elites"--of bemoaning a loss of epistemological certainty grounded in religious doctrine shared reasonably universally. This habit is frequently expressed in indecisiveness, hesitancy in judgment, and not infrequently depression and pessimism.

These reactions arise as a result of an inability to react flexibly with the intellectual inputs of our modern philosophical heritage in such a way as to create approximate, useful truths. In short, to create.

In particular, the modern tendency to moral relativism, or moral equivalence on the part of academics and leftist politicos, represents a contingent, non-universal use of Enlightenment moral concepts.

Logically, if Jefferson, as a representative of the Enlightenment, was right, and men (and women) ARE endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, then this concept, if adopted, is universal in scope.

It applies equally in all times and all places. The rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (or ownership of property, in Locke's original formulation) are inalienable, and ought not to be denied to anyone, anywhere, for any reason, except in the occasional instances in which such action is conducive to longer term growth in those rights. For instance, when criminals are jailed, and when wars are fought to secure those rights.

This is a very simple heuristic, and ought, as one example, to make it clear that if we want to promulgate justice, we ought to work for increased rights for, say, the populations of the Islamic world.

Yet, such efforts are quite often condemned by our intellectual elites as "Imperialistic". Substantially any and all efforts to interfere with the internal workings of other nations, however corrupt they may be, however violent and repressive, are viewed as wrong.

One may ask such people: by what criterion is Imperialism wrong?   Why is it wrong to conquer other nations, and implement policies designed to make political liberalization, with associated rights, possible?

After they snicker and roll their eyes at our imbecility, we will hear something like: it fails to reflect the rights of other nations to conduct themselves the way they choose. It fails to protect their liberty, and their pursuit of happiness. Shooting wars kill people. It is a violation of our ideals, the ideals of the Enlightenment. It is precisely our virtue as a nation that we adhere to high ideals.

And this makes quite a bit of sense. Yet, yet, let us ponder this in more detail.

Could we not view the de facto Enlightenment credo to be "we are all citizens of the world, subject to the laws of our Creator, and no other"? Was not the Declaration of Independence precisely a justification for severing common bonds with England, in the name of more general principles, those based in effect on universal laws, superior to any enacted by human governments?

This, to me, is the ethically sustainable, non-contradictory, version of moral relativism. If one were to posit that we all should have the same rights, and America is privileged ethically only in having more fully realized them, I would agree with that. If one wants to argue for the brotherhood of Man (and sisterhood of Woman), I could agree with that.

What is not ethically sustainable, and is in fact contradictory, is the use of our ideals with respect to us, but rationalization of the abrogation of those ideals in others. Either they are universal, and we are all brothers, or we have to reduce our ideals to utilitarian ones oriented solely around the survival and growth of our nation.

To take a concrete example, there were claims following the attacks of 9/11 that our foreign policy—presumably one based on heavy-handed greed and thirst for power—was in some respect the obverse and equal of those attacks. That, in effect, we deserved it, and that the attackers behavior could be justified by appeal to their own unique understanding of the universe and their place in it. That we were no better than them, and that—given the courage it took to commit suicide for a cause—we were on balance perhaps even less noble/ethical/consistent/congruent/Good than they were.

This line of logic goes like this:

a. It is impossible to know with certainty what we are supposed to do. Manifestly, what is ethical with one people in one time and/or place may be cause for murder in another. For example, homosexuality.

b. People should be judged, therefore, not by universal standards, but by their own.

c. We can judge ourselves by our own standards, therefore, but not others.

In practice, this plays out in constant critiques of American policy—for example the decision to liberate Iraq from Saddam Hussein, in addition to preventing him from developing and using nuclear weapons—coupled with an utter inability to place such matters into context.

To take one obvious example, Americans did not invent the use of Abu Ghraib as a prison. Under Saddam, day in, day out, the most gruesome tortures and murders were committed, for many, many years. These were not aberrant policies, undertaken by undertrained, undersupervised soldiers. These were official, from the top down, policies. Men were hung on meathooks, they were electrocuted, they were beaten, they were run through plastic grinders, etc. etc.

Yet, when one thinks of Abu Ghraib, one thinks of Arab men on leashes held by Americans or in naked piles. Why? One was our crime, one was Saddam's. We can only comment on our own.

This leads to a pronounced inability to use scale in assessing crimes. Small American crimes become equal morally to massive crimes of others, since we can't accurate assess the crimes of others, since we would be forced to use their own standards, and don't understand them.

"Maybe 'Arabs' just do things like that. Who are we to judge?" We hear things like this, in effect, although this part of it is normally implied in the volume difference in the hue and cry resulting from our crimes versus those of others.

There is no such ambiguity with respect to our own principles, however, so any and all deviations from perfection are condemned roundly.

As I will argue shortly, all moral principles are adopted within systems approximately. If you deploy a notion—say human rights—over a group of people, interpretations will differ, and in some cases you will have failures. What defines the system, though, is not what is done sometimes—accidentally, so to speak—but what is done generally, where the weight of practice is.

One exception cannot falsify an entire system. In fact, within chaotic systems, exceptions are predicted and anticipated.

Returning to moral relativism, our Founding Fathers believed in the fundamental brotherhood of men (and sisterhood of women), with Washington and Franklin both being apparently "devout" Masons, one of whose core doctrines is in fact the unity of mankind, with Brotherhood being their means of expressing it.

We could say "The Arabs are our brothers", and commit to helping lead them over time out of the sands of despotism—with the emerging example of Iraq the sole exception, all Arab nations are autocratic—but instead efforts to implement change in the Middle East are routinely condemned.

One source of this objection is the perceptual error that the shortest path to democracy and political liberalization is through democracy. In order for democracy to work, people must be educated in the virtue of self restraint—of placing the rule of law above their own personal and parochial interests--and in practice most Arab nations have multiple groups seeking to replace the ruling governments with yet more autocratic governments.

This means that in practice American style democracy is not an option at the moment, but can be best furthered by supporting the most liberal autocrat we can find, the one most likely at some point to relax his rule.

Obviously, if you implement a vote, vote in an autocrat who then forbids or fixes (Saddam was regularly "re-elected", remember, as were Stalin and Hitler) future

elections, you have not in fact implemented a democracy. Although painfully obvious, this is apparently overlooked by many.

The other more important problem is that there is a latent philosophical contradiction that is as important as it is overlooked.

In order to have a consistent foreign policy, we need to have consistent principles. Self interest would be such a principle, as would idealism. The two can be combined, as happened in Iraq. We prevented the development of nuclear weapons on the part of a man willing and able to do so, and with a clear capacity to use them if he had them. We also are, in the process of cleaning up our mess, creating perhaps the first ever Arab democracy. We are creating a template for political liberalization that is potentially generalizable to the Middle East as a whole.

But this is considered imperialistic and wrong by a sizable segment of our political spectrum. Why?

As noted above, we cannot judge others, but we can judge ourselves. Our criterion for judging ourselves is conformity to our ideals of respect for human rights, and liberty. Even though Iraqis were already living under a totalitarian government, when we went in, all of our principles immediately applied.

This made, Day One, any imperfections our fault, and all deaths resulting from our invasion war crimes. This, despite the clear fact that no solution existed apart from invasion to get Saddam and his sons out of power. This, despite the fact that no pragmatic alternative existed, making the status quo—under Saddam's reign over a million people died unnecessarily—the only other option.

Clearly, such critics considered the status quo superior. They would have preferred allowing Saddam to develop nuclear weapons—after getting inspections halted, and the oil embargo formally lifted. This path, although clearly inferior, did not necessitate the violation of anyone's rights, by Americans. All rights violations were to be done by others, and not our problem, since they were committed, presumably, under a different—and therefore unimpeachable—moral code.

The brotherhood of man is thereby rejected. The values upon which we were founded are thereby confined to our shores, and actions originating from our shores.

This is why so many on the Left found it difficult—and find it difficult even to this day—to unambiguously condemn Communism as wrong.

It is why we defeated the Vietcong, had the NVA on the ropes, and then quit in Vietnam. It's why the French decided to lose the war in Algeria, after having won it.

If nothing is universally true, then we can, in effect, only speak for ourselves. Any efforts to change other people or nations—any effort to judge based on unambiguous moral codes—are wrong.

This limits our morality, in effect, to our own subjectivity. Our universal rights, our universal moral code, upon which America was founded, are only valid here, and not elsewhere.

Yet, while this may work emotionally, it is logically contradictory. If the principles upon which we were founded are valid here, they are valid everywhere. If all principles, as a matter of principle, are empty, lacking in intrinsic value, then what we believe here is just as random as anything anyone anywhere else believes. Our moral foundation is habit, and nothing else.

And in practice morality comes to get expressed not as a coherent behavior pattern ordered by principles, but as emotion, specifically that of compassion.

To feel compassionate is to be good, and to be apparently lacking in the sentiment of compassion is to be bad. This is where we wind up.

I discuss the effects of this extensively later, and will comment for now only that the principle of compassion is different than the sentiment of compassion, and as a matter of historical fact grotesque atrocities have been committed in the name of the principle of compassion, making the rational manipulation of principles unavoidable, even when the principle appeals primarily to emotion.

I would like to summarize this issue as follows: Moral Relativism is the principle that all principles are equal. If we accept this, then it is equal to the principle that Germany had the right to slaughter 6 million Jews, and Stalin had the right to slaughter 20 million (or whatever the actual number was; there are many, many bodies that will never be found) of his own people, accomplishing nothing.

In short, this principle leads directly to confusion, expressed both intellectually, and behaviorally. It does not allow any positive statements to be made. It leads to sentimentalism, and disengagement from formal processes of logic and dispassionate observation.

5. **Self pity must be rejected.**

Commentary 1: No emotional fact of human existence is more clear than that Self Pity has no benefits and considerable detriments. It is not necessary, for example, to correct wrongs. In fact, it facilitates a stance of powerlessness, since it implies a lack of ability—or desire—to respond.

Pain in various forms is a universal in human existence, and there is no pain, however heinous, that cannot be made worse by the addition of self pity. Self pity always constitutes an added weight, and the rejection of self pity a relief.

Fundamentally, much or most of our suffering consists not in objective conditions, but in our reactions to them.

"The mind is its own place, and in itself, can make a heaven of Hell, and hell of Heaven" as John Milton put it.

The difference, in my view, is Resistance. It is a spirit of rejecting what we need to do, itself arising from resentment. Resentment in turn comes from self pity, itself arising from vanity. Vanity, as I will argue, is the single sin most conducive to evil, but where it is a perceptual condition, self pity is the first affective symptom, and best chokepoint for stopping falls into darkness.

There is no human felicity which cannot be turned into an undesired impediment through the addition of self pity, including wealth and leisure.

The symptom of the Rejection of Self Pity is quiet dignity.

The symptoms of an attack of self pity are many, but principally involve a disengagement from creativity, particularly emotionally creative and resilient responses to real or perceived hardship. Resentment then typically becomes the channel for expressed emotional energy.

The effort involved in recreating oneself in response to an emotionally difficult situation is intrinsically meaningful. The rejection of such effort—of the necessity

of such effort—is intrinsically a movement towards meaninglessness, and rootless nihilism, itself generative of confusion and anger.

An argument that will recur often throughout this text is that much of our modern confusion—I refer here to the great difficulty most Humanities Professors have in assenting to unambiguous moral narratives--arises directly not from necessary philosophical conclusions, but from what amounts to a cowardice based on widespread failures among our intelligentsia to pursue paths they knew were right.

"The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried."

G.K. Chesteron.

Self pity is nothing more or less than a reduction or cessation of movement, as a result of the breaking effect of self-induced Resistance. If life is movement, self pity is a form of death or somnolence.

Commentary 2: One of the most important influences on my thinking about resilience is that of Martin Seligman. I would like to briefly comment here on his work on developing cognitive methods for combating depression, which I view as highly useful.

His starting point were experiments which are somewhat known, but perhaps not as widely known as they deserve to be. In these experiments, rats were put in cages with electrified plates. They would be shocked, and initially they would try furiously to escape, and, failing, eventually stop moving and "consent" to the shocks. They accommodated their perceptual frames, in a sense, to a world in which shocks were the norm.

Then they were given an out, a door to a cage where the plate was not electrified, where they would have been safe. They never took that option. Their worlds had shrunk to an acceptance of their fate, in effect, and the apparent conclusion that nothing they did mattered.

Seligman took this observed phenomena, and applied it to people in his model of "Learned Helplessness". This is a cognitive adaptation which is pessimistic, and which is characterized, in his view, by an Explanatory Style which views problems as 1) global in scope; 2) permanent; and 3) caused by some intrinsic fault, known or unknown, in the character of the person.

For example, if you get fired, you conclude immediately that you will get fired in your next job, that it is your fault, and, more generally, that you are a loser in all aspects of your life. This is a marvelous way of developing clinical depression.

His cognitive therapeutic approach then—which he has documented works well—is to help people see the world more accurately, since so often we are very close to success, but stop trying.

Specifically, you:
1) Compartmentalize your life, so that a failure in one part of your world—say your job—need not be related in any way to other parts of your life, say your role as a husband and father. You can fail at work, and succeed at home. Or vice versa. They are not necessarily connected.

2) Change the relationship of your failure to time. For example, you say to yourself, I will try harder next time, so I will get a different result, which deals with the perception that things will always be the same.

3) Say to yourself, I'm a good person, and I think maybe that boss just had it in for me, which allows the condition of you being the apparently common factor in failures to be mitigated.

In effect, you condition your thought process to facilitate what I am calling movement, so you don't get stuck on that electric plate, which is an excellent metaphor for self pity.

These are wonderful ideas.

I will add, that in my own view, my system is more complete, but I have included his since it is excellent, and maybe I am wrong.

Commentary 3: One tool I have developed for myself is what I call a movement poem. So often, it seems to me, people mistake the expression of pain for profundity. Those who have suffered the most, we presume, are the most wise. This is true ONLY if those people have taken that suffering, and reintegrated it. Thus it is the back end of the pain that is meaningful, not the pain itself.

In a movement poem you express your pain as directly as you can. You leave nothing back. THEN you move towards what you want, towards closure, towards renewed joy and hope.

Here is an example I wrote during a difficult period in my life. The title, of course, is almost laughably morose, but it fit at the time, so I went with it. I

make no claim for the merit of the poem. It is simple, and it did me good.
That's all I will say. Anybody could do it.

I will add, that the haiku form seems to work well. What you will find in the 5-7-5 structure, is that you are often forced to choose different words than those which first come to you. What I found is that often those words led to new and interesting connections that had merit. Haikus are also very unintimidating.

Raking pebbles in the rubble of my soul

Enduring sadness
Is a soul's malignancy
Raven's beak bites deep.

What is depression?
Stuck on a river's edge
Moving back, standing still.

Or immunity
To seagulls and the sense of
Wet salt on your tongue.

Cardboard in your mouth
And plastic apples shining,
Savorless and flat.

Or stuck in a well
Without water, light, or hope
Just getting through days.

Salvation only
Exists Here, Never there; only
Today brings freedom.

You must realize
Rainbows see us, when we see
Their arching beauty.

And Mountains in the
Distance reach for us when we
Truly see their peaks.

Like homing pigeons
Spun in their cages, we can

Miss our True North's pull.

Still, in time we find
Our way back: the pull of home
Is built in our wings.

This compass may be
God: He's light shining in
Stone's hostility.

Satan's an angel
Whose wings only fly down, to
Loveless absence.

We see him when we
Mismanage our gaps between
Light and convenience.

Cruelty exists and
We cannot fully avoid
Hunger's eager bite.

We can only eat, drink
And take joy in our work as
God's Bible teaches.

I say I am strong
For weakness has not broken
Me: I still strive yet.

In love's sweet solace
We can once more cry tears of
Rebellion, not failure.

Our universe, like
A puppy, is eager to do
What we ask of it.

Lacking sentience,
It cannot understand us
When we can't see Peaks.

It reflects joy back
And gives us what we want when

We smile at others.

The hurt of digging
A well, and of climbing out
Can be relinquished.

And a deep kiss of
Connection, and abundance,
Can yet fulfill us.

Walk with me: See me
As I strive to see you and
Let us love again.

It seems to me that the relative disappearance of poetry from our cultural landscape is significante. Proper poetry, to me, expresses simple emotions in qualitatively rich ways. In that formulation, it is in a sense innocence. One could almost say naïve.

All too often, I feel like we feel this need to hide, to protect ourselves. To justify all emotions except when properly formatted as a therapeutic complaints, in which case deeply personal things can be spread high and low on national television.

This strikes me as a deep symptom of unrecognized grieving. We ache for the simple clarities of times past, and we don't know how to mourn their passing without accepting that loss. And we can't accept that loss without a new way to integrate the pain of the modern age in a new social harmony.

Commentary 4:

4. **The tubaform "movement is universal" is useful.**

MENTION SOMEWHERE IN HERE THAT REVERSIBILITY IS NOT "MONKEY FISTING", AND THAT "DOING NOTHING" IS REALLY NOT ADDING ANYTHING TO WHAT IS NEEDED, WHICH STARTS WITH ELIMINATING COMPULSION.

If Self Pity is the rejection of movement, movement is the rejection of self pity. Since life is often difficult, necessitating work of all sorts, including emotional,

intellectual, and physical labor, it is appropriate to examine the process, the quality, of movement.

Move your head slowly and purposively—with as little tension as possible—forward so that your chin is heading to your chest, then back so you are looking straight up, like a nod extended on both sides comfortably. Do this 10 times gently, without forcing anything, without pain. Now do it 10 times with half the range of motion, less forward, less back. Allow yourself to breathe a sigh of relief as you relax, if you are so inclined. Now do it ten times again with a full range of motion. Can you go farther with less work? Many people can.

Moshe Feldenkrais labeled the property of efficient movement "reversibility". This refers to the ability of the well organized system to change quickly and easily as needed to accommodate new inputs. You are going one direction, and suddenly need to move another, to reverse.

Tension is a resistance to movement, a predilection to follow small, defined, neuromuscular paths, and is applied to ensure conformity to past behavior.

A person who is physically relaxed—efficient--is quicker in more directions than a person who is physically tense, who may only be able to react in a small number of directions.

Tension is defined in a continuum. In your neck, the smoothness of the movement, the lack of jerkiness and tension, defined the quality of your movement. Greater smoothness, less bumps, better movement.

In human beings, we differ in our movement patterns only in our dysfunctions. There is only one best way to move, but an infinite number of ways to move with tension and imprecision.

Proper movement, movement which is reversible, which is capable of flexible reaction, contains more latent potential than improper movement. Those who are physically compulsive, who habitually tense muscles unnecessarily, who are unaware of their deficiencies, can do less than those who are less compulsive.

This line of thought applies to perception. All dichotomies of thought can be "reversed" and turned one into the other. Black can be turned, through an infinite progression of shades of grey, into white. Black is not the opposite of white—not when seen on a broader continuum of various radiations—but rather exists in an opposite direction on a continuum. Yet you can start to the "left" of black, and then move through white to the "right" of white, and on to infinity. They occupy parts of a continuum that are related solely through movement.

Just as proper movement uses a smooth curve, and can move back and forth without unneeded effort, and without "bumps", just so proper perception is not locked into a fixed stance or point of view. Perception, like a living being, must be allowed to breathe, to move.

The continuum around which perception is most usefully oriented is between the General Idea—tubaform—and concrete detail, gathered in as great a profusion as possible. To gain understanding, one must organize details in a general scheme, to organize the search for further details.

At no point, however, does either end become fixed in an organic, healthy system. The details are not "fixed" through selective gathering to support a tubaform, and the tubaform is not propagated without regard to concrete realities. Both interact, one with the other, in a whole which changes reversibly over time.

I call the expansion the Cloud, and the contraction the Bullet. When expanded, a bullet creates a cloud, which will often change in constitution. When contracted, the "condensate" of the bullet will often change where it appears, where the center of gravity is.

The term bullet is used, since it has direction. To make decisions, what is latent must be contracted and crystallized. It is right to often recalibrate decisions.

This process I refer to as Perceptual Breathing. It is the lack of such breathing, necessitated by irreversibility—inflexibility—that is the root cause of most long term, large perceptual failures.

EXPAND TERM PERCEPTUAL BREATHING. MENTION CONCEPT OF DOING MANUAL, DETAILED LABOR AS METHOD FOR IMPROVING ABILITY TO CONCRETIZE. OFTEN ACADEMICS DECONSTRUCT ONE TEXT WITH ANOTHER, NEITHER REFERRING TO ANY OUTSIDE REALITY, FOR EXAMPLE MYTHS WITH FREUD, ABSENT ATHROPOLOGICAL DETAIL.

JOKE ABOUT ECONOMIST STRANDED ON AN ISLAND; POSIT A BOAT. PROFESSOR SAYS THERE'S NO BOAT BECAUSE A RICH PERSON STOLE IT.

5. **In moving, we are Becoming. Becoming approximates Truth.**

Or, to revisit an Existentialist maxim, "Becoming approximates Essence".

If we cannot always know what is "True", we can know in what direction we are traveling. Or, to be more precise, in what direction we are intending to travel.

Movement is organized around a purpose We move, perceptually, emotionally, intellectually, physically, when we have an intent.

The best organization of human consciousness is that oriented around goals. I call this concept **Telearchy**, for order based on purpose. We cannot know what is objectively coded in the universe as what we should want, but we can certainly decide what it is we do want, and how to move so as to get it.

6. **What we typically refer to as "Truth" is an outcome of a process. This process is defined by the desired result.**

In Science, for example, what we refer to as "truth" (defined on a continuum consisting in part of the range from Conjecture to Law) is that for which we can offer explanations--which are not contradicted by ordinary experience—for repeatably observable phenomena. We believe General Relativity is "true" because it makes predictions for which observations can be made, and those observations, when made, match what was predicted.

However, since our experience is conditioned in many ways, some perhaps unknown, we cannot refer to any set of experiences as "true" in an absolute way, merely in an agentive, functional way.

Newton's Laws of Motion are "true" because they are useful. However, we have no firm basis for believing that gravity, for example, cannot change. The concept of "Law" is a Deistic relic—it arose from the notion of the universe as a clockwork mechanism created by a now somnolescent or indifferent Creator--and is a Tubaform, not a "Truth". We have confidence because as far as we know gravity never has changed unexplainably, but we have no firm, unambiguous basis for this belief.

Thus, Truth in science consists in that which is repeatable—which is to say predictable-- and therefore potentially useful. This in no way makes the conclusions of Science necessarily "True" in an absolute, lasting way.

7. <u>**Because Truth is the contingent outcome of a process defined by a criteria (such as repeatability, or conformity to theory), we logically should subordinate these processes to desired outcomes.**</u>

Science is conducted principally for 3 reasons: 1) the derivation of an intrinsic sense of meaning, of which public acclaim can be a part; 2) to make a profit through the development and refinement of new products; 3) to develop things which decrease human suffering.

Relative to number 3, an unexamined but real assumption of most Scientists is that knowledge which enables increasingly sophisticated manipulations of the physical world is inherently good. This assumption rests on the assumption that relief from material effort and suffering is an inherently desirable goal.

By submitting the idea that the intrinsic desirability of relief from material effort and suffering (in the form of disease or poverty)—without regard to other factors--is a tubaform, we can ask ourselves if this is in fact what we most want and need.

8. The best aim of human action is joy.

Commentary 1: If we cannot make necessarily true statements about human experience in the abstract, or Truth in the abstract, we CAN comment on our internal states, since that is the one, unambiguous input available, and constitutive of "life" itself.

Of the states of "life" of which we know, or can imagine, joy is the best and most positive, and thus the most generally desirable.

"I want to be happy" is, therefore, an organizing principle, and thus potentially capable of approximating, through motion (per number 6), Truth.

However, happiness cannot be willed. It arises spontaneously, in my view, as a result of the unobstructed operation of Goodness, discussed below.

9. There are qualities both of joy and pain.

Quality, as I want to define it, is a form which contains latent information. Quantity is that which "conducts" the form, the raw matter or raw experience.

Qualitative joy is the progressive refinement of latent complexity in joy. For example, it consists in finding happiness in the joy of others. This expands the experience both of the other person, as reflected in you, and your own experience.

Imagine a King, sitting on his throne, master of his domain, and capable of getting anything he wants. Imagine there is a certain pastry he likes, say an almond horn, that brings him pleasure. He orders one, it comes, and he greatly enjoys it. There is a resonance, and deep joy and satisfaction that comes over him. He savors the almond, the butter in the crust, the aroma of vanilla, the texture of the pastry, and sweetness of the dough. It makes him happy.

This is qualitative joy, which consists in a richly ordered experience, consisting in the proper and full use of information.

Then he orders another one, and it still satisfies him, but not as much. His capacity for savoring the pie has been reduced by satiety. He orders another, then another.

As time goes on, his ability to approach that experience with full sensitivity reduces, until he eats without thinking or feeling. He still enjoys the pastry, but only as a glutton.

With respect to people, versus objects, you are dealing with a reactive system. Your joy in them, your love for them, can be reflected back to you by them, when they also love you, when they also want joy for you. This feedback loop is the root of the best and highest quality joy possible.

Love is nothing other than willing the sustainable joy of others. It consists in helping others build their own "self structures" through adherence to the principles of Goodness: Rejection of Self Pity, perseverance, and perceptual breathing.

Love does not consist in depending on others to solve your problems for you, or a compulsive need to solve the problems of others for them.

Love consists, primarily, of the sharing of energy by two people, who each exist as Good people, in a non-compulsive, amplifying way. There is no limit to the energy that can be created if it is not short circuited by dependence, weakness, or an unwillingness to remain open to experience.

The opposite of this is compulsive attraction. In the case of a man and woman this will generally take the form of sexual attraction/compulsion, and/or matching dysfunctions, in which each partner expects the other to address/fix/heal some part of them which appears to them incomplete.

Expressed socially, this is the compulsion to "rescue" those "in need". Expressed in Pop Psychological terms, this is codependence. In order for you to exist, you have to see yourself be reflected in the eyes of another as needed, as valued, as important. You don't just want to help that person. You NEED that other person, with the result that your rescue efforts are not oriented around the objective correction of that person's plight, but rather around the mitigation of it, in such a way that it never ends.

The only actual solution to the problem of poverty, as an example, is full employment, in jobs that pay well enough to avoid what we call poverty. Yet,

the only possible means of accomplishing this is ensuring that the poor are employable, which is to say possessed of the self discipline, thrift, and energy to become educated, and to understand how the work world operates. Yet most poverty alleviation programs have this notion—if it is present at all—only in the back and most deletable portions of their programs.

Thus, poverty solves a problem for a certain segment of our society. It gives them a cause to "fight" for, one which makes them feel relief that they are needed, and one which is likely never to end, since the tactics and strategy employed have no end game.

Both the psychology of meeting ones basic emotional needs, and that of binge eating, I would consider quantitative joy, having enough of a quantity, but having lost the capacity for absorbing information—quality--fully. The King eats more and more because he enjoys less and less. The activist shouts more and more, and accomplishes less and less.

You participate in quality. You consume quantity.

This basic process can happen with respect to every form of enjoyment, including sex, sporting activities, work, etc. Quality is retained while an expansive, information rich consciousness is retained. As things become increasingly symbolic, means to an end, qualitative joy diminishes.

In many respects, I am describing the I/Thou, I/It dichotomy of Martin Buber. There is information and quality in capturing the richness of every experience as unique and valuable. There is degradation in treating new experiences as "basically the same" as old ones.

There is an intrinsic link between energy output, and quality. Energy is that which forms form.

Qualitative pain is pain on a formal level. As I will define it shortly, it is any reorganization with respect to the Sacred. This consists, for example, in attacks on ideas upon which your sense of self is based. If someone denigrates you, then you have the chance of reorganizing yourself on a higher, more evolved basis by developing the strength to resist them; or you can allow that insult to change your self image—who you "are", in your own mind—temporarily or permanently. You can react with violence, as well, which substitutes external change for internal change.

Quantitative pain is pain on a physical level. This is the pain of long marches, hard work, lack of food, lack of sleep. Quantitative pain often gets processed as Qualitative pain, but not invariably. If you are the only hungry person on your

block, the potential exists of the infection of self pity and resentment. These are qualitative pains, since they comment not just on the objective condition, but the context.

Another example: involuntary hunger saps energy, and leads to reduced expectations in life. However, voluntary hunger in form of fasting strengthens people.

As an example of this relation, Marine Corps training aims to generate tougher people through both quantitative and qualitative pain. People are insulted and demeaned so as to be forced to reintegrate their senses of selves on a higher qualitative level. They are subjected to tough physical tasks in order to support that qualitative reorganization, as well as to physically prepare them for their tasks in combat.

The nature of suffering is such that no trauma is intrinsically good or bad. What makes the difference is the qualitative effect it has, which is to say the effect is has on the structure of a person. A difficult childhood destroys some people, and makes others tough as nails, and happy because of it, capable of greater and longer exertions and energy generation, itself leading to qualitative joy. Marine Corps training is remembered with fondness by most Marines, for this reason. It defines for them a big part of who they are, which is to say who they chose to become, under demanding circumstances.

In my formulation, the purpose of life is qualitative joy. The means of generating such joy is through qualitative pain, itself sometimes generated intermediately by quantitative pain. The justification for undergoing such pain is duty, defined by what is considered sacred. The simplest and most general definitions of sacred principles are those I have used to define Goodness.

No increase in joy can be reached without the pain of suffering through difficulty, which generates a corresponding informational, qualitative richness. A growth in personal structure.

Character, to pull an antique word off a dusty shelf, is richness and wealth, that buys much happiness. It orders our personalities, and generates social order. Globally, it is necessary to peace.

It makes possible the ongoing conquest of Resistance.

To take a very limited but illustrative example, consider sports. Sports are work. All sports. If one considers ease—the opposite of quantitative pain--to be desirable, why do people voluntarily subject themselves to such trauma? Why, for example, do people run marathons? Is it not for that feeling of being a

"marathon runner", and the self image of being someone who is mentally self-possessed, and capable of surmounting daunting obstacles?

This increase in structure, in latent information, in self organization, is precisely what I am terming qualitative joy. It creates the ground for both peak experiences, as well as what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls "Flow", which is utter immersion in an activity that calls forth all of ones latent resources, and in so doing develops them. He considers this the basis of happiness.

Such joy takes an infinite number of forms, but is fundamentally expressed by energy, by the reemergence of the primal force of clear ecstasy and pleasure, unmediated by dull repetitiveness.

If information is defined precisely by the predictability of the next input, then every true qualitative joy is unique. Every run where great pleasure is felt, is unique. Every surmounting of obstacles, internal, or external, is, when enjoyed fully, unique. Even every sensory experience, as in eating, or enjoying an orchestra piece, is unique.

This is why childhood experiences are often imprinted so strongly. Childhood is eminently qualitative, where everything is large, new and remembered consciously--or forgotten but retained unconsciously--forever.

10.   Goodness consists in a reversible Will to Qualitative Joy.

If qualitative joy is that which combines structure with pleasure, and if pleasure is a principle organizing goal of humanity, then that structure is the proper aim to which we ought to direct our actions.

Action precedes affect. This means that the level of joy you are capable of achieving is conditioned in large measure by the concrete decisions you have made in the past. Such decisions form your self concept, your form; and your "form" is the prime determinant of how much innocent pleasure—qualitative joy—you can take from life.

Such innocent joy cannot be had compulsively, but rather arises spontaneously from a properly integrated and structured personality. Such a personality possesses the three traits necessary to Goodness: the Rejection of Self pity, Perseverance, and the ability to breathe perceptually.

The Rejection of Self Pity is necessary because self pity acts to add qualitative pain to all pains—qualitative and quantitative—and tends to act as a disorganizing, entropic force, which leads to a reduction in the types of joy which are possible, and ultimately, unchecked, to evil, defined below.

Perseverance is needed because it is what enables the continued effort needed to effect the elevations in personality structure needed to experience qualitative joy.

Perceptual breathing is needed to calibrate actions to achieve affects. It is enlightened perception, ultimately, that allows one to see that the highest of all joys is that in which one takes joy in the joy of others.

Viewing the world through this lens, it becomes clear that compassion is destructive where it feeds self pity in others, or encourages entropy rather than creation.

So many bad things happen when people compulsively work to help others quantitatively—for example by giving poor people money—when what they really need is to develop the capacity to surmount qualitative pain, develop self respect, and grow in their capacity for the dignity of qualitative joy.

This is why reversibility is essential. One must have the capacity to recognize, in both a general and specific sense, when one is actually working for the elevation of others, and when one is serving one's own selfish need to be the one people look to for help. In other words, to feed one's own vanity through apparently selfless action.

Commentary 2: We all have to bear our own crosses, but it seems to me others can help us by helping us bring out latent potentials, by helping us see where we can demand more from ourselves, by leading us by example. I don't think, in general, compassion is useful in this regard. I also don't think that we can ever really understand others on a detail level, but that in most cases having suffered and survived is enough. Again, we all have our crosses, and although some are heavier than others, they all have weight, and they all are unavoidable, if one wants to learn to live a truly happy and fulfilling life. What make them heavier are a sense of futility, a sense of solitude (especially when surrounded by others), a feeling of weakness, and resentment towards the need. Given this, others can help by pointing to reasons for hope, by being emotionally present, by not indulging others' feelings of self indulgence and emotional torpor, and by not feeding feelings of self pity

12. **Vanity is the beginning of evil, which consists in the search for power rather than joy.**

If qualitative joy is refined and expansive, then quantitative joy is that in which all human beings—and all transactions with human beings—are reduced to the material. If one observes material objects, some are large, and some are small.

Some are high, and some are low. These relational characteristics are the simplest possible statements which have any descriptive validity whatsoever.

The search for power is precisely the quest to attain positional advantage. It consists not in a pleasure which can be enjoyed and expanded alone, or be expanded and reinforced in sharing it with others.

It consists in a pleasure which necessitates the debasement of others relative to oneself. Thus, at least two objects must be involved: oneself, and another human, animal, mountain, or lake.

This quest for power is precisely the rejection of pain, both qualitative and quantitative. The reality is that pain is necessary in this world to grow, and to experience the best that life has to offer. It is resistance that enables more complex, more refined structures to form, which conduct the energy of joy and light.

The beginning of this rejection is vanity, in that the person chooses not to believe that the rules which govern others govern them. This failure is comprised of self pity, lack of capacity to persevere in the face of qualitative difficulty, and the inability to see that their own objective self interest dictates steadfastness and the rejection of self pity.

Since pain is a universal reality, and must be undergone, those who seek power in effect seek to "outsource" the need to feel pain through cruelty.

Sadism—overtly expressed evil--is a precise inversion of the creation of qualitative joy through qualitative pain. It consists in inflicting pain that is not intended to foster growth--making it qualitatively negative--and deriving thereby qualitative joy, but joy whose structure is unsupportable, because rather than being expansive, it shrinks.

This is why sadists must repeat their crimes, either in reality, or in their imagination. Such quality prevents complete collapse for a time, but not indefinitely. It is a fact that all serial killers are eventually suicidal. It is a fact they keep "mementos" to resurrect their crimes in their imagination. This is a part of the disease.

What such people seek, without knowing it, is in my view innocence, paradoxically. If innocence were a drug, its sale would be tenfold all existing illicit substances. It is not, however, and thus must be maintained, or rediscovered.

Sadists, for a brief moment, in my belief, feel free. They feel free because the challenge of life, that of surmounting pain, has been accomplished by their surrogate, by their victim. They enjoy, vicariously, this victory, before the dark chains of reality emerge once more. This is the very definition of compulsion. They are not and cannot, for that reason, ever be free.

It is with great concern, in this regard, that I view the propagation of movies which unambiguously glorify cruelty. It is, to me, a symptom that people have lost their capacity to suffer qualitatively in the name of the sacred, and have been reduced to feeling their pain vicariously. More on this later.

13. **Human Society can perhaps be best understood as composed of 4 systems: a Meaning system, a Truth system, a political system, and an economic system, each defined by principles.**

NOTE IN HERE SOMEWHERE BISCHOFF'S COMMENT ON PG 423. REMEMBER TO REFERENCE BIOLOGY AT END

James Gleick, in his book "Chaos", describes the development of the math needed to model "chaotic" systems. For example, a small number of equations are sufficient to generate in a computer model all observable variations in global weather. From simple equations, great and almost overwhelming complexity ensues rapidly. This complexity, however, is not entirely chaotic. It is approximately predictable.

There is not a linear relationship between the equations and the outcomes—predicting the weather is currently an impossibility more than a few days out—but there are known mathematical, approximate, bounds, within which the system operates.

This represents the order, which could be visually depicted, as an example, as a sideways figure 8 (infinity sign) which you draw over and over, such that you never exactly repeat a line, but constantly approximate the line. Occasionally, you get far outside the line, then catch yourself. The point in the middle, the center of systemic gravity, is called a "Strange Attractor". More on this shortly.

I propose that this analogy be applied to human society. The order in a society arises from the principles—"formulas" deployed widely-- upon which most people:

   1) Base their sense of meaning;
   2) Determine what is true;
   3) Govern themselves politically;

4) Govern their economies.

Human social systems are infinitely complex, but they are not random. They are defined by a small number of principles, and from those principles flow great variations in action, which are controlled within bounds. Such action can be understood as the operation of governing principles in motion.

In short, if you know what people hold dear, what they hold sacred, you know most of what you need to know about them.

The sacred, as I want to define it, is that for which people are willing to suffer, and which thereby acts to facilitate qualitative growth in individuals, and cohesion within groups.

Any group of people that has suffered a common difficulty will either break apart, or come together. The sacred is that which makes the latter more likely. In no small measure, the training of Marines sacralizes the relationship of the individual Marine with his Unit, and the Marine Corps as a whole. They are willing to fight, suffer, and die for one another.

There is also a two-way relationship here. Voluntary suffering sacralizes an action—as in the willing sacrifice (lit: "an act of the sacred") of one soldier for another, or a parent for their child. The pain itself makes the act perceptually holy, even if undertaken spontaneously, without a formal thought process.

Inversely, such actions are undertaken as a result of sacred beliefs, in this case love for one's brother soldier, with love being defined as a will to the joy of that soldier (which might be a reduction in their pain), or one's fellow soldiers (showing that all lives are valued). This is a qualitative, organizing act, for that reason.

Thus, there is an intrinsic connection between quality and the sacred. For the purpose of this argument, I will make no effort to ground the sacred in some higher purpose. My intention is a functional analysis of the logic and reality of the situation. It is manifestly the case that all religions have resulted in both good and bad behavior, including the inverted belief system of a-theism.

The proper question is what is best, and my answer is intended not to quelch any belief system, or uniquely support any single belief system. My intent, in fact, is to strengthen ALL belief systems in what is good in them, and work to reduce in all such systems what is bad and tending to evil, though increased clarity of thought and perception.

14.   The purpose of a Meaning System is the generation of qualitative joy in the face of qualitative and quantitative pain. That is the desired outcome.

I propose that the best meaning system is one oriented around individual and collective goodness.

A meaning system is that system of thought which provides a reason to voluntarily undergo pain.

It organizes the Self, organizes perception, and permits the expression of qualitative joy.

Yet, joy, as I defined it in the beginning of this book is an "emergent property of Goodness". Goodness I defined as the emergent property of the sacralization of the rejection of self pity, perseverance, and perceptual breathing.

Remember the figure 8? The point in the middle is called the "Strange attractor". Mathematically, it defines the center of gravity of the system, even though the parameters of the system—say, for global weather, which is a paradigmatic chaotic system—rarely are "on" that spot. In an 8, you spend little time on the dot in the middle, even though you see it often.

I propose that Goodness is the Strange Attractor created indirectly through the individual and social sacralization of the Rejection of Self Pity, Perseverance, and Perceptual Breathing (and that this utterance itself is an outcome of Perceptual Breathing).

I propose that the highest form of joy, that of innocent delight--qualitative joy—is the Strange Attractor of Goodness.

The clear implication is that Good people are approximately good. They are not perfect. They are centered around, oriented around, Goodness, but not compulsive. This is living goodness, from which I would differentiate the compulsivity of various Fundamentalisms.

"Perfect Goodness is not straight", said Chuang Tzu, and here it is, explained (in one tubaform, anyway).

If "good" behavior is compelled then you have merely hidden the actual operative principles of that person or society. In a Totalitarian system, for example, the actual principles are applied cunning and deceit, even though the stated principles may be outwardly benign. No innocence is possible, where deviation from a rigid program is punishable by death or exile.

The further implication is that you can't expect to feel joy all the time. You are making it an "accident waiting to happen", but you cannot force it.   The system has its own logic, and own timing.

I would argue that there is a fundamental homology between Goodness, and all useful (defined as enabling qualitative joy) meaning systems. Self evidently, all religious systems would potentially be included here, as would all useful non-religious philosophies and creeds.

Goodness, in other words--as a concept and a system--can be fit within existing systems, with benefit, and without strain. I do not need to convert anyone to anything other than that which they already believe. I want Christians to be better Christians, Muslims to be better Muslims, and Humanists to be better Humanists.

Most meaning systems appear different. Islam appears to differ in major ways from Christianity. Yet, pealed away, both are systems for providing meaning. Both aim to promote justice on earth, and both offer their adherents behavioral systems which are sacred, and which aim to the creation of Goodness, and qualitative joy.

Superficially, a sacrificial act dedicated to Allah might appear different than a sacrificial act dedicated to Jesus. Both acts may appear different than an act dedicated to "economic justice". Yet all of them have as their aim the creation of a specific state in the believer, and in the world of the believer.

We all, ultimately, have many, many more shared realities than disparate realities. Understood with wisdom, with the insight which the religious believe God gave us, all religions contain within them a recipe for peace, which begins with the qualitative joy of Goodness, and satisfaction in who one is, without the compulsive need to change others. The need to change others is a need for power, and thus fundamentally tending to evil.

There is an inverse relationship between the quality of an idea, and its associated need to be enforced through violence. Good ideas sell themselves. Bad ideas have to be imposed by force.

Good people sell their ideas. Bad people force them on other people through violence.

Capitalism, as an example we will look at in a moment, sells itself. Many, many nations have copied our model without any input from us at all. It works, and is

really nothing more or less than a large scale invocation of the sort of trade (buy low, sell high) that has gone on since time immemorial.

Communism has always needed secret police, lots of guns and prisons, and many, many murders.

The only happy, non-compulsive implementation of Communist ideals of which I know occurred and continues to persist in Israel, in the Kibbutzes. There, the idea was sold to, and voluntarily adopted by, people with a commitment to shared suffering, and shared joy.

15.   Truth systems are necessarily and definitionally contingent, and should therefore be oriented around achieving the results of the Meaning system.

Science—as our principle shared "Truth" system—is a human activity. As such, it is governed by human volition.

Science has performed well in enabling us to accomplish concrete, physical ends, such as putting men on the moon, building large dams, and providing power for large cities.

The method of science is emotional and intellectual detachment from the things of the world, so that generalizable, functional truths can be uncovered, which permit more highly ordered human activity. As such, it is by definition infinitely skeptical, and must for this reason treat even its own conclusions as contingent, pending further data inputs.

The process is observation. Effects are observed, and ideas brought to bear on possible cause and effect relationships: "If I do this, I believe this will happen."

These ideas are advanced as hypotheses, and experiments conducted which are intended to disprove the hypothesis—technically, to "falsify" it. If numerous experiments are done, AND the idea offered has consistent predictive value, AND if no conditions can be uncovered which are not covered by the hypothesis, then it is elevated to theory.

Theories which remain useful and unfalsified long enough are elevated to the status of laws, which as I have already indicated is an infelicitous use of language, invoking as it does Deism, or overt Theism.

The whole system is based, as I said, on emotional detachment. For this reason, it is unscientific to be emotionally attached to any theory or any Law whatever. In fact, it is the duty of proper scientists interested in progress to continually do

their best to find limit conditions in which their theory does not hold, as this will generate new data which will enable new paradigms, which in turn will allow more progress.

This process is violated when Science, in itself, becomes a principle source of meaning. The Meaning and Truth systems have collapsed together, resulting in mental confusion.

For example, it is manifestly the case that many scientists derive great pleasure from the aesthetic achievement of Charles Darwin in developing a plausible method for the development of complex forms of life—technically, for species— from less complicated forms of life. He did not invent the concept of evolution— which was a very old concept—but rather proposed a means for it which did not need to invoke a hypothesis—a Creator Deity—which was not testable by scientific means.

In short, he severed the previously necessary relationship between religious belief, and science. He provided an answer to the question (the objection, ultimately): if God didn't create this, then where did it come from?

Little pieces that became big pieces. That was his answer. He proposed a mechanism for the self assembly of living clocks, that of random mutation and natural selection.

Around this time, then, we see in the history of science the development of a school of thought that says that that which cannot be tested cannot be scientific. Formally speaking, this is in my view a proper statement of the matter.

However, culturally, the received view of this goes:

1) That which is True can be uncovered by Science;
2) That which cannot be tested cannot be TRUE;
3) God cannot be tested;
4) Therefore there is no God.

This goes too far. This is a philosophical landgrab that is unsupportable within the necessary confines of Science, properly understood.

If one contemplates the Universe, which may or may not be infinite, it becomes quite clear that it is fully conceivable that as humans we may never be able to know as a race everything there is to know. We cannot, as a matter of formal epistemology, ever know for sure what we don't know. We live, certainly, in a small bubble. How small, we can't know.

The innovation of Science is skepticism. Where previously things were held to be true because they were claimed to be true by people who could kill you if you questioned them, Science offered a means for correlating observations with predictions.

If the Truth system of, say, the Catholic Church posited that something would happen—say, that lighting would strike you if you flipped the finger at the Pope—and you did it, and nothing happened, then you had thereby tested that truth claim, in a defined setting, under specific circumstances.

It was skepticism, the possibility of imagining another reality, another explanation, that would make such an act possible.

Yet, as the successes of Science continued to rack up, the initial circumspection in carefully defining the limits of what was known, gave way to trumpeting generally accepted theories as non-contingently True.

Science ceased being skeptical of its own root claims. Rather, it found in the epistemological clarity of absolute claims to an understanding of Reality the same relative solace, the same sense of meaning (understood here as the emotional reaction to achieving a sense of intellectual order vis a vis the uncertainties of life) that had previously been the domain of religious sentiments.

Self evidently, I am here reifying Science. Science is that which scientists do. Because it is a human activity, there is in every moment the potential for new decisions.

However, I would like to point to one specific areas in which a generally propagated sense of confidence appears ill-suited, and in fact non-conformable with emotional detachment and skepticism.

Quantum physics is non-conformable with orthodox materialism. Quantum physics posits that "matter" is an experiential fiction that does not "exist" in any formal, unchanging way. Or at least that is what the math says, and the math—and associated experiments--work splendidly.

Specifically, it has been shown experimentally and mathematically that "matter"—technically, information--can interact over distance at speeds faster than the speed of light. Non-locally, to use the preferred term. This development arose as a result of Einstein and several colleagues efforts to integrate Quantum Mechanics into General Relativity, since the two are clearly incompatible in a grand unified theoretical structure.

They failed. They in fact succeeded in laying the ground work for a mathematical proof showing them to be wrong—Bell's Theorem—and an experiment which validated Bell's Theorem, and which has been replicated to the extent that the experimental result is no longer questioned. Its meaning, of course, is.

One would think that such a finding would lead most scientists to question orthodox materialism, which I will define here as the foundational notion—the tubaform—that all observable phenomena have at least theoretically observable antecedents, and that those antecedents at least theoretically operate in precisely predictable ways. Billiard Balls do not move themselves. And God, to quote Einstein, "does not play dice".

Such questioning of their dominant tubaform has not happened. This can be defined precisely as an example of the conflation of a meaning system with a truth system. The principle symptom of such conflation is the marked cessation of genuine skepticism.

Rather than retool and redirect, the last 30 some-odd years have been spent in mathematical morasses of String Theory, and in the progressive uncovering of smaller and smaller particles, in the hope that one will prove truly material. Yet this possibility is already rejected by Quantum Theory, and there is no theoretical resolution in sight, of which I am aware. Enormous sums of money, however, have been spent in this enterprise.

The evidence supports abandoning traditional materialism. However, in rejecting God, philosophers of science did not stop there. They rejected anything they termed "metaphysical", by which was intended anything non-falsifiable (not testable), but which came in cultural practice to mean anything that smacked of anything but orthodox materialism.

Thus, by abandoning religion as a source of meaning, and embracing Science, the stage was set for a large scale failure of perception, which in my view continues to this day.

One aspect of this I have not addressed is the genuine desire of many scientists to materially improve the world. They thought that where religion was a system of coercion based on fictive entities, science was a system of freedom, which enabled a universal language, and a universal system of communication. Such a system would be capable of crossing borders, and would ultimately work to break down the petty disputes that plagued so many parochial entities, such as nations and churches.

Science, in short, worked for peace. Peace being intrinsically desirable, science was a force for good.

Again, however, the assumption proved misguided. Science served as a handmaiden to the atrocities of World War 1, where widespread use of machine guns, poison gas, and long range artillery caused many millions of deaths.

Darwinian notions of "fitness" were explicitly invoked by German scientists—well before Hitler's harnessing of such notions to rise to power—to develop "theories" in which classes of human beings were assigned to statuses lower than animals. Such "theories" caused millions of deaths.

It can clearly be seen, then, that "Science" per se—the activity of scientists—is not good or bad, but rather dependent on the use to which it is put. The purpose.

In short, it is not an end—"truth" is not the end—but rather it is a means to an end.

Therefore, it ought properly to be the servant of the meaning system, and I propose here that the highest and best use of human volition is the creation of individual and generalized qualitative joy. That which subtracts from it is bad, and that which adds to it is good.

And what is the process for determining which is which? Observation.

Many scientists like to nurture the conceit that their theories spring full-blown from brilliant minds, but in reality a great many advances have been made entirely by accident. The development of Penicillin, for example, was an unanticipated result of another area of research entirely.

Much progress comes from just trying something, seeing what works, and then trying to figure out why in retrospect. Fleming did not need to know why penicillin worked in order to use it.

This approach is called Black Box thinking, and is in my view the ultimate expression of what scientists ought to be doing. In this line of thought, you create an input—you try something—then you measure the output, and compare it to the outcome you wanted.

In this case, we want practical approaches to increasing joy. In the short run, this may well consist in experiments in how to better educate kids to assume adult responsibilities. It may consist in trying different things with school curriculums.

Above all, it will consist in not ignoring any form of evidence with promise simply because it fails to match existing paradigms.

As an example, the existence of light emissions from living cells is well attested. These are called Biophotons. The existence of such light is proven. There exist two dismissive explanations, neither of which holds up.

The first is that photon emissions are related to thermal energy. Logically, if this were true, there would be a linear relationship between photon emission and temperature. This has not been observed, and has for all practical purposes been experimentally falsified as an explanation.

The second dismissal takes the form of "Incompleteness Theory", which states that rather than completing a given chemical reaction, sometimes individual molecules give off energy in the form of light or electrons. Again, however, insofar as chemical reactions are dependent on temperature, the expected data that would support this explanation has not been found. On the contrary, this explanation has for all intents and purposes been experimentally falsified.

Currently, this leaves the explanation that such photon emission is biologically important. In numerous, decades long experiments, German scientists have shown a relationship between such light and cellular DNA, which they view as an antenna of sorts.

They have shown that biophotons are coherent, which in effect means they operate with the precision of lasers.

Experiments have shown that lasers shorten wound healing time, for reasons that are to my knowledge inexplicable within currently accepted paradigms.

Experiments have shown that biophoton emission is universal in living creatures.

Detailed models have been developed that appear experimentally supported that show how coherent light in organisms regulates growth, and plays a role in cellular differentiation.

This field of science shows great promise in supporting the field of biology in developing a systemic, non-reductive theory of human nature. Most biologists currently are working to develop increasingly granular understandings of human biochemistry, based on the materialistic tubaform that big things are built from small things, and small things are built from something solid. Find the small things, you can reverse engineer the big thing, and then we can duplicate human life.

Yet, in this whole line of thought, the consequences on human psychology are seemingly never considered, that we are merely "machines made out of meat", and utterly determined in our behavior. "Don't worry" we are told. "It's all good: Details to follow."

Again, a conflation of meaning—here, the desire to engineer life, to play God—with Truth.

If this thought is depressing, and if alternative models exist, why not at least explore them? If our goal is the increase in human joy, then we can validly ask if this line of research's risk is worth its possible reward. If we succeed in creating cyborgs who live forever, but who don't want to, is that success? If we succeed in reprogramming people for happiness, is that happiness after all? Is that sort of life worth living?

These are questions that can be dealt with only if there is a criterion by which to reach a determination. I have offered one such criterion, one which invokes choice explicitly.

I have seen none offered by the scientific community, outside of the unjustified and unexamined assumption that living longer and more healthily is intrinsically good, and that they will at some point be able to help in that process.

That, and of course the criterion that such research makes money, money is power, and power is good.

As I have shown, that latter criterion is the opposite of good. It does not lead to real joy in its adherent, it is not philosophically necessary, and is in fact empirically wrong. It does not accomplish its desired end, that of genuine happiness.

16. **That political system is best which best supports diverse meaning systems.**

The workings of any chaotic system will generate an infinite number of specific results. Take 10 people, convince them that their future happiness depends on the Rejection of Self Pity, Perseverance in the face of difficulty, and Perceptual Breathing, and they will all generate different results.

One may find his calling in being a carpenter who plays in a band on Saturdays. One may decide to become a nurse. One may join the military. One may become a stockbroker dedicated to providing the best possible service and ethical return on value for his clients. One may join the Peace Corps. One may

become an engineer working to develop better solutions to providing cooling in hot climates. Etc.

What this system is intended to do is both spread out and contract results achieved within the system. I can't say that somebody won't do what Charles Manson did with the White Album, and do something terrible. That would be, statistically speaking, an outlyer, a line far outside the lines, but still a possibility within the system, which is not linear.

But, in general, on average, the system will tend approximately to Goodness, if I have figured this out correctly.

The best political system is that which maximizes the possible movement, since this maximizes the capacity of the individual humans to realize the potential of their own chaotic systems, which of course are defined by perceptions that are uniquely their own. Thus all Goodnesses are unique, and all associated joys are, in some respects, unique.

This, of course, is liberty.

At the same time, human beings are moving bodies. Moving bodies collide. The greater the number of bodies, the greater the motion, the greater the risk of— and corresponding need to regulate—such collisions.

This necessitates the implementation of laws, and the ability to enforce laws. Laws themselves need to be based on principles, since in order to not be coercive (remember there is an inverse relationship between the quality of an idea, and its reliance on force) they must be acceptable to most if not all of a population.

Thus: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

In my view, the American system of self government is the best that has yet been achieved in recorded history. In 1789, when the Constitution was adopted, the world was characterized by kings and tyrants everywhere. Only in America was a Bill of Rights enacted into universal law.

This Bill of Rights may be understood to act directly as a support for the free expression of personal meaning systems.

We have survived—in a world which has regularly been hostile--because America's proclivity for self reliance may be very closely correlated to the rejection of self pity, and perseverance has been needed for our expansion. The prototypical homesteader may be seen as a model of the virtues of the rejection of self pity and persistence.

Further, democracy can be viewed as the expression in the social sphere of perceptual breathing. Every 2 years, we recalibrate to a certain extent what we believe to be true about the world, who is best fit to meet those challenges, and how best to meet those challenges.

We have room for the invocation of personal beliefs of various sorts, and self evidently it is precisely for the ability to freely admit the content of our beliefs into public discourse that many if not most of those who founded our nation came here. It would be an oppressive tyranny that pretended that our most cherished beliefs must for any reason be left at home. This is why room is made for ALL beliefs.

I do however believe that one aspect of our system has been inadequately understood, and therefore inadequately protected.

It was understood by our Founding Fathers that maximal freedom is distributed, not centralized. Some functions, such as national defense, function best for all when coordinated centrally. Others, such as moral preferences, will vary widely among people.

Understood as a chaotic system, the States were intended to be self-similar to the Federal government in their fundamental acceptance of the rule of law, and their subordination to the Constitution and Bill of Rights, but differing otherwise in their own implementations of notions of right and wrong.

In the structuring of the United States of America, the intent was clearly to give individual states considerable leeway in how they "conducted their business".

For example, is smoking marijuana moral? Would we get different answers in Texas and Oregon? Probably. Should the answer then come from Washington, with respect to such a question?

Should doctors have the right to end life? Is Capital Punishment right or wrong? Should homosexual unions be recognized under law? Is welfare a right or a privilege? Is Affirmative Action a good idea? Should evidence supporting the incompleteness of orthodox Darwinism be allowable in publicly funded schools? Should people have the right to carry concealed weapons?

The list goes on. Are not all of these questions whose answers arise from the latent complexity of a meaning system and idiosyncratic perception? Would it not make sense to reduce the role of centralized decisionmaking, since final answers cannot be had, merely commonly agreed-upon and negotiated ones?

16. **That economic system is best which best allows the free, competitive operation of the market. Sometimes this necessitates regulating the market, but errors, where made, should be on the side of freedom, and not restraint.**

If the goal is wealth creation, and associated relief from hunger, backbreaking lifelong labor, and short lifespans, then Capitalism works. The wealthiest nations on earth are those which have Capitalistic systems. This means, in part, that the poorest members of the wealthiest nations compare in their objective standards of living well to the wealthy in many parts of the world, and extremely well to the wealthy in past centuries.

Famously--among the actually economically literate--Nobel Prize winning economist Friedrich Hayek argued that the "Invisible hand" of Adam Smith was the result of the order—he called it the Extended Order—created in the operation of countless local transactions.

To simplify it greatly, if I go to the market to buy a pound of rice, the person selling it to me looks at me, my mood, and states a price. If I want to, I can haggle. If I consider it fair, I pay it. The price may vary from customer to customer, or day to day, not always in intrinsic relation with actual cost on the part of the rice merchant.

This is an efficient system. Everybody pays what they are willing to pay, and charges what they are willing to charge. It reacts flexibly and instantly across wide areas.

In Command Economies—the result of thinking Hayek called Constructivist, which is essentially the conflation, again, of a truth system and a meaning system—prices are dictated more centrally. This results in lower profits for merchants, and thus less efficiency. Since the motivation to sell is reduced, economic output is reduced.

As the old Soviet saying goes: we pretend to work, and they pretend to pay us.

This is why Cuba is dirt-poor.

The Extended Order is in my formulation a chaotic system, which in Hayek's estimation—and I agree—is best defined by honesty, enforceable contract rights, and the absolute right to personal ownership of property.

If those three things are treated as sacred legally and by members of an economic order, then wealth will be created. Wealth is the strange attractor of the system, the product, and the more movement occurs, and the larger the movement, the more wealth is created.

This is well attested historically.

Again, the only permanent solution to the problem of poverty is full employment. Full employment can only occur in conditions of wealth, and wealth is created by relatively unfettered capitalism.

Governments can take from one group and give to another. They can tax those with money, and use that money to create jobs for those who do not have money. This can work as long as the rich remain rich, and remain taxable.

However, such taxation amounts to a cap on what price can be charged for a product. It amount to a centralized dictation of what profit can be had. As such, it decreases the motive to work in most people.

Systemically, this is clearly the case, regardless of appeals to the altruistic potential of human beings. Such demands get processed as coercive, and as such as violence. As such, they are low in quality.

Thus, the tactic of taking from the rich makes the rich less rich since they now work less.

Moreover, in our global economy, they can take their money elsewhere, making ALL taxes levied by that nation disappear. Halliburton now—or will soon--pay NO taxes, in America at any rate, having moved to another, more congenial clime.

Such movement can be banned. The desired behavior can be coerced. This may work on the now manacled person or corporation. However, much growth comes not from home-grown industry and investment, but from overseas. Most investors everywhere want to put money in America. We clearly protect rights to private property, and we use our system to generate wealth.

There are nations, such as Venezuela, where nobody who wants a return on their money wants to invest. They nationalized several oil rigs, and made it clear that money put in Venezuela may never come out.

They rejected, in other words, the unambiguous right to private property, and the right to enforceable contracts.

People with money saw this, and now Chavez is going to have to fund his programs with money borrowed from sympathetic regimes, and that stolen from the hapless wealthy who understood the danger too late. Since as a chaotic system motion is decreasing in both speed and amplitude, a descent into severe poverty is inevitable. Since popular resistance to such idiocy is also inevitable, so is an authoritarian backlash.

This is the nature of Constructivism. It claims to want to solve the problem of poverty and "injustice", and instead creates worse poverty, and worse injustice.

Human beings are not created equal in intelligence, physical capacity, desire for self betterment, or in opportunity. Therefore, to expect equality of outcome is naïve. Why should someone of great intelligence and great physical energy not make more money than someone of low intelligence and low physical energy? What would be the basis for this claim?

Normally, the apparent "logic" is that inequality of outcome must result from inequality of opportunity. Since opportunity is something that is "given" to someone by "society", the political system needs to act on the economic system so as to "give" that someone the same opportunity.

To make a long story short, Hayek argues clearly (in the "Fatal Conceit", among other books) that efforts to equalize outcomes lead to inequalities in opportunity. Moreover, that in turn leads to decreased economic output, and decreased personal liberties.

He invokes a very useful heuristic, that of Action To, and Action For.

Action For is the intent of an activity or policy.

For example, raising the Minimum Wage is intended to reduce poverty by ensuring that a living wage is paid to all employees in a given area. The intent is benign.

Action To is the actual consequence of a policy. Remember that the economic system is chaotic, and defined through principles whose operation yields results which are systemic, not linear, and often unanticipated.

In the case of the Minimum Wage, every time it is raised, area unemployment goes up. This is well attested.

In much of Continental Europe, employment rights are strong. It is nearly impossible to fire someone, legally mandated wages are reasonably high, vacations are long, and performance expectations are low.

Consider the following in that regard: "Since the '70s, America has created 57 million new jobs, compared with just four million in Europe (with most of those jobs in government). . . In France, joblessness among workers in their 20s exceeds 20%, twice the overall national rate. In immigrant banlieues, where the population is much younger, average unemployment reaches 40%, and higher among the young." (2)

Constructivism Acts For the alleviation of human suffering, and Acts To increase it, on balance.

In my formulation, it is a quantitative solution to qualitative problem. See Appendix 1 for one version—my version—of a qualitative solution.

17.   That which "Acts To" goodness is good, and that which "Acts For" goodness, and fails, is bad.

When you are a kid, it's a good thing to skin your knee once in a while. It's good to not get what you want at Christmas. It's good to be forced to work hard in school at times.

That which Acts To increase people's resistance to Self Pity, their ability to persevere, and their ability to perceive, is good. This is because these things foster Goodness, which in turn fosters genuine joy.

That which fosters self pity, which encourages the self image of being a helpless victim, is bad. That which discourages effort, and which rewards indolence is bad. That which fails to compel people to think and to feel autonomously is bad. This is because these things lead to evil thoughts of violence and cruelty.

In that regard, consider the following lyric, from .50 Cent, a top Rap/Hip Hop artist:

They say Im grimey, Im greasy
I make a 187 look easy
F**k that, I lay my murder game down
Push me nigga, see what Im about

I was a snotty nose, nappy head, dirtbomb nigga
Sayin I cant wait till I get a little bigger
Half the niggas jumped me, bumpin' my head

Thinkin' I wish I had a gun I fill a nigga with lead
Took a kitchen knife, Im finna poke me a nigga
Wishin' I had a gun so I could smoke me a nigga
Sold my first five quarter gram pieces in the alley
Where Bizzy had the Bondeville and Kev had the caddy
Now those were the days, where crime really pay
9 milly spray, got the f**k out the way
The shootout, the shootout
The bricks went fast, robberies went bad, niggas got blast
Niggas kidnap Drew granpa kid
Came through and shot Ms Leak in the head
Wonder why I got a gun so I can get down for mine
You need that, out on the grind all the time.

A 187, of course, is a homicide, in at least the California legal code.

What to make of that?

Or, to change cultural lanes, since I see this as an ubiquitous problem, consider that "*Hostel* grossed $80 million US in worldwide box office receipts and another $180 million in DVD sales; the *Saw* series has earned more than $200 million US."

These movies consist of little but extended torture scenes. They are "winning" entries in what has been called the "torture porn" genre, and contain little or no character development or qualitative differentiation.

They exist, in other words, on a quantitative level.

What to make of this?

My take is that evil is making inroads in our nation, inroads facilitated by misplaced compassion.

What do I mean by this?

Let me take a circuitous route in my explanation.

Cruelty is clearly as old as humanity. Even a cursory study of history will find ample evidence, if one is so inclined, to consider all human beings cursed.

What is history, really, but the continual history of the subjugation of one nation by another, repeated endlessly? The Persians conquered much of Asia Minor,

the Greeks conquered them, the Romans conquered the Greeks, the Turks conquered the Romans, the Allies conquered the Ottomans, etc.

In all of these conquests, one sees rape, murder, torture, looting, and all conceivable acts of cruelty and viciousness. In his book "The Gift of Fear"—which all people should read—Gavin de Becker asks you to imagine the worst thing you can imagine one human being doing to another. Now make it worse.

Somebody has done that.

In my view, such acts arise from simple evil, as I have defined it above.

But let us refine this a bit. I have given you a simple, short, bulleted assertion—the existence and expression of evil. Let us expand it, in the manner of perceptual breathing.

Historically, the sacred beliefs of individual societies were very local, and confined to a small group or tribe. The sacred laws both defined membership in an order, and conversely, membership in the order of "Other".

In most human societies, for most of history, slaughtering "others" was, to a greater or lesser extent, acceptable. Many if not most of the wars which have been fought, consisted in nothing other than wanting another groups stuff, which included their women.

Imagine you could, without risk of reprisal, invade the best neighborhood in your town, and take absolutely anything and everything you want. You can take out all the frustrations of your life on whoever gets in your way, and you can have their women to do with whatever you please.

This image is not attractive, but likely comprehensible if not acceptable for most male readers. This is what drove wars, nothing more, for most of history. Even in modern Germany, the scientific capital of the World, many Germans did not protest the disappearance of their Jewish neighbors overly much, because they were able to move in and take what they wanted, up to and including their houses.

If the Sacred is that which defines what you are willing to control yourself for, to suffer for, then the more local the belief, the smaller the group of people who share that belief. Consequently, the number of people who can be attacked—those for whom one does not have to sacrifice or restrain oneself--is larger. It's everybody else.

Conversely, then, universal beliefs limit greatly the number of people who are outside the "fold", and lead, therefore, to a much greater need for the development of self restraint in the service of the sacred.

In history, one can look to the formation of many Empires as supporting the growth of the homogeneity in outlook which permitted the growth in size of "included" groups, and decrease in size of "excluded" groups.

Alexander, for example—whose Empire extended from Greece to India (through Afghanistan)--famously allowed conquered kings to retain their thrones, subject only to his authority. He had been taught that that king rules best who rules least. Yet he created the possibility of Hellenisation, which influenced and affected very large areas of the Mediterranean, and which to some extent homogenized cultural ideals.

One of the most peaceful periods in Mediterranean history occurred in the first few centuries of the first Millenium. Roman Centurions saw to the peace.

One can of course say that the Romans, as conquerors, were not acting in the interest of universal peace. This would be true. However, while they were "acting for" material gains—including slaves—they were "acting to" create a template for modern Western Civilization, and in their own time for the cessation of the constant violence which occasions all peoples not united in a large whole.

It was not, you see, a question for the conquered peoples of "peace or war", but generally "war with whom", and "what do we get if we win". With the Romans, they got peace and prosperity, much more than they otherwise would have achieved.

Maybe it wasn't what they would have chosen, but they got used to it, and universally began adopting Roman ways.

And generally speaking, Romanization was not an intentional product of the Romans. They never sought to be cultural hegemons, merely economic and political hegemons. People adopted their style because it was congenial. It sold itself.

And it was the quality of Roman ideas that made it the model for the modern world, as expressed in the Re-naissance.

The Roman Empire, therefore, although manifestly unjust by modern tastes in many ways, was supportive of the long term growth of human rights, through the cultural unification of much of Europe, the development of sophisticated

methods of government, and through creating a model for peace across wide areas, as mediated by law and where necessary by force.

This set the stage in turn for the broadest application of the sacred of which I am aware, which occurred in Western Europe during the Enlightenment, in which fundamental rights were posited for all human beings, of all races, without regard to creed or ethnicity.

Ideas such as that can only spread in conditions of cultural receptiveness. For this reason, the groundwork laid in the unification of various peoples into nations, such as the Germans, the Italians, the British, the French, and the citizens of the United States of America—each nation, of course, could be viewed as an Empire, consisting as it does in disparate peoples unified together through both common interest and force--worked to enable the wide propagation of ideas which were inherently amenable to peace, by sacralizing peace—or principles which lead to peace--through attention to universal codes.

In my view, the concept of universal human rights ought to be acceptable to all major religions. All religions of which I am aware have notions of Goodness. In my view, notions of universal rights must be understood as having emerged from Goodness.

I would formulate it this way: the wider the potential applicability of an idea, the greater its quality. The notion of human rights is universally applicable, and serves as a useful template, a tubaform, for increases in human liberty, and human joy. This makes it a good concept.

Where we have gone off track, where we have lost the Light in the Enlightenment, is in a political dialogue oriented around the use of the tubaform of human rights to portray any and all deviations from perfection as predatory.

In my view, most modern atrocities—think the Soviet Union, the National Socialists, and the killing fields of Cambodia—originated in the French Revolution.

The French Revolution—in my admittedly imperfect and incomplete, but I think helpful, tubaform—originated in the ideas of Emil Rousseau, whose work I blame for most of the spectacularly stupid deviations from the possibilities created by the French Revolution.

Rousseau's counternarrative to the ideals of the Enlightenment--which looked forward to universal human emancipation through the propagation of notions of human rights, and the primacy of Reason, not Identity—was to posit a primal simplicity to human beings, which could only be corrupted by increasing civilization and its ideas.

This simplicity, which he understood to be the latent Nature of Man, was antithetical to what he viewed as the artifices, and ultimately subterfuges of enterprises such as the Enlightenment. That which was primal was real, and that which was created, thought up, engineered, was not. It was corruption.

He was of course a Romantic, in love with turbulent mountains, and violent rivers.

And the French Revolution took his ideas seriously. Without recapping the history too extensively, Louis XVI was really nothing more or less than an unintelligent man upon whom was thrust the combination of financial troubles (occasioned in no small measure by their support of us, an effort designed to annoy and harry the British), and the 18th Century equivalent of bloggers, who put out endless pamphlets, and who stood up in Cafes to declaim on the nature of God, man, the King, and a proper Pomme Frittes.

His crimes were not exceptional. They were actually fairly mild.

Taxation really wasn't fair and he did occasionally arrest people, but the storming of the Bastille prison, whose "liberation" marks for the French to this day a positive and not a negative moment (Bastille Day is their equivalent to the 4th of July), held only a handful—7 to be exact—prisoners, none of whom were political prisoners, and one of whom was apparently a child molester (the Compte de Solages). He was freed, of course, in the name of justice.

The fever was such that it was determined that the entire apparatus of state had to go. They destroyed everything that had served to order their society, and the consequence was, economically, increased poverty for all but the nouveau riche who were able to take advantage of seized assets to replace the ancien riche.

Politically, it was for a time a situation in which anyone could be killed at any time for any reason. "Courts" were set up, whose verdicts were known in advance, since only those were arrested whose judicial murder was intended. This was known as the Terror, and justified as necessary to "purify" the nation. Yet the vast bulk of those killed had nothing to do with the old aristocracy or Church, and their main crime in most cases was making an injudicious comment within earshot of a Nazi-like revolutionary.

All of this makes perfect logical sense.

Logically, if according to Rousseau-inspired thinking the underlayment of human society is a hidden Goodness—a hidden rustic simplicity and nobility--then that which prevents this from emerging is bad.

This is a perduring, material quality of human nature, which is defeated only, ultimately, by social imperialists, people who want power, and who in that quest for domination corrupt "the people". You have a "people", who in the imagination are without time, and are frozen, almost, like a museum of wax figures. In this pose, they are "natural".

And they are Good.

You have, therefore, a fundamentally material quality attributed to human "nature". You have an "is-ness". You have an ontological statement being made, absent movement.

This last, the reference to movement, is critical. Remember my supposition that movement is universal? It is a tubaform, but nothing in my sensory inputs—or understanding of the added sensory and theoretical inputs available through science--gives me cause to doubt it. Moreover, I have shown, in the concept of Chaos, how latent order and apparent confusion can coexist.

The order depends not on what is intended, but upon the operation of principles, which over time will always "Act to" accomplish something, something which is often other than and often the opposite of the intended "action for".

To return to the French Revolution, the thinking was childishly simple: remove that which is corrupt, and Goodness will emerge. There is an implicit Manicheanism in this, a separation into that which is Good—uncorrupted, theoretically—and that which is corrupting.

In the case of the French Revolution, that which was corrupting was the "Old Regime". Therefore all the aristocrats, and many of the clergy, had to be killed, so as to purify the "Virtue" of the people.

To this list were added anyone who thought that killing an entire class of people, in cold blood, for the crime of being born to the wrong parents was wrong. They were "counter-revolutionaries". Since the Revolution was Good, being an expression of the General Will—which in effect is to say the latent Virtue—of the People, being against it was to be bad.

"Terror is only justice: prompt, severe and inflexible; it is then an emanation of virtue; it is less a distinct principle than a natural consequence of the general principle of democracy, applied to the most pressing wants of the country."

Maximilian Robespierre

Robespierre was responsible for the murders of some 50,000 people. Along the way, some people realized they had lost their minds and were slaughtering people who, for example, had made a bad selection in clothing—wearing, for example, the wrong colors. The Revolution had colors, and the Ancien Regime had colors. You could not mix the two.

The principles they claimed to believe in were, famously, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

One might reasonably ask how exactly these principles were furthered in a regime which had done away with habeas corpus, the right to an impartial trial, the right to the freedom of speech, the right to petition grievances, that worked splendidly to undermine all trust between human beings operating in that sphere, whose voting process was thoroughly corrupted by violence, whose leaders were manifestly NOT equal to those they claimed to serve, and many of whom became wealthy off their opposition to wealth.

What, then, was actually held sacred? Aggression, public "piety"—consisting of the frequent invocation of the triune catechism of virtues, along with general appeals to virtue—and naked cunning.

The principle difference between the American and the French Revolutions, then, was that we actually held the rule of law to be sacred, and continue to. They invoked higher, "human" principles, but failed to accomplish the furthering of any of them to even a fraction of a percent of what we were able to.

The issue could be summarized—and again this is a bullet point, which is necessarily slightly reductive, but which is intended to present a useful heuristic—by stating that the American Revolution was a product of the Enlightenment, which looked forward; and the French Revolution was a product of the Romanticism, and thus looked backward.

More on this in a moment, but I would first like to conclude this extended discussion of the French Revolution—which I view as the beginning of ALL our modern political troubles—by pointing out that Hitler was also invented there.

In the *ancien regime*, the power of the King was limited by the Church, by the aristocracy, and to a lesser extent by periodic assemblies of the people. To be sure, pretty much everybody was corrupt to a greater or lesser extent, but their constant vying for power ensured that total power was never in the hands of any one man, even the King.

Napoleon changed that. After years of chaos—defined by the principles I defined above—the apotheosis of aggression, public piety, and naked cunning emerged,

and took power. He did not merely play the role of King. He played the role of ALL the traditional 3 Estates. There was no practical limit on his power. There were no checks, there was nothing holding him back from doing essentially anything he wanted. None of the French Kings ever held as much potential power as he did, at least in my understanding of the issue.

In this, he foreshadowed 20th Century totalitarian rulers like Stalin, Hitler, and Mussollini. Like them, he favored an aggressive, expansionistic nationalism, which he acted on. The principles named were the same Liberte, Egalite, and Fraternite, but the method was conquest, and pillage. He was an ordinary thief, at the end of the day, whose supposed virtues counted for nothing.

Returning to the differences between our Revolutions, and why they "created" Napoleon, and we "created" George Washington, some useful comments can be made on a very high level of abstraction.

Broadly speaking, the Enlightenment can be defined as an effort to ground human purpose and activity in terms of generalizable principles, which are considered to be universal Truths. Mankind "is" X. The proper purpose of humanity "is" Y. These principles, although conformable to religious beliefs, were not reliant upon specific theological suppositions, and in this represented a new era in European history.

Thus, Jefferson was famously a Deist, who invoked a Creator many times in the Declaration of Independence, without himself being a member of any particular creed or denomination.

"We hold these Truths to be self evident [ontologically grounded supposition] that Men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. . .".

The notion of rights is a principle. This is, in some sense, a creation, since there is nothing written in the sky that we can see.

Yet, one could observe the turbulence and violence of human history, and say "we can do better". One could say, if we act as if these things are true—if we treat them as truths-- then we will improve upon the historically miserable performance of humankind. And 200+ years later, we have evolved a liberal democracy with universal suffrage, legally strong rights, and tremendous wealth. It has worked. We have succeeded.

Romanticism is the sense that Truth is desirable. In this, it shares a commonality with Rationalism. However, the method of apprehension of that Truth is not through the process of thought, but rather through emotion, through sentiment.

And if sentiment is Truth, then strong sentiment is especially True. Truth is emotional authenticity. Authenticity, then, is the purpose of humankind.

Logically, authenticity is an individual experience. It is how YOU encounter the world, how YOU move through it. And the more turbulence you have, the more movement, the more ups and downs, the more EXCITING your life is, the more you have "lived", the more authentic you are, and the closer to Truth.

This pattern of thought, of course, in sacralizing novelty, passion, and individualism, works to undermine unvarying, consistent constructions of human thought, specifically those of the Enlightenment.

In short, I believe that the Romantics used the ideals of the Enlightenment to undermine the Enlightenment.

As we saw, Rousseau argued that in his "natural" state, Man was Good. This is a principle, which we may call that of "atavistic return". The goal is to return to that State, and doing so constitutes "authenticity". You are authentic, absent the restraints, the binds, the "discontents" of civilization.

"Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains.", states Rousseau famously in the beginning of The Social Contract.

Why is he in chains? For the reasons I have given. Corrupt people have introduced "artificial" limitations on the "rights" of self expression, and thereby erased the natural, spontaneous self possession of Man.

At this point, our tributary goes around a bend. This is your riverboat Captain speaking, and we are going to take a quick detour into two Taoist concepts, before taking this up again: Wu Wei, and P'u.

P'u is a famous Taoist concept, is normally translated as "uncarved block", and is used to connote simplicity, lack of refinement and excessive cognitive adornment. However, the character actually consists of two parts, one for "tree or wood", and the second for "dense growth or thicket".

In my view, what is being portrayed is a chaotic pattern, absent coercive and compulsive forming. One can model, to my knowledge, ALL patterns in nature using Chaos Theory. Cloud cover can be modeled, as can the behavior of bodies of fish.

As can the distribution of trees in a forest.

"Perfect Goodness is not straight", remember? In my view, it is a result of strict adherence to "curved" principles—I have delineated my best guess at the right ones--not something directly approachable. Ought one invariably to be honest? Is the effort to "Act For" always going to "act to" what is right? Can you think of no times where lying is the right thing to do? For example, to protect the innocent from predators?

Thus, it is not always possible to know what the right answer is. One must make ones way as one goes, and the best possible basis for making, in general, approximately, the right decisions—those which "act to" general felicity, seen as a system—is to cultivate an emotional basis free of strong preconception and attachment.   Such a system is non-linear. The woods are an excellent metaphor for this, in my view.

I mentioned attachment. You have likely heard the enigmatic Taoist phrase "the sage does nothing, yet nothing is undone.", or the many variations on this from the Tao Te Ching and other texts.

Wu Wei means, literally, "without doing, causing, or making". The characters are a monkey and a fist. I don't know if what I'm about to say is consistent with Chinese tradition or literature, but it makes perfect emotional sense, so if it isn't right, it doesn't matter. It is right, for me, here. It is useful.

There is a trap used throughout Asia to trap monkeys. A bottle or jar is left out with something desirable at the bottom, say a ripe piece of fruit. This jar is tied with rope to a pole, or other fixed object. The mouth of the jar is big enough to allow the monkey's hand through, open, but not big enough to allow through a fist with a piece of fruit in it. Monkeys reach in to get the fruit, grab it, and find themselves unable to let go. They are perplexed, because they are so close to getting it, but can't get it out. They literally trap themselves, in a case where the only force used is their unwillingness to let go of that which they can't have.

To me, Wu Wei is a term for reversibility. It indicates a lack of compulsion, and an ability to work around obstacles smoothly, and freely. You can't have everything you want. You can't force yourself to feel something you don't feel.

And you can't make yourself Good. Not directly.

Returning to Rousseau and the Romantics, there is a clear antipathy between thinking clearly, and privileging emotion. One sees this constant energetic downhill flow, where the thought starts out rational, then invokes—as a principle—passion. Then Reason flows over a cliff, and down, out of sight.

The invocation of passion as a principle, intended to "act for" truth, instead "acts to" create chaos and confusion. This is what actually happened in the French Revolution. There was excitement, there was passion, but it resulted in a lot of death, greater impoverishment of the people for whom the Revolution was supposedly conducted—along with greater limitations on their political freedom—and no natural nobility.

This was of course always a fiction. Societies are organic entities, not wax figures, and thus must be approached indirectly, through the ideals they hold. Ideals, in turn, must be sold through persuasion, not compelled. There is, I will repeat, an inverse relationship between the qualitative elevation of an idea, and its reliance on force.

But let us return to this issue of codependence. Logically, if I want to generate passion, I must have a cause, I must have a banner behind which I can march. If men are in chains, I must liberate them. That is a noble battle.

And what is my compelling passion, what is it that I can invariably invoke without being called out for fraud? Compassion. Who cannot relate to this most human of sentiments, the "feeling-with" another their limitations, their sufferings, their yoke imposed on them by evil "civilization"?

Wherever there is suffering, there must be oppressors. This is clear in the logic. Man, in his natural state, is happy, wealthy, and wise. If he is found otherwise, it must be societies fault. Again, this is a structural issue. There is no movement. Victims make no choices, but are assaulted by a system.

If someone is poor, it can only be because there are rich people. In our static system, which has no movement, every dollar made must have come from somewhere, and logically if there are poor, then it was stolen. "Property is theft", to quote a famous Leftist.

This notion is further supported by egalitarianism. All people are equal, so if inequalities of any sort are observed, then it can only be as the result of "violence". Something has been taken from one place and delivered—viciously, wrongly—to another.

Virtue, then, consists in righting the wrongs suffered by those who are less powerful. In so doing, the person on this crusade can don the mantle of the Good, the Virtuous.

To be clear, this was the mindset of the French Revolutionaries. And it was, to use coarse but in my view appropo verbiage, a clusterfuck. It was an unmitigated disaster from every possible perspective. 50,000 people were

murdered in the Terror alone, a totalitarian dictator was installed who waged war with half of Europe—more than half—and in the end the Monarchy was restored. Men didn't get universal suffrage for another 100 years, and women didn't get the right to vote until 1945, at the end of the Second World War.

Moreover, aftershocks of this colossal error motivated modern Communism. Marx was specifically impressed by the Paris Commune of 1848. It is not exaggerating to say that all of the excesses of Communism in the 20th Century—whose crimes dwarf by almost an order of magnitude those of the Nazis—began in Paris in 1789.

And what is wrong with this mindset? Where did they go wrong?

First off, man has no "nature", in my view. Men operate in the world cognitively, and act based on what they believe. People have reasons for doing things. They are often motivated by emotions, but on balance the system is defined by what is held sacred. Self restraint was likely held sacred by the Yamomami tribesman who so impressed Rousseau as a "Noble Savage". As it turns out, they—like their neighbors—were a vicious group, but one which rejected self pity, and which persevered in the face of difficulty with sang froide.

Leftism, as inaugurated in the French Revolution (the term comes from the Revolution, where the radicals sat in the left part of the room, and the relative conservatives sat on the right), is a thought process based on the perceived need for social change.

Specifically, as long as there are any differences whatsoever between people in terms of their wealth, social status, or accomplishment, there is room for compassion. One can feel sorry for those who have been structurally violated and victimized. One can fight on their behalf.

In this fight, one generates a purpose—a sense of meaning—and an associated pride in virtue. One is helping to "save the world". Because virtue is associated with this fight, and not closely tied to ones own behavior, libertinism and lack of attention to traditional (civilization is corrupt, remember, if it tells you to squelch any "natural" urge) morality often accompany this "Weltanschauung" (as the Germans would put it, for "Worldview"), without contradiction.

Virtue is covered already, if one is a leftist. That stance alone constitutes a complete morality, and "social consciousness". Since one needs this stance for morality, and since one needs someone to help, a victim, to justify this stance, one needs victims to be a good person.

It is an externally grounded morality, which I believe to be codependent, since it requires a cause celebre for its existence and justification. You cannot be good sitting at home around the table with your family in a small town, content with your work and community.

In actual fact, even though progress is the supposed aim, most leftist fights, while "acting for" social betterment, "act to" victimize the very people they claim they want to help.

In particular, the fetishization of the "victim" by the left is nothing other than a demand for self pity on the part of the affected population. "Raising consciousness" consists in the deliberate cultivation of resentment. In this, it is the polar opposite of cultivating dignity and self respect.

When the "War on Poverty" was launched back in the 60's, many of the poor initially didn't want to take the money. They considered it undignified, since anyone who had to take money was almost by definition a beggar, and begging was considered shameful.

Needless to say, this changed. Now, we have millions of people who have been in effect promised by the Left that they will be rescued. Yet, there is no means by which this can happen. We can't afford the entitlements we have—the Baby Boom is going to make a big explosion—and we cannot afford to pay sizable segments of our population to do nothing.

Because this problem cannot be solved by governmental means, this is a perfect issue for anyone who doesn't want to solve the problem, but wants the image boost of the self perception of WORKING to solve the problem. Even though our great wealth has made even our poor wealthy compared to most of the Third World, they need not worry about their cause disappearing fully.

Which brings me full circle back to the problem of evil.

(With one more circle to follow shortly. You may have noticed I prefer to evolve ideas, rather than unfold them directly. This is because perception is not linear, even though it often seems that way. We include more than we realize even in our use of "reason").

Evil begins, I believe, in self pity. Self pity fosters a resentment which causes one to reject the sacred. The sacred is that for which you are willing to suffer with dignity. Which in fact increases your sense of dignity and pride.

Traditionally, self reliance was a sacred value in America. It has worked for us, and was very intact as recently as the first part of this century. We have had

many recessions and Depressions, but only in the 1930's was the Federal Government—rather than private relief agencies, churches, and family—invoked to solve the problem.

At the time, it was likely needed. However, the New Deal continued unabated long after the pressing need for it was gone. Long after prosperity was restored.

The message sent, and the message received, was "you have the right to expect to be taken care of". An unanticipated effect of this was to weaken the sacrality of personal responsibility.

Life is hard. No one denies that. Self reliance is hard. It is a demanding, difficult, painful virtue. But we had it. We built a great nation on hard, hard, hard work, and by and large we did it without complaining. We did it because we believed in the value of government of the people, by the people, for the people. Not in theory, not in cafes, but in reality.

Now we seem to have entered an era in which suffering appears to many optional. Maturity is optional. Parents do not make compelling demands on their children. They do not force them to confront difficulty.

Self reliance and personal responsibility—foundational virtues of our Republic-- are no longer sacred. Where in the past families looked to one another for support and help, our families have collapsed (50% divorce rate overall; illegitimacy rates of up to 90% in some "communities"). The State can now care for those who fall the lowest, and so family is no longer necessary for survival.

What we hold sacred is compassion. Yet, there is no difficulty inherent in feeling sorry for people. It's easy to do. Yet this compassion, delivered without wisdom, acts to cause people to wallow in self pity, and is ultimately destructive of the very people whose suffering it is supposedly designed to relieve.

If we want to make compassion sacred, let's do it right. Let us be clear that what is sacred is hard. What is hard to do is kick people in the tails when they need it. This is genuine compassion. This is acting to help someone, and done properly it is emotionally demanding. It is disciplining children when you really want to be their friend. It is forcing people to fend for themselves when you want to help them, because helping them feels good for you.

Gangsterism, and its manifestation in Gangster Rap is a reaction to the paradigm of that of victim, itself created by well-meaning leftists. Where the tendency is to sit passively waiting to be rescued, gangsters can't wait, and decide to "get rich or die trying". They empower themselves, in other words. They stop feeling sorry for themselves, and they take chances.

This is admired by many. Yet, their desire is one informed by entitlement. Why do they get to take advantage of those around them to raise themselves? Why should their murder of others—or glorification of the murder of other "niggas"—be acceptable? How is this lyric not a grotesque expression of racial self hatred, and self destructiveness? How could the most bigoted Clansman not wish precisely this mindset on African Americans?

In my view, the whole enterprise is built on vanity. It is built on a shell-thin ego that says "I DESERVE" to be wealthy because of what I have suffered in the past. All of my past hurts, all of the things done to me, ENTITLE me to strike out in anger. In other words, each such person feels more important than the next person.

And such vanity, of course, shows, in the constant contest to have more stuff, have more "ho's", have more money, have more "bling", etc. etc. These ideas have legs, and can be found everywhere in America, and likely overseas. They may have originated in the ghetto, and for all I know may have been positive at their outset, but have been adopted across all racial and economic lines, and appear to me harmful for the following reasons.

The dominant principles in this system are self pity, a refusal to follow traditional routes to prosperity of hard work, and sacrifice—with associated potential of dignity—and an unwillingness to perceive that for every person who succeeds, a thousand fail, and that for this reason this ideal is extremely destructive to their communities, which would be much better served by reminders that nothing is free, and work is the main source of wealth in all communities.

Horror movies, in my view, are also a reaction to the problem of pain. Specifically, I think the human organism—or human soul, take your pick—is designed with an understanding that suffering is an essential and ineluctable part of life. Since people understandably don't want to suffer for no good reason, they need the sacred, the socially conditioned basis of social order, in order to voluntarily undergo difficulty.

Friedrich Hayek argued that conservatism with respect to tradition is desirable, because in an Extended Order—a chaotic order—one cannot always fathom immediately why certain things are done the way they are. What can be said, though, is that customs which have endured for a long time probably serve a necessary function we don't understand. With respect to this discussion, they clearly serve to delineate the sacred, non-contingently.

The problem is that our modern educational system—based on the work of our intellectually elite—has shown that all moral values can be deconstructed.

Obedience, for example, can be perverted into the service of evil ends, as happened in Germany. Patriotism, honor, honesty: all of them can be used, and to think otherwise is to be used as a pawn by the powerful.

There is no moral claim which cannot be contradicted, and thus there is nothing which absolutely must be done. Given this, and given that we have no information about what happens when we die, the only clear purpose for which we can live is pleasure, and the only non-deconstructable form of pleasure we can be sure of is sensory pleasure.

Our current explosion of pornography and drug use is a logical extension of this mindset.

I will dilate on pornography, as the more socially dangerous of the two, in my view. Just as the VCR's became ubiquitous due to porn, so has the internet. It is everywhere, and a many BILLION dollar business.

Pornography is the application of the quantitative mindset to sex. It removes all of the possibilities of relationship, and the joy of sharing a sense of wonderment in the world, of connecting on a deeper level—"depth" is a deconstructable value, using among other paradigms biology—is lost, and friction alone retained.

Childhood is so often lost, when kids go straight from a realization of a difference to a consummation of that difference, without giggling and courting. Without holding hands and wanting nothing more. Without the experience of innocence delight in the company of someone you love. Without qualitative joy.

This is a loveless world. It is salt water that never slakes your thirst. It is a world of the relationship of object to object. I cannot use you as an object, without denying in myself that which is best in me, my capacity for non-sexual joy, for love, for communion. Thus, there is a downward spiral in quantitative sex, and a loss of love in pornography—at least every piece of pornography I have ever seen.

And much of it is cruel. A female acquaintance of mine once commented that she didn't watch pornography because she felt like she was taking part in someone else's molestation. I have no doubt there are reasons those women are so often apparently lacking in boundaries.

There is thus an element in our culture of the reduction of relationships to quantity, to material utility. What can you do for me?

Which brings me to another latent "ism", that is in my view in some respects a complement on the political Right to Leftism: Objectivism.

This mindset is, in my understanding, deployed widely throughout our business world—with Alan Greenspan being merely a well known acolyte—and consequently important to understand. It gets expressed politically as Conservatism or Libertarianism, but functionally I want to view it as a Meaning system, one with flaws, but not also without virtues.

This system of thought was cooked up by an exile from Communism, which intentionally tried to invert most of what was wrong with that echo of the French Terror and totalitarian aftermath.

Specifically, where the Soviets wanted (and Chinese and Cubans want) to reduce all individuals to members of a collective--whose value is not intrinsic, but as a member of a coerced group--Rand wanted to invoke the primacy of the individual, the importance and innate value of the individual.

And in doing so, she invoked an economic metaphor (a tubaform). In Capitalism, the entire system depends on countless individuals each seeking to maximize their profits. Through the Extended Order—the Invisible Hand—the system, although apparently chaotic and uncontrolled, in fact achieves—in general, on average—its greatest efficiency. More wealth is generated than would be through greater control, even though greater control on paper appears to make sense. It is more linear.

Since the intent is to work only from what is readily apparent—"Objective" is to describe what can be seen, not imagined--atheism is deduced since God—if he exists—appears irrelevant.

The goal then becomes the maximization of the output of the individual—understood here as creative OR economic output—which even if undertaken as a sacral system defined ONLY by the apparent self interest of the individual, is believed to result in general weal and well being.

Greed is good. Selfishness is a virtue, understood systemically.

I agree with this in part. Like her, I start from what we can perceive. Like her, I state individual emotional satisfaction to be the most desirable goal.

However, through the use of the three perceptual tools I have developed—Reversibility, the Tubaform, and the Quality/Quantity distinction—I have, I believe, deduced more inclusive, better conclusions, or perhaps more specific ones.

If one feels happiness in the happiness of another, that is still selfish in a way, isn't it? Would it not be compulsive to reject, as a matter of principle, ALL sense of satisfaction and pleasure in this world, even pleasure obtained by the service of others?

Of course. It would make one miserable and mean. This is not Good.

Where I think she goes wrong is in missing the quantity/quality distinction, which I would summarize as Unenlightened and Enlightened selfishness.

What I see in our cultural landscape are large numbers of senior Executives who have abandoned all pretense at pride in their work. Once you reach a certain level, you can accomplish the exact opposite of the mission you were hired to do, and get fired with an enormous bonus. You can make shoddy product, or outsource American jobs overseas to make a few extra dollars, generate a few years of decent quarterly profits, and leave when the hens come home to roost. Once everybody has sent the jobs overseas, there is no competitive benefit left. Once people realize you make a shoddy product, they buy something else.

This doesn't matter. You made your money. This is perfectly congruent with the received version of Objectivism.

And you feel no need to give back to your community—unless the accolades you receive stroke your ego—and instead build multiple many-million dollar mansions, and see if you can't keep your third wife happy, and occasionally get that oldest daughter you alienated years ago to spend Christmas with you once in a while.

These people exist. In my understanding, though, they still possess the virtues of the Rejection of Self Pity (in general, as there is a continuum here, and it is never perfect, or even consistent from one day to the next), and perseverance.

What they lack is Perception, the ability to see that all their wealth—to invoke clichés from probably every religion on the planet except Objectivism—cannot buy happiness. Even if they know where to shop.

Rounding out this tuft of willowy, and non-linear condensed water vapor, I want to return, again, to Horror movies. This is a bit of a fixation of mine.

I shop at Blockbuster. For anyone who doesn't go in those stores any more, I would encourage you to try it once. Look at the movies people are watching.

I take my kids there, and if they can't find something in the kids section, I tell them I will run the perimeter of the store—where all the new films are—to see if any new kids films are out.

This is because approximately every fourth or fifth movie now has a cover on it of blood, filth, and blatant violence. People screaming, blood dripping from knives, teeth extracted on wires. The movie poster for Hostel 2 was supposed to feature a woman's severed head, until protest or common sense intervened.

This bothers me. My neighbors are watching snuff films, over and over. They are renting movies with graphic torture scenes—one more recent one apparently shows a naked woman hanging upside down and undergoing an extended and painful death—voluntarily. When tasked with a choice to make, they are choosing overt voyeuristic sadism.

I have spilled many pixels over this in my Notes. Why? Why is this?

In the notion of the tubaform, I am making explicit the potential to reduce all phenomena, no matter how complex, to one simple explanation. This can be done, but will typically involve some amount of missing significant elements, and possibly a complete misunderstanding. This is why the perception has to live, so that it can adapt to changes in your available inputs. So it can breathe.

Given this caveat, though, I would like to offer one principle idea, with several ancillary ideas.

The main problem arises in misplaced compassion.

It arises for two reasons: weakness fostered by overindulgence, and compassion fatigue.

Humans need pain to grow. Growth, in fact, is characterized by qualitative pain. Changing ones form from child to man, from drone to manager, from failure to success, from simple to more complex and informationally rich, is hard.

Historically, we had socially conditioned expectations. We held certain developments—such as for boys to become "men"—sacred. One can infer what a society holds sacred by what it punishes. Laying at home for years after completing ones education would have been in times past a profound cause for shame. One could, without risk of condemnation, condemn someone who failed to uphold their role, to meet the expectations placed on them by tradition, and often necessity.

This made that path easier, in the sense that there was pain associated with failure, and inclusion as a member in a wider community associated with success. And the expectations were clear. You just had to do what your father (or mother) did.

In our modern world, characterized by moral relativism, and the triumph of compassion as our only universally shared public virtue—of which tolerance is a strain—there is almost nothing you can do wrong, no crime of omission for which you cannot readily be forgiven, and thus no clear moral code to follow, and for which to voluntarily undergo pain. The sacred has been weakened greatly.

We don't know what to do, because anyone who wants to make positive moral claims, like "Toughen up and be a man" is condemned as lacking in compassion. Of supporting unambiguous, non-deconstructed gender roles. What if he is gay? What if he just needs more time? What if we failed him as parents?

The hand wringing can go on forever, while little Johnny plays X-Box, and fails to do his part to assume his role as one of the governors of our country, as a part of the People. He graduates school ignorant because his school didn't want to make excessive demands on him, and because they didn't want to present one version of history when another was possible, even if implausible. So he doesn't know who Napoleon was, or who Pol Pot was. His politics, if he has any, emerge from the only sacred he has, compassion.

Morally, he is weak, not having been taught anything unambiguously—not Patriotism, not the intrinsic value of hard work, not loyalty—and when he goes to make his way, his own desires, his own pleasures are his motivation. He may in fact learn to work hard, but so he can make money for more pleasures.

Or maybe he does learn the pleasure of intense effort, but not as a result of systemic teaching. That which is true, though, does tend to recur. This works in humanities favor.

The bottom line, though, is that his moral structure is weak. His qualitative development, his understanding of a shared sacred, of a communal sacred, is virtually non-existent, other than the value of tolerance and compassion.

This in turn sets up Compassion Fatigue. This is a condition in which you get tired of being nice. You just want to kick that cute puppy dog. You want to poke somebody in the eye. You want to express yourself violently in some way.

One sees symptoms of this everywhere, for example in bumper stickers: "keep honking, I'm reloading"; "My kid beat up your honor student", etc. etc. You see fake legs hanging out of trunks. You see graphics like the email I got where you

could control a blender in which was placed a frog who talked to you. The goal was to kill the frog, slowly, since there were multiple speeds. To torture a small helpless animal to death, in other words. Someone spent a lot of time developing this "game". Many people probably played it repeatedly every time they got frustrated.

I don't think objective stress has increased that much in the last 100 years. I think the reasons for undergoing it have. 100 years ago, people had to fight to eat, literally.

Now, food is a given, shelter is a given. We have higher divorce rates, but that's in no small measure because we can AFFORD to get divorced. People were no luckier 100 years ago in their match-ups, just forced to be more willing to compromise.

We are weaker. We are weaker because less qualitative demands are made on us for character development. Character is a form which is resilient under stress. It can only be built under stress, and we avoid developing stress in our kids. Self possession and self restraint, based on principle, are arguably the most important outcomes of our cultural evolution, and we are currently losing them, to the tubaform of moral ambiguity.

Weakness leads to resentment. Resentment leads to anger. Anger leads to aggression. Aggression leads to violence.

Overt violence is illegal and can result in jail time, so countless people take part with a spirit of complicity in the crimes of serial killers who they idolize for actually doing that which they imagine. There are hundreds, and hundreds of these movies.

In one more telling recent example, two prominent, main-stream Hollywood actors—Kevin Costner and William Hurt, both Academy Award winners—play a serial killer in the movie "Mr. Brooks". Costner is the killer, Hurt is the devil on his shoulder, his alter ego. Brooks goes to Alcoholics Anonymous, not revealing that his addiction is killing.

He kills a couple in bed, is caught by a voyeur, who wants to kill with him. To take up his hobby, so to speak. Complications ensue, but one significant one is that it turns out that Mr. Brooks' "addiction" (note the use of clinical language, which distances him from his responsibility) may have been "passed" on to his daughter, who is possibly complicit in a hatchet murder.

Drama and murder follow. He prays at the end, as if that atones for anything.

The important element, in my view, is the use of the voyeur to make explicit the relationship of the viewer with the murderer. We the viewers are intended to participate. There is theoretically a heroine—a cop played by Demi Moore—but the movie is told about Mr. Brooks, from his perspective.

He is the title character, and HE IS THE HERO. This is not an anti-hero movie. There is no cautionary tale inserted. He never gets caught. He is never punished.

He expresses all of the latent violence of the weak. Of those whose lives have been so easy, so free of genuine difficulty that they must find their need for pain met through vicarious viciousness. Through sadism. Through evil.

This, in my view, is the long term net effect of the sacralization of compassion. In the French Revolution, there were examples of cannibalism, in the street, in public. People ate and publicly raped "enemies of the people". These things were done in the name of justice, with justice being the expression of compassion. A just society is compassionate, and compassion makes everyone equal. If not everyone is equal, the society is not compassionate, and thus is not just. The means by which to make it just is to destroy all that which is bad— understood here as living human beings—which will mean that that which is left is good.

This logic led to perhaps as many as 100 million deaths under Communist regimes.

This is the logic in all forms of lesser coercion, such as that of the court system, and of sundry reductions in personal freedom occasioned by constructed needs for equalities of outcome.

We have come far from the wisdom, and the human possibility created in the Enlightenment. But perseverance is sacred, and not all hope can ever be lost.

18.   <u>Reason is not a complete system, but it is a good system.</u>

Rationalism was the hope that objective, necessary truths could be produced through Reason. Reason, as a form of perception going beyond the five senses, was understood to offer the possibility of seeing the Mind of God himself, since the Creator expressed Himself through laws, and laws could be apprehended through human Reason.

The doctrine of deconstruction—which in reality has many iterations, many writers, and really many names, but shares broad commonalities of spirit— argued successfully that many of the "results" of Rationalism—the conclusions--

could be viewed not as objective realities, but as linguistically constructed facades, behind which lurked unknown and possibly no content.

"God", as a word, means many things to many people, even among believers. No one has taken a picture of God, and very few in history can claim to have seen "Him". He is felt as a Presence, for those who claim to have evidence of His existence.

Personally, my sense is that God is that field from which flows the possibility of form, with Goodness being a latent qualitative increase in form, but making that argument takes me too far afield, and is not necessary at the moment. In conformity with prevailing notions of what might be termed "subjectivism", though, I needed to make full disclosure.

This intrusion of my own opinion does actually continue the argument, however. Since words exist within social "fields", our perceptions are necessarily conditioned by what we can say, and our social and personal context. As an example, this is why I had to invent the word Tubaform, to say just what I wanted. To be more precise.

From this basic thought process, however, it is a very, very short step to concluding that since all truth is socially conditioned, and all non-material words can be argued as having no referents—of not referring to anything—that Truth is unknowable, philosophically. For all practical purposes, nothing is True.

Religion is not true, and philosophy just an exercise in the pedantic use of words.

I was in the computer store the other day, and the song playing was "Reason is Treason". This expresses this mindset well. Postmodernism—which is the academic exercise on display here—may as well be termed postrationalism. And determined postrationalists, when one wants to debate them, particularly on matters of politics, revert to that doctrine quite readily.

If you like, you can treat the cause of "social justice" as true, or you can get rich and chase constant sexual pleasure, or power. Mostly you wander around, not quite knowing what to do.

Reason, then, comes to an end. Science comes along, and picks it up, saying "We can generate truths, we can find things out, we will tell you what is really real". And this is how science came to assume the mantle of our meaning system, in addition to that of our truth system. If you see a magazine that has the word Reason or Rational in it, you can generally assume that it has a scientistic bias.

Scientism, which I have not called by that name, is what I have described as the philosophically unjustifiable conflation of a Meaning system with a Truth system. It seeks all Truth in science, and considers meaning an epiphenomenon of Truth, itself conditioned solely and definitionally by the human brain, which is a sophisticated biocomputer which can theoretically be programmed.

And that is currently the state of the State, in many respects. This is, though, of course an oversimplification. Many people retain—justifiably—their religious beliefs, and none of the sacred gospels of Scientism—materialism, Darwinism, biochemical reductionism—can be proven, and in fact have systemic flaws whose existence is concealed only by the paradigm shifts they would necessitate. But more on that another time.

My addition to this debate, in my view, is the contingent, partial recovery of Reason. If principles inform the operation of a society, if they inform the actual felicity and happiness of that society—including of course by definition all the individuals in that society—then we can use Reason to determine what principles are best.

However, we do not stop there. We look at the effect of principles. We use Reason to govern the use of Reason. Logically, that which works is useful, and that which does not is not useful. Which is which cannot be deduced in advance, but must be observed. Principles which do in fact further the end we have chosen, that of qualitative joy, are Good, and those which do not, are bad, relatively speaking.

And this process is in constant motion. Where Enlightenment philosophers looked at the stars and saw permanence, we can only see that which we actually believe is there: perennial, perpetual, unending movement.

But this movement can be managed. We can choose reasons to discipline ourselves; we can choose reasons to suffer. We can choose what is sacred to use, as individuals, as a society, and as a global community. We can feel joy, and the wind in our hair.

We can dedicate our lives—honestly, honorably—to helping others. I ask only that what is done be done with open eyes, and innocent of compulsion.

This process, this ordering process, I have called Telearchy. I believe it is a useful notion.

"Self knowledge is best learned, not by contemplation, but by action. Strive to do your duty and you will soon discover of what stuff you are made." Goethe

19.   This book is an effort to introduce new—really, to reinvigorate old—Truths.

You, the reader, are a part of a social system. You play a part in the definition of what is sacred and what is not. You determine what virtues are "real", what virtues operate to define who we are, and how high we can climb.

If you agree with me, please share this book. Give it to a friend, or send them the link for it.

If you can improve on it, please do so. This is an entry into a chaotic system. It will, hopefully, have effects, which have effects.

I visualize social order as consisting of self similar spinning vortexes of various scales, which I call chakras, after the Sanskrit for discus or wheel (in the mystical usage, they intend the same image, of spinning energy). There are individuals, there are families, communities, regions, nations, cultures, and the planet as a whole.

In my interaction with you, I hope to spark something in you, which enables you to recreate yourself in some small way, today. And by learning that that process brings relief, if done in the direction of higher order, of qualitative organization, I hope that you learn the metaprocess—the process of processing—of growth in general.

Make yourself vulnerable to perception. Allow yourself to believe that by working to understand the universe based on a rejection of self pity, perseverance, and relentless effort to understand your world on many levels— including but not limited to that of science—you will grow. That Goodness will happen, as an accident, and that joy will follow.

Hope may at times appear to be a small candle, but remember there is an infinite difference between complete darkness, and a single spark of light. If we look to one another as reference points, life will not be so hard.

Best of luck!!!

References, approximately

(1) Here are two excellent links to lectures given by William James, which in my view solve splendidly the problem of how we can have brains that appear to influence all aspects of our behavior, but still be able to exist in a form outside that of our body.

http://www.survivalafterdeath.org/articles/james/soul.htm

http://www.survivalafterdeath.org/articles/james/immortality.htm

(2) http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110007519

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