

Prologue

Time Travel as a Means for Understanding the Journey of Life

*"Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness...
when experience is not retained, as among savages, infancy is perpetual.
Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it...
this is the condition of children and barbarians, in whom instinct has learned
nothing from experience."*

George Santayana

This is how my thinking begins. This is a first draft. This is the way the world appears to me. This is how I start to learn and think through philosophy and begin the journey of wisdom and enlightenment and the search for the meaning and purpose of life.

On the cement floor in front of me is a barbell. There's approximately 500 pounds of weight loaded on it (including two giant manhole covers weighing 150 pounds each) and I stand over it ready to do two or three repetitions in the dead lift. My mind is intently focused on the barbell. I am breathing deeply. My muscles are tense. I grit my teeth, clamping my jaws together. I am determined to lift the weight.

Whoever thinks weightlifting is a purely physical thing depending on simple brute force does not understand it – does not understand that one lifts the weight with one's mind as much as one's body. Weightlifting is both mental and physical; the imagery, energy, and feel of your consciousness, of your will, permeate and explode out through your muscles when you are lifting. Further, the barbell is not just a physical thing but a psychological reality as well. It has a meaningful, even willful presence. It confronts you as a challenge, a defiant inertness, and an immense heaviness resisting any force against it. Your mind has to beat this intimidating presence. In the act of lifting the weight, you must "psych yourself up" and "psych the barbell out." The barbell will pull against you in a tug of war, a war of wills – the might of steel against the might of your spirit. It is therefore you – all of you – body and mind versus the dark ponderous weight. You overpower it, in determination, concentration – in an explosion of body and will - or the barbell intimidates you, frightens you, overpowers you, and your mind and body fail together. This is how I see life.

Before reading the philosopher Nietzsche and his concept of "will to power" I intuitively understand him through weightlifting. I know how to completely give everything I have to the act in the moment when the weight exerts its force most strongly against me – to roar against the barbell. I know how

to extend my will and bring all my strength into the act, far beyond where most people simply give up, far beyond where most people find nothing left to give. As a weightlifter I see people as having weak wills as much as weak bodies.

And yet the barbell is more than an adversary; it is also ally and teacher, that which gives me my power and strength. In the extreme opposition of the weights against my body and will, the barbell has taught me how to be strong. It has pushed and pulled me, challenged me and demanded of me to extend myself further and further. In the ongoing confrontation with it, year after year, I have grown, becoming more determined, focused, and powerful.

I bend over the huge weight, my feet and legs balanced and positioned, ready to support, to brace against, the intense pull that will come from my torso, lower back, and shoulders. My whole body works together in the act while my mind – my spirit – energizes and coordinates the act. I grip the weight, raise my head to the heavens above (in this case the ceiling of the small basement room I am working out in), and pull upward.

The weight comes up in a flash. I breathe outward in a great whoosh, stand erect, my hands holding onto the barbell like two iron clamps – this much weight would rip your hands open in a second if you didn't concentrate on maintaining the grip, on squeezing tight as hell. I lower the weight and do another repetition and then a third one, and finally drop the weight in a heavy thump and clank, further indenting the cement floor below. I am the east coast dead lift champion, having lifted the past summer 575 pounds at a bodyweight of 190. The year is 1966 and I am nineteen years old.

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I have been regularly lifting weights for over four years. At fifteen I was just under six feet and, at 145 pounds, pretty thin. Since beginning to work out I have added fifty pounds of muscle to my body, seven inches to my arms, eight inches to my thighs, and fifteen inches to my chest, in spite of the fact (or maybe because of it – thus provoking my oppositional nature) that many people told me I would never get really big or muscular because of my “thin frame.” They were wrong. I got big. I got big with a vengeance.

I got big with a vengeance because I got beat up. Played out on a dark back street late at night, after a high school dance in Waterbury, Connecticut where lacking sufficient street smarts and aggressive fighting skills, I walked into being sucker punched and battered about in a fist fight.

Never attempt to take your jacket off ten feet away from a street fighter who has no scruples. There are people who do not play fair, who will hit you when you are not looking and your arms are stuck inside your jacket sleeves.

Waterbury is a rough, blue collar factory town and young teenage males achieve and maintain social status by beating up other young males. One's self-identity is significantly determined by the power of one's fist. Therefore, losing the fight left me totally humiliated and completely determined to transform myself physically – to never let it happen again.

Once my two black eyes healed, I bought my first set of weights. The memory of the fight – the jolt to my sense of self-worth - provided the escape velocity and propellant energy to get me going and keep me going, regularly working out and pumping iron, as I slowly but steadily grew and thickened all over – chest, arms, thighs, and back - becoming bigger, more solid, and more sharply defined.

As this transformation has taken place, sometimes I feel amazed and astonished when I look in a mirror. I feel disoriented - my God is this me? This sure isn't the kid I remember from a few years ago. I surprise myself. Something strange, almost alien has emerged that is sending me on a whole new trajectory in my life.

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This experience – this action and reaction – defines a pattern within my life. Some significant trauma, adversity, or kick in the butt propels me into a new level of growth and excellence, and a new sense of who I am. What seems bad, in the long run, turns out to be good. It turns out to be just what the doctor (or God) ordered.

As is frequently reported in stories people recount regarding what life experiences instigated important jumps in wisdom and character development in them, usually it is some traumatic or negative event that is the catalyst behind their personal growth. The common expression in weightlifting circles is “No pain, no gain.” Only through something painful does the good evolve. It appears that the evolution of the good obeys Newton’s Second Law: “For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.”

But there is nothing certain in this. It depends on you. The dark side can either crush you under its weight, or it can provoke you into an evolutionary counter-action. Life involves possibilities; life involves choices.

As is the case with championship weightlifting, the road to personal growth and wisdom is governed by Newtonian mechanics, with elements of uncertainty and self-determination thrown in.

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It is a different universe. It is July, 2008. The temperature is approaching 110 degrees Fahrenheit. The sky is cloudless, a brilliant blue, and a hawk circles overhead toward the mountains as we head up the trail. Due to the intense heat, we aren't going to hike that far but it feels great to get out for a while and absorb the energy and the light. We are out in the Sonoran Desert near the base of the McDowell Mountains just northeast of Phoenix, Arizona. We talk as we move through the desert, over the hills and through the gullies, among the cholla and saguaro cactus, over the hot red rocks under our feet, with rattlesnake and prairie dog holes scattered about. As is usual, we are talking about the challenges of life.

Jeanne strides forward, ahead of me, eager to stretch and exercise the muscles in her long exquisitely shaped legs. As she puts it, I saunter – the philosopher in shorts and sandals in the desert, semi-lost in thought as I go along. I love the feel of the sun against my body. I feel like one of the desert lizards. I revel in it and so I saunter a bit, taking it all in. Jeanne charges along across the gravel and hard packed dirt. But I will stay with her, with my steady pace and determined mindset. By the time we come back down the trail, I will be in the lead.

Jeanne and I frequently talk about finding the time to do all the important, as opposed to bothersome, trivial, and distracting things in life; we discuss the forces of order and chaos – of realizing order amidst the chaos. We also talk about good and evil and ugliness and beauty. We reflect on our mortality and the finite amount of time we have left to realize our dreams. We get into life and death. We talk about focus and getting into the flow, about tenacity, and about confidence versus fear and anxiety. We talk about the monsters of the id and the angels who visit us from above.

As we move up the hill, among the myriad dried and brittle creosote bushes, I am telling her, half joking, half serious, that everything I learned about being disciplined and successful I learned through weightlifting in my youth. I talk about the “will to power” – about strengthening one’s will – about the power of the mind and self-determination. As in hiking or weightlifting, life is a steady, incessant push up a psychological mountain. At least that is a big part of the story.

I tell her that everyday after high school let out, I would come home, head into the basement, meet up with my workout partner George McCary, and we would lift weights from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. five days a week. (Incredible George – always there knocking at the door – ready to go!) There were no excuses – that is, absolutely, unequivocally, “damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead” no excuses. There could be a lustful, naked teenage girl waiting upstairs – still no excuses. No try, as Yoda would say, we simply did it. The question never crossed our minds “To lift or not to lift?” We were lifting weights today, a primordial decision and act without thought or equivocation.

I also tell Jeanne that my success as a student in college derived from the discipline and focus I learned from weightlifting. (It’s amazing the rippling repercussions that can come off of being punched in the face.) In college, every night after dinner in my dorm, I would gather up my books and go into the empty cafeteria, get a cup of coffee, and read and study from 6:00 p.m. to 1:00 or 2:00 a.m., Sunday through Thursday, again no excuses. In college I studied the philosophers Plato, Aristotle, and Spinoza, the psychologists Freud, Skinner, and Rogers, and the nature and workings of the brain and the human mind, instead of doing dead lifts, curls, squats, and bench presses as I did in high school, but still many of the same principles applied. Success, either way, involves focus, determination, and meeting the challenge. Further, if weightlifting was a challenge to my mind, sitting and studying five nights a week – staying energized, organized, on task, and attentive – was a challenge to my physical being. Success is an act of mind and body – united. I graduated from the

University of Connecticut in 1969 and I was awarded the outstanding psychology student of the year with the highest grade point average in psychology courses – all A's. (In fact, including graduate school coursework, in the following years, I would never receive a B in a psychology course.)

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As we are walking under the blazing sun, with plenty of open space for my thoughts to expand and grow in the fire of the day, I go into mental overdrive and start in on describing what I learned in those days long past.

First, there is rhythm and regularity. If you want to achieve something – to create something, to realize a dream - commit yourself to a schedule for working on it and do not waver from it. There are always excuses. Life is a bottomless pit of rationalizations and reasons for not doing something, so you must simply not allow for any. Regularity is critical; get a rhythm going in your life and keep banging on the drum. Accomplishments are built from a steady, incessant accumulation of actions, literally, of acts of creation.

(Philosopher's note: The universe as a totality is the unfolding – the manifestation – of the cosmological act of creation. We are watching it; we are part of it. There was no singular point of creation; creation is ongoing.)

Second, focus and concentrate on the task at hand. The surrounding world should fade away, there but not there. Forget the world; forget yourself. There are always things to worry about – to distract your mind, to intrude on your attention, to make you feel guilty, insecure, anxious, worrisome, or confused, to take you away from what you want and what you need to do. Chaos tries to destroy order. Chaos tries to undermine the creation of order. Against this, you must immerse yourself in the object of your desire – your interest, your aspiration – and prevent chaos from taking control of your mind. You must become lost in the object of your intent.

(Second philosophical note: Life is the creation of order amidst a sea of chaos, but chaos can work for you as well as against you.)

Third, understand the necessity and importance of challenge. Accept the fact that you will encounter difficulties and existential roadblocks along the way. Be ready to exert yourself, to face and suffer some pain, depression, fear, and disappointment. Relish the sweat, struggle, toil, and intense expenditure of energy you will need to experience in the process of growth and evolution. I told people in college that I wasn't really that smart but that I just worked very hard at learning and understanding things. God knows, I found the theoretical abstractions, convoluted complexities, and immense intellectual territory of psychology, philosophy, history, and science a real ordeal to master. It did not come easy, and sometimes I just felt stupid. Some days seemed a total wash-out. But I drew energy off of these challenges and set-backs. I derived great pleasure, in fact, ecstasy, from accomplishments that involved extreme effort and some level of stumbling along the way (the Catholic in me). For me at least, adversity not only got my engines going, but kept pushing me along on the way up the hill.

(Third philosophical note: That which opposes you or challenges you strengthens you.)

Taken together, the last two points, on focusing and reveling in challenges, describe some essential features of what the psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, refers to as “flow”: the experience of immersion and exertion in a challenging task. In lifting weights I experienced flow. In reading and thinking I experienced flow. It is important to cultivate flow, to realize it everyday. It creates and amplifies purpose and direction in you. It charges and changes you. It opens the future. Flow is not something you walk into; it is something you must seek out and nourish. Flow requires effort to get to it; flow requires effort once you are in it.

(Fourth philosophical note: One flows into enlightenment; flow is perhaps the essential form of enlightenment.)

Next and critically so, identify an over-arching goal or direction in the future. See what you are doing today – in the present - in the context of the future. This is a higher form of consciousness. As a teenager I wanted to become a champion bodybuilder and weightlifter. As a college student, I wanted to realize a deep and comprehensive understanding of reality and become an accomplished scholar. Though different in some ways, both goals involved high standards of personal excellence and setting a clear direction for the future.

You are on a journey through time – the time of your life - and the light ahead of you, the light you imagine and build off of in the future, will give meaning, focus, and coherence to what you are doing today. Future goals give order to things, define a sense of progress, and combat the influence of chaos, distraction, confusion, and apathy that can easily come into one’s life. Regularity comes through having a goal set in the future. The future – consciousness of the future - works against the inertia of the past and the lethargy of the present. And once you bring the future into consciousness, once you set the light of the future burning, you must stoke it and keep it burning. You must feed the future; you must nourish and grow the future image everyday.

(A very deep philosophical point: The present is the unfolding – the manifestation - of the future. There is no present without a future.)

But success is more than determination, imagination and behavior; it is fueled by passion. Fifth on the list, your future goals must align with your desires and interests, with what you intrinsically value. Your goals must be passions. Rules for success mean nothing without love and emotional energy. You must love what you pursue.

(Another deep philosophical point: The idea that God is creation means the same thing as God is love.)

Finally, we come to tenacity, which ties together several points already made. Tenacity comes through having a powerful goal. Tenacity connects with rhythm and regularity and plowing through challenges. I have seen many people who seemed to possess talents and strengths equal to my own fall by the wayside because they gave up along the way. There are ups and downs in everything. There are challenges, defeats, sometimes even disasters. There is no such thing as a smooth and steady ascent upward. Roads are rocky, filled with holes and crevices, and we frequently stumble, fall, and slide backwards

along the way. Tenacity is maintaining long-term determination and continual action through chaos, monotony, momentary failures, lulls in energy, and outright attacks against your integrity. As the psychologist Abraham Maslow pointed out, even self-actualizing people (the best of us) feel anxiety, fear, frustration, anger, and depression, but they pass through it, rise above it, swallow it up, and keep growing and living. Tenacity is not letting the dark side beat you; tenacity is swimming through the nothingness.

(Final philosophical note: Resurrection is an archetypal pattern of existence – repeated resurrection.)

Regularity, focus, struggling through adversity (in fact, using adversity), flow, future goals, love and passion, and tenacity: these are some of the key factors behind the realization of excellence and the achievement of one's dreams. These are the things I learned in weightlifting and that I practiced and further developed in college. These are the things I learned because I got sucker punched in the face.

As I go over these ideas with Jeanne I sound like a teacher. I lecture. I preach, as I plod along through the desert. I get into it. There is passion and fire in my being. The sun has heated me up. I create a network of thoughts now floating and swirling about through the hot air and mind space around me. My words enter into the noosphere (a term popularized by the evolutionary theologian Teilhard de Chardin) - the atmospheric, ambient realm of ideas surrounding us all.

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We reach the end of our climb for today and circle round heading back down the hill. In front of us now, the flat, expansive valley of the Phoenix metropolitan area at the base of the mountains extends off as far as the eyes can see. Right in the middle of the valley to the south is Camelback Mountain, defining with its sharp triangular peak the center point of Phoenix and the surrounding area. I climbed that mountain with my sons. It was life and death on the way down.

Gazing toward Camelback, high on this hill overlooking the valley, I wonder how I got to be here after growing up in a street tough, old decaying town on the other side of the continent. (Can I explain this with my philosophy of self-determination and "will to power"?) I look at Jeanne and feel a similar bedazzlement and perplexity. She is my muse, a being first formed in the intense heat of the southwest and then sculptured in a whirlwind spin around the world – this, indeed, is literally how she was born. Feeling metaphysical about everything – the desert will do that - I ask myself, who is this woman who hikes with me, who discusses philosophy, psychology, and cosmic evolution with me, who makes intense and passionate love with me? Who is this woman with bright red hair, this bird spirit who has flown down out of the bright blue heavens above? Where did she come from? I have plenty of answers about everything, but down deep I am amazed by it all.

Ultimately, it is all very strange. Everything has the quality of the miraculous. I see this now. This goes beyond what I saw - what I knew – what I concluded as a teenager and college student. It goes beyond what I have been telling Jeanne about success this day in the desert sun.

There is the mystical. It stares you right in the face. Each unique presence in the world is mysterious and mind-boggling. When you really see – when you really understand – when you really wake up - you experience this sense of bafflement, this sense of the oddness of everything. As my old friend Wittgenstein said, “There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical.” There is no need to invent something more, something supernatural. Reality is strange enough.

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Connected with the mystical is the ongoing creative efflorescence of the world. The universe is overflowing with creativity. There is the novel, the new, the emergent that pops into existence in front of you right out of the blue, out of the vacuum space of nothingness, out of the soul of God.

As a weightlifter and a college student, I see life as an arena in which one set goals and then realizes these goals through acts of will and self-discipline. Reality is a determined – a self-determined - system. What we get in life is of our own choosing and the result of our own actions. We can predict it as a consequence of what we intend and what we do. We are responsible for our life (whether we like it or not). When one encounters obstacles, one plows through them; when one is thrown off course, one just steers back in the right direction. But this is too simple – too one-sided a way of looking at things.

As I see it now, life is more than a simple straight ascent up a mountain. Life is more than a clear image that you can capture in your mind. Life is more than a set of principles for success. Life is more than some abstract formula by means of which you can compute the nature of existence and predict what will be. Life always surprises you - always goes beyond whatever you think.

The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead said it: "The ultimate metaphysical ground is the creative advance into novelty". Olaf Stapledon, perhaps the most prodigiously inventive mind of the twentieth century, described it in *Star Maker*. God even surprises God.

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In a six-month flurry in the summer of 1996 I write a book I title *The Odyssey of the Future*. I select the word “odyssey” because I see the future as an adventure, filled with uncertainty and surprises. Because of its openness and unpredictability, the future engenders both awe and wonder and “fear and trembling” (as the philosopher Kierkegaard would say). Having read and very much enjoyed Homer’s *Odyssey* as a youth, I remember how Odysseus finds himself pulled off course in various, often unforeseen, directions as he attempts

to steer his way back to Ithaca and his wife, Penelope. By 1996, my sense of things resonates with the *Odyssey*.

While we participate in the unfolding of the future and help to create it, we assuredly can't completely control or anticipate it. Now I see life as a dance of order and chaos, of self-direction and surprises, of prediction and uncertainty. Like Odysseus, we do not always see where we are going, or what is coming. There is ambiguity, uncertainty, capriciousness, and turbulence along the way.

But I also think that this is not all that bad. We should, in fact, embrace the adventure and uncertainty of it all. The unexpected is good. The future is indeed an odyssey; the winds of change and the calls of the sirens do tempt us away from our chosen path, and, at times, perhaps just as well. In the process we learn. We see the world anew, often against our will and the defenses of our mind. The direction and form of our journey is transformed; we are transformed; we evolve.

This is clearly true for Odysseus. The wild currents of nature, the whirlpools of flux and chance that he struggles against, help to create him. They redefine his character and set the conditions for his heroism. The surprises and detours create the drama and color of the story of his life. When he arrives back in Ithaca, he is not the same person that began the journey ten years earlier from Troy – and does he have a saga to tell.

But in spite of the flukes, in spite of the flux, Odysseus does find his way back to his home and to his love. He perseveres. His story, in fact, is archetypal. The ancient Greeks, in their evolving sense of self-hood and self-responsibility, struggled with the question of to what degree humans can control their fate, and to what degree the gods, the forces of destiny, and simple chance and luck determine the future. This is the grand philosophical question tackled in the *Odyssey* where Odysseus must confront all of these disruptive forces that work to undermine his self-conscious intent to return home and determine his own life. He is transformed by such forces, and he goes this way and that, but he does make it to his goal.

In 1996 I think that life is an odyssey - a dialectic and interplay of order and chaos – of determinism and unpredictability. My thoughts, in fact, are premonitional. The year unfolds as a jolting, jarring combination of the creation of new order and the chaotic destruction of the old.

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“...every work of art comes into being in the same way as the cosmos – by means of catastrophes, which ultimately create out of the cacophony of the various instruments that symphony we call the music of the spheres.”

Wassily Kandinsky

Again, it is another time and another place.

We are on the patio in the belly of a November afternoon. It is 2006. The sun has turned the needles on the potted barrel cactus into a blood red as if time has trapped all our sunsets in this house there in the slim and treacherous barbs. They glow red and orange. They echo the blood and tears of our recent conversations here. But it is a bright and warm afternoon now as we sit surveying the Mexican beauty of this house we will soon leave. A dozen wind bells dangle from the fuchsia eaves, impervious to the move they will soon be making. The towering oleanders which we believed guarded our privacy stand ignorant beside the placid pool. The block wall I transformed into a Mondrian pattern of bright colors – of yellow, magenta, lime green, and purple - the hundred potted cactus, the bougainvillea and *Yin-Yang* laid out in pink and white gravel in the backyard, all this beauty.... We will take what we can and leave the rest to the insidious evil beyond the walls.

The sky above is its usual bright, rich blue - cloudless, cosmic, and dreamlike. A golden glow washes across the patio, galvanizing each leaf and stone and cactus pot until everything around us seems surrealistic. Or perhaps it is just me. I look across at her. She smiles at me – those cat eyes, the slight look of mischief on her face. Tall, thin, graceful as a deer, auburn hair with fiery red highlights in the sun, she is animated and excited as we talk. I think to myself – I ask myself – who is this person sitting across from me? (Have I thought this before? Will I think this again?) I tell her that one morning I woke up and realized that I was intensely in love with the person I had been sleeping with – her - as if it were some kind of unexpected and profound revelation.

She is telling me how I am going to write the book. She says it should be a novel – a futurist novel, but non-fiction. I'm not sure what this means but I agree. I tell her I want it to be a book about the future but built upon the past. I want it to be a history of ideas - a history of how my ideas on life – on the future - have grown these last forty years.

Our minds go in multiple directions. Thoughts swirl around, attempting to take shape. It is another draft – another perspective in time.

I tell her there are people who have influenced my thinking on reality, life, and the future along the way. I tell her I should include the “God-intoxicated” seventeenth-century philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, who reached out to me as I reached out to him across time. Also, I need to describe my dear, wonderful, flamboyant teacher J. J. Gibson and his ecological theory of reality, knowledge, and mind. And there is Robert Pirsig, his classic book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, and his search through madness for the elusive nature of quality, a theme I connect in my own life with my personal search for love. And there is Fraser, the philosopher-scientist-poet, my psychologically jolting meeting with him, while searching for a red-headed woman from a science fiction story, and his metaphysically unnerving theory of the evolution of time that turned my sense of reality upside down. She says that is a large order and I say that is just the beginning.

Later, there is Frank Tipler and his theory that the universe is evolving toward God rather than emerging out of God (God is in the future, not in the past). And there are the fantastical futurist realities of Stephen Baxter, Vernor

Vinge, and Dan Simmons that I encounter – of the galactic Internet, of pack-minds, of re-engineering the universe, of the promise of immortality delivered by the Devil, of the Second Coming, and the ultimate, yet futile battle of the light and the darkness at the end of time. And around the same time in my life, there is Martin Seligman and how I re-discovered Aristotle through him, which led me to the issue of the good life and how to connect psychology, ethics, and the future – which ultimately led me to immerse myself in the study of wisdom.

And in the middle of this ongoing intellectual adventure, as I explain, the great vortex of existence – giving form and dynamism and symmetry to the whole saga – the ontological whirlpool of the *Yin-Yang* pulled me in and sent my mind reeling. Out of the East – out of the intuitive and mystical traditions of ancient China – this archetypal form took hold in my mind and did not let go – has never let go. The universe – my life – fell into place as a great balancing act of opposites, of contradictions that were not contradictions. Goose bumps run up my spine as I describe this to her.

She tells me that the book should also be about all those other women that led the way and set the stage for her presence now: Beautiful Laura, a long-legged Elke Sommer, my first love, my first true friend – who has now become a ghost; and scintillatingly erotic Suzanne – a being of perfume and cashmere and jewels - my second love, who appeared and then quickly disappeared into the night; and bright-eyed Lisa – the dark-haired Indian princess, my third love, who I cried and prayed and ranted and raved over to the point of emotional exhaustion and spiritual death, and ultimately, Jeanne, who turned out to be my only true love. The future changes the past.

But I say that the book should also include Bill, who could cook amazingly hot chili (liquid cement on fire) and stubbornly argue philosophy with me from morning to night; and crazy Frankie, who disappeared into Alaska; and Ed, who lived with sharks; and the brilliant Feyerabend, who drew diagrams on the floor; and Pink Floyd, whose music I taught to my son when he was a year old. And there was pipe-smoking Tom, lost in infinity, somewhere amidst the steel mills of northwest Indiana. And there was my dear friend and philosophical adversary Matt, whom I watched die in front of my eyes, and big jovial Robert who shook the room with his laugh.

I tell her the book should encompass those dark early years under the gray repressive skies of northwest Indiana; it should journey through Connecticut, Minnesota, New York, Massachusetts, and Chicago, and, finally, follow me on my odyssey to the southwest. It must move on a timeline from all the cold dark places to this sunny patio in Arizona. Arizona – the crystallization of a distant dream of the future I once had - a future that brought forth this woman who is now talking and planning out with me how to write this book. The book should dramatize the struggle and search for this magical and brilliant future.

Along the way, giving some color and craziness to the whole thing, I should also recount my journey to the Rockies and how I fell off its precipitous slopes, rolling all the way back to the Midwest. I should describe how I spent seven years, off and on, talking to psychotics, drug addicts, criminals, and paranoid saviors of the world, and why I went to confession with a Baptist

minister for thirty days straight, and what possessed me to throw a thousand-page book into a dumpster. I should recount seriously contemplating both suicide and murder and how one night I talked to God and God talked back. Enlightenment without the bizarre and the fantastical is not enlightenment at all.

I tell her that I can not write the book alone. She must write it with me. She has read and studied Spinoza, and has accompanied me to his grave in The Hague – that holy place in the obscure corner of a churchyard it took us hours to find in the rain. She has discussed with me Freud and Kant and Hegel. We have talked for endless hours about the futurist dreams of science fiction, the moral and cultural failings of modern Western society, of God, science, and religion, and of love, beauty, music, and sex. We have talked about our pasts, about our sins, transgressions, and stupidities, about our ever-evolving philosophies of life, and about our future. I tell her, and she knows, that we are on the path to enlightenment together and that this new book will be an expression of that creative and inspired drive. It needs to be a co-creation. To follow the advice of the philosopher, George Santayana, it is time to gather the past together, to clarify and understand it and learn what lessons need to be learned. It is time once again to press forward into the adventure of the future. We are on this journey together, shocked and repulsed out of our dogmatic and mindless slumber, ready to create something totally new for both of us. Each of us has written too many things alone.

Sitting in the intense sunlight on the patio, I tell her that I want to write a book that points toward a preferable future rather than just a prediction of “the shape of things to come.” I want to create a vision of something better than the world we live in today. We have both looked the Devil in the eye and seen what decadence, superficiality, immorality, and madness permeates our world; we have been infected by it. It is time to envision, articulate, and argue for something better and figure out how to live it. I tell her that this positive vision of the future must be grounded and inspired by moral values, by human virtues, and by the ideal of wisdom. But in order to say what was right and good and provide a direction for tomorrow, the book must also identify what is corrupt and wrong.

We discuss all of this – sending our thoughtful and impassioned vibrations out into the surrounding garden we have loved so much – into the heavens above to make contact with the forces of the universe. We are trying to find resonance with the light.

I tell her it is time to begin the book – to begin a new chapter in our life - in fact, we need to do this – we have to do it. We must carry the momentum forward of all that has happened to us through writing the book. The book is the vehicle – the thinking space – for our ongoing act of creation. After decades of studying philosophy and science, psychology and religion, of reading countless tales of the future within science fiction and tales of the past through history and literature, of wandering about the country and traveling across the world, we have been thrown into the future by the hand of God. (Has this happened before?)

After feeling our way along like the blind, after colliding with objects and falling through unexpected holes in the ground, after experiencing both tragedies

and victories, with intimations at times of where we were heading, we have been abruptly awoken from the dream. The hurricane hit – perhaps more like a tornado – a volcano – a Big Bang. Reality has been thrown into question and reality has been revealed. Life has shown itself more than ever as a *Yin-Yang* – a great polarity of colossal contradictions – as the Dance of Shiva – of destruction and creation – of good and evil – of fire and chaos and harmony and love.

We have decided to leave. We can not stay here. The place is haunted by his ugly presence – a residual vibration and existential stench that will not go away.

We are moving – we have to move. We are moving toward the light. We are going to write a new book. We are heading toward the fire on the mountain.

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It is a year later. Like Billy Pilgrim, from Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughter House Five*, my mind keeps jumping back and forth through time – trying to find order, direction and meaning. Having sent Copthorne a short draft of my new book, Copthorne writes back and tells me that my story is a quest. He says that the story emerging in the draft is about the quest for wisdom. I think about this – is he right? Is this the key? Have I been searching for wisdom? I decide that I like his idea – that the quest for wisdom provides coherence and focus to the book. Wisdom is the ideal – the ideal of the future.

I connect back to Odysseus. Like Odysseus, I see that perhaps I have also been on a quest, that there has been an overall purpose and direction to things – to my life. Perhaps it is the search for wisdom.

But I also realize that at first I wasn't very clear about this – of what I was looking for. As a youth, was I searching for happiness, for fame and fortune, for self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment, for self-understanding, for love, for knowledge? The answer is probably "yes", "maybe", and "who knows" to all of these questions, but it hits me now that there was something deeper at work. There was something I felt; there was something "out there" that was calling to me, pulling me forward. At times I could sense its presence reaching back through time from the future, there right on the perimeter of consciousness, perhaps right in front of my nose.

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The past is revealed through the future. It is in retrospect, in looking backwards, that one gets a sense of the whole of things – of the whole of time - of the purpose and meaning of actions, choices, directions, and events, of how the pieces connect together. It is in retrospect that I can best see the nature of my quest, in fact, that I can even recognize that I was on a quest.

A person's life is a complex and diverse array of places, people, and events; of actions, thoughts, and feelings and one can ask, does it all fit together? Clearly within a person's life there is chaos, randomness, ambiguity,

and changes in direction, and there are loose-ends, perplexities, and contradictions. But it seems to me that there are patterns and attractors in the flow and helter-skelter of reality and as the great contemporary scientist Ilya Prigogine says, there is order arising out of the chaos.

After thinking about Copthorne's remarks, I realize that a central part of my story – the journey that makes sense in retrospect - is my search for wisdom and enlightenment. I add "enlightenment" because it is intimately connected with wisdom – I realize I have been looking for both. Though I would not say that as a youth I saw this, as time went by, this quest came to define an emergent trajectory to it all. It evolved and captured the flow of things. I was after enlightenment; I was after wisdom. It was this that lit my fire and turned me on. It was this that I have been struggling to achieve.

It makes perfect sense that at first I wasn't clear that I was in search of wisdom and enlightenment. Coming to grasp the importance of wisdom and enlightenment requires gaining at least a rudimentary understanding of what these concepts mean and at the beginning that is no easy task. A big part of the quest for wisdom and enlightenment is to simply understand the meaning and significance of these ideas – to see the value of these qualities. One must wander around and sniff and search and then perhaps something begins to become clear, something that catches you, that draws you to look some more, to think some more. The object of the quest emerges together with the quest itself.

There are many answers to what wisdom and enlightenment mean. But my quest goes beyond simple answers and simple understanding. Answers are one thing; reality is another. Through my life, I now understand, I have been searching for the experience of enlightenment and the capacity of wisdom.

Why search for wisdom? Why search for enlightenment? The pursuit of wisdom and enlightenment is critically important to living the good life - toward realizing what is best in us, toward giving meaning and purpose to our existence. Wisdom and enlightenment bring quality to life. Wisdom answers the question of how to live; enlightenment answers the question of what to live for. They are the key to a positive future – toward a preferable future.

I see that Copthorne's suggestion that I have been searching for wisdom connects with my idea of articulating a vision of a preferable future. Wisdom, and for that matter, enlightenment connect with the theme of the future – of a preferable future. The pieces begin to connect in my mind – at the very least to cluster.

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I am standing in a check-out line in a Safeway grocery store. It is 1992 and I have just moved to Arizona. Aside from being hired as the new chair of the psychology and philosophy departments at a local college I have also been put in charge of "Integrative Studies" – the capstone course for the college's associate degree. Integrative studies could focus on whatever theme I chose to select, as long as the theme somehow pulls together the breadth of undergraduate

courses, especially the sciences and humanities that students take in completing their degrees. I have been thinking about different possible topics for the course but this day in Safeway I still haven't decided on anything definite. As I am waiting in line I start browsing through the paperback bookstand at the check-out line and notice that Alvin Toffler, author of the highly popular book *Future Shock*, which I had read back in the 1970's, has a new book out titled *Powershift: Knowledge, Wealth, and Violence at the Edge of the 21st Century*. In a flash – it hits me – why not do the Integrative Studies course on the 21st Century – in fact, on the future? Most, if not all of the main areas of study in an undergraduate college program could be addressed and synthesized in the context of the future. Creating a course on the future would be an interesting and challenging endeavor, and I feel that such a course would be of great value for students. Shouldn't we all try to think about and understand the future? Shouldn't we all try to create the best future possible for ourselves?

After circulating around in my mind through the early decades of my life, through the study of evolution, through the reading of science fiction, through my fascination with the nature of time, from this beginning in the check out line of a grocery store, the future as a core idea and great attractor explodes into predominance in my consciousness. The idea of the future emerges as an overarching theme that brings heightened meaning and significance to my many years of study. It provides a canvas on which to create a picture of the cosmos – “of life, the universe, and everything.”

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Wisdom, enlightenment, and the future – they all fit together.

The future is the great testing ground of practical knowledge – of the capacity to live well, live intelligently, and lead a good life. And what is wisdom but the highest expression of practical knowledge. Wisdom, by definition, deals with the future. Wisdom – perhaps the quintessential character virtue and pinnacle of human development - is to be understood as the highest expression of future consciousness.

The future brings the greatest experience of enlightenment; it is the ultimate mind flight of imagination and consciousness. The future promises enlightenment. The future illuminates the path of enlightenment. Enlightenment is the journey through time – through creation – through insight.

Wisdom and enlightenment point toward the future – open up into the future – are revealed through the future.

As I say in *The Odyssey of the Future* “The future is the most cosmic, mind-expanding, and philosophically enlightening topic the human mind can entertain. It is also the source of most of our most pressing practical problems and issues.”

Having written several books on the future, it is time to write a book on how wisdom and enlightenment connect with the future, and in particular, a vision of a preferable future.

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“A seeker after truth climbs a mountain to ask the guru at the top what the secret of the universe is. The answer is ‘everything converges on oneness.’ The climber replies ‘Surely you are kidding.’ ‘You mean it doesn’t?’ the guru asks.”

Joel Kupperman

The mind to some degree lives in the future, as it also lives in the past.

I am very young. Somewhere in my future is love. Somewhere in my future is this unique person. I see this early on. I hear this in Bobby Darin’s “Beyond the Sea”; in Elvis Presley’s “I Can’t Help Falling in Love with You”; in Henry Mancini’s “Moon River.” I am on an adventure to find her.

As a young teenager in the late fifties and early sixties I listen to music about love. Most Rock n’ Roll is about love: looking for it, finding it, and losing it. As a young teenager – clearly in resonance, deeply imprinted in my soul with this music - I am in search of love.

Along the way there are many girls and many disappointments, as the songs have told me there would be. Love hurts, love drives you mad, love brings out the best and worst in you, love can be tragic and sad.

As time goes by the girls turn into women but the story line - the song of life - in many ways does not change. There is passion and desire. There is happiness, if not moments of ecstasy and bliss. Love propels me forward and shows me the way. But there are tears, broken hearts, frustrations and obsessions, and conflicts, upheavals, and wars. Love is the energy – the Heraclitian fire – that lights and ignites my life.

Though I look for love and find it, for most of my life, love is something more elusive than real.

There is this emotional undercurrent to it all – this archetypal theme – that runs through everything. There are times when I think that the meaning and purpose of my life is the quest for love.

Through my life I think about love a lot – I philosophize and connect love with the great issues of reality, knowledge, beauty, and the good.

I have asked – searched for answers to questions: What is love and how does one realize it? How does one become wise about love, to be enlightened as to its nature – its essence?

I think that love and wisdom and enlightenment are related. Love is realized through wisdom and is a form of enlightenment.

I think that one can only truly realize what one loves; without love there is no substance to things, no wisdom, no philosophy, no enlightenment, in fact, no future. Love is the energy that creates the future; more precisely, the energy that creates a preferable future.

Perhaps it would be more accurate to say, again in resonance with Odysseus, that I have been looking for love and along the way, as a necessary condition for experiencing it, I am realizing some wisdom and enlightenment.

This is another draft – another angle on things.

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I visualize reality in terms of waves, oscillations and ripples across the fabric of space and time. A pebble falls into the water and sends a wave train of ripples out across the surface. Every object – every event – in the universe sends waves or ripples out across the vastness of space, announcing or broadcasting its presence. (I learned this from Leonardo and from Gibson.) One can imagine these waves as traveling through space, but just as appropriately one can imagine them traveling through time. The effects of things spread out in space as time transpires.

Recently, I read an article arguing that just as there are ripples from an event that move out forward in time, there are symmetrical ripples that move backwards in time as well. The ripples from an event into the past expand outward also. If this were the case, it would follow that the future affects the past; perhaps better said, events in the future draw us toward them. The Greeks called this destiny. Events diverge in their effects into the future; but do events converge toward the future as well?

But doesn't this way of thinking violate the principle of forward causality in time? Doesn't this make time a loop rather than a line? Was Odysseus destined to return to Penelope or did he freely choose it? Can it be both?

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After lunch, it is almost time to head back to school. I am in the eighth grade and we get an hour off for lunch. But I can't seem to break myself away – I am immersed – I am lost in another world and another time. Everything around me seems ephemeral and only marginally real. Why should I head back? It seems of no real importance.

I am standing on a beach and the giant red sun hangs low in the sky, half submerged below the horizon of the dark and mysterious sea. There are snowflakes falling – pink snowflakes reflecting the red light of the sun - and some strange, ill defined form floats on the water, just close enough to send chills up my spine. I have traveled millions of years into the future and I have followed the rise and fall of humankind – of human civilization – of catastrophic world war and the evolution of the Eloi and the Morlocks - and now I stand on a relatively barren earth in its final stage of death before it fades once and for all into “the dark backward abyss of time.”

Why on earth worry about heading back to school after lunch?

I am reading H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* and nothing will ever be the same. The universe has expanded before my eyes. It is not so much where we are – but when we are – and that there is so much more, of what has been and what is to come. One can see the whole by standing back in time – from a set of different points of view – through traveling in a time machine.

Perhaps this is the first draft.

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One of the most brilliant scientific and philosophical minds in Western history, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz, believed that the universe consisted of “monads” – of an immense plurality of conscious points of view, each reflecting a unique and limited perspective on the whole. Reality is a plurality of visions – of convergent points of clarity and light. Consciousness is a set of flashes of illumination in the darkness. Only God, according to Leibnitz, can grasp the whole.

Gibson though thought one can move from one point of view to the next and the order of things would emerge. The chaos of the plurality – of points and streams of stimulation and energy moving across the sense-organs - yields an invariant pattern specifying the nature of reality. But that means that one can only apprehend reality through time.

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This book is a personal narrative, from time past to time present and into time future.

Though the future transcends the past, it is built upon it. Part of wisdom and enlightenment is understanding how we got to where we are. The past clarifies our direction and alludes to the possibilities of the future. As Santayana notes, without learning from the past we remain children; we remain lost in the momentary present. Without a past, there is no future.

To see anything is to see it in time, where it has come from and where it may be heading. This is one of Gibson’s insights – one of Aristotle’s. My story is about the past; my story points toward the future. The future is illuminated through the past. Time goes in a circle.

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In this narrative, I explore the ideas and live through the realities, of order and chaos, of virtue and good and evil, of madness and sanity, and how best to realize “the time of your life.” I delve into science and the future of technology, but also religion, myth, and the nature of God. I swim around through love and sex and sometimes even come up for air. I grapple with the issue of personal responsibility, what it means, and how best to realize, maintain, and heighten it in the context of the flickering, fickle, and disruptive ambience of the world and of our own minds. I repeatedly and passionately delve into education, evolution, the nature of knowledge, and the great puzzles of mind, self, and consciousness. I set sail into outer space, contemplate robots, androids, and aliens, travel to the end of time, and jump into alternate realities where I connect and resonate with a Neanderthal man.

Although I constructed in my youth, so I believed, a relatively sturdy ship to set sail in on my journey through life, the currents of time that lay ahead of me were filled with turbulence and treacherous outcroppings, with unforeseen whirlpools that swirled about, sucked me down and disoriented me, and on several occasions, nearly drowned me. Along the way there were the great forces of *Eros* and *Thanatos* – the forces of life and death – of evolution and entropy – of the ultimate *Yin* and *Yang* of things; and there was music, drugs, exhilaration and stupor, awe and wonder, tragedy, villainy, betrayal, joy, intoxication, fear and depression, miracles, stupidity, multiple wounds of the heart, and acts of God. All of this is part of the story, part of the quest for wisdom and enlightenment – part of my search for the future – part of the search for my love.

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The manhole covers are long gone. I have a different set of weights now. George faded into the night, along with many others, as I traveled across the country in search of a new home, in search of the life of the mind, in search of love. Now, far from Waterbury, Connecticut, in this metaphysical and spiritual place, filled with palm trees, cactus, snakes, and lizards, I have a new workout partner and I have been pumping iron again. I have a new home, filled with thousands of books and hundreds of fantastical works of art, and this partner I live with is this exotic woman that I know better than anyone else I have known before in my life – whom I feel at times that I barely know at all. There are children in the house as well – there have always been children - and sometimes I feel like one of them. (My sense of being jumps about through time.) I am, in fact, once more like a young kid. I – no - we are building up our muscles again, strengthening our will and spirit, and further expanding and sharpening our minds, as Jeanne and I dive into creating a new chapter in our journey through life.

The moon is rising over the McDowell Mountains, its southern hemisphere aglow, looking like a bright yellow saucer hovering in the sky. It is 2:00 in the morning. It is time to travel into the past to find our way into the future.