

## **The Time of Your Life: Personal Responsibility, Wisdom, and the Future**

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*"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*

On the cement floor in front of me is a barbell. There's approximately 500 pounds of weight loaded on it (including two 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 focused – intently focused on the barbell. I am breathing deeply, my muscles are tense, I grit my teeth – clamping my jaws together, and I am determined to lift the weight. Whoever thinks weightlifting is a purely physical thing depending on simple brute strength does not understand it – does not understand the ontology of things. (The idea of the purely physical or purely mental is a dualistic mistake.) Weightlifting is as much mental as physical – it is both – mind and body as one – the imagery, energy, and feel of your consciousness permeating out through your muscles. The weight is not just a physical reality but a psychological reality as well – it confronts you as a challenge, a defiant inertness, and an immense heaviness with a will resisting any force against it. It will pull against you in a tug of war, a war of wills. It is therefore you – all of you – your perceptions, emotions, motives, sense of self, the power you feel and express in your body - versus the barbell. You lift the weight through your body with your mind – you overpower it, in determination, concentration, an explosion of will - or the barbell overpowers you – intimidates you, frightens you, and your mind and your body fail together.

I bend over the 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. The whole body works together in 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. I know how to really exert myself – to bring all my strength and “will to power” (as the philosopher Nietzsche would say) into the act, far beyond where most people would simply give up. I have learned this from years of lifting – how to completely give everything I have to the act in the moment when the weight pulls most strongly against me. (In a sense, in the extreme opposition of the weights against my muscles and will, the barbell has taught me how to be strong.) 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 pull your hands open in a nanosecond if you didn't concentrate on maintaining the grip. I lower the weight

and do another repetition and then a third one, and drop the weight in a heavy thump and clank, further indenting the cement 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 19 years old.

I regularly lifted weights as a teenager from the time I was fifteen till I was twenty. At fifteen I was tall (around six feet) and thin (around one hundred forty five pounds); over five years of weightlifting I added more than fifty pounds of muscle to my body, seven inches to my arms, and fifteen inches to my chest – in spite of the fact (or maybe because of it) that many people told me I would never get really big or muscular (thus provoking my oppositional nature) because of my “thin frame.” They were wrong – I got big.

How I got into weightlifting is a typical “Charles Atlas” story – metaphorically having had sand kicked in my face. (It is also the typical kind of story behind why wisdom grows in people.) Instead of “on the beach”, my story took place on a dark street, late at night, after a high school dance, where due to being naïve, stupid, and not aggressive enough, I walked into being sucker punched and beat up in a fist fight and totally humiliated by the experience. (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.) Once my physical and psychological wounds had healed, I bought my first set of barbell weights, thoroughly motivated to build up my strength. The insult – the blow to my male ego – provided the escape velocity energy to get me going and keep me going.

Years later it hit me that at several key points in my life, including this early incident, it was some significant trauma, adversity, or kick in the butt that propelled me into some new level of growth and excellence. What was bad, in the long run, if handled the right way, turned out to be good, that is, just what the doctor (or God) ordered. According to one study, in stories people recount regarding what life experiences instigated significant jumps in wisdom and character in them, the most frequently reported scenario is that some traumatic or negative event was the catalyst behind their personal growth. As is a common expression in weightlifting circles, “No pain, no gain.” The “dark side” can either swallow you or crush you under its weight, or it can provoke you into a counter-action – like Newton’s Second Law - “For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.”

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*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

*T. S. Eliot*

It is years later – the now – 2007 and I am telling my wife, Jeanne, half joking, half serious that everything I learned about being disciplined and

successful I learned in weightlifting when I was a teenager. Jeanne and I talk quite frequently about finding time to do all the important (as opposed to bothersome, trivial, and distracting) things in life. 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 around 4:30 PM – five days a week. No excuses – that is, absolutely, unequivocally, “damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead.” There could be a lustful, naked teenage girl waiting for me – no excuses. We simply did it. No try – as Yoda would say – simply do. The question never crossed my mind “To be or not to be – to lift or not to lift?” It was simply that I am lifting weights today - period.

I have frequently told 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 having sand kicked in your 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 PM to 1 AM – Sunday through Thursday – again no excuses. Of course, in college I was studying the philosophers Plato, Aristotle, and Spinoza, among others, the psychologists Freud, Skinner, and Rogers, the nature and workings of the brain, and the psychology of learning and perception, along with many other topics, instead of doing deadlifts, curls, squats, and bench presses as I did in high school, but many of the same principles of success applied. I graduated from the University of Connecticut in 1969 and I was awarded the outstanding student in psychology for that 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.)

What principles did I learn as a weightlifter that transferred over to being a successful college student?

- If you want to achieve something – to create something – to realize a dream - commit yourself to a schedule for working on it and never waiver 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.
- Focus and concentrate on what you want to do – on the task at hand – the surrounding world should fade away – there but not there. Go at it. 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. (The chaos of the world and your mind tries to destroy order.) But you must immerse yourself in the object of your desire – your aspiration.
- Accept the fact that you will encounter challenges along the way – be ready to exert yourself – to 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 would tell 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, immense detail, convoluted complexity, and expansive intellectual territory of psychology, philosophy, history, and science a real ordeal to master. It did not come easy, and sometimes I just felt stupid, but I seemed to draw energy off of these challenges. I derived great pleasure from accomplishments that involved great effort and some level of suffering along the way (the Catholic in me). For me at least, adversity not only gets the engine going, but keeps pushing it along on the way up the hill. Taken together, this and the last point describe some essential features of what the psychologist, Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, refers to as “flow” – the experience of immersion and exertion in a challenging task. In lifting weights I experienced flow – in intently reading and thinking through a philosophical argument I experienced flow. Cultivate flow – realize it everyday – it will create and amplify purpose and direction in you. It will charge you. It will open the future. Flow is not something you walk into; it is something you must seek out and nourish.

- 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. (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 a famous writer and scholar – how’s that for a switch?) 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 and coherence to what you are doing today. But you must set the light burning and keep it burning – you must feed the future. 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.
- Tenacity also comes through having a goal and you must cultivate tenacity, above all else. I have seen many people who seemed to possess talents and strengths equal to my own fall by the wayside because they gave up. You can waiver in the moment and avoid doing what you intended to do today, or you can waiver in the long run and not stay with something long enough to bring the endeavor to fruition and completion. I will say more on this later, but it is a fundamental truism that 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 forward determination and continual action through these interludes of chaos and momentary failures. Having long-term goals or

aspirations gives you tenacity – it keeps you going when you want to give up (and everyone at one time or another wants to give up) – it picks you up after you have fallen down. It defines the value of what you are doing – of the meaning and direction you are taking. As the psychologist Abraham Maslow pointed out, even self-actualizing people feel anxiety, fear, frustration, anger, and depression – but they pass through it and keep growing and living.

Regularity, focus, struggle, flow, goals for the future, and tenacity – these are some of the key factors behind accomplishment and the realization of one’s dreams. I could also add trauma or extreme adversity, if reacted to constructively, as another important ingredient to success. But what I have said so far is just the beginning of the story – of the philosophy I am going to develop and explain. I am going to recount my search for understanding the nature of wisdom and enlightenment and the meaning and significance of the future. I will be looking at the nature of time, of order and chaos, of virtue and good and evil, and how best to realize “the time of your life.” I will be discussing personal responsibility, what it means, and how best to realize, maintain, and heighten it in the context of the flickering, fickle, and fantastical ambience of the world. Although I had constructed in early adulthood, a relatively sturdy ship to set sail in on my journey through life (or so I believed), the current of time that lay ahead of me was filled with turbulence and treacherous outcroppings with unforeseen whirlpools that sucked down and swirled about, smashed and splintered, and disoriented me, and on several occasions, nearly drowned my existential being – my body, my spirit, and my mind. Along the way there was love, sex, exhilaration, awe and wonder, tragedy, villainy, betrayal, joy, intoxication, plenty of “fear and trembling,” bouts of depression, miracles, stupor, stupidity, multiple wounds of the heart, and acts of God.

But I will try to be concise and focus on the ideas – on wisdom, virtue, time, personal responsibility, and the future - with just enough personal narration to give some color, drama, and realism to the exposition. And through it all, as a great *Yin-Yang*, that returns and yet doesn’t exactly return to the same place, I will come back ultimately to weightlifting, but now transformed.

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*“All things excellent are as difficult as they are rare.”*

*Spinoza*

I distinctly remember that when I started college I decided to become more serious than I had in high school about my studies. I was in college and I needed to rise to the occasion. I was also anticipating that college was going to be harder than high school so I needed to give it more effort. During high school I had spent a lot of time hanging around with my male friends – going out at night, walking the streets, cruising around in cars, looking for girls, drinking

alcohol and going to dances on weekends, and in general, wasting a lot of time doing nothing. (Of course, during the weekday afternoons I lifted weights, but this “fit” into the high school mentality and culture.) But now high school was over, I had a steady girlfriend, and I made the decision to stay at home during weekday evenings and read my college texts, with the intent of doing well in my studies.

A question that is frequently asked about fundamental personal change is whether it comes from within the person, or is triggered by some significant environmental change or event. It seems to me that in this case, the transformation in my life was a consequence of both internal and external factors; I made a decision but in the context of some important external changes. It did, however, require some effort and tenacity on my part. One of my best friends from high school, Tony Masini, would call me up frequently during the week wanting to know if I wanted to go hang out, and I would tell him no, that I needed to study. I felt like I was breaking up with a long time girlfriend, and I frequently felt guilty saying no to Tony, but I wanted to do well in college and going downtown to play pool in the local pool hall or listen to records in the record shop had lost its appeal. The environment, including the people you interact with, is important but one can transcend the immediate environment and begin to create a different one. I turned my bedroom at home into a study and a new world began to emerge in that small little room.

Sometimes it takes a year or two for an important idea to take root in your mind, grow in strength and clarity, and permeate out into the different elements of your life, transforming your behavior, your environment, and who you are. Something began to take root in the fall of 1965 when I started college and by the spring of 1967 I was living in a different universe. I discovered the life of the mind – I discovered the exhilaration and elevation of scholarship and the world of ideas. After getting myself into a regular schedule during the fall semester of studying weekday evenings at home (still continuing my weightlifting during the days) and doing moderately well in my courses, I entered my second semester and encountered Plato and Freud – taking both introductory philosophy and introductory psychology courses that spring. Plato and Freud marked the end of high school, the end of childhood and adolescence. In retrospect, it seems like I became conscious for the first time.

Reading Plato’s *Republic* I was introduced to philosophical argument and the principled and conscientious quest for truth, and a deep understanding of reality. With Freud, I encountered the idea that one could systematically describe the basic structure and workings of the human mind. Through Freud I also was introduced to the idea that we may not know what is going on in our own minds – we may be “unconscious” to the deepest workings of our soul. I remember thinking at the time that in order to understand how to lead a good life (a basic question in Plato) then it made sense to understand what motivates people and why they think and behave the way they do (Freud’s question). Understanding the mind – the study of psychology – was the key to understanding the nature of human reality – to civilization, to ethics, to religion, and everything else. But also, from the philosophical angle, I don’t think I had ever seriously thought about the nature of knowledge, justice, the good, of what is real and what is illusion or

appearance – these new areas of inquiry – these new questions - opened up my mental space – my consciousness – my sense of the depth and expanse of existence. I had been living in Plato's Cave (a metaphor used by Plato to describe the world of appearance); I had believed that the shadows on the walls of the cave were the totality of reality. There was something very important that I had missed – totally missed – and I felt that my eyes had been opened and that I literally had been unconscious before. I was no longer in Kansas, or in this case, Waterbury. I was caught, whether I totally realized it at the time or not.

But the transformation moved in steps, with new pieces replacing old pieces but not all at once, and I continued my weightlifting through the spring and the summer. Although I was pursuing a college degree and was clearly motivated toward doing well in my academic studies, my goal when I started college was to become a physical education teacher (a reflection of my dedication to weightlifting). But I did really well in my second semester, better than in the first, and a dissonance was growing in my mind between my stated goal of teaching physical education and my emerging interests in psychology and philosophy and more generally, the world of ideas. I did not feel like the same person that I was in high school.

As a physical education major, I needed to transfer in my second year from the local campus of the University of Connecticut in my home town to the main campus in order to begin to take courses in my major. This meant having to move from the industrial blue collar town of Waterbury to a college town – Storrs – and this change in the environment further contributed to the transformation going on inside of me. Instead of pool halls, record shops, hamburger and hot dog stands, and city streets with teenagers hanging around street corners and cruising in their jazzed up Chevys and Fords, I was now in a rural hilly environment, with tall oak and maple trees and large colonial brick buildings filled with classrooms and books. I was in a place dedicated to learning, education, and the ideals of scholarship and the pursuit of knowledge. Storrs was beautiful, but it felt very strange and I was homesick for the first six months at least.

But here is what happened – what came to fruition in that second year of college. I realized that I loved learning new ideas, new facts, and new theories about reality. Increasing my knowledge and understanding became a powerful desire in me, in fact, the central motivator in my life, whether the new knowledge pertained to psychology, philosophy, history, science, literature, or the arts – it was all important. There was so much to learn and I was drinking it up. I valued it all – how it was expanding my mind and my consciousness. A vast and infinitely deep universe had opened up and I was exploring it – I felt exhilarated. I came to believe that this was the good life – something that everyone should pursue – at least to some degree. Also, I came to deeply value developing my mental skills and capacities – my abilities to analyze, to synthesize, to reason logically and clearly – to argue, debate, and discuss all these new ideas with others. Further, I perpetually worked on putting the pieces together – to see patterns and connections across disciplines – to get the big picture. I had this passion to see the whole which is why I found philosophy so interesting. I was driven to make sense of it all. Expanding my understanding, sharpening my mental skills, and

looking for ways to synthesize and abstract on what I was learning – all of this was an expression or manifestation of a drive toward excellence within me. The growth of knowledge and the improvement of thinking became central guiding virtues in my life. The pursuit of knowledge was a virtue – the pursuit of knowledge tremendously enhanced the quality of one’s being – the pursuit of knowledge gave me a much deeper and more powerful purpose and meaning for living than ever before.

As I move through this essay, one of my main goals will be to develop a theory of wisdom and enlightenment. As a starting point – a foundation – in this direction, it has seemed to me since my college days that the broad, systematic, passionate, and ongoing acquisition of knowledge and the development of fundamental thinking skills are essential features of an enlightened mind. By broad I mean knowledge encompassing both the humanities and the sciences, ranging from art, music, and literature to philosophy, psychology, the social sciences, biology and ecology, and physics and cosmology, at the very least. By systematic I mean the ongoing process of connecting, relating, integrating, and abstracting upon this diverse array of areas of knowledge, in an attempt to gain a big picture of things. I include the word “passionate” because the pursuit of knowledge and the experiences of discovery and understanding are not simply cold intellectual states – there is excitement, astonishment, exhilaration, and awe infused into the process. Knowledge acquisition is intrinsically motivating. Finally, I use the term “ongoing” because there is no end to the process – no final state of knowing it all and seeing the truth – and the person who truly appreciates the experience of learning, discovery, and expanding understanding would not want the process to end. The concept of thinking skills is a broad notion. At the very least, it means to strive for clarity – to work at the capacity to make one’s ideas intelligible and communicable – to strive for synthesis, coherence, and systematization, to bring order to one’s thoughts and bring them together – to strive for logical and rational sequences of thought – to strive for objectivity, open-mindedness, and fairness – to work at examining, comparing, and evaluating multiple points of view – and reciprocally, to be critical and in pursuit of the best approximation to the truth one can realize; that is, not to just accept any idea, but to have standards of evaluation and believe that one can separate the intellectual junk from what is of value and validity.

There are people who are critical and disdainful of the intellectual pursuit of knowledge – who see “book learning” as either unnecessary or even counter-productive to leading a good life. Perhaps “true” knowledge isn’t to be gotten out of books – perhaps it gets in the way. Perhaps enlightenment or wisdom is to be found in the streets – in the messy realities of everyday life. Now I would agree that academic knowledge is not sufficient for either wisdom or enlightenment and it does not necessarily generate a good life. Yet, I have lived “on the streets” at several different points in my life – and the wisdom to be found there is meager, frequently confused and mistaken, and filled with vanity, fear, hostility, and ignorance. I think what confuses critics regarding knowledge gained through books, is that they see the book as a bounded physical entity – a thing with words and ideas contained in it. What they don’t see is that books are portals into

multiple and extremely diverse dimensions of reality. When you enter a book you go someplace else – you are no longer there in your chair or at your desk – you are traveling through space, time, diverse cultures, the minds of the writers, and even alternative universes. You could be sitting in a restaurant, a park, or coffee shop reading a book and there could be quite a bit of activity going on around you, but at that moment all of this immediate physical reality will pale in comparison to the reality you are exploring in the book. Of course it is true that there are intellectual nerds, megalomaniac scholars and teachers, and socially and emotionally inept “geniuses,” but the solution is not to throw the baby out with the bath water, but to take what one learns in books and apply to it life – to test it out and use it to enrich one’s existence – one’s understanding – through the ideas one encounters in the books one reads. To toss aside – to burn – the works of Plato, Aristotle, Dostoyevsky, Freud, and Confucius, among many others, is to retreat back into the cave of obscurity, darkness, and the underground ruminations of the mole.

In the first semester of my second year in college I took three physical education courses and three academic courses. I found the physical education courses boring. I found the academic courses invigorating. I kept lifting weights, but now I had to go to the gym in the college athletic facilities; I had left my parents’ home and my familiar basement where all my barbells and weights were. After throwing the discus and shot put in high school, I was now learning to throw the hammer in college, but I didn’t like having to go to the gym and there was something calling me toward the dorm where I was living – something that I felt at a gut level was pulling me in a different direction. Interestingly, that fall semester my teacher in the history of physical education gave a lecture one day about following your passion in life and making sure that you find value in what you decide on as a career. Without knowing it, he convinced me (or let’s say provided the straw that broke the camel’s back) that I shouldn’t be in physical education. Coincidentally, or perhaps in psychosomatic resonance, in the late fall, I developed mononucleosis, and after having peaked at 210 pounds at twenty years of age (and being bigger and stronger than I ever was and less than 50 pounds away from the world record in the dead lift for my bodyweight), I lost thirty pounds in one month, stopped weightlifting, and never was able to (or wanted to) re-establish the passion and determination I had sustained for the six previous years. I had found a new passion, a new love, and a new life goal.

The spring semester of my sophomore year was much different than the fall. No more physical education courses – no more serious weightlifting – I was no longer that homesick – and I dove into psychology classes. And that spring I first encountered a man from across the centuries, who spoke out to me (or maybe I spoke out to him first). I met Spinoza.

Baruch Espinoza has followed me through my life. As a college student I would frequently have philosophical discussions with other guys in my dorm, and one night in particular, back in the spring of 1967, to the accompaniment of Pink Floyd, I stayed up till around three o’clock in the morning discussing with my friend John the meaning of life, the nature of existence, and what we should do with our lives. Both John and I felt this sense of epiphany and revelation the

following morning, but I can't honestly recall what profound conclusions we had come to the night before. But that following morning I mentioned to one of the other guys in the dorm, Barry, some of the ideas John and I had been discussing, and Barry told me that our ideas sounded like Spinoza. Spinoza? Who was Spinoza? After Barry's comment I went out and bought Spinoza's *Ethics* and started to read it and Spinoza would become the first real intellectual hero in my life.

It is fair to say that Spinoza is one of the most admired Western philosophers of modern times. Not simply for his ideas, which are profound enough, but for his character; he epitomized the true quest of the wise man – someone who really lived the ideas that he espoused. (And this point – integrity – is critical to the nature of wisdom.) Also, living in the mid-seventeenth century in the Netherlands, Spinoza was one of the central and most important early spokesmen for the European Enlightenment and the modern era. Spinoza rejected many of the teachings of traditional European religion (both Judaism and Christianity) on the grounds that the teachings were superstitious and not based on reason or scientific evidence. At the age of twenty-four he was excommunicated, cursed for his views, and labeled a heretic and an atheist. Spinoza became a great hero of Rationalist philosophy, willing to endure a life of social condemnation and isolation for the principles of reason and enlightenment.

Beginning from a set of axioms and definitions, Spinoza, in the *Ethics*, attempts to logically and methodically deduce the existence and nature of God, of reality, of knowledge and truth, of the psychological nature of humanity, and of the good life and how to achieve happiness. Spinoza deduces that the totality of existence is God, that everything that has been and will be is completely determined (which of course includes God), that there are no miracles or immortality of the soul, and that one should (in the intellectual sense) love God but not expect a reward from God in return for such love. For Spinoza, the loving of God was its own reward, as a life of virtue was also its own reward. Further, Spinoza thought that ethics and morality derive from acting in accordance with one's own self-interest, and that it is when one does not know one's own true nature (or other people or events interfere with a true self-perception) that one becomes unhappy and less than completely virtuous. Evil is ignorance and misery. On the other hand, virtue equals happiness equals self-awareness and enlightened self-interest. Finally, the true perception or understanding of anything is to see it "through the eyes of eternity" – to see oneself, the other, or whatever the thing is, in the context of God or the cosmos. (God is the cosmos.)

I suppose that from early on what I connected with in Spinoza was the idea that everything made sense – that everything fit together and that for everything there was a reason or cause. Spinoza spoke to my view of nature as orderly and coherent. A sense of order and coherence to things provided a sense of psychological security. I would often argue Spinoza's determinism with others, attempting to demonstrate that whatever we did – whatever actions or thoughts we engaged in – there was always a cause, and a cause for that cause running backwards in time. Even if we say we decide upon an action, the action follows from our own inner nature and psychological make-up – of the causes within us,

and those causes go back to other causes, both within us and from the outside environment and our history.

Yet, Spinoza's ultra-determinism seemed to run counter to the philosophy of freedom (as espoused by existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre, for example, whom I also read back then and who argued that humans have no inherent nature and that we completely choose who we are and what we do). Science though, beginning in the time of Spinoza, had adopted a deterministic approach to reality – in fact, that is the point of science. Science attempts to explain and understand reality by identifying why things happen the way they do - what the laws and causes are behind the patterns of events in the world. But if you apply science to humans (which modern psychology does), then it seems to follow that what people do, what they think and what they feel, is strictly determined. In reality then, there are no choices in life (even if I feel a sense of choice in making decisions). In Spinoza's philosophy even God is "trapped" by its own nature. (I use the impersonal "its" since for Spinoza the idea that God is a he or she is nonsensical.) In Spinoza, everything follows from necessity. (In fact, God is necessary.)

I should also highlight at this point Spinoza's idea that the nature of things is to be found within the context of God. Nothing stands alone and the only complete and true way to see something is to see how it fits into the grand scheme of things. Such a view is holism carried to the extreme. Everything exists in a cosmic context and it is only in the context of the whole that the thing or the part can be defined. This obviously runs totally counter to the idea of autonomous and distinct individuality. There is, though of course, something uplifting in seeing oneself or seeing humanity in the context of the cosmos – it elevates our existence. And further, it is critically important for humanity to see how we fit into nature and not to feel separate or above nature, lest we abuse, disregard, or destroy the hand that feeds us. (This is the logic of ecological activism.) For Spinoza, not only is no man an island; in all of nature there are no islands anywhere at all. But to keep in mind, the only totally complete and valid context for anything is God. It is God that provides the ultimate meaning for everything, and for Spinoza, his life and his identity were unequivocally dedicated to seeing himself in resonance with God – in intellectual love with God. The spiritual or philosophical power of this image is truly amazing.

Nothing in my past was a match for Spinoza. If Plato and Freud had opened the door leading out of the cave – Spinoza showed me the possibilities of what lay out there amidst the stars and the canopy of the heavens. Whatever remnants of my Catholic upbringing remained were overpowered by the sheer power, rationality, and expansiveness of his image of the cosmos. Waterbury was a million miles away – quickly receding into the fogginess of forgotten dreams. My friends from high school had disappeared. I had disappeared. That year, back in Waterbury for the summer break, I spent a lot of my spare time staying up late at night reading philosophy and science fiction. I doubt I went out with my friends from high school at all.

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*For things are things because of mind,  
as mind is mind because of things.*

*Hsin Hsin Ming*

The cold in Minneapolis in the winter was the most intense I had ever experienced in my life. In walking home from school to my apartment, icicles would form on my beard and moustache, and I had to take my glasses off because the metal frame would get so cold it would hurt my nose. Once I remember the temperature dropped to minus thirty degrees Fahrenheit – not counting the wind chill. It didn't seem to snow much between late December and early March because – so I believed – the sky was literally frozen solid, preventing any moisture from coming down.

But the University of Minnesota was a great place to be. The intellectual stimulation was incredible. Aside from my psychology courses, I took a large number of philosophy courses, especially in the philosophy of science. Two of the premier philosophers of science in the world at the time, Paul Feyerabend and Imre Lakatos, visited the school on several occasions and I had the opportunity to listen to them expound their ideas and debate with each other. (Feyerabend was something to behold – bright orange hair, equally colorful eyebrows that curled up at the ends, an I.Q. estimated at 190 - the same as Einstein – highly eccentric and animated, and he walked with a cane due to a wound in the lower back he had suffered in World War II.) While in graduate school, I read voraciously (including numerous articles by Feyerabend) building up a substantial collection of philosophy and psychology books. Also, while I was in Minnesota I “discovered” classical music, learning on my own the major pieces of all of the great composers from Bach and Beethoven to Sibelius and Rachmaninoff. I read, studied and wrote to unending, inspiring classical music the three years I was in Minneapolis.

One of Feyerabend's main arguments was that there were no a-theoretical facts in science; all the facts of science were understood and described within theoretical perspectives – from particular points of view. Feyerabend could be seen as an extreme subjectivist; even science, the presumed paragon of objectivity, was thoroughly colored by the ideas and presumptions of scientists. Feyerabend's argument could be generalized to all human belief systems; there are no objective facts or truths anywhere – everything is through the eyes of the beholder. The noted historian of science, Thomas Kuhn, who was immensely influential during this same time, took a similar position to Feyerabend, and argued further that there was no objective way to compare and evaluate two competing scientific paradigms (or theories) because paradigms describe different facts, use different languages, and literally “live” in different universes. Paradigms are “incommensurable.” Lakatos, in opposition to both Feyerabend and Kuhn, argued that there must be some principled way to comparatively evaluate different points of view – science can not be simply based on personal

tastes or “mob rule.” Lakatos proposed a distinction between “degenerative” and “progressive problem shifts” as a way to comparatively evaluate competing different points of view. A degenerative problem shift is where the theory in question is in a defensive position having to repeatedly come up with explanations for facts after new facts have been uncovered; a progressive problem shift is a theory that anticipates new facts before they are discovered. Degenerative problem shifts are neurotic (as I would say) always in a defensive mode of existence; progressive problem shifts are healthy, in an approach mode.

But the *Zeitgeist* was with Feyerabend and Kuhn. This was the era of the rise of Postmodernism. As a graduate student I learned that everything was open to criticism – nothing was certain – nothing was unequivocally true – even the supposed indubitable facts of science. Within Postmodern philosophy all facts and all values are relative – objectivity was a myth. I was very ambivalent, though, about this subjectivist and relativist philosophy; clearly interpretation and perspective come into our beliefs and perceptions of the world, yet, to conclude that objective knowledge – that truth – was a chimera and impossibility seemed too extreme a view to me. From the relativist point of view, one idea was as good as the next. It seemed to me that subjectivism (in the extreme form) was confused and self-contradictory. (If every statement is relative and there is no objective truth, then this statement is relative and not objectively true.) Sitting in my study as a graduate student, reading essays by Feyerabend and other philosophers and cognitive psychologists as well, regarding how the human mind presumably constructs experienced reality, I would listen to Beethoven and think there is nothing relative about it – Beethoven penetrates to the heart of reality and reaches upward to the heavenly heights – he is truth, beauty, and the good. In some sense, we can acquire knowledge – albeit perhaps not with total certainty and totally untainted by personal bias, but the journey toward truth is not an illusion.

But my evolving thoughts on the nature of knowledge, on objectivity and subjectivity, on truth and reality, found their real grounding and inspiration in a professor from Cornell University who believed that he was challenging the entire intellectual heritage of Western thought on the nature of knowledge and reality. (And to a great degree I came to the similar conclusion that he was.) In 1971 I met J. J. Gibson. Our first conversation – our meeting each other – took place on a visit he was making to the psychology department at the University of Minnesota and began with him asking me for a cigarette. After giving him one, he immediately engaged me in a very animated and open discussion on the psychology of perception. What is significant here is that, at that time, Gibson was probably the most famous perceptual psychologist in the world, and there I was having this very stimulating and friendly chat with him – like old friends - all of a sudden – right out of the blue. Something like that does not happen very often in life. I don’t know if you could call Gibson wise, but he was enlightened – a true creative genius – with a mind like a child, alive, opinionated, totally un-self-conscious, playing with one idea after another.

Gibson believed that direct knowledge of the external world occurred through perception; that the perceiver and the environment actually form a

reciprocity with each other. The concept of reciprocity meant “distinct but interdependent.” Gibson rejected the dualism of mind and matter as two separate substances. Instead of thinking of the mind as separated from the physical world and lost in its own psychological fabrications and creations, Gibson developed a highly original theoretical explanation of how we make contact with the world. He described his theory as “an ecological approach” to perception, for he viewed perception as realized within an ecological context – that the perceiver and the environment formed a holistic and integrated reality. The objective and the subjective are intertwined together; we are aware of both – of the self (in what Gibson called “proprioception”) and of the environment surrounding us (what Gibson called “perception”). At the most general level, all of psychology is ecological; humans and their environment form a reciprocity where one can not be understood independent of the other.

Another way to come at this basic point, stated in a more general fashion, is to argue that although we have a tendency to want to distinguish and separate ourselves from the world, we are, in fact, interdependent with the world we exist within. I may feel myself as a distinct conscious being with an individual self and personal mind and consciousness, but this sense of individuality and separateness is not the whole truth of things. We exist in relationship with our world. We are distinct but interdependent – a reciprocity. In this sense the subject matter of psychology is ecological – as humans we exist in the context of an environment – we can not be described independent of this context. This is not to say that we are entirely a product of our environment or our culture, but neither are we simply autonomous, distinct beings. In the West we tend to emphasize the core individual self – the distinctiveness and self-determination side of our reality. In the East, the emphasis is placed on the relatedness of individuals to each other – on community and group norms. Viewing the self or the individual through the eyes of reciprocity implies bringing these two perspectives together into a necessary whole. We are distinct but interdependent beings.

The key theoretical idea in Gibson was reciprocity. Throughout Western intellectual history, beginning with Plato, reality was frequently divided into two separate realms. For Plato, there was the eternal realm of mind and reason and the temporal realm of physical appearances. In the Judeo-Christian tradition there was body and spirit – of God and man – of Creator and created – of good and evil. Gibson, on the other hand, attempted to reconceptualize all the fundamental dimensions of reality in terms of reciprocities – distinct but interdependent. He saw stability (persistence or invariance) and change (transformation) as a reciprocity; each exists in the context of the other – neither stands alone. Perceptual time is a synthesis of persistence and change. Each of us, as human beings, exists in the context of a world – there is no independent self separate from the world. Our actions in the world are always interaction effects between the world and ourselves. I would carry this general mental framework for understanding reality in the years to come – all the way to the present. Along the way, other writers and intellectual sources would feed into, enrich, and expand this basic framework for understanding how it all fits together. The universe is a network of reciprocities.

I spent my last year in graduate school studying with Gibson at Cornell in Ithaca, New York (another cold place). I did my thesis on the evolution of his ideas, setting his views in a historical context. (One of my main intellectual passions in graduate school was the history of psychology and philosophy.) Gibson was a nighthawk, usually not going to bed till three or four o'clock in the morning. He would frequently come over to my apartment around 10 or 11 p.m., and we would smoke cigarettes, drink coffee, and talk about all manner of topics, from epistemology (the study of knowledge) to religion and the existence of God. (If I recall, Gibson was a devout atheist.) One night he just showed up at my door, without even calling, looking rather forlorn and agitated, and of course I invited him in. He quickly said to me, "Don't ever get into an argument with your wife about psychology." (His wife, Eleanor was a very famous psychologist as well and they often engaged in rather heated debates.) I didn't ask him the specifics of what he was talking about, but I could pretty well figure it out, and within ten minutes we were at the dining room table in a conversation about some abstract topic, totally unrelated to the challenges – and ups and downs – of marriage and the relationship of the sexes. It is interesting, though, that years later, the last thing he ever said to me before he died was, "Stay away from bright-eyed girls." Was he talking about me (which given the situation I was in at the time made sense), or was he talking about himself (words of wisdom passed from teacher to student), or was he talking about the both of us? Gibson was one of those bright stars in my life – my teacher and inspiration – an intellectual soul of great passion. I think each of us – though we were separated in age by over forty-five years – had a real fondness and liking for the other. We both loved ideas and we both loved to argue. And in the final analysis, Gibson taught me more than just about knowledge and reality; he taught me about love.

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*"Now I have the chance to be a decent human being,  
for I am standing eye to eye with death."*

*Ludwig Wittgenstein*

*"Let us draw closer to the fire so  
that we may better see what we are saying."*

*Chinese Aphorism*

I graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1973 with a Ph.D. in psychology and a minor in the philosophy of science. But it was difficult to find an academic job, especially given my philosophical interests and broad theoretical orientation to the study of psychology. (I had trouble specializing in graduate school.) So when I found an academic job it was at Indiana University Northwest in Gary Indiana, where I would stay as a teacher from 1973 to 1978. I did not like being in northwest Indiana – driving into the area at night was like entering

Dante's *Inferno*, with innumerable smokestacks from the steel mills spewing smoke and flames into the dark ominous sky. I wanted to find a faculty position in some better, more academic location – preferably in the east – where I could devote myself to being a scholar and writer. That was my vision at the time – the life of a scholar in a New England university. Instead I was in northwest Indiana and my primary responsibility at the college was to teach. It is strange that I never envisioned myself much as a teacher – more a scholar hidden in some vast library surrounded by books. Yet I was rewarded (the silver lining) – a very positive and uplifting surprise in fact - for enduring the grayness and industrial mentality and ambience of my surroundings. I found that I loved to teach (once I got over the anxiety of speaking in front of people). I really enjoyed my students and explaining ideas to them. Within a year or two, I saw myself as an excellent teacher – articulate, clear, animated, highly organized, personable, and above all else extremely stimulating – I could get people thinking. Instead of realizing my dream of a solitary existence – lost in my mind and the universe of abstract ideas – I became much more social, engaging other people in the worlds of history, psychology, philosophy, and science, and it was exhilarating. I had found another way to experience flow – in interaction with others - and I could provoke flow in many of the students – the intellectual flow of thinking about ideas, about the nature of the human mind and human personality, about the history of thought, and the wonder of reality. Part of the life of the enlightened mind – the mind of wisdom – is exploring with others the meaning and nature of things. It was in Indiana that I learned to teach.

I would have to say, that it was through teaching that I much more deeply learned the subject matter of my disciplines. When you have to explain something to other people, it really tests and challenges your understanding. You get to listen to your own mind – how well oiled it is and how well the different parts work together – out loud. (How do I know what I think until I hear what I have to say?) And I took teaching very seriously, feeling responsible for communicating to students the clearest, most comprehensive and balanced, most up to date, and well organized overview of the material. I was continually pushed in the direction of knowing the subject matter better and better. Also, I was driven by the conviction that there was a way to explain any idea, no matter how abstract or difficult it was, to any reasonably intelligent mind assuming the person would listen, ask questions, and discuss the idea with you. And I was my own worst critic, continually assessing myself after each class regarding how well I came across and what I could do to improve the educational experience. I would watch the students and observe how interested or engaged they appeared. I liked my students, interacted with them as people, and wanted them to succeed – I wanted them to “see the light.” (One day in one of my classes a student stood up in the back row and exclaimed “That’s it! I understand.” He picked up his books, left the room, and I never saw him again.) I may not have been the solitary scholar and writer I envisioned, but I clearly learned more psychology and philosophy in those five years of teaching than I did in graduate school. And if I was becoming more knowledgeable, more enlightened, more wise, it was in the context of interacting with people – all these qualities of the

mind and the character require a social arena in which to really blossom and refine. As Gibson would have said, we are ecological beings, and knowledge is realized in an ecological setting.

But in the middle of all of this, another, more personal transformation took place that would significantly impact the direction I took in the future. After being together with the same woman whom I had first met as a senior in high school, and whom I subsequently married in 1969, we separated and divorced in 1977. I went through significant emotional turmoil over this; my academic focus deteriorated, and I found myself lonely, depressed, and extremely restless. I very quickly came to realize that the world of ideas was not enough – that love and companionship was equally, if not more, important. Again, this idealized image I had of the solitary scholar was undercut this time by affairs of the heart. (And of course I asked myself why, if I was so smart, so enlightened, was my personal life such a mess?)

During the period from 1976 to 1978, now living a single life, I became increasingly less focused, more unsettled, and decidedly more liberal and loose in my behavior. I started to think that after having been in academia all my life I should leave it, to experience the reality outside of school. The spirit of adventure and freedom overpowered me, and I totally changed direction. I gave up on the idea of moving back east to lead the life of a scholar. Instead I decided to leave academia, move out west, and attempt to become a science fiction writer. Since my youth I had been an avid reader of science fiction, and in fact, after finishing my Ph.D., I spent a lot of time the following couple of years reading science fiction.

After the divorce I became increasingly Dionysian (reveling in sensation, spontaneity, and the emotional side of things) and much less Apollonian (the rational orderly side of human life). I had been reading Kurt Vonnegut (about the absurdity of life), Carlos Castaneda (about the teachings of the mystic Indian Don Juan), and Robert Pirsig (about madness, the search for quality, and traveling out west on a motorcycle). These books energized me, but I am sure I also felt guilty about the divorce. I engaged in too much “socializing” during that time – too many women, too many intoxicants, too many nights out on the town. Perhaps I was in a mode of self-destruct, but I took off for the west, having quit my teaching job and with no job at the other end. I spent my money too fast and ended up working in a science fiction/comic bookstore in Boulder Colorado for peanuts and without the status or prestige of being a college professor. (What was I thinking when I left teaching? Didn't I remember what reality was like outside of academia? Didn't I remember Waterbury?) Along the way I also got re-married, but this new relationship ended up mirroring the disarray of my life in general. Six months later I was back in Indiana, with my new wife, broke, depressed, and demoralized.

Perhaps anything could have happened at that point, but in the cold winter and utter grayness of northwest Indiana and my own inner soul at that time, it really hit me that my passions were ideas, the pursuit of knowledge, the adventure of the human mind, scholarship and teaching, and that I was miserable and thoroughly deflated being disconnected from this way of life. I

knew that I had to find a way back to that reality. (Again – what was going through my mind when I left academia?) This insight – this powerfully painful reminder of what I presumably already knew - was critical. The obvious hit me - sometimes you don't realize the importance of what you have – of how much you value it - until you lose it. In psychology it is called the contrast effect – the reality of something becomes clearest and most vivid when you juxtapose it with its opposite. And I learned something else too: Make sure you think through what you are doing when you leave something (and perhaps burn some bridges behind you), because it can be very hard to get back on track if you change your mind some time later.

The period from 1978 to 1983 was the big kick in my ass of my young adult life and I wandered about the country in search of the opening that would lead me back to the world of academia, teaching, and scholarship that I had left. My marriage suffered for this as well, as my wife and I swung back and forth between being together and being apart. I worked as an alcohol-drug therapist along the way and did some part-time teaching, but I also did a lot of other less appealing things, such as working in a fish market and selling life insurance. Let us say that this was my test – I had hit a hole – a big hole and the question was what I was going to do about it. How could I get back on track?

At least part of the answer came from Marilyn Monroe and the movie “The Misfits.” In the movie, Marilyn is telling Clarke Gable that if you are not sure what to do the best thing may be to simply sit still. From 1978 to 1983 I had been moving around from one place to the next, always looking and, when things didn't go well, always running to the next place. The result of all this frenetic activity was to simply go in circles, getting nowhere. My personal life was in the same pattern of disarray. In 1983 I decided that I had to plant my feet and stay put no matter how much I wanted to take off and go somewhere else. I guess I had to learn a new variation on some old principles about tenacity and commitment. If you find yourself jumping from one thing to another and feeling that you are going in circles and not getting anywhere, then it is important to STOP. Don't move from where you are. Figure out how to grow – like a tree with roots firmly planted – from where you are standing. As a *Yin-yang* paradox - there are times when the only way to start moving again is to stand still. One can only grow from a steady position. A lot of motion does not equal direction – a lot of motion can equal chaos.

So in 1984 I planted my feet in the suburbs of Chicago (a short little jump from northwest Indiana, but a world away in environment) and I secured a job as an educator and administrator in a mental hospital in the Illinois Department of Mental Health. I had wanted to find a position in teaching at a college, but after having been out of the academic world for a number of years it was very difficult to come back in through the front door. Perhaps this was just as well, since going to work in the field of mental health broadened my professional background, enriched my learning, and ultimately paid off for me.

Having acquired the bad habit of jumping from one place to the next, it was difficult, especially at first, for me to remain steady and committed to the mental health job or to anything else for that matter. Which brings up another

basic principle to keep in mind: Good habits can be unlearned or replaced with bad habits. So the determination and persistence I had learned as a weightlifter and college student, I lost (for a while at least) in my early thirties and I had to re-acquire it. It is very possible in life to go backwards; good habits and positive character traits need to be regularly exercised or they atrophy. (Of course, I could say that this is also a principle derivative from weightlifting; if you don't exercise your muscles regularly, they will shrink and become soft.) Think of habits and character traits as things that need to be constantly nourished – they don't just simply remain strong and ingrained in you. Entropy (the movement toward disorder in nature) works against everything – things break down – the body breaks down. To move forward, the body needs to keep rebuilding itself and the mind needs to keep recreating itself. All is flow – all is continual creation and recreation - things fall apart if they are not perpetually being reconstituted. This is part of the theory of open systems. We are open systems. (As I write this the expression is circling through my mind – an idea I would encounter later in life: "Grow or die." There is no standing still in the flow – in the currents of time.)

During the time that I jumped, circled, and hop-scotched around the country, as I mentioned, I worked as an alcohol and drug therapist for a while. Now in 1984 I was in a mental hospital filled with schizophrenics, depressives, and assorted paranoids and personality disorders. I had a good position, first as director of staff education and quality assurance, and a little later, adding on the role of head psychologist for the hospital, but I was constantly around mental patients and observing the sad, deranged, and unfortunate in life. Between the therapist job and this new one, I really got a good dose of seeing how bad human life could become. I would have to say that viewing such misery, such confusion, such hopelessness in the patients (at a deep level) scared the hell out of me – I was seeing the "dark side," which clearly motivated me and re-energized me to work very hard at life to avoid the possibility of ever ending up in such a situation. (The previous five years of darkness also hung over me as a personal reminder of how bad it could get.) As an alcohol therapist I had learned that anybody can fall into the gutter – anyone can ruin his or her life, his or her mind and body, with the bottle or with other types of drugs, or through making bad decisions. And, now in the mental hospital I saw all kinds of people whose minds had taken a nosedive into insanity for various reasons, many of which could impact and destroy any of us. (Indeed, on several occasions during the period I'd just surfaced from, I too came very close to sinking my own ship.) One must take care to cultivate what is good and not to minimize the potential dangers of life; the darkness lurks close at hand – the darkness may lurk inside oneself.

Now I could say that it was Marilyn Monroe who got me to stop and hold my ground so I could start to move forward again, and that is true, to a degree, but there were other factors at work that were important as well. One important additional factor was the idea of evolution. By the time I was a college student I was definitely a firm believer in the principle of evolution. I understood how evolution applied to the history of life on earth. But during the period when I wandered around the country, I studied and read a lot about many new ideas in evolutionary theory. (Even during this tumultuous and frustrating period, I kept

trying to re-assert and re-energize my intellectual interests.) I learned about the idea of cosmic evolution, the idea that the entire universe had evolved and perhaps was continuing to evolve. Everything is in evolution. I learned about “punctuated equilibria,” the theory that evolution seems to move in rather sudden jumps punctuated by periods of relative stability. I was introduced to the ideas of the philosopher/scientist J.T. Fraser, on the respective roles of order and chaos in the evolutionary process. For Fraser, evolution results from an ongoing interplay and conflict between order and chaos. There is no movement forward without chaos. Finally, I became extremely interested in the Taoist concept of the *Yin-yang* which holds that all of existence can be described in terms of complementary forces that oscillate in dominance and balance with each other over time. The idea of the *Yin-yang* provided a connecting link between Gibson’s idea of reciprocity (the complementarity of things) and Fraser’s concept of the interdependency of order and chaos. Putting all of this together in my mind, I ended up interpreting the troubles and turmoil of my recent life as a, perhaps, necessary period of chaos. But believing that the overall flow of time was uphill and evolutionary, I kept telling myself that things, sooner or later, would begin to improve. That I shouldn’t give up hope - that there would be a jump forward. As I would tell my students in later years, (for I would eventually find my way back into teaching) progress and evolution involve both order and chaos. There are periods of increasing order but there are also periods of chaos and disruption in life. One needs to accept the chaos and move through it with an eye to the future and a belief in the new order that will come. In fact, chaos seems to play a necessary role in evolution, for life needs to be “shook up” every so often to bring creativity and new directions into things. Chaos is connected with creative surges. I could have stayed a college teacher in Indiana and perhaps moved along a steady, deterministic line leading to a foregone conclusion. Instead I dove into the abyss and suffered for it (chaos does not feel good). But I emerged on the other side, once I created a direction again for myself, with all kinds of new ideas, new experiences, and some new and improved character traits. I was a new species – I had experienced punctuated equilibria.

One of the great challenges in life – one of the major things that needs to be understood and dealt with – even used – is coming to terms with chaos. I will have more to say on this later, but it seems clear to me now that it is fairly easy to maintain order and move forward in an existential vacuum (which of course doesn’t exist for we are ecological beings) but if one is placed within the world, one of the biggest problems is going to be creating order and direction and holding to it amidst the turbulence, disruptiveness, randomness, and unpredictability of life. As contemporary science describes it, we are all open systems existing in interaction with our environment and the environment is not always a peaceful place. Anybody can be a saint in an ivory tower (if one existed) but we all live in the trenches and the bombs keep bursting overhead.

All the above points, on evolution, punctuated equilibria, entropy, the *Yin-yang*, order and chaos, and open systems (of which there is of course much more that could be said), help us to understand the nature of time and in particular the time of our lives. We could imagine time as a steady, uniform, and

absolute flow in which we move and live, but time is complex – it has a dynamical structure. Time is not an empty vessel – a temporal “space” without resistance, friction, or curvature. To invoke metaphors, if time is a river, then the river twists and turns, surges and swirls, rises and falls, and we are navigators on this river, attempting to steer a course amidst this fluid and unsettled complexity. We, in fact, are part of the river – our very being (mind, body, and emotion) is temporal. We can harness the currents or we can struggle against them, but we can’t move independently of them. To “manage time” one must first understand it.

Strange as it may sound, the other thing I learned or acquired during the “dark ages” of my early thirties was a renewed commitment to God and prayer. At some level I saw God as the evolutionary force or principle – that God was somehow intimately connected with evolution - and that somehow I could resonate and commune with this reality through prayer. In those darkest hours of the early 1980s (to be melodramatic), I began to pray. (I had a personally intense series of conversations with a Baptist minister along the way that had a big impact on me. (My God! – Me, the philosopher and evolutionist - who had read Nietzsche, Spinoza, and Sartre, talking with a Baptist minister!) My initial praying was simply asking God to get me out of the mess I was in and give me what I wanted (the typical “petitional prayer”), but what I found was that through prayer I began to discover all kinds of hidden emotions and rather primitive hopes and fears within me. Though I had studied Freud many years earlier and his idea of the unconscious, it was through prayer that I began to see what primordial and often infantile things churned around inside of me. God was the road to the unconscious. Hence, through prayer, I became a lot more honest with myself. I saw/felt my weaknesses – my deep humanity. Prayer was clearly for me not an escape or running away – it was decidedly more confrontational – with myself – with God. Reality was exposed rather than covered up or denied. What I had learned about prayer – right from the beginning – was to simply pray from the heart (no recitations of standard prayers) and reveal to God what I truly felt.

Now I should point out that I was not practicing any particular religion or subscribing to any particular religious doctrine (I could never swallow the fundamentalist Christian idea of creation and the story of *Genesis*). I simply prayed to God. Also, I didn’t have some “bearded man in the sky” concept of God in my head. I felt a presence and talked to that presence from my heart and my deepest personal self. Of course, a secular or atheist thinker might argue that I was simply talking to a psychological projection – an imagined archetypal “father” or “parent” figure. But I wasn’t sure about this. Who is to say that the human mind is trapped within itself – that it can’t “tune into” something beyond or something more encompassing than itself? Further I had come to the conclusion that I needed to believe in something that transcended all misfortunes of life and transcended all finite gods (like success, money, sex, social popularity and even the intellect and rationality). As I said, prayer produced much deeper personal insight, which clearly helped me in life in innumerable ways; a practicing belief in God (as expressed through prayer) gave me a steady re-charging of hope, determination, self-hood, and calm, and it also gave me a sense of humility.

Confidence is important (real confidence built on effort and success) but so is humility.

As I evolved in this practice, I increasingly entered into what is often referred to as “meditative prayer” – to simply open one’s mind – one’s feelings and thoughts – to the presence of God – without really asking for anything. From my work in alcoholism I had encountered the idea of surrendering to a higher power. Meditative prayer felt like a surrendering. Spinoza talked about the intellectual love of God – to simply desire to know God; in my case, it was a type of felt conscious resonance through just letting go and becoming open. In some ways it was like Buddhist meditation.

How God, spirituality, and religion connect with (or don’t connect with) science and evolution has been an area of great controversy and debate for hundreds of years, at least in the West. It is clear from history, though, that the religious and spiritual traditions have contributed greatly to the search for wisdom and enlightenment. In thinking through a contemporary, up-to-date understanding of wisdom and enlightenment, it is important to consider how a belief in God and various spiritual and religious practices may either positively or negatively impact wisdom and enlightenment. And, of course, there are many different forms of religion and spirituality, and many different visions of the nature of God. I will have more to say on this topic later in the essay.

In the years I worked in mental health, armed with a growing philosophy of evolution and a practicing belief in God, I began to dig myself out of the hole (financial, personal, and professional) that I had created in the earlier years. And I had this dream of getting back into teaching, which I took up again, applying for part time college teaching positions while I worked in the hospital. Within a year or so, I was teaching psychology courses at a local community college. And it is here that I am reminded of another important principle in life: The power and central importance of passion and love. I found a way back into teaching because I loved doing it. Whatever it is that you decide to dedicate yourself to, make sure you love it. Make sure that it is something you would do if you were independently wealthy and didn’t need to do in order to earn a living. There is a lot of advice about how to succeed, how to manage your time, how to realize your goals, etc., but these cognitive and behavioral guidelines don’t mean very much without passion. If the passion is there, you will find a way to do whatever it is you desire and to manage your time so that you can give it sufficient effort and energy. Love conquers all – love brings focus, determination, motivation, discipline, energy, commitment, and flow. Love destroys, negates, and trivializes distractions. Love brings excellence and quality to your work. Without this emotional core, you will sabotage (consciously or unconsciously) whatever plans and strategies you concoct to structure your life and time.

Within a couple of years, teaching undergraduate courses became increasingly boring. I was getting back into the rhythm of teaching and wanted something more challenging. I was offered a part time teaching position at a graduate school for clinical psychologists (a Psy.D. program) and though I was somewhat apprehensive over teaching graduate students I took the job and began over-preparing for the courses I was going to teach. A principle that

comes up in the psychology of learning: If you want to do something really well, over-learn it. Even if you think you know it well, go above and beyond the call of duty. There is no best you can do – you can always do more – so do better. So my passion for teaching and for psychology and my renewed compulsiveness, coupled with some good old fashioned fear and trembling over coming off an idiot in front of smart graduate students, pushed me into really getting prepared – intellectually and motivationally – for this new teaching position.

I brought my enthusiasm, my intellect, and my education into the classroom and I was a resounding success. Within the next year and a half, I won the outstanding faculty award (as a part time instructor to boot) and was offered the job of dean of the school. It was ten years since I had left my full time teaching position at Indiana University and now, finally, I was back in a full time position in academia, and surprisingly, not just as a professor, but a dean as well. My ego was definitely flattered on this one – I was a dean. But I was in for another lesson, or let us say, a variation on a lesson already learned. I had been offered the job of dean because I was an excellent teacher, one whom the students really respected and liked, and I had a number of years of experience now, working in the mental health field, where I had had a variety of administrator responsibilities. But I did not enjoy being an administrator – I loved teaching – I loved ideas and exploring them. I did not enjoy the messiness, bureaucracy, people politics, hostile competitiveness, endless meetings, trivialities, and mundane mechanics of being an administrator.

So over the next three years (from 1988 to 1991) when I was the dean of the school I came to realize that image and prestige were a poor substitute for love and passion. In psychology there is a distinction made between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is where something is done because the action is perceived as leading to some desirable end, but the action is not experienced as pleasurable in itself. Intrinsic motivation is where the action is done because it feels good to do the action – it does not have to lead to some additional consequence. The action is its own reward. (Intrinsic motivation is experienced in flow.) People will often engage in jobs where the reward is a good salary, prestige, and success but the job itself is not that satisfying. People will stick with such jobs though because of the money, security, and sense of importance attached to it. I believe that this is a very common story. Being the Dean of the school had lots of external rewards, including the best salary I had ever earned and a sense of power and professional elevation, but I didn't love it. Also, I found that I actually had more power in the classroom. As the dean, I was frequently simply carrying out the wishes and agenda of the president of the school and trying to accommodate to all the desires and personalities of both staff and students. I felt more like a slave than a master.

But there was something else going on as well. I had never given up on the dream of moving out west – of leaving the cold and gloom of my surroundings for something more scenic and exotic, and more sunny and warm. In 1987 I took a vacation with my wife out to Arizona and though it was only late March, the temperature in Scottsdale, where we stayed, hit 100 degrees one day. Arizona was filled with cacti and palm trees, western, Mexican, and Indian

art, and desert mountains (as opposed to the flatness of the Midwest). The sun shone brilliant everyday against a bright blue sky. I fell in love with it all. It seemed like a magical land to me and when we returned to Illinois, it seemed so gray, unromantic, and mundane. I decided that somehow, sooner or later, I had to move to Arizona; not to run again this time, but rather to find a place, my place, where I would settle with a sense of love and enchantment and from which I would never move again. It was interesting that it wasn't very long after this trip to Arizona that I was offered the dean's position. But the whole time I was dean I kept thinking that it was only for the short term and that I wanted to move to Arizona.

During the years from 1988 through 1990 I did some job searching in Arizona, though living two thousand miles away, it wasn't very easy. I visited Arizona twice during that period, but nothing materialized. Then in the summer of 1990, things began to go sour with the dean's position (a long story about administrative politics), and I decided it was time to really rev up my efforts at finding a way to move to Arizona. I was, in fact, happy underneath that things were not going well at the school – it gave me an excuse to go after my dream. (Make no mistake, I loved the teaching and the students were the best I had ever had – but the nine to five administrative responsibilities simply wore on me.) So for the next year I did everything I could think of to figure out a way to move to Arizona. I became obsessed. I talked to numerous people in Phoenix on the phone; received the Phoenix newspaper; filled out job applications; looked through the Phoenix yellow pages. I broadened my job search to include anything in psychology, mental health, or education. I was willing to sacrifice my college level position, which I had worked so hard to achieve during the 1980s, to get to the magical land of Arizona. In retrospect, I think that this was one of the most intense and determined efforts to achieve something that I had ever put my mind to in my life. There were disappointments along the way – I was promised one job that did not materialize - there was uncertainty – but I prayed and held to a deep faith that things would work out. I maintained this overall faith and determination in spite of the fact that I often felt the reverse – there were many times that I felt hopeless and helpless – Arizona seemed so far away. But I persisted – I had to persist – nothing else was going to make me happy.

When I talk about maintaining purpose and direction through the ups and downs of life, I must point out that the ups and downs occur within our own minds as well. There are times when you are on a journey that you lose confidence, feel demoralized and, in spite of all the positive self-talk you may engage in, you feel emotionally down. In such situations, you must keep going – you must keep doing – even if your heart and mind frequently lose conviction and enthusiasm. You must pull yourself along. You keep hoping and waiting for the miracle. And in the final analysis you don't know exactly how it is going to work itself out, but you just keep staying with it.

As the summer of 1991 was ending, in a relatively short period of time, after over a year of job hunting, I received an offer for an interview for a college teaching job, came down to Arizona for the interview, did what I believe was the best job interview of my life, waited and paced around for a week or two, got

another call for a second interview, came down again and did a second interview, and was offered the position of faculty chair for psychology and philosophy at Rio Salado College. Our house in Illinois, which had been up for sale for a month or two, still hadn't sold, but now I had a job – a good job in academia – so we packed everything up, had it picked up by a mover, and on a cold morning in early November, with the first snowflakes of the year falling, I set sail in my minivan with my wife and three kids, taking them all on the adventure of a lifetime two thousands miles to the west. We were in a covered wagon heading across the wide open spaces, leaving the security of our home and life for the strange exotic land of Arizona. The future opened up in front of us – boy did it ever open up in front of us all!

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*"It is possible to believe  
that all the past is but the beginning of a beginning,  
and that all that is and has been is but the twilight of the dawn.  
It is possible to believe that all that the human mind has ever accomplished  
is but the dream before the awakening."*

*H.G. Wells*

There is a strange, disconcerting feeling that I have had at different points in my life. I look back at some earlier time, where I lived in some other place and lived with different people, and it does not feel that it was me who was there. It feels as if I were looking at someone else. So much has changed that I can not identify with the person in my memories. It is as if I were watching a movie. In psychoanalysis this experience of detachment from one's self is called dissociation. Is there or is there not a continuity of self throughout one's life? Is it one person living this life or many? In the movie *Bladerunner*, there are androids that are given memories so that they would feel more human, with a history and a sense of belonging. I could ask if I was given the memories I have in order to give me a sense of history and belonging, but many of my memories actually give me a sense of disconnection, as if I had just popped into existence sometime in the recent past. As the great philosopher, Bertrand Russell pointed out, how can we know for sure that all the memories we have right now of our past were not just put in our mind a few moments ago? (As with the androids in *Bladerunner*.) Indeed. If Arizona had seemed like a dream when I was in Illinois, then my whole life in the Midwest now seems like a dream – perhaps even stranger than the memories I have of growing up in Connecticut. There are discontinuities in time – ruptures in the fabric of existence. There is birth and death, and as the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus observed, becoming and passing away. Leaving the Midwest was a rupture in time – in the time of my life. I am not who I was before. Such things happen in life – this is part of the form of time.

I said above that coming to Arizona opened up the future and that was true in more ways than one. Since moving to Arizona, I have created a new life – perhaps preserving some things from the past (or more accurately finally bringing to fruition certain half-realized potentialities) – but clearly much has changed over the last fifteen years since coming here. The people that I live with are different people than those I lived with before. Who are these strange new people? What happened to the old ones? I have developed a bald spot on the top of my head and I became an artist, first with sculpture and painting (inspired by the Southwest) and then with computer graphics – colorful and surrealistic pictures now hang all over my house. (What would I have made of such psychedelic creations fifteen years ago?) But also, since coming here I discovered the future as a subject matter and discipline that I could study, teach, and write about. Unquestionably, this is the defining event of my entire professional and academic life. I never saw this coming. How did it happen?

Aside from being hired as the chair of psychology and philosophy, and teaching a variety of courses in these two disciplines, I also was given a course titled “Integrative Studies,” which was the capstone course for graduates at Rio Salado College. The course was supposed to center around some theme that would pull together a liberal arts associate degree. I could pick whatever topic I wished. The idea of an integrative course really intrigued me since all of my life I had pursued a generalist approach to learning and knowledge; I studied different disciplines and was always attempting to pull the pieces together. Well, one day in a Safeway grocery store, while I was standing in the check-out line and browsing through the paperback stand, I noticed that Alvin Toffler had a new book out titled *Power Shift: Knowledge, Wealth, and Violence at the Edge of the Twenty-First Century*. (Alvin Toffler had become famous back in the 1970s for his book *Future Shock*.) I had been thinking quite a bit about what theme I could select for the Integrative Studies course, and when I saw Toffler’s book, it hit me in a flash that the twenty-first century, or more generally, the future would be an ideal topic. The course could cover all the major dimensions of human reality, from science and technology to economics, politics, and society, and address the general question of what might happen in any and all of these areas of human life in the future. I could tie all the areas together, asking how the dimensions would interact, creating the complex world we would live in tomorrow. Further, it hit me as an obvious truism that it was important to think about the future – to try to understand as best as possible what is to come – what might come - and prepare for it. The future was both abstract and theoretical, and practical and concrete. It subsumed both the sciences and the humanities. It looked to the past for an understanding of trends and patterns of change, but it pointed toward the mystery and wonder of the infinite possibilities of tomorrow. This was the beginning – in a sudden moment, when I least expected it, my whole life took a new turn.

In the coming years I read profusely everything I could find that was relevant to the future. I brought with me my interests in science fiction, evolution, history and time, and built on this. I created a full-blown course and began to write short articles to supplement the primary books I assigned students to read.

By 1996 I had written an entire 500 page textbook for the course covering science and technology, computers and robots, biotechnology and ecology, space travel, psychology, men and women, the global society, human diversity, education, morality, and religion and spirituality. I wanted to gain a comprehensive view of the possibilities of the future and not narrow my understanding to just a few areas – the “Renaissance Man” in me. And I found this whole new universe of ideas open up before my eyes. I was on a new intellectual trip, similar to what had happened to me in college when I discovered psychology and philosophy.

It is fascinating that I dove into this whole new domain of study and thinking when I was in my mid 40s. Perhaps it is not that unusual, but I was learning a whole new discipline – refocusing my intellectual interests around a new center of gravity in the middle of my academic career. One actually can dramatically switch directions in one’s professional life – perhaps anywhere along the way. We can successfully initiate fundamental change. Instead of thinking of myself as a psychologist, a philosopher, or a teacher, I now increasingly saw myself as a futurist. I was redefining myself. This is another important point to keep in mind about focus, direction, and purpose: One can re-create oneself and do so even later in life.

I should, though, qualify the above point. At one level my transformation into a futurist felt like a discontinuity – a jump in time – a revolution to a new paradigm of thinking and being (as the philosopher and historian Thomas Kuhn would put it), but I also felt that I had finally found what I was looking for, and all my previous study and learning were being pulled together around the topic of the future. I had collected all the pieces – many diverse pieces – but now at last I saw the pattern – how it could all make sense. My inclination throughout school to avoid specialization and to stay a generalist served me well when I first approached the study of the future. My youthful fascination with science fiction stretched my imagination and got me thinking about numerous alternative and frequently strange futures. The study of evolution, history, and time gave me a conceptual framework and mindset in which to understand patterns and forces of change across time. My interest in science and technology gave me the basics for understanding how these areas might develop in the future – two of the areas of future studies that appear to promise the most incredible and mind-boggling possibilities. Psychology helped me to understand human nature and consider how humans might transform and grow, and philosophy expanded my mind so as to comprehend all the fundamental abstractions I would need to consider in thinking deeply, logically, and theoretically about the future. Even my years of wandering around and then working in administration and mental health provided something – the raw experience of life, with its ups and downs. Yet, before coming to Arizona I had no expectation or suspicion that I was going to go in this new direction. So it was both a surprise and yet a natural fulfillment or realization of all that had come before.

This is something to be on the look out for in life. The surprise that in retrospect is not a surprise, but seems more like an inevitability. Or to say it differently, one can plan and set one’s sights on a goal and imagine that life is

simply a straight line – that time is a straight line – moving toward that anticipated goal. But along the way, something new emerges that takes one in a different direction and yet it seems very natural and obvious that this new thing fits so very well with one’s talents, one’s education, and one’s past. Time is not linear but creative, and yet it builds out of the past – there are emergent and novel syntheses out of trends and elements from the past. So it is important to be prepared for such surprises – to recognize “what was meant to be.” One can think of time as something that one must manage and structure along pre-determined goals, long and short ones, and of course some level of structure is important, but life is also an adventure and one needs to participate in the adventure – to go with the creative flow. And interestingly, in retrospect, these novel twists and turns – this odyssey of things - may actually make perfect sense as evolutionary expressions or manifestations of what you had been doing all along. Is this something new or not new? It is both.

Early on, in teaching the future and writing about it, there were three principles that I highlighted: Evolution, reciprocity, and possibility. First of all, applying the idea of evolution to the future means that the overall direction of time is progressive – at the very least there has been an ongoing increase in complexity within the cosmos and nature as a whole, and human history and the growth of civilization also show an increase in complexity as well. Some would say that power, freedom, intelligence, and even morality are evolving in the great saga of natural and human history (though there is clearly debate as to whether or not “things are getting better all the time” and as to what indeed is better). To recall, evolution is not steady and smooth, and there are elements of chaos and creativity in the flow of time. When one thinks about the future, one should think of it as a continual evolution from the past, but with novel and creative elements to it – both creative and destructive. Even the process of evolution may be evolving with new, more efficient or more intelligent ways to move things forward; – for example, culture creates a quicker, more efficient way of generating growth and evolution than the biological-ecological mechanism of the natural selection of genes. Secondly, the principle of reciprocity, which I first encountered in Gibson, means that life is structured in terms of complements and that everything is interdependent. This idea can be found in the Taoist *Yin-yang*, but also within contemporary science. All the systems in nature are open and require each other for mutual support (such as in ecosystems or human societies). We can not stand back from reality, above it or disconnected from it, attempting to control it, but rather we participate in reality, both influencing and being influenced by events in our world. We are open to the world – everything is open, surrounded, and even interpenetrating. In understanding human psychology, behavior unfolds in interaction with the environment, and the direction that life takes is a combination and synthesis of what comes from within and what comes from without. Applying reciprocity to evolution, one finds a necessary complementarity of order and chaos – things do not grow smoothly, there is a breaking down and a coming together – an oscillation of order and chaos – a reciprocity of unity and diversity. But also, things do not evolve in isolation; things evolve reciprocally or interdependently. Animals and plants have co-evolved – males and females have

co-evolved - predator and prey are in continual mutual competition. Third, the future is possibilities rather than certainties. No one can predict with complete accuracy (or even close to it) the future. Believing that one can predict the future with certainty is a form of defensive insecurity. (There is no certainty.) Life is irreducibly an adventure with surprises. This is not to assert that humans can't predict the future at all – of course we can, regarding innumerable features of things, and we can improve our abilities to do so, but uncertainty will always remain, and it is that very uncertainty that makes life exciting – both good and bad. Also, if the future could be completely predicted, it would follow that it was completely determined, and this would eliminate the possibility of freedom and choice in human action. I believe that it is important to view the future as to some degree uncertain and open to possibilities; it is within this context of possibilities that one makes choices and decisions regarding the future direction of one's life. It is within such a context that we can consider our accountability and responsibility – that we have the power within us to go after different things – sometimes good, sometimes not so good.

Since my early days as a teacher and writer on the future I have added several new major ideas into my general theoretical perspective on the future. One of the most important ideas that I have added is the concept of wisdom and how it applies to the future. Wisdom is, of course, built on past experiences and what a person learns from these experiences, but wisdom is about the future. It is about applying the lessons of the past to the future – about making good decisions. Wisdom is also about getting the big picture of things and one of the most important truisms about the big picture is that we are all connected together. In fact, according to most writers on the topic of wisdom, being wise means making decisions that not only benefit oneself but also others. It is wise to think about and consider others. Wisdom entails compassion for the other. It also has been said that culture is the repository of wisdom, and cultures can be wise or not so wise. Wisdom is not something located within an individual human mind – it is realized in a social context – it is ecological. Wisdom is not something practiced or expressed in a vacuum; it is something manifested in the world, in interaction with the world and in interaction with other people. It seems to me, too, that wisdom is clearly connected with understanding and realizing love in one's life – the realization of love is the testing ground of wisdom.

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*"Time's noblest offspring is the last."*

*George Berkeley*

If the years from 1991 through 1996 were a time of emergence and evolution of a new order of things, more complex and more invigorating than what had come before, then the period from 1997 through 2000 was a time of chaos, deep disappointment, and a descent into darkness again. I spent a lot of time in restaurants late at night smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee with my

friends and talking about what had gone wrong. Toward the end of 1996, my wife and I separated and a little over a year later got divorced. Of course – perhaps – I should have seen it coming - another one of those surprises that had been building to an eruption, a crescendo, for the last few years. But I was angry – I was depressed – I was lonely, and I had to struggle through another difficult period in my life.

Chaos comes in all levels and all magnitudes. There are the little unsettling and disrupting events that occur every day. These are the distractions and the inevitable noise of day to day existence. But there are big upheavals as well, and one can go into a total tailspin over these high impact events. It is fair to say that when I got divorced the first time twenty years earlier, I went into a nosedive. I hung around in bars, numbed my mind with too many intoxicants, lost interest in my teaching job, jumped from one woman to the next, and eventually quit my job and headed off to Colorado, where I really hit bottom. How's that for maintaining control and managing one's life? This time, in 1996, I had learned at least a few things. I didn't quit my job, didn't run away, and didn't go out to bars and drink. I lived in my house at least for a year (my wife moved out instead), I talked to my friends, and I prayed a lot. I kept my eye on the future – as best I could – and though I slowed down considerably during this period, I continued to pursue my interest in the study and teaching of the future. This was not very easy and clearly I "wasted" a lot of time during this period – talking with people and meandering around Phoenix. When your heart is upset it is very difficult to concentrate. I was restless again, but at least this time I stayed within the local metropolitan area. I generated a lot of my own chaos (in my mind and in my behavior), but I didn't self-destruct.

So, at this point, let me come back to the idea of reciprocity. If we are all interdependent, then it follows that we all depend on others in creating and maintaining a direction for ourselves and realizing our goals in life. If you are married and you go through a divorce, then it stands to reason that your whole life can become disrupted, including your professional life. Hence, it is important that as you create your way through life you develop partnerships and friendships with people that, at least as best as you can tell, are going to help and benefit you in the long run. If you depend on people who can not understand or support your passions and goals, then sooner or later, you are in for trouble. You could think that perhaps it is best to not depend on other people in managing your life and realizing your dreams, but this attitude is unrealistic – it runs against the ontology of human existence. We all need other people (in spite of the Western myth of individualism), so it is best to develop relationships with people that are kindred spirits that you can count on. You can't run away from others – you can't go it alone. Of course, nothing is certain in life. How do you really know about other people? Can you predict what they're going to do – how they're going to think in the future? But we need to do the best we can in finding those people with whom we really resonate, and we need to cultivate and continue to develop these connections. If we don't, we can waste a lot of time and energy in life on interpersonal mayhem and disaster.

I have always been a romantic at heart; I have had an intense interest in ideas, knowledge, and the life of the intellect, but I also have been in search of true love. I thought I had found real love and companionship with my second wife (I could feel it in my heart), and I did have a sense of commitment and appreciation (something that wavered with my first wife). Yet we never were able to realize compatibility at the intellectual and philosophical level. In retrospect, the whole thing seems extremely odd since the world of ideas is so important to me; so how could I think that I had a good relationship and partnership with someone who did not share that passion? I guess I kept thinking that the life of the intellect wasn't everything – true enough – but it sure was something important to me. In the final analysis, we lived in different universes and that was that. The obvious will kill you sometimes. If, in my first marriage, I valued the intellect over love and companionship too much, then in my second marriage I valued love and companionship too much over the intellect. I had swung from the Apollonian and Rationalistic to the Dionysian and Romantic; I needed to find the balance.

So, the thing my friends kept telling me during and after my divorce was basically that I needed to find someone who shared my interest in education, ideas, books, and the pursuit of knowledge. My mistake had been that I didn't consider this sufficiently important in a committed romantic relationship. (Yet, the heart has its own reasons.) To repeat, what I said above: We are all on a journey and we journey together with others, so it is critical that we share our journey with others who want to travel in roughly the same direction. Of course, it is easier said than done. But I started looking again, trying to keep in mind that I needed to look beyond just beauty, and even a warm and loving heart, and find a kindred mind and spirit who also believed in the value of the intellect and ideas.

Another principle in life that appears to be true is that if you are looking for something – wanting to achieve something – you may need to throw out a lot of energy, make a lot of attempts, perhaps even willy-nilly and all over the place, and then at some point, often unexpectedly, after you have expended sufficient effort, what you have been looking for (seems to) simply fall in your lap. All the presumed wasted time and energy appears to be some kind of dues that you must pay to the cosmos to get what you want. (This principle is some synthetic version of faith, karma, and tenacity.) During the period from 1997 to 2000, I took the direct approach to finding a new companion in life – I aggressively looked all over the place – the Internet, dating services, singles dances, personal ads in the newspaper, friends of friends – there were some good connections but there were over a hundred dead ends and some of them turned into unnerving and unpleasant encounters. Then one evening at a party, when I wasn't looking or expecting anything at all, I saw her. I immediately resonated with her eyes, her smile, and the brilliance of her presence. But that first evening I couldn't really talk to her and I didn't see her again for another few months. Then one day at a college meeting, she came into the room and sat beside me. I could feel this energy (or perhaps I was projecting my own feelings) – this “static electricity” between us – and we talked a bit, but clearly she was in my mind now. A week later I saw her again – a vortex of mutual attraction was at work - she was circling

in, or we were circling around each other, getting closer, and this time we talked much more, in fact, we collided. I had been standing in the middle of a large room during a college social event and when she came in, after going through the reception line, she made a beeline straight for me. I, of course, was watching her intently, smiling, and I'm sure that she saw that. And that was that. Barely knowing her, but mustering up my courage, I asked her if she would like to go out and without any pause she said yes. And that's how I met Jeanne.

Within a few weeks I really fell in love with her – I felt this connection “heart to heart.” But let me also say that on our first date, aside from beginning to share our personal histories, she sat and listened to me talk about the great and highly eccentric philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, and on the second date we started to talk about evolution, God, and the theory of the Omega Point – that God will come into being at the end of time as the culmination of cosmic evolution. Also, as I soon became aware, Jeanne loved to write – she was a poet and lover of language and literature – and we began almost immediately to email each other. Our emails became this interesting combination of love letters and philosophical dialogue. There was this clear intertwining of *eros* – intense *eros* – and intellect – a dialectic of sexual energy and intellectual repartee, as I would come to see. As our passion for each other soared, we also began to argue over things – from love, marriage, commitment, and independence to the existence of God and how to raise children (we each had two children living with us). There was great emotional intensity – ups and downs – a roller coaster ride – in fact, a war of the wills. Within six months after our first date, we were married and had bought a house together.

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*“It is easier for us to imagine ourselves living among better appliances than among better human beings.”*

*Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi*

One of the main themes of this essay is the topic of personal responsibility. Another is the nature of change or time – how to understand it and how to navigate its currents. As a futurist, who looks at contemporary trends and where these trends might be leading, I am especially interested not only in trying to understand the frenzied, fast-paced modern world in which we live and how increasing speed and information overload are affecting our lives and our management of time, but also in what we can do to maintain some sense of order, direction, and personal control amidst the madness and stress of our times. How can we structure and direct our own personal future so as flourish, as opposed to flounder, in the rapids of change coming at us? Can we anticipate with some degree of accuracy what is coming and accommodate to it? Can we create a preferable or desirable future for ourselves with waves of chaos, unpredictability, and transformation crashing against us and unsettling our stability? Yes – indeed – can we?

This essay has taken the form of a personal narrative. Through this narrative I have addressed different aspects of the questions and themes identified above, using my own experiences as a foundation and springboard for discussing general philosophical points about meeting the challenges of life and creating and maintaining a sense of direction. I will now look at my work as a futurist and an educator over the last seven years and based on this work, further develop my ideas about personal responsibility, time, the future, and sustaining focus and direction in life.

As one general point on personal responsibility, I believe that due to the increasing popularization and influence of the science of psychology there has been a general trend toward absolving oneself of responsibility through the use of psychology. In the science of psychology, the attempt is made to find explanations and causes for human behavior, emotion, and thinking; psychologists approach human behavior as determinists. This is quite understandable, since psychology attempts to come at human behavior and mental states scientifically, looking for laws and principles that explain and make sense out of human nature – even predict it. Why do we do what we do? Explanations of behavior can include genetic factors, physiological factors, parenting and early upbringing, the social environment, and culture. Within a deterministic model, the person acts the way he or she does because of genes, brain states, personal history, and the present environment. From the perspective of scientific psychology, human behavior (as well as mental states such as emotions and thinking) is determined (or caused) by such factors. Influenced by this way of viewing human nature, many people end up thinking and talking in deterministic terms such that they will excuse or explain away their behavior through identifying causes for why they are the way they are. I am insecure because my parents criticized me incessantly. I am loud and obnoxious because it's in my genes. I am depressed because my wife abandoned me. I guess it goes without saying – but I will say it anyway – that humans can find explanations, excuses, and rationalizations for anything they do, no matter how irresponsible, immoral, self-destructive, or stupid the behavior is.

Accepting personal responsibility for your actions and states of mind means acknowledging that events in the world and your history have an impact on you, but that you always have a choice regarding how you will react (or act) relative to these influences. Taking personal responsibility requires approaching life and decision making from the assumption that you are free – that you have choices. The world may be crazy, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you have to be crazy. It is of course much easier said than done to exercise choice when the world is buffeting you about. For example, it is quite natural to feel angry or depressed when something bad happens to you. It is quite natural to "fall victim" to negative influences. And from a psychological point of view, it is important to understand what is causing the distress, hostility, or immoral behavior in you, but this should be seen as a step toward enlightenment – now that you know you can do something to transcend it – rather than an excuse for continuing to act in the same old way. When the bombs explode overhead it is quite normal to panic, fall down, even go ballistic, but is that the end of it? Do you

have to behave a certain way given what happens in the world around you? Can't you find other ways to react? Can't you learn? Can't you make choices? Are you nothing but a reactionary being? And of special significance, when something bad happens, can you find a way to grow and act constructively in response to the problem? What is bad can provoke something very good. This is part of – a big part – of what we mean by wisdom.

The issue of personal responsibility serves as an intro into a problem I faced as a teacher and chairman of the psychology and philosophy departments. A number of years ago it became clear to me, which was strongly confirmed by many of my teachers, that there was an excessive amount of plagiarization going on in our classes. And further, to make matters worse, students caught plagiarizing would frequently deny any wrongdoing, pleading ignorance or some other strange excuse. We had numerous people behaving unethically and denying responsibility or culpability. (Out of guilt and defensiveness for having been caught in the act?) One explanation we had for the excessive plagiarization was that many of our students did not value education for its own sake (there was no intrinsic motivation to learn); rather they were in school to earn a degree so that they could get a better job and make good money. Hence, however they got the degree didn't matter, because the degree was simply a means to an end. Who cared if they were being unethical? But how can a teacher facilitate the development of wisdom, enlightenment, and real knowledge in a student who doesn't perceive or feel the intrinsic value of learning, discovery, and increased understanding? And further, isn't part of education the development of character, virtues, and important life values? At least some of our students were failing miserably at this.

Many of our students frequently worked full-time jobs and had families, so how much time did they have to study and write their own papers? They were told that one could work full time and still have enough time and energy left over to succeed as a student. Yet the serious pursuit of knowledge can not be realized by attempting to squeeze it in late at night (after work, supper, and the kids) when one is exhausted. Our students were leading fast, overloaded, and frenzied lives and so, to take a short-cut, some of them cheated in school. We would hear many different reasons, but to repeat, my main concern was that students would frequently explain away their unethical behavior. They would not accept responsibility.

A general conclusion I came to after numerous discussions with my teachers was that we needed to develop a focus on educational values within our courses. We needed to clearly communicate and reinforce a set of essential values that were critical to success as a student – that were critical to character development in life. Two of the central values we began to highlight were honesty and personal responsibility (accountability). Literally, we needed to explain in our course material why it was important – in school and in life - to be responsible and to be honest. We needed to teach ethics. We also began to emphasize the importance of the pursuit of knowledge and the love of learning. We definitely felt that we were working against pop culture on this one. Many of us believed that pop culture did not value learning, intelligence, and knowledge. Pop culture, it

seemed to us, valued gimmicks, technological fixes, quick payoffs, sensationalism, glitz, and money, among other things. None of the most admired persons in popular culture is a wise man (or wise woman), a scholar, a philosopher, a humanitarian, or a scientist. When we talk about progress and accelerative growth and change in human society, we tend to focus on technology and economics. We feel good about that, as if that is what were really important – more money and better machines. But are we growing or evolving morally, psychologically, socially, or spiritually? Are our minds evolving? Do we care enough about that? We needed to somehow teach students the love of learning – the value of knowledge and enlightenment. That should be the primary reason for going to college, rather than getting a good job. We needed to teach that knowledge empowers – that knowledge liberates, expands and elevates one's consciousness, and enlivens the soul. We needed to teach that ethics (rather than eye shadow, big breasts, computers, and jazzy cars) was important. We needed to highlight that education should help make us better human beings and better citizens of the world – more capable of making a positive contribution to humanity.

Another point, connecting back to the theme of personal responsibility again, is that the overload of media, advertisement, technology, being constantly wired in, and running around in a state of quasi-mania and attention deficit disorder, makes us exceedingly prone to being externally driven. In psychology, there is the concept of perceived locus of control; people can vary regarding whether they see their lives as under an internal locus of control (they see the events in their lives as due to their choices and actions) versus an external locus of control (they see the events in their lives as due to external forces that make them do what they do). The challenge we face is that stimulus and information bombardment and the fast paced, highly driven nature of our lives undermines our internal locus of control and consequently the practice of personal responsibility. We do not experience ourselves in the driver's seat – we have lost touch with what it feels like to be in the driver's seat. Instead we feel driven, buffeted about, bombarded, and constantly “under the gun” to get things done. The world is coming at us so fast and furiously that it is as if we were in a video game, attempting to shoot down or ward off all the projectiles coming straight for our heads. We can't think about ourselves or monitor our pace – we live in *Star Wars*. Consequently, we are stressed and anxious.

Students in our introductory psychology class are assigned a self-development paper (one of the places where we see a high incidence of plagiarism – the irony of it); they are asked to select an area in their own lives where they would like to grow or improve and then to do research in psychology and apply principles from this research to their identified area of self-development. The most common problem identified (by far) is stress. The experience of stress, though, is fundamentally due to not feeling in control of one's life. It is not directly the fast pace of things or the challenges – stress is due to losing one's sense of power over what is happening in one's life. On this paper, given the stress and frenzy in their lives, we have had quite a few students cheat and not accept responsibility for doing something unethical. The

Devil made them do it. Yes – indeed. But then they did not learn anything from doing the paper for they succumbed to the very forces and impulses that they were trying to change.

Finally, another challenge we face as teachers, especially in our efforts to highlight fundamental educational values in our courses, is the popular philosophy of ethical and epistemic relativism. (I discussed this theme earlier.) Basically relativism means that what is true (epistemic) and what is good (ethical) are relative to a point of view; that there is no absolute or universal truth or right or wrong – it is all relative. Hence, there are many different “truths” and many different values or notions of what is good. I have been familiar with the theory of philosophical relativism since my undergraduate days in college and though there is some element of truth in the position, I have always found this view, when carried to the extreme, dangerous, psychotic, muddle-headed, and self-contradictory. As teachers, we need to have standards of truth and ethical behavior, yet we are constantly called to do battle with students who think and talk as if there were always some way to explain or justify any action or point of view no matter how bizarre or indefensible it may be. What is really true? What is really right or wrong? What the teacher believes is simply his or her opinion. Having a self-serving motivation behind it, relativism becomes dogmatism. Anything goes – there is always my side to the story – and I am not going to change my mind about it. Who are you – the teacher – to judge the validity or value of my viewpoint or my behavior? In the name of philosophical tolerance, how can anyone judge? In this line of “reasoning” there is no acknowledgement that there are perhaps standards or external realities – independent of personal biases – relative to which one can evaluate beliefs and determine whether the belief is right or wrong. As I learned in the field of mental health, psychotics can rationalize anything and everything. (For example, I encountered numerous “Second Comings” in the hospital.) Paranoid schizophrenics and alcoholics are often especially good at coming up with ways to support and validate their delusions and modes of self-destructive behavior. In fact, it seems that the crazier or more immoral a person is, the more entrenched the person is in the conviction that he or she is right – or at least, in the conviction that you can’t demonstrate that they are wrong.

During the years 2000 through 2003 I increasingly came to think that all the emphasis on human diversity, and specifically people having different belief systems and values, was a mistake – at least a significant exaggeration that had negative consequences. For one thing, the philosophy of diversity has generated a lot of divisiveness, and throughout history the theory of diversity been used as a way to control, suppress, and even murder people. (For example, the belief that men and women are significantly different has been used as a justification for men controlling women.) Through my readings in culture, human society, and psychology, I started to think that there were important universal standards or values that most people around the world subscribed to. That we are not as different as we think we are. The emphasis on differences, in part at least, derives from the extreme individualism that permeates our culture. Each person is presumably unique. Each culture is presumably unique. But how true are these

beliefs? The psychologist Martin Seligman, the futurist Wendell Bell, and the anthropologist Donald Brown all have presented various arguments, supported by considerable evidence, that there are universal human values and relatively objective standards for determining what is good and what is true. (Over the last couple of decades, at least in the philosophy of science, the pendulum has swung back against the extreme relativism argued for by Feyerabend and Kuhn.) Further, in thinking through the diversity argument it became clear to me that advocates of diversity want everyone to understand that all people simply want to be treated with respect and given equal opportunities – which means that what they are really saying is that people are not essentially different – that we are all human beings, with the same feelings, abilities, and goals, and everyone should be accorded the same rights. (So the argument for diversity is really an argument for sameness and inclusiveness.) And I would also add that everyone – at least to a degree - should accept the same responsibilities and moral obligations – no excuses. Finally, diversity can be also used as an excuse for behaving unethically or irresponsibly – people can say that they are special and use this as a justification for doing immoral or stupid things. (This flies in the face of the Golden Rule and Kant’s categorical imperative. The categorical imperative is that any action you believe is OK for you to do you should agree is OK for anyone to do.)

But not to sound too one-sided, there is clearly some truth and value in the diversity theme – at least in some respects. There is a clear value in listening to and considering different points of view. People, obviously, have different beliefs and each of us individually may have multiple angles we can take on a particular topic or issue. If a society or social organization were to allow for only one way to think about things and forcibly suppress dissent, then the atmosphere would be suffocating and would rob people of their freedom to think for themselves. Often we can learn something important and new from someone who doesn’t think like us. Locking in on one officially sanctioned position as the “Truth” kills creativity, growth, and the human spirit.

Critical thinking is one of the basic skills we have taught and reinforced in our college classes. Critical thinking involves a variety of abilities and practices, but one key feature is the capacity to examine and entertain different points of view and to critically evaluate the pros and cons of each position. Critical thinking works against being closed-minded; the opposite of critical thinking is being egocentric and thoughtless. But critical thinking is not simply being open-minded and accepting of just any point of view that someone wants to propose. Different points of view should be comparatively evaluated according to standards, such as clarity, empirical accuracy, logic, depth, and fair-mindedness. Based on such standards, an individual can make thoughtful and considered judgments regarding which point of view seems more convincing and probable. In teaching critical thinking we are attempting to counter-act the human tendencies to simply accept an idea without thinking about it and, equally, to reject an idea without thinking about it. We are reinforcing the value of thinking in making judgments. Hence, instead of either saying something is absolutely true or absolutely false, or saying that one idea is as good as the next, we work toward getting people to

make open-minded but considered and principled judgments of what seems more likely true and what seems more likely false. We work against dogmatic certainty and wishy-washy relativism.

In the history of thought, there has been an ongoing quest to find certainty, whether it be through religion (revelation), philosophy (rationalism and logical proofs), or science (establishing objective indubitable facts). One fundamental piece of wisdom that we seemed to have learned (or perhaps for many people are still learning – even resisting to learn) is that there does not seem to be any way to realize certainty in human knowledge – at least regarding the empirical world. Knowledge about the world – past, present, and future – and about others as well as oneself – seems to carry an element of contingency. (Research on the nature of wisdom appears to suggest that people recognized as wise are open to the possibility that they might be wrong – wise people are not dogmatic – wise people are open to learning, which is probably what has made them wise to begin with.) Yet, if we believe that only certainty qualifies as knowledge and we become disillusioned over the lack of finding any indubitable truths, we can swing to the opposite extreme and embrace skepticism, nihilism, and relativism; we give up the search for knowledge, growth, and value, because perfection is impossible. A third stage of thinking/believing is possible, though, and in fact desirable, one that moves beyond the extremes of absolutism and relativism, and that is reflective thinking. One realizes that certainty is impossible and that there are always multiple points of view, but one attempts to assess and compare these different points of view, coming to tentative, but considered judgments based on standards regarding which view seems the best.

As a college student, I enjoyed reading about different philosophical, psychological, and scientific theories. My knowledge base was broadened – I acquired “breadth” as they would say in the critical thinking literature. I would often be able to find different features of these different theories that seemed true or plausible. But I would also attempt to compare them and reach conclusions regarding which views among many seemed the most accurate and valid. In fact, it seemed that by looking at the many, it helped me to decide upon which views were the best. Both the drive toward diversity and breadth and the drive toward comparable evaluation and preferential judgment are important qualities of learning and the growth of knowledge and they seem connected. If there is true passion in learning, it seems to me that both qualities will be realized.

Now as one final point on critical thinking, values, and diversity, it has seemed to me that advocates of diversity really don't believe in the principle of tolerance and appreciation of all views and all types of people. For one thing, advocates of diversity object to those people who do not embrace diversity – who are not tolerant – who are bigoted and closed-minded. The tolerant do not tolerate the intolerant. Just as in philosophy, science, or everyday human affairs, there are certain views and certain people that seem ludicrous, dangerous, destructive, and immoral. Every society has some set of rules – boundaries past which people should not go. Sometimes it strongly appears – past any reasonable doubt – that a belief is just plain wrong – or a behavior is just plain evil. People have beliefs. Rock bottom – no one really totally embraces all

diversity – everyone does pass judgment on other people – everyone believes in something. There are really no true relativists.

Personal responsibility, critical thinking, and ethical values naturally lead into a central theme I have developed as a futurist. As I began to evolve my thoughts on the study of the future, I put together an initial article on the value of thinking about the future. As a psychologist, I began to think through the various mental components involved in thinking about the future, and I came to realize that all of the fundamental dimensions of the human mind were involved, from logical reasoning, imagination, and intuition to motivation and emotion. I decided to broaden my descriptive expression for what I was studying from “thinking about the future” to “future consciousness” which includes all those psychological processes and modes of experience that pertain to the future. Hope and fear are fundamental emotions concerning the future, and goal setting, purpose, and the complementary needs for security and adventure are basic motivational features of future consciousness. One’s self-identity is connected to future consciousness as well. For example, people develop a self-narrative – an autobiographical self – that describes their journey through life from past to present and into the future. This self-narrative defines how we conceptualize ourselves – it is at the core of our self-consciousness and includes reference to the future.<sup>1</sup> I have published – in the last few years – numerous articles and a chapter in a book on the nature and value of future consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

As I thought through this topic, I increasingly came to think that enhancing future consciousness was not only possible but desirable. (Writing out and thinking through your self-narrative, connecting past, present, and future is one excellent way to enhance your future consciousness – it also seems to strengthen wisdom.) One feature of our popular culture – given its frenzy and impatient need for the technological quick fix – is a narrowing of future consciousness (and historical consciousness as well) to the immediate here and now. We live too much in the present. We have no long term view of things. (Have we become less wise? Less enlightened?) One offshoot of this excessive presentism is the inability to make long term commitments – we always want to keep our options open – see rather than determine what tomorrow may bring. Because we have to move so fast and are immersed in so much stimulation and sensation, we don’t have the time or inclination to slow down and think things through. Another consequence of this mode of being is increasing chaos and fragmentation in life. (Again, the environment does not totally control us, but it sets the conditions, opportunities, affordances for action – we have to consciously and volitionally work against this tempo – leave it if we have to – to do things differently or else we just resonate in.) These negative and limiting qualities of our cultural ecology and contemporary consciousness need to be countered.

Aside from too much of a focus on the present, clearly there are many other problems, challenges, or negative trends in the world today. My colleague, Jonathon Richter, and I, back in 2003, began discussing what we thought were the most significant negative trends in both our country and the world at large. As we began to outline and organize our thoughts, it seemed to us that many of the

negative trends were due to a lack of future consciousness, but it also seemed that many of our problems were due to various weaknesses or deficiencies in character virtues. The previous couple of years I had been reading Martin Seligman's work on optimism and pessimism and the connection between character virtues and human happiness.<sup>3</sup> Putting the pieces together, it seemed to me that the development of certain important character virtues would not only improve the overall quality of modern life, but would enhance future consciousness as well. Virtues lead to both happiness and heightened future consciousness. Perhaps the key flash of insight was connecting future consciousness with virtues – that the latter facilitated the former. Out of our discussions emerged a paper published in the annual World Future Society anthology "Evolving Future Consciousness through the Pursuit of Virtue."<sup>4</sup>

By 2003 two different lines of thought, from teaching and education on one hand and from the study of the future on the other, had converged on a single theme or hypothesis: *We were sorely lacking in both character virtues and future consciousness and many of our social problems could be traced to these related deficiencies.* In the 2004 paper, I listed the following five major social problems and the following six clusters of character virtues as remedies to these problems. I saw the virtues as essential to the evolution of future consciousness and the increasing well-being and quality of human life.

### **The Problems**

- Presentism
  - The drive/inclination toward immediate gratification in a "hedonistic (sensation-based) society"
  - The cult of the present as the only true reality
  - Uncertainty about the future and out of fear the narrowing of the temporal horizon
  - Nihilism (based on uncertainty and pessimism) and the loss of purpose and direction in life
- Speed and Overload
  - Living in the buzz – always on the go – all of life in accelerative change
  - Ambient engulfment of stimulation - bombardment of the media and communication systems - and overload in choices and information resulting in loss of control, frenzy, and confusion
- Chaos
  - Disconnected, trivialized, and perpetually shifting information flow
  - Mental pandemonium in consciousness and a fragmented self
  - Feeling out of control, stressful, and coming to revel in chaos
- Monetization, Commodification, and Consumerism
  - Plentitude of material things coupled with psychological depression
  - The monetization of everything – everything of value can be bought

- Consumerism and customers – consumption as a way of life - the buying of happiness
- Egocentricity, Individualism, and Narcissism
  - Excessive individualism (The belief in a separate distinctive self) and social disconnection
  - Egocentricity
  - Subjectivism and relativism
  - Feelings of impotence and helplessness

### **The Character Virtues**

- Self-Efficacy and Self-Responsibility
- Order, Integration, and Direction
- Courage, Faith, and Freedom
- Wisdom and the Love of Thinking
- Reciprocity and Balance
- Evolution and Transcendence

The concept of self-efficacy means the degree to which a person believes that he or she can influence the course of events in his or her life. Without a belief in self-efficacy, one can not assume a position of self-responsibility, for unless one believes that one can influence how one's life goes, then one won't be able to see oneself as capable of being responsible for anything. If one feels powerless, one can't feel responsible. The opposite of self-efficacy is a sense of helplessness and victimization – it is seeing one's life as under the control of external forces; that is, having a mindset of external locus of control. I list "self-efficacy and self-responsibility" as the first virtue – the cardinal virtue - because character virtues are accomplishments. Virtues are acquired through effort and self-discipline. Hence, if one can not take responsibility for oneself and act to consciously improve oneself, then one can not develop any virtues. Generally speaking, whatever problems or challenges one finds oneself in, if one can not take personal responsibility to do something about it, one will (all other things being equal) remain stuck and nothing much will improve. What I discussed early in the essay about persistence, achieving and maintaining focus, identifying future goals, and personal responsibility are all relevant to the topic of self-efficacy.

Exercising and developing the virtue of self-responsibility is clearly needed to address the problems of consumerism and commodification. The consumerist mentality is that everything can be purchased – even that happiness is something one can buy. The phenomenon of commodification turns all value into monetary value – everything of worth is reduced to a price tag. Hence, whatever is of value can be bought. But something like education, let alone wisdom and enlightenment, requires effort – you can't buy knowledge or wisdom – it is

something earned or accomplished through effort and a driving passion for excellence. Consumerism and commodification negate the basic principle that what is of value in life is realized through initiative and effort.

Courage and faith are absolutely essential for dealing with the future because nothing is for certain in the future. This unavoidable uncertainty can paralyze a person. Why commit to anything – why try anything – if you don't know for sure if things will actually work out? Why believe in anything if you can't be certain? But the fundamental uncertainty of things makes life an adventure and a challenge – there is no end of the rainbow or no final resolution or answer – the journey goes on. Courage is not the absence of fear – courage is not letting fear overpower you. I use the word “faith” here not to signify belief in things for which there is no evidence (that is nonsensical), but rather to believe when there is not sufficient evidence to be completely sure. And since, regarding the future, everything is uncertain (the future is possibilities), faith is necessary. Nihilism is relinquishing courage and faith.

I list evolution and transcendence as character virtues. What does this mean? First off, it means that the belief in progress – in things improving and getting better – is a virtue. This is not to say that problems, difficulties, and uncertainties shouldn't be acknowledged, but rather that one can realistically acknowledge the problems and yet, still find ways to believe in and commit oneself to progress – to be a realistic optimist. Both optimism and its opposite, pessimism, are self-fulfilling prophecies; life tends to go in the general direction you anticipate, be it positive or negative. Transcendence is believing in something beyond oneself – in something more important – in something higher or better. Developing the virtue of transcendence is highly correlated with human happiness. The virtue of transcendence can be connected with the belief in God – of something greater than oneself in the face of which one is humbled. Evolution is a form of transcendence in being able to see beyond the here and now to some more positive and different reality in the future – to some more advanced self or way of life off on the horizon. A pessimist sees no hope for the future – a pessimist does not believe in positive transcendence. I believe that a pessimist, as well as a nihilist, (at least often) operates from a position of fear. Pessimists and nihilists also feel a sense of helplessness about the future (which, in effect, is not having a strong sense of self-efficacy.) Transcendence also counteracts extreme individualism; an individualist can not experience transcendence – can not look beyond his or her self to something more elevated – deserving of their passion, dedication, and energy. Love is connected with transcendence.

The virtue of reciprocity is connected with the principle of justice – of giving people what they deserve in return for what they have given you. Most importantly, reciprocity – in my mind – means appreciating one's interdependency with others. Reciprocity is another counter-measure to extreme individualism. Reciprocity means appreciating the other – acknowledging that one is only alive and functioning because of the other. If we apply this virtue to the issue of personal responsibility, then we can always ask ourselves how we are contributing to any interaction and what we can do to change it.

Finally, let me consider the polarity of order and chaos – a theme I have discussed throughout this paper and that has followed me in my life. As I stated earlier, chaos is a necessary part of life, but our drive through life is to create increasing order. (This I would contend is the principle of evolution having become self-conscious in the human mind.) Being pulled in different directions – falling apart and losing one’s integrity – having one’s life disintegrate – are all things that can and will happen – at times such periods in fact may be a prelude and necessary condition for creativity - but a chaotic existence should not be the standard way of life. Being drawn toward chaos is self-destructive. As the psychologist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi has observed, people feel happier when their lives are focused and they are working toward the creation of order and increasing complexity; people become depressed and anxious when their lives and their minds are chaotic. Personal evolution makes us happy.<sup>5</sup>

The one virtue from the list above that I have not yet discussed is wisdom and that is because it deserves a special story. Let me return to my work as a faculty chair and educator. A few years ago, the challenge was presented to me to find a way to assess deep learning in students, as opposed to the surface learning (simple memorization) that students frequently engage in. I took it upon myself to study the phenomenon of deep learning and try to understand what it is, how to facilitate its development in students, and then how to measure it. As I studied ideas about deep learning, it seemed to me that in many ways it was connected with the virtue of wisdom. Specifically, I came to think that deep learning was a necessary condition for the development of wisdom. Deep learning involves thinking about the subject matter being learned, getting the big picture of things rather than just a set of disconnected facts, connecting the learning to one’s inner self, values, and deep beliefs (and changing accordingly), and being able to apply this new knowledge to the practical issues and challenges of life. All of these qualities also describe features of wisdom. Deep learning also is intrinsically motivated – there is a love of learning connected with it. When people engage in deep learning they are in flow. The same is true of wisdom – that is, the pursuit of wisdom is its own reward. Hence, as I studied deep learning and found ways to apply its principles to our courses, I also thought through the nature of wisdom. I also considered the area of critical thinking and how it fit with deep learning and wisdom. When people engage in deep learning they are actively thinking and they are concerned with quality, truth, and excellence, at least as it pertains to the topic they are studying or the skill they are learning. After studying deep learning I explored recent research and thinking on wisdom, developed a workshop on wisdom and deep learning for my teachers, and published an article for the World Future Society, “The Pursuit of Wisdom and the Future of Education.”<sup>6</sup>

I came to believe that the modeling and teaching of wisdom should be the central focus of education. Wisdom became the central ideal in my theory of a preferable future for education. I developed a definition of wisdom (which undoubtedly will continue to grow): Wisdom is the continually evolving capacity to grasp the big picture of life, of what is important and meaningful, and, guided by ethics and virtue, the ability to apply this understanding to enhance the well being

of life, both for oneself and others. If you look at the definition, wisdom involves not only knowledge but an ethical dimension as well – knowledge is applied to enhancing the well being of life – for others as well as oneself. Wisdom is connected to the virtue of compassion, for there is a concern for the well-being of others and not just oneself. In addition, as other supporting virtues, wisdom requires courage, self-honesty, and a dedication to searching out the truth. Wisdom also involves being able to identify what is really important – to extract the essentials – to prioritize the critical and not be overcome by the trivial. It is being able to see the forest and not just the trees. Finally, I should note that I came to the conclusion that wisdom is the highest expression of future consciousness. Wisdom is expansive consciousness, of both the past as well as future possibilities, perpetually evolving in light of new knowledge that is used to improve, within an ethical framework, human reality in the future. Wisdom sees the consequences of things – it takes the long view.

Hence, one of my central hypotheses within this essay is that *if you want to manage your time – which really means to manage your life – in the best way possible, you should pursue the development of wisdom within yourself and use this evolving wisdom to organize your life. As a corollary hypothesis, managing time and managing your life is fundamentally a capacity of future consciousness. It is the ability to bring order, awareness, value, and direction to what you are going to do with your future – it means placing your life in the context of the future and considering how what you are doing today fits together with your overall goals and visions for the future.* (Life is not a daily planner of minutiae, a calendar of meetings to attend – life is best approached as a holistic reality with fundamental goals and values providing the structure and impetus.) These two hypotheses fit together since the highest expression of future consciousness is, in fact, wisdom. A life of wisdom involves finding something that is really important and valuable to provide a guiding light for prioritizing and structuring your time – something of value both for yourself and others. And thus, when we talk about taking personal responsibility for our lives and doing the best we can at giving it quality and significance, we are talking about the development of certain key virtues, which include wisdom. Time management has an ethical solution.

Two additional points to make about wisdom concern its connection with leading an ethical life and its relationship with scholarship and knowledge. As mentioned above, wisdom is connected with other human virtues. In fact, I have heard the argument that wisdom is fundamentally excellence in ethical thinking, decision making, and behavior. Further, it is a mistake to say wisdom is guided by ethics, for in some sense wisdom and ethical thinking are the same thing; wisdom is infused with ethics. Consequently, it would be contradictory to talk about an unethical wise person – as one writer put it perhaps we call such people “cunning” but clearly not wise. At the very least, wisdom involves the desire and the enhanced capacity to think and behave ethically. Regarding scholarship and knowledge, as I argued earlier in this essay, the development of a comprehensive and deep understanding of reality and human affairs is essential to the growth of wisdom and enlightenment. Now it has been argued that wisdom is a form of tacit knowledge (knowing how to do something without necessarily

being able to articulate or describe the capacity) and also that wisdom is something that can be developed in a person without a foundation of intellectual scholarship or knowledge. But I am not at all sure whether wise people are unable to describe their thinking processes in coming to decisions – rather part of their wise nature may be the clarity of mind and heightened self-awareness they possess regarding their own thoughts, emotions, values, and lines of reasoning. Wise people, in fact, possess heightened self-awareness. And, at the very least, wise people possess a rich and extensive foundation of knowledge regarding human life and its challenges, however they have learned it. Yet also, as I have proposed, following other writers on this, wisdom is not some static corpus of knowledge – wisdom is dynamical, evolving, and reflective of the best knowledge and understanding of reality and human life at the time. Keeping abreast of the issues and challenges of contemporary life and the most recent positive advances in knowledge are essential to be wise. Wise people have a thirst for knowledge and learning, and although intellectual knowledge is not a sufficient condition for being wise, it clearly enhances one's perspective on life, assuming one attempts to apply the knowledge to the world. Finally, on a related note, it has also been argued that logical thinking or critical thinking are at odds with becoming wise or enlightened. I think that this view is simply false. People, of course, have an intuitive side and we can have flashes of insight and penetrating perception into reality that are not directly based on logical lines of thinking. In a broad and holistic definition of wisdom, insight and intuition must be included alongside logic and analytical thinking; these capacities are complementary and can be mutually reinforcing. It is not an either/or situation.

As a final wrapping up point on wisdom, it has also been suggested that wisdom is connected with a certain personality type or overall character. At the very least, it seems to me that the growth of wisdom and enlightenment throughout one's life will have a deep and pervasive effect upon one's self-identify and character – in fact, the pursuit of all of the important virtues will impact a person's character and identity. To recall, deep learning is transformative learning; the person is changed at his or her core through deep learning. Wisdom involves the ongoing process of deep learning through life, and consequently, there is a personal evolution that takes place in a life involving the pursuit of wisdom. Education, in the best and truest sense, as the pursuit of wisdom and enlightenment, should transform the personality and character of a person.

It was during the years 2000 to 2004 that I decided to take some additional proactive steps in developing my career as a futurist. I decided to walk the talk and think seriously about my future as a futurist. I had weathered a personal storm (the dissolution of my second marriage), and was ready to more aggressively dive back into my work on the future. By this time I felt I had paid my dues – persisting and holding to something I saw of value – with both its ups and downs. Through it all, I held to the conviction that the study and teaching of the future was of central importance to education and the improvement of the human mind and human society. I was regularly going to the World Future Society annual conventions and giving presentations every year. With Jeanne's

encouragement I began to write articles for publication. Just before I met Jeanne, I published a first book on the future, *Doorways to the Future*, but I was not very happy with it.<sup>7</sup> But the following year, I wrote a series of lengthy pieces on the future of science and technology, which together constituted a second book, and I was much more satisfied with the overall clarity and depth of this work.<sup>8</sup> But perhaps, most significantly, I created a huge website on the future - *Odyssey of the Future* (<http://www.odysseyofthefuture.net/> ). The website, which continues to grow, contains all my writings on the future (including articles on science fiction as the mythology of the future; the future of human psychology; feminist visions of the future; and educational values and ethics.) It also contains what I believe is the most extensive electronic library of websites relevant to the study of the future, organized by topic, such as the future of biotechnology, ecology, human society, and spirituality. Finally, in 2004 I began to work on a comprehensive and expansive text on the evolution of future consciousness from prehistoric to contemporary times – an evolution off of *Doorways to the Future*. All in all, my tenacity through the years (one doesn't always get much support or understanding for being a futurist) had kept the fires burning and now, as the new Millennium dawned, I was ready to move up another level in my life as a futurist.

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*“The Tao that can be described  
is not the eternal Tao.  
The name that can be spoken  
is not the eternal Name.”*

*Tao Te Ching*

*“If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.”*

*Voltaire*

*“I will be what I will be.”*

*Genesis*

The *Tao* is the overall rhythm of time – of reality. This general form and motion of reality is elusive and literally transcendent to any conception one can entertain in one's mind. If one understands the logic of the *Yin-yang*, it becomes clear why it is impossible to pull it all together into one complete picture – the *Yin-yang*, with its reciprocal logic, does not hold still – it keeps going beyond itself. There is a *Yin* to every *Yang* and a *Yang* to every *Yin*, and where does it end? Contrary to the popular images of “reaching Nirvana,” “seeing God,” or “becoming aware of the Oneness of it all” - true wisdom – true enlightenment – living the *Tao* - is by definition always a journey and never complete.

As I discussed earlier in this article, there came a time in my adult life when I began to pray and develop an active belief in God. I said that this practice and belief was not tied to any particular religion. Well, let me qualify that statement; in some ways, it was connected with the Taoist approach to life and reality. In some ways it was also connected to evolution, though strictly speaking evolution is not a religion but a theory in science. In order to explain (and this discussion will have great significance in thinking about personal responsibility) I need to describe some of my ideas (as best I can articulate them) on the nature of God.

In my late twenties, after my first divorce, I came to the conclusion that the development of the intellect and the pursuit of a professional career were not enough to secure true and complete happiness in life. (I rejected the Apollonian solution to life.) All the knowledge in the world does not bring you love, intimacy, and companionship with another human being, and further, it is a notorious truism how the compulsive dedication to work and one's job can do the reverse and destroy one's personal life. Also, I discovered that academics, who were very knowledgeable and intelligent, often were not very admirable human beings – in fact, sometimes they were quite immature and egotistical. During this time I read a book by John Lilly titled *Simulations of God*, in which he argued that people worshipped many different gods, including money, success, friendship, the intellect, etc. These are all false gods – they are all finite and limiting – one can become a slave to any of them. It seemed to me that if one was going to “worship” (or aspire to) something and use that reality as one's center of gravity, then it better be something that was transcendent to all of these more limiting ideals. In fact, I thought that if there is a God then God must go beyond any conceptualization or image we can create in our minds. And that whatever challenges and difficulties confront us in life, God could be thought of as always able to meet, solve, and transcend the problem. Whatever finite ideal we set up in our minds always has a weakness – an Achilles' heel – it can never cover all dimensions of reality. Believing in God means believing in something that does envelop and transcend everything. (At this point I am not suggesting a second reality distinct from our everyday reality – I am not proposing a dualism.)

When people pray they may envision God as a personal presence or they may envision God as a force or “spirit” – as something benevolent and powerful that they can turn to. One can imagine prayer (or even meditation) as the attempt to resonate and get in tune with this presence. In Alcoholics Anonymous the idea is presented that one must surrender to a “higher power” if one is to successfully start to recover from alcoholism – it is an admission of humility and the need for help based on the acknowledgment that one can't do it alone. Prayer is also an acknowledgement of our weaknesses and humanity. It is a key feature of wisdom that one acknowledges one's incompleteness and relative ignorance – how else can one grow? The philosopher Ken Wilber distinguishes three conceptions of God: The God (or the Cosmos) understood through the intellect (Spinoza's God); the God you can become “one with” in a heightened meditative state; and the God of prayer, a personalized God one humbles oneself to. There is something

to be said for being able to realize a humbled state of consciousness in the face of the Cosmos.

Another thought I had was that when one worships finite gods, the result is always in some way a diminishing of one's power. One becomes a slave to the thing worshipped. Of course, things like love and knowledge are empowering ideals and pursuits, but each will also blind us to some other aspect of reality and we will end up serving it, rather than it serving us. (After abandoning the Apollonian, I embraced the Dionysian (at least regarding love) and that didn't work either.) So, I asked, following a *Yin-yang* logic, is there something that one can surrender to that is totally empowering? Is there something whereby one gains one's individuality by giving it up? Where you find yourself by losing yourself – where in giving up your freedom you get it back even more so than before? Following from the idea of the *Yin-yang* and the principle of reciprocity, we all exist in an ecological context and it is within that ecological context that we realize ourselves. We do not exist in a vacuum – we do not stand alone. The ecological context is both mental and physical – consisting of ideas, emotions, natural objects, a physical environment, and other people. So if we are to realize who we are we should select the context or ambience that is most liberating and powerful, and we can think of God as that most empowering context. To drive the point home, reciprocity entails that there is no absolute individuality and independence – we are all interdependent beings – we all exist within something. If so, how does one realize the best – the most distinctive and the most evolved – selfhood within this type of reality? If I am personally responsible for my character and my future, then how do I empower myself to the best of my abilities and knowledge to exercise this basic capacity for self-determination? How do I realize self-determination? Of course, we could say that learning and education leads to increasing power and understanding and this is clearly important in order to wisely and intelligently exercise personal responsibility. The growth of knowledge can enhance one's capacity for self-determination. The argument I am developing here is that there is a further step, which is the practicing of belief in and attunement to God.

Sometime in the late 1990s I read a book titled *The Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God, and the Resurrection of the Dead* by Frank Tipler.<sup>9</sup> Tipler's basic argument was that God – a supreme omnipotent and omniscient being – is the culminating point (the Omega Point) of the evolution of the cosmos. That is, Tipler sees God as something realized in the ultimate future. This view runs counter to traditional views of God as the Creator of the universe. Tipler provides a scientific explanation for why he believes this and elaborates how this Omega Point will be actualized through a combination of natural and technological evolution on the cosmic scale. Literally, the intelligence of the universe will self-organize into God. Tipler's ideas have been criticized and debated, but the basic idea that God is the result of evolution and that the future is a progressive movement forward struck a cord in me. The philosopher of time, J. T. Fraser, had persuaded me to view the evolution of time as progressive; that time is not a "fall" from perfection, as clearly is the case in the theories of Plato and most mainline religions. What is most primordial is what is most primitive; the

best is yet to come. Tipler's view, I came to think, was too rationalistic, linear, and unimaginative with too much of an emphasis on technology and not enough of an emphasis on the humanistic and psychological, but I became convinced that in some sense Tipler was heading in the right direction. The philosopher, Ken Wilber, has stated that we (the universe) are "God in the making" and I tend to agree with this. In essence, this basic idea is my way of integrating the ideas of God with evolution.

The question of the existence of God has been debated through the ages. Some would argue that God is a primitive notion and we should evolve beyond it – that the existence of God can not be proven – in fact, there is no evidence at all for God. Some would argue that the idea of God is dangerous and has produced significant harm throughout human history. Some would argue that the belief in God does the reverse, producing great benefit, and, of course, many would argue that there are clear and obvious reasons for believing in the existence of God. Building on what I have already said, I will simply share some additional thoughts on this.

One problem that atheists and critics present in arguing against the existence of God is the problem of evil. If there is an all-powerful and totally benevolent and loving God, then how come evil things happen? Why doesn't God prevent such events? The best answer that I can propose to address this criticism is a combination of *Yin-yang* logic and the principle of evolution. If what constitutes reality is necessary polarities or complements, then in order to have good one must have evil. (Similarly, for there to be order there must be chaos.) Good defines itself against and in response to evil. But this is not a static reality and it is here that evolution comes in. God evolves as the progressive overcoming and transcendence of evil – God swallows evil. Most traditional religions conceptualize God as eternal and complete; I think of God as dynamical and perpetually self-transcending. Again, to recall, the *Tao* that can be named is not the *Tao* – God keeps going beyond whatever we think – God keeps going beyond itself. This is a fundamental principle of reality – that it is self-transcending and perpetually creative – that is evolutionary. At the very least, if one wants to avoid using the word "God," it seems to me that reality moves in a direction that is progressive and self-transcending and this creative progressive motion seems to necessarily involve an ongoing struggle and oscillation of disruption (even death) and creation – of good and evil. (Note the Christian overtones to this as well, but this is also the Dance of *Shiva* – of creation and destruction - in Hinduism.)

But besides the problem of evil, there is the problem of why one should postulate the existence of God if science can explain everything without recourse to God. (There are, of course, reasons to think that science, and technology as well, can become false gods and that science, by its very nature, can not cover all of reality.) Or more directly, one could ask what evidence there is for God. There are various philosophers and even scientists who argue that there is evidence for God, though I find many of these arguments weak, ill informed, and unimaginative. For example, I think the argument that "something" had to make the universe or start it all is nothing but an infinite regress argument. What made

the something that made it all? And so on. And if there is such a primary cause, why must it be more elevated than us? As Fraser and Tipler have proposed, might the most elevated and advanced be off in the future, as opposed to the past?

Also, as I noted earlier, although I sense a personal presence in my mind when I pray (an experience that many people seem to have), this could simply be a psychological projection I produce in my own mind. When I pray – when any of us pray – we are simply talking to ourselves. Yet I remember an exchange within Neal Walsch's *Conversations with God*. Walsch recounts an extended conversation he has with a "presence" that appears to be God. (Walsch does not hear a voice, but finds his hand writing sentences that seem to be coming from an intelligence independent of him.) Walsch asks God how he (Walsch that is) could know for sure whether it is God speaking to him, or whether Walsch is simply speaking to himself. God replies that both alternatives are true.<sup>10</sup> As the Hindus would say *Atman is Brahman* – the divine spark within each of us is identical with the universal spirit permeating the cosmos. Perhaps God is a core consciousness and core evolutionary impulse that permeates everything and lies at the center of each of us. In prayer or meditation, one "surrenders" to it, which means that one finds the deepest, truest inner self.

But there is another hypothesis I also want to suggest for consideration: Building on a point I made earlier, it seems to me that at times sequences of events come together in holistic ways that generate positive and creative results that are surprising, yet in retrospect make perfect sense. It feels as if reality is being coordinated by something more intelligent and benevolent than we, or, if one doesn't want to reify this "something," that there is an implicit benevolent and intelligent coordination built into reality. Further, these coordinative creations occur when one surrenders – when one goes with the flow – when one doesn't try to force things. One can see such occurrences as fortuitous coincidences but many people see such occurrences as the hand of God. Further, it seems to me that these coordinative events have a clear evolutionary quality – the result is felt as some significant movement forward.

Hence, we can attempt to structure and order our life – bring self-control and personal responsibility into our actions – but as stated this sounds too much like viewing our self as a being that exists detached from the world – it sounds too individualistic. It also sounds as if we can detach from our self – simply pulling back, observing our self, and controlling and directing what we do or think. Yet we swim in our own feelings and thoughts and we swim in the world – we can not detach from either ourselves or the world. We do not simply create ourselves or create and control our world; we move within internal and external currents and participate in the creation, attempting to guide it. Believing in God (or evolution or the *Tao*), among other things, means that one acknowledges transcendent and positive forces at work that we can get into resonance with and learn from in our journey through life. There are times when I think that I should be doing this or doing that – that my internal director or conscience thinks is the most pressing thing to do – but I find that there is a positive and constructive flow to things occurring, in my mind as well as in the world, and I should go with this

flow. That whatever external demands or forces – whatever imperatives – are telling me (or I am telling myself) that I should do such and such – there is something more important, more intelligent that is guiding me in a different direction, and this is fine – at times I trust in the “force” (to use the *Star Wars* expression). Evolution has a rhythm – a pace and form to its creation.

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*Consequently: he who wants to have right without wrong,  
Order without disorder,  
Does not understand the principles  
Of heaven and earth.  
He does not know how  
Things hang together.*

*Chuang Tzu*

*“And Strange to Tell Among that Earthen Lot,  
Who is the Potter, Pray, and Who is the Pot?”*

*Omar Khayham*

Since Jeanne and I were married over six years ago, I have become more intellectually and academically productive than ever in my life. I have read more, written more, and published more by far. At one level, this is very strange, for I clearly spend more time together with Jeanne than I ever did with my two former wives – I am devoted to her and she is to me – practicing the virtue of love – but I am somehow also more intellectually focused and creative as well. In the last three years alone, I have published fifteen articles, two books, and given over a dozen professional presentations on the future, wisdom and enlightenment, and future consciousness. How can doing more in one area actually increase one’s productivity in another area? Isn’t time a finite quantity, such that if you take a bigger chunk of it away for a new passion or interest, it should leave less time for other pursuits? Perhaps this is the wrong way to think about time. Perhaps time commitments that are constructive and growth promoting don’t subtract from each other, but mutually amplify each other. Perhaps the reason you don’t have enough time, the reason why you don’t get enough done, is that there is something else you need to also do, that you are missing and that will juice up your whole life.

Jeanne and I talk a lot – about everything – from the mundane to the ethereal. We have had an ongoing debate over the existence of God; she describes herself as a secular humanist and a believer in natural evolution; I am some kind of evolutionary Taoist and theist. We also talk about the mind and body – of the intellect and sex. She says that if she gets cerebral, it diminishes her libido. I say that a good intellectual conversation is like foreplay for me. I

argue against dualism – of separating the mind and the body. I argue that one makes love with one’s mind. To recall, I also said that one lifts weights with one’s mind. Strictly speaking, so as to not sound like a dualist – lovemaking is done with the mind, expressed and revealed through the body, or that in lovemaking the mind exposes itself through the body. In *lovemaking*, the mind is “in” the body; in sex, the mind is detached or vacant from the body. Sometimes our debates turn into arguments; there is great emotional intensity in our marriage and relationship – we often lock horns. Sometimes tiny sparks ignite forest fires and a few objects have been thrown (though never at each other) and fractured against the walls. Like the good Taoist, I say that the arguments have a value – there must be darkness along with the light. Through all the discussion and, at times, volatile arguments, (or maybe because of it), we are exceedingly passionate, romantic, and affectionate with each other. Jeanne frequently wears a *Yin-yang* around her neck.

Though in 2001 and 2002 I read and wrote a lot on the future of science and technology, I also worked on a number of other futures-related topics around that time and in the next few years to follow. Thinking about the future of science and technology motivated me to get back into reading science fiction and I read through a large number of newer novels in the genre; overall, my knowledge of science fiction went through a quantum jump. I developed, in the coming years, a presentation and extensive article on “Science Fiction as the Mythology of the Future.” But I also, in part because of my interest in the writings of Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi and Martin Seligman, got back into thinking about psychological evolution in the future. How might humans, perhaps augmented through advancing technologies, evolve in the future? How do wisdom and enlightenment, and even the general themes of mental health and mental illness, fit into the future evolution of humans? It seemed to me that we should seriously think about how to evolve ourselves as a species – or beyond our species. How can this be done and to what ends?

As I mentioned earlier, beginning in 2004 I began writing a comprehensive text on the evolution of future consciousness. For three years I worked on this project, and the book grew so big that it divided itself into two companion volumes before it was born in 2006: *The Evolution of Future Consciousness* and *Contemporary Futurist Thought*. Jeanne was my primary sounding board for the ideas that went into these two books and she proofed and edited both volumes; as I emphasized earlier, it is important to find supportive and resonant partners or companions as you create your journey in life. In many ways, Jeanne has increasingly become my intellectual and spiritual partner in my work as a futurist (more on this in a moment).

The first volume of my two new books discusses the psychology and value of future consciousness and traces its evolution from prehistoric times to the end of the nineteenth century and the theory of evolution. I argue that future consciousness is integral to our unique capacities and accomplishments as a species. I discuss the different modes of future consciousness as they emerged in human history, from making instruments and engaging in social planning to mythic and religious thinking and then to scientific laws and predictions and

abstract logical reasoning. The second book deals with developments in the twentieth and early twenty-first century, including science fiction, the academic discipline of future studies, and an extensive review of contemporary theories and paradigms about the future. There are, in fact, many different views on the future; to paraphrase Virginia Postrel, the future is an arena of great debate and confrontation – in fact, what to do about the future is the big question of our times. I look at theories that emphasize science and technology, theories that look at the environment and ecological issues, theories that highlight psychological and social evolution, theories that deal with globalization and culture, and theories that have a spiritual or religious emphasis. There are also integrative theories that attempt to pull together all these major dimensions of human reality, and I believe that such integrative theories represent the best, wisest ways of thinking about the future. Reality is holistic and multi-faceted, and a true understanding – a wise understanding of human reality, past, present, and future needs to synthesize all the major dimensions. As I argue, in creating a vision of one's own future, one should be informed about general theories of the future and global trends and possibilities. We will realize (or not realize) our individual dreams in the context of what will be happening in the future in the world as a whole. And the major ideas of others regarding where the future is going or where it should be going should be thoughtfully considered in creating one's own plan for the future.<sup>11</sup> It is important to be enlightened about the future. I believe that the two books provide a very good overview of futurist thinking – of the ideas, issues, conflicting values, and possibilities regarding where we are and where we should be heading tomorrow; one can view the reviews of the books on my website.<sup>12</sup>

When I wrote the article on virtues and future consciousness I didn't include love as one of the major virtues. (Seligman had included it in his list.) I found this omission troubling, since the list I presented sounded too cognitive and cold to me. Isn't love a virtue and a very important one? I had trouble, though, figuring out how it connected with future consciousness. Of course, many people might argue that we need more love in the world and this will help to solve the various social problems that we face. At one level, this is probably very true. But how does love support future consciousness?

Being with Jeanne and watching our relationship evolve, coupled together with more reading and a lot of discussion with her, the significance and meaning of love and how it pertains to future consciousness has become increasingly clear to me. Through the time that we have been together we have thought, talked, and struggled with the issues of love, marriage, the sexes, and partnership and learned from it all. We have become partners in the study of love (of course with a necessary amount of personal field work thrown in). For example, having read back in the 1990s the works of Riane Eisler on women and men and the relationship between them throughout history as well as the possibilities for the future,<sup>13</sup> and having discussed Eisler's ideas with Jeanne, early in our marriage Jeanne and I decided to create a presentation entitled "Adam and Eve in the Third Millennium." (Basically, Eisler proposes a partnership conception of marriage and human society in place of the dominator view of

marriage and society.) In disagreement with the popular philosophy that women and men are very different (part of the philosophy of human diversity), we proposed that women and men share much in common and that the emphasis on differences throughout history and up to the present has created more problems than benefits – it has created stereotypes, repression, divisiveness, and subjugation. Instead, we envisioned a future in which a philosophy of equality, commonalities, connections, and the mutual interests of the sexes would become more influential in human society. This presentation, which we first gave in 2002, would grow in the coming years, as I describe a bit later, into something much more expansive and richer in scope.

What I now think regarding the connection of love and future consciousness is, first off, that in prehistoric times the challenge of creating a life together was one of the most significant instigators or stimuli behind the evolution of future consciousness in our species.<sup>14</sup> There is a strong social dimension to future consciousness that involves the collective discussion and negotiation of future goals and plans. We bond with an eye on the future. Further, it now seems to me that creating, maintaining, and evolving a loving committed partnership is one of the most important testing grounds for the virtue of wisdom. Love, in the deep sense, probably couldn't exist without wisdom and heightened future consciousness. Passion is impulsive, selfish, and often stupid; love is intelligent, compassionate, and sustained.

To pull in some additional relevant thoughts on the nature of love, earlier in the essay, I stated that unless one has love for what one is doing, one's efforts in that direction will flounder and ultimately fail in the long run. Love sustains – love in the broadest sense creates a future. Also, in discussing deep learning I used the expression “love of learning” to describe the intrinsic motivation that accompanies deep learning. Without a real love of learning, things simply do not sink in. When you love something or someone, it transforms you – love is transformational. Wisdom requires love since the sincere desire to help others can not be realized unless one feels love and compassion for others. Love is a transcendent experience – there is something or someone that is very important – that you care about – that goes beyond oneself. Although people often say that love blinds (and there is some evidence for this), love also amplifies perception – it stimulates a person to look deeply into the other, to find and to understand the other. Love reveals. Love is connected to enlightenment. Finally, it is often said that God is love; that the cosmic force behind things is an expression of love. Love, as the Greek philosopher Empedocles argued, is a synergy – a coming together of things, in contrast to strife which is a fracturing and rupture within reality. Time disappears when one is in a state of love – there is incredible creation, but no one is watching the clock, planning, or consciously setting goals. One is in “flow” with the other – there is no other. (Love creates flow.) To borrow an expression from the futurist Barbara Marx Hubbard, love can be seen as the “co-creative” force of human experience. Perhaps one should see the future as the ongoing triumph of love, for even Darwin noted that (in spite of the popular view that he saw evolution as a competitive process involving survival of the fittest), nature contains intricate systems of cooperation and symbiosis. Nature

creates through evolving reciprocal co-ordinations. (As Robert Wright argues the growth of civilization is the development of reciprocities.<sup>15</sup>) Darwin even believed that morality (which involves compassion and cooperation) was an expression of evolution – that ethics evolved within the human species because it served beneficial ends. And love (or ethics) need not be seen as a fixed reality, but rather evolutionary – love as a psychological and ecological reality continues to evolve.

So on that note – on Darwin, ethics, and the nature of love – let me dive one last time into the ugly mess, underbelly, and “tooth and claw” of it all – in fact, the crescendo, climax, and resolution (at least as it pertains to this story) of certain core challenges I have faced in life. I need to bring up again the issue of chaos in life and connect it with both love and the ethical concept of evil. In philosophical and theological history, chaos is often identified with evil. Chaos destroys, and when the word “evil” is used it frequently refers to actions where the conscious intent is to hurt other people. Sometimes we even talk about evil people, who seem to chronically engage in actions that harm other people. They bring chaos into the lives of others. Yet, I have also suggested that in evolution chaos seems to be a necessary element for progress, and in Western religious thinking, evil plays an essential role in the spiritual progress of humankind. (Without temptation, sin, and the Devil, there would be no reason for redemption and salvation.) In my own life, as I have recounted, I have had several significant encounters or experiences with the chaotic dimension of things. And in the long run, such upheavals led to evolutionary jumps – but only after coming unglued, falling to the ground, and banging and bouncing my body and mind around for some period of time. But every time one of these disruptions occurred, though in some cases I depended on friends, I pretty much had to endure and pass through the trauma on my own. Yet, last year another traumatic episode manifested itself – reality was disrupted – causing great emotional and mental chaos, but this time I didn’t pass through the challenge alone, but passed through it with Jeanne. And though I have rarely in my life ever used the word “evil” to describe another person or his actions – in fact, I have had doubts whether the concept had any value – this time there was no doubt in my mind that we encountered someone evil. And in retrospect, it was clear, that it was love that conquered this negative force and in the process actually strengthened the reality of love in our lives for each other.

In spite of whatever humanitarian or spiritual ideals we may believe, there are people we will meet who consciously attempt to upset or ruin our lives or perhaps, which is just as bad, they simply disregard our well-being or happiness. We live in a world where not everyone wishes us well (so much for embracing all human diversity). If, as Darwin believed, life, to some significant degree, is a competitive reality and evolution depends on competition, then one could say that there are people who will unsettle your life to serve and advance their own ends. (Everyone of course competes with others, but where the competitive impulse leads one to intentionally harm another, then something is ethically wrong.) One of the main reasons behind the development of morality and social norms is to constrain those competitive or self-serving human impulses or

behaviors that hurt other people. Yet, as history clearly demonstrates, humans frequently behave in unethical ways that cause harm to other people. It is strangely co-incidental that in 2003 I became very interested in the importance of virtues and at the same time there was a “presence” hovering around our home, camouflaged as a friend, who did not wish us well and unquestionably was the most unethical human being I have ever encountered in my life.

Jeanne and I encountered someone who attempted to destroy our marriage and undermine our individual self-worth and mutual respect for each other. More to the point, this “presence” went after my *wife*, camouflaged as a concerned friend, but ultimately frightening and intimidating her. This “presence” attempted to convince Jeanne that there was something wrong with me and convince me that there was something wrong with Jeanne. (He had also tried to convince Jeanne that there was something wrong with her.) This presence preyed on weaknesses – tried to use weaknesses to serve his ends. In retrospect, my psychological background told me that we had encountered a psycho-path – someone who could quote *Scripture* to his purposes and pretend to be trying to help, when in fact, there was absolutely no concern or respect for us as a married couple or as individual human beings. The sad and ugly truth is that this was not the first time in my life that I had encountered a male that showed no respect for a marriage – that seemed oblivious to the unethical nature of openly expressing interest and desire toward someone else’s wife. But in this case, things clearly went to a hideous extreme - the person for an extended period of time acted like a friend toward me – a very good friend - whom I repeatedly let into my house – while he stalked my wife, and behind my back, incessantly tried to convince Jeanne that she was guilty and culpable. In retrospect, in talking to Jeanne, I would refer to this whole thing as a nightmare. Jeanne felt that she had been living a nightmare as well.

Eventually, when she could not take it any longer, after a new wave of harassment began, Jeanne told me what had been going on and I confronted the thing – the ‘presence’ – the “demon.” What I got from him were excuses, rationalizations, blaming, and lies. What I did not hear, and have never heard since from him, was anything approaching honesty, remorse, or personal responsibility. I went home, locked the door, and shook all over.

Jeanne and I both found the experience extremely unsettling (my perception of “reality” was clearly shaken – it frightened the piss out of me). Evil has a visceral quality – it can permeate into your being – perhaps even evoking the desire to vomit. Evil attempts to provoke – draw one into a resonant response of anger, hatred, fear, loathing, shame, depression, and whatever other negative emotions exist at the core of its own being. What is hateful wants to be hated. It has been a struggle to contain this natural reaction to the evil presence. The darkness attempts to swallow you. At rock bottom, I now find (as does Jeanne) the thought of him revolting.

But the experience caused Jeanne and me to pull together like never before and to do a lot of soul searching and sharing regarding how we could have been drawn into such an insidious reality. How could I not have noticed what was going on? How could I have believed that he was a friend? I felt (and

you can call me superstitious) that it was the hand of God that brought things to light and that both of us had been given a *satori* slap on our respective butts to wake up and “smell the roses” or perhaps more accurately realize the bramble bush of thorns surrounding us. We experienced a “metanoia.” Perhaps just as “coincidental” or “synchronistic” was that the publication of my two books occurred at the same time that the evil was exposed, and in the first book, I had written the following dedication for the world to see, “To My Sweetheart and Intellectual Companion, Jeanne.” (And I am sure that he saw these words.) To speak like a New Age philosopher or Eastern mystic, I sent some very positive vibes into the cosmos, both intellectual and personal, and the cosmos responded.

Since then Jeanne and I have pondered and discussed the significance of evil (from both a *Yin-yang* and theist perspective). Does God use evil (or chaos) to jolt us out of our dogmatic slumber? To teach us things? Was this an inevitable experience that was necessary to move us to the next stage in our own evolution? Was some deep unconscious scenario being played out that had to come to resolution? Was this simply bad luck? However we think of it, it is clear that we could have fallen apart over this (which clearly was the intent of the individual we encountered), but we did the opposite thing. (His plan totally backfired on him.) Love conquered evil. I could not say that in any conscious sense either of us planned for this to happen, and at one level we clearly wished the whole encounter had never occurred, but in retrospect, it was just what the doctor ordered – it changed us. (Bad is bad but if responded to in the right way it can lead to good.) Again, there is this phenomenon of a coordination of events that at first seems like a total surprise, but afterwards appears to have the quality of being a natural consequence or even intelligent evolution of various converging forces – a *Gestalt* effect. In this case, the *Gestalt* effect had a *Yin-yang* quality – first something very negative, followed by something very positive.

Since this event occurred, we have been rethinking and re-organizing our lives and our priorities. Again, part of intelligently “managing” one’s time may involve going into a holding pattern where priorities, ways of living, and character traits are seriously re-thought and re-arranged. There are times when it is simply not enough to change some unproductive habits – there are times when you need to redefine yourself. Following from the principles of reciprocity and personal responsibility, we had to ask ourselves the question, how did we allow such a dark force to enter into our lives? What were we doing that opened the door (literally) to such malevolence? Part of the philosophy of personal responsibility is acknowledging that when things go wrong, and even when it seems that one is simply a victim, there were things that you were doing that set up the possibility for the intrusion of negative forces. Responsibly assessing one’s life is figuring out what needs to change to lower the chances of these negative events happening again.

Jeanne used to go to bed earlier than I, tired and exhausted from driving every day into downtown Phoenix and working at her full-time job. Now I go to bed with her every night, and she has quit her full-time job, taking a part-time position instead. (She had been debating with herself the last few years the

wisdom of her work schedule.) We decided to be “married married” instead of “married single.” We retold each other our life histories, more honestly and completely than when we had first met. Perhaps this time we heard more; perhaps this time we realized more about ourselves. We decided it was time to systematically extricate ourselves from the madness and frenzy of modern life. This has been an ongoing challenge. We moved out of our old house (too many residual negative vibes) and closer to the mountains and the desert, and now we take walks into the wilderness – into the silence and beauty of magnificent vistas, soaring hawks, lizards, and cacti. Jeanne has taken up bird watching. We spent the latter part of last summer discussing the great modern philosophers Spinoza and Leibnitz, the existence of God, whether or not this world is the best of all possible worlds, and the nature of good, evil, love, and commitment. Jeanne has been studying philosophy quite a bit the last year. We are working together more and plan to write and create articles, workshops, and perhaps even some books on the future in the years ahead. Her silent presence knows – understands – has edited every word in this essay, as well as contributing quite a few of her own.

In the summer of 2006, as an evolution of our earlier talk on “Adam and Eve in the Third Millennium,” we did a presentation at the World Future Society on “The Evolution and Future Direction of Marriage.” As we were talking last year, when we first decided to do this presentation, I suggested that perhaps the way to conceive of the ideal marriage for the future was to define it in terms of the practice and collective pursuit of virtues, notably including love, courage, honesty, mutual self-efficacy, loyalty, transcendence, and wisdom. Jeanne and I did some intensive research into the history of romance, love, and marriage and the transformations that have occurred through the ages. We came to the conclusion, based particularly on the work of sociologist Stephanie Coontz and anthropologist Helen Fischer, that in spite of, or more accurately because of, all the turbulence occurring over the last few decades in the institution and practice of marriage, that marriage is in a positive evolution – that marriage based on values such as equality, love, and deep partnership is becoming the ideal that people are shooting for in their relationships with each other.<sup>16</sup>

This last year I also transformed what I was doing at my college. I started doing more in-person teaching, specifically on the future. It was time to interact with students in person more instead of sitting behind a computer. I did a series of presentations on the future to retirees out in Surprise (a western suburb of Phoenix) and the experience was very positive – I reconnected with people – face to face – who were interested in learning, interested in ideas, and wanted to talk about the issues of life.

Over the last year, I also put together a four-part workshop series on how to develop constructive, optimistic, and creative attitudes and behaviors about the future. I wrote and published four articles to accompany the workshops.<sup>17</sup> The main focus of the workshops was leading the participants into writing (or re-writing) their ideal self-narrative for the future. Life is a story we tell to ourselves – we are both the author and main character in our self-narrative. How we live our lives – how we guide or direct our future - reflects the script and the role we assign to ourselves in our self-narrative. In the workshops I explain the different

aspects of future consciousness, including the emotions of fear and hope (identify your fears and reinforce your hopes); the motivational drivers of stability versus change, and approach versus avoidance (the future is an adventure involving uncertainty and risk and one should go after things as opposed to running from things); the sense of self-efficacy (without self-efficacy one can't create a self-directed future); the role of creative imagination (open your possibilities); and the attitudes of optimism and pessimism (recognizing the self-fulfilling nature of both attitudes. I ask the participants to self-consciously reflect on the story they have created about their past and where they think they are headed in the future. Then I suggest that they re-write the narrative using key virtues as the ideals they should pursue and develop in the future. I ask them to consider a future self and future life that not only will benefit them but contribute to the well-being of humanity. I highlight the virtues of courage, honesty, self-responsibility, transcendence, love, and wisdom, but offer a number of other important virtues that could be central within their future self, such as loyalty, gratitude, justice, and temperance. I tell them that they can re-structure and re-direct their lives, based on a new self-narrative, and realize both greater happiness and a higher ethical plane by using virtues as the guiding lights in their self-development. To change requires courage and the overcoming of fear – to change requires wisdom and following one's true bliss, passion, and love. To change involves finding flow. I tell myself all these things as well, since one shouldn't teach what one doesn't do – teaching requires integrity (another virtue).

There are many ways to come at the future. Over the last fifteen years or so, I have met and gotten to know many futurists around the world and they have different interests and different philosophies. Most recently I have been stretching my connections (personal and intellectual) across the globe to the east, both attempting to understand non-Western ideas and getting to know writers and thinkers who, at least in some ways, do not approach the future from a Western point of view.

Though I clearly see the value in being comprehensive in one's thinking about life and the future, I have tended the last few years to focus on the topics of human psychology, human relations, wisdom and virtue, and the enhancement of future consciousness. I have also pursued my interest in the issue of God and how to connect this idea with science and evolution. I have given several presentations recently on the future of science, religion, and spirituality; I even gave my first sermon in a church recently on this topic. I continue to work with my teaching faculty at my college on how they, as educators, can pursue the development of wisdom and enlightenment in their own lives and careers, since they should be role models and guiding lights for those students that they teach.

Perhaps for all of us, but I know at least for me, there is something scary about exposing one's beliefs, one's feelings, oneself to others. It requires courage. But I think that that one should go towards the fear. I have been working on creating a philosophy, an approach, a set of ideas, ideals, and practices regarding understanding the future, understanding the human psyche and human life, and developing one's capacities to ethically, intelligently, and constructively realize a positive future. I am increasingly "taking the show on the

road” – more accurately, together with Jeanne, we are putting things together and taking our show on the road. (She tells me it is mostly my ideas – I tell her that without her and without her resonance, intelligence, and support, I would not be doing this.)

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*"We do not yet know what we are about to bring forth,  
but we can sense, if dimly, that this birth will be  
our deepest, most fundamental fulfillment."*

*Herbert G. Gerjuoy*

Time can be divided up into units or periods, such as hours, days, weeks, or years, but the time of your life is better divided into personally meaningful units that mark the beginnings and endings of major events and experiences. I look back on my life, and I naturally divide it into my early youth in Waterbury, Connecticut, my college days and first marriage, my years of wandering around the country which led into my second marriage, the stable years in Illinois, my early years in Arizona and becoming a futurist, my second divorce which led to meeting Jeanne and marrying again, and finally the early years of our marriage, filled with passion, sound and fury, and quite a bit of productive intellectual work, though punctuated by a good deal of stress and a powerful dose of invasive malevolence. I feel that now I have begun a new epoch of my life, but one that marks a very deep transition from all my earlier years as an adult. There is a rupture in time equal in significance to moving from a teenager to an adult.

We are in the garage. I am sweating – I am gritting my teeth – the muscles in my arms bulge and tighten as I curl the dumbbells toward my chest. I focus my attention, my gaze, on my biceps and chest muscles which have become harder, bigger, more chiseled this last year. But she is looking at my muscles as well. I have a new workout partner replacing George McCary. It is her turn now and Jeanne, seated across from me on the bench, (now the focus of my gaze) is pushing the dumbbells overhead and the muscles, in her shoulders, arms, and chest, tense in sharp relief under the strain. She is a new woman, stronger, more mature, and robust. Her face is intent and determined on lifting the weights. We have been working out together for almost a year now and the sustained effort shows. It is difficult coming out into the garage to lift weights, especially during the Arizona summer, but we push ourselves, realizing we always feel better for it. We are in the flow. We are both re-creating ourselves – building our muscles, redefining our bodies and our minds.

It is a far, far better thing that we do than we have ever done before.

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