

The Exit Hell Organisation

Blogs

Or simply put, a paper copy of
Michael's periodic, online,
textual thoughts,

from www.exithell.org/blogs
with videos online.

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Introduction

Clearly my website's not a book, but it shares much more than blog posts. By blogging I can expand my literary opus, which was previously represented by my "EVERYTHING" book.

When ideas emerge, they appear on my website's "Blogs" page. Sometimes they're previously covered; other times only partially so, but thankfully they continue to be brand new too. I'm in good company by repeating myself, because Jesus Christ did the same, retelling words with different slants. Surely that's the best way, to help the greatest number of people reach understandings.

I might prefer to betray a mathematical or logical background, rather than exclude people through an overly verbose wordiness, or a "wood for the trees" aspect.

Michael x

The disclaimer

I'm not a Humanities graduate. My bibliography and references are my rich life experiences. My "Everything" book is 800 pages long. As mentioned, this volume extends it. My life is covered both directly and indirectly by my prose and verse, and they represent empathy before knowledge. Those words cover good and bad times, as well as my own versions of those inescapable tragedies we all suffer.

I've had no opportunities to run statistical trials, which can approximate truths, but my realisations occurred independently, and they excitingly overlapped ideas of historic and modern thinkers, who I'd no prior knowledge of.

There's an exception to the above statement. Like most westerners, I can't pretend I've had no personal Judeo-Christian influences. Similarly, many of the prior mentioned thinkers can't either!

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Poem

I wrote poetry between the years 2000 and 2020. My ~600 poems are collected in the “Complete Verse” available via the website. The piece below, which is more prose-like than verse, is the very final “poem” I ever wrote. BTW my “Completion squared yet again” collection, may be a useful transitional adjunct, to my prose.

I always recorded the conception dates of my poems and coined the term “My beautiful diary”. “When I changed:” is the only piece of mine, read live by someone else at an open-mic event. It is highly appropriate to share it here, near the start of this volume, and I still, absolutely stand by every one of its words.

It describes my “awakening”, my late entrance into “adulthood”, my becoming me, my discovery of individuality, the “I am”...

I have placed all my writing effort since this piece, into expanding on it.

When I changed:

It happened in one moment.
I realised my worth.
Some people stopped liking me.
Some people started.

Most days became valid.
Acting out me was fun.
I could drink alcohol sensibly.
I became interested in humanity.

The longer I was me, the more me I was.
Dare I say I increased in wisdom?
My empathy rocketed.
The plight of others could make me cry.

In part, the right wing grated.
I gained personal rules.
Turning a blind eye was not one.
Further introspection was.

An adult relationship was possible.
I'm made up I became me.
I'm saddened some don't make it.
It's hard, but the "before-me" bit has a name.

It's called Hell.

26/1/20

Afterthoughts

When I recently discovered some of Sri Ramana Maharshi's work. It turns out that he wrote a brief book with a title like my own first nonfiction, "I am". His book was called "Who am I?". When you run out of answers to that line of questioning, you get close to 'you'. I also remember seeing the YouTube video, of Doshin Roshi from Integral Zen, at Findhorn. The date was August 2016. To a group of seekers, Doshin says, "Who are you?" It's ~40 minutes into the video.

Subjective objective

When the same message is repeated across separate cultures, religions, and other groups, a confidence ought to increase or precipitate. Ultimately, new sources of the message become little surprise.

In today's homily, our vicar talked about some of the difficult questions of Christianity. These include the nature of God, the Trinity, how the world was built in a week, and the divinity of Christ, etc., etc. At the same time, in this morning's Sunday school, the children were given problems with no possible solutions. So that was the basic theme. You can't objectively answer questions, like how God, Jesus and the Holy spirit can be the same entity. In Christianity, we or they say, "it's a mystery." In other words, it is not in the realm of objective truths. Words do not help. It's about subjectivity.

Personally, I think all of us should head increasingly towards the subjective. The more important aspects of life are patently not objective. Why? Because if that was the case the books at schools and colleges for example, would accurately tell us everything, and unequivocally. Zen Buddhists ponder koans, which appear to have no answers. A good example is, "what is the sound of one hand clapping?" With endless consideration, perhaps the objective mind becomes so confounded, it achieves the subjective?

I've added this, today's blog, for another reason, even though it is complete at this point. Going back to the top of this post, I suggested the importance of messages being repeated (independently, in fact). I don't see love being the answer because people will always form groups. A classic example is Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan.

I think respect and individualism makes more sense than love and humility, despite the overlap, but even then, we will never have a world of individuals and no groups. And after all, with the unfair distribution of natural resources and vastly differing weather systems, it will not be likely.

Page 795 of my 800 paged "Everything" book has this thought, "I beg there is a more useful concept of the human nucleus, perhaps with a different subjective and nebulous centre, overlapping readily with objective externals, with relevance and virtues?" I filled the rest of it by combining lines from separate poems of mine, to form couplets of varying degrees of confusion.

This is currently my best effort to help readers, and life remains a work in progress for all of us, especially me.

Thoughts around paranoia

This brief piece is based on personal experiences. It won't cover the entirety of such a complex problem, but it fits with some other modes of my thinking, whereby broader ideas might resonate with one or more objective ones.

* * *

There is a paradox to paranoia, which is a condition that is necessarily complex, and is perhaps aggravated for one, by a connectionist view of the mind. For example, in organisations, the paranoid person with little personal insight, will receive many bombardments due to other people's subtleties of body language and vocal tones, and those people's difficulties to empathise with the sufferer, who for starters, they don't view as ill. In fact, the sufferer doesn't either, but the nonuniform nature of the environment can overwhelm, and generate increased anxiety that feeds paranoia.

So, the cruel paradox is this: to overcome the paranoia, you could perhaps gain greater personal insights through life experiences, but life experiences cause anxieties that feed paranoia, partly because a significant lack of insight can provoke reactions from others, and at the same time, sadly, the more negative reactions are useful data, and need to be understood.

Abnormal psychology and the Matrix film's red pill

The quote at the bottom is so accurate, and exactly what I experienced in my early to mid-twenties. Please continue though.

You might read my prose and verse. I managed to learn and share so much. My main book is, "I am". It's very tight at just 42 pages. (I'm never verbose like so many writers are). The PDF version of "I am" can be found as a free download on my website. There are no strings attached to getting it; like questions, such as requests for email addresses. Zero records are kept, so I'd need telling, or I'd categorically not know anyone had it.

I want my writing to help people, rather than it being a mechanism to enlarge my ego. That's so common in the world, that people readily assume it's the motive of others. Ironically, that assumption may stem from a projection

mechanism, of their own egotism, or attitudes. In part, my "I am" book even talks about these aspects.



We're mostly immune to abnormal psychology, but in my experience, the Burroughs quote below is accurate and not unlike taking the Matrix Film's red pill. In a sense I did, and I eventually reported back to those who took the blue pill, or perhaps neither pill.

"A paranoid is someone who knows a little of what's going on. A psychotic is a guy who's just found out what's going on."

~ William S. Burroughs.

* * *

I've not shared a live link. Interested people will find out more; so, www.michaelholme.com

The witness

We need to understand, that we are not the thought, and we are not the feeling.

Thoughts colour feelings, and the feelings colour thoughts; and either one can be set-off by an event completely outside of our control. What an utter nonsense that is. It can rule our lives.

Everything turns around!! That includes thoughts and feelings.

Be the witness; the "fly on the wall" of your own life. Watch the pantomime unfold, but don't be a pointless part in it.

There's a choice. No, not for everyone, that's true; but try to reach a perspective. I'm personally guided, by balance, respect, and love xxx ... I think!

Know thyself

My own writing, and general philosophy, hinges on self-knowledge. In truth it's more about the knowledge of what we are not, because I espouse a shedding of identities and group mentalities. I talk about the "I am". I wrote my "I am" book first, and only afterwards, did I realise how relevant it was. It was wonderful that I had realised perennial wisdom independently.

My late wife came to my mind tonight. She had experimented with the Golden Dawn. Clare had a strong Catholic upbringing, that involved a convent school education. In fact, as a young lady she was a daily communicant, and considering whether she had a calling to become a nun. Ultimately though, she reacted against her guilt, her Catholicism, and began many experiments.

There is a list in the Roman Catholic church of groups, systems, and activities, which are sinful for Catholics; for example, astrology, Tarot, and

I Ching. Clare was highly proficient at all three of those. In her last years she pursued Kriya Yoga, but her most evil and naughty transgression, if not Scientology, had to be Aleister Crowley's works. He significantly said, "know thyself." Clare studied the gigantic tome, "The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic." I found these related words online.

"'The Devil' is, historically, the God of any people that one personally dislikes. This has led to so much confusion of thought that THE BEAST 666 has preferred to let names stand as they are, and to proclaim simply that AIWAZ, the solar-phallic-hermetic 'Lucifer,' is His own Holy Guardian Angel, and 'The Devil' SATAN or HADIT, the Supreme Soul behind RA-HOOR-KHUIT the Sun, the Lord of our particular unit of the Starry Universe. This serpent, SATAN, is not the enemy of Man, but He who made Gods of our race, knowing Good and Evil; He bade '**Know Thyself!**' and taught Initiation. He is 'the Devil' of the Book of Thoth, and His emblem is

BAPHOMET, the Androgyne who is the hieroglyph of arcane perfection.”

~Magick in Theory and Practice

It's special that I accidentally hit this webpage.

<https://www.azquotes.com/quotes/topics/knowthyself.html>

It has another 119 quotes about this subject, by about every major thinker from around about the beginning of time.

That's spectacular. It's vital wisdom. I've shared this link at the bottom of my Galley page, for those who don't read my blogs.

Solitude and the Mr & Mrs TV show

The first significant message I placed in my literature, was "Embrace your aloneness." You should do so before entering the "world". Ultimately, we all should, at least to a degree.

We might think we know people well, but when they're thrown into sudden situations requiring a snap decision, people can surprise us. Life was perhaps mirrored by the old Mr & Mrs TV show from the 70s onward. To a spouse's surprise, after decades of marriage, a husband or a wife may answer way off the mark.

Realising our own aloneness before our peers do, can create a real challenge, and it may lead to loneliness, but that's not the way to view it. There's a negative ring to that. Instead, it's about solitude, and solitude has been the driving force of much of the world's great creativity.

So, positively embrace your aloneness, and enjoy Godspeed in your endeavours, in your path.

I Googled for a page of relevant quotes and found this great hit.

<https://creativeenso.com/inspirational-quotes-about-solitude/>

A musical exchange, but mainly J.S. Bach 101

Talking to my MSc in computing course leader, on Facebook, about music, esp. J.S. Bach., and 28 years since graduation.

* * *

MH - The best music ever written (or conjured up otherwise) are the Six Keyboard Partitas of J.S. Bach. If you think otherwise, you are wrong, and here's why I say that. This music is a direct link to "God", making players and listeners, laugh and cry in its beauty alone. My last 33 years of piano playing has often been in pursuit of the skills to play this music, but it's like riding a bike: if you're not riding, you're on the deck; but there is a scrappy in-between bit, which you hope your brain will eventually turn into riding. In Bach's day this was the ultimate music (still is for me), but a listener needed to play them, or find someone to play these Partitas to them, in order that they could hear them. Recording was

obviously impossible back then, that's why mastering this music could lead to musical world fame in those days.

MScCL - I will listen to that music. My taste is early c20, but my dear friend who died almost 7 years ago did his best to share his love of Bach, Mozart and to a lesser extent Haydn.

MH - when I first started playing and listening to piano music, it was overwhelmingly the bigger romantic works I was drawn to, but I liked Bartok a great deal, so from the earlier to mid c20, like you also mentioned. I also liked Ravel and Debussy. I still like all three, but exactly like your friend, Bach, Mozart and yes, to a lesser extent, Haydn, are now my thing. I think Beethoven opened the field for this massive composing. Satie mocked it, calling it Wagnerian, but also inspiring Debussy in a way, probably harmonically. Both Debussy and Ravel looked quite far backwards by sometimes writing in old fashioned suite forms. Bartok,

wrote stacks of smaller scale piece, genuine music, without romantic excesses. And today, in terms of classical music, I think the minimalists are where it's at, and it's highly skilled to write appealing original music with such a reduction of musical resources. Einaudi is great. I shared my own rendition of a piece of his on here a bit ago. A sort of summary: there was certainly something in that comment of Salieri's in the film "Amadeus." He said, "too many notes." You can't say that about Mozart's music. It's perfect, but maybe with Beethoven, his Hammerclavier sonata, for example, and the romantic period, music got carried away.

MScCL - For me it is Elgar, Mahler, and Sibelius primarily, but I have no technical understanding of music. I can see why someone who has would admire the Bach Partitas. I have listened to the 1st - on Harpsichord and then piano. I think I liked the piano version more, but no idea why.

MH - I like them on piano too. The louds and softs add expression. Not that the piano existed in Bach's time. That leads to purist and historical accuracy.

MH - I thought a bit more about your technical descriptor. I wasn't sure what you meant. In Bach's day compositional rules were very strict. I think that's why he can make me laugh. That's the effect of the clever aspect. It's both organic and "mathematical" at the same time. The feeling bit is inexplicable. You would never buy a friend a painting. That's something you do yourself. Your late friend might have been trying to do something like that to you with music? You must have heard of the book "Godel, Escher, Bach". I don't read books, that's why I got lumbered in computing. I certainly would never have chosen a life at a desk with a bloody machine if I could have avoided it! That book covers the link with arts and rules/maths, etc. There is definitely all of that going on in Bach. I've heard of some people who say every Bach

piece they've heard is essentially the same one. They can't hear it. It's almost like white noise to them. It's absolutely not for them. A test in piano grade exams is when the examiner plays a piece with a right-hand line, and a left-hand bass, with some notes in-between in the alto/tenor bit. Then they ask, sing or hum the bass tune back to me. For some people that is almost impossible. A better appreciation of Bach, and you could call this technical, but also organic, is discerning different threads, not a single melody alone. The overall effect though, is there or not for people. I don't know what you can do about that. For me, if I sightread a piano piece for the very first time, and really gel with it, could be any genre, I get nice feelings in my body. If I then play it again, I get the feelings again, but they've diminished. A third time might not be much good again. If I play the piece again, in say two months, it feels nice again. With much of Bach, it feels good in my body every time, but not all Bach. Those six Partitas I mentioned, are an absolute joy to play. Listening to Andras Schiff or Gould play them is

brilliant, but for the nice bodily feelings, it means playing them. That's my Bach 101. I hope you welcome it.

Isolating-banter

I'm never short of things to say. I've always got hours of ad-hoc conversation for anyone, and more so, if we're within some specific subjects. However, I have never said the word *banter* to someone, online or off it (apart from just now). I have chats. I don't engage in banter. Chatting is nothing special. It's just something people do, and a lack of self-consciousness can facilitate it. The presence of the latter generates anxiety, much to do with personal measurements of one's "banter" quality, which feeds the anxiety further in a vicious circle, because nerves hinder us from tapping into thoughts and memories that smooth our exchanges.

The word "banter", with connotations of skill and wit, is often linked with flirting, and all in all, it has helped to add pressures to the simple act of talking.

My wisdom in a flash, or the first post I made to my recently formed "exithell" Reddit community

I assert that "Hell" is on Earth, and the "Kingdom of Heaven", or let's say happiness, is within us all. So, all the love we need is already there. It's a choice away. Admittedly, many people have had such hardships in their lives, that it is very hard for them to ever believe there is any love at all. Religion is categorically not my thing, but I reference Jesus sometimes. I'm saying don't look for big answers outside of yourself, because it's down to a realisation of our uniqueness, and that suggests having NO labels, or practically speaking, trying to reject them and minimise their number, as best we can. Having none is a perfection. In an extreme, no-one was ever meant to be Elon Musk, Lady Gaga, or David Beckham, other than those same three. However, we're all able to be equally special, whilst equally opposite. No-one was meant to be you either, other than you in all your genuine uniqueness. That represents the best "deal on

the table". It leads to things "clicking" more often, and the possibility of you attracting better people and things to yourself. I've written much more about and around this. My website helps. Daft as it sounds, I'm just suggesting be yourself, but; in a complex world with too many choices.

"Be kind", really?

Clearly, Jesus and others after him, have been saying "love one another", "peace", and "be kind", etc., for at least two millennia. If only life was that easy, and we could demand each other to be nice, and then they'd just have to do or be so.

Perhaps Dr Jordan Peterson's idea that we sort out our own "houses", and be responsible, rather than telling others to sort themselves out, is a better idea than any such personal obviation. I think my broad idea of individualism, overlaps with Peterson's responsibility mantra.

The stumbling block for the less active "camp", is the problem of who should be kind first, or do we all trace a path back to Calvary? Either way, in the twenty-twenties, I feel the temperature is getting hotter and hotter; both literally and figuratively. It doesn't seem to me that any attempted shaming of individuals, has any chance of solving any big, or ultimately world,

problems, because it is controlling, lazy, and a self-righteous peculiarity, of a tiny global minority. They share the demographics of having relative lower ages, and a susceptibility to some more modern aspects of western culture.

"Gift of the gab"? Gifts don't always match outcomes of working

Did you realise, that people who never seem to stop talking, don't necessarily have some kind of "gift" of the gab, and therefore, something that gets bestowed on some people but not others? Instead, some people have suffered the most profound periods of loneliness, and they eventually act. Through painful trial and error, they become communicators, but absolutely not egotistical ones, who might more likely, attract sycophants. Instead, if you choose to talk to this other type, you'll discern them through your feelings of comfort and social solidarity, that are in a large part down to an avoidance of competition, and/or boastfulness. It's not rocket science, some people are mindful of how unattractive those negatives are, and others either aren't, or they plain don't care anyway.

The folly of buying a DMR radio that doesn't actually support the DMR digital mode



ICOM's IC-R8600, high-end communications receiver, appears to have settled at firmware v1.35. I listen to mine nearly every night. It's the best bedside radio in existence. I've used mine for around an hour a night, for the last five months. Having been a shortwave listener (on and off ;)) since the '80s and having not noticed a single problem with my own R8600, upgrading the inner code beyond v1.35 seems pointless. I've

found nothing to fix. Arriving at the DMR debate (digital mobile radio) there's a silliness. ICOM chooses its own proprietary solution. If you had wanted DMR as passionately as others do, you ought to have bought a radio with it in already. It reminds me of some women who marry so-called bad boys or players. They want excitement without infidelity, etc., and they marry, but with plans in place from the offset, to modify their husbands to suit. It's a classic mistake that often ends in divorce, and further down the line, an eventual bonding, but this time with a partner who has the figurative DMR already installed.

Herbie Hancock speaking as if about a life metaphor

A few years ago, I bought Herbie's jazz piano lessons on www.masterclass.com. They were, in conclusion, unexpected, because in a sentence, they summarised as "you're already there." He liked mentioning the band leader and most brilliant jazz trumpeter, Miles Davis, who Herbie had played keys for.



On hearing an ostensibly wrong note within the mix, Miles' lead and outright genius, would always cause it to be an opportunity for excitement, innovation, and creative exploration. To Miles, no notes were wrong. As in life, some choices lead to rocky paths, but lessons, achievements, and more, can reward the stalwart.

Herbie could have taken a much fussier and prescriptive approach in his lessons, with endless scales, voicing, chord substitutions and harmonic progressions; like the vast majority of related, but highly unoriginal books on jazz piano. The message in my "I am" book is the same; you are already all you need to be!

Of course, academics teach people about the significant artists that worked in the field beforehand. They wouldn't have courses if they didn't, and maybe no physical establishments?

In fairness though, if you avoided any adulteration of students, the graduating mavericks might find making livings much harder, because conventionality has always been more acceptable than innovation, and speaking in the broadest scope.

This is like having gone full circle, back to the beginning. I'll just reiterate the fourth and final stanza of my 2015 poem, "Recalling the wilderness", that goes like this -

* * *

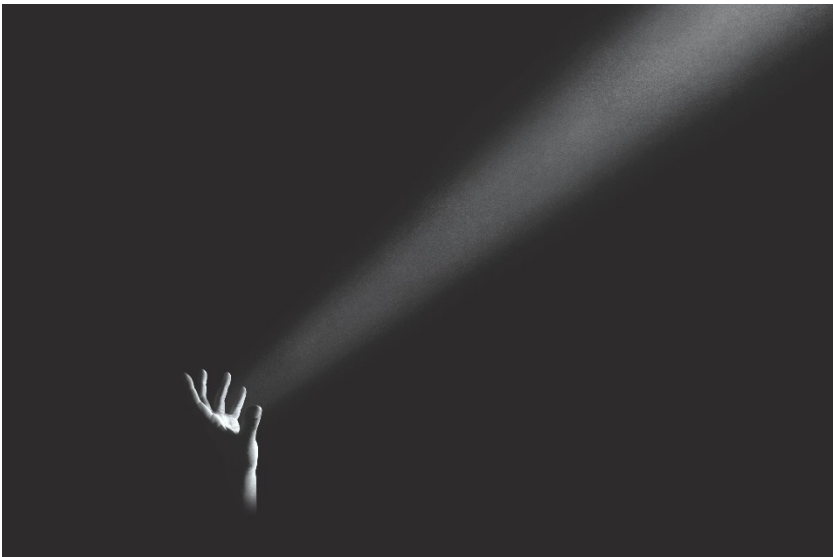
Be aware that most folk act.
They are not better than you.
Be you. Honestly, be true.
You are amazing. Just do.

* * *

What is the "Dark night of the soul" ?

The following statement was found high in Google's search results on the subject -

"'The Dark Night of the Soul' is one of the most painful, isolating, and destabilizing experiences in life. Yet it is also a tremendous blessing in disguise."



Coupled with “that which does not kill us, makes us stronger”, attributed to Friedrich Nietzsche, and speaking from my own life experiences, this will lead you to your suicide but for remarkable fortitude, humility and action. Personally, I began classical piano playing from nothing at the age of 21, and I ultimately achieved a college level; but piano led to further diversification in my life, and more. My mother maintains the instrument saved my life.

This experience represents a total breakdown of everything that is us, at the most fundamental levels. It doesn't mean dissociation from our families or loss of a sense of gender. In a greater part though, identities and group affiliations, etc.: the things we don't need to hold so much store in, are especially vulnerable and likely to be lost. That's very painful, but vanities such as our physical attractiveness and unfounded confidence, may go too, perhaps with more pain. After all of this, we either rebuild and/or begin everything again, and in a better way, or rather

a more robust way, i.e., a genuine way; or life is over.

Having pointed out that I experienced such a misfortune, it shouldn't be a surprise to anyone, that my primary book: "I am", is strongly against us forming identities, accepting labels, and entering the mindset of groups.

* * *

Most things involve shades of grey and are not about blacks and whites alone. It would be crass for me to suggest people attempt to achieve mitigations, just in case they have a "Dark night of the soul" !!! They are not so common. Instead, I think that we are stronger, less vulnerable, and more genuine, if we avoid these identities, labels, and anything else which removes our individuality...

Being aloof

People can automatically be irritated by aloofness. It can easily look like a rejection. People tend to exist between two poles of aloofness, and the balanced middle ground. That's three positions then.

1) I'll call "top aloof" this: it's the vulnerable person who wants to hold onto their pride. They can't imagine life without it, and although it's isolating them, they do feel above others.

2) Whilst "bottom aloof" is another vulnerable position, and often isolating too, but it stems more from low confidence, and/or low self-esteem.

Outsiders can mix these two up, especially in work situations. "Top aloof" don't want to seem arrogant to colleagues, because it's distasteful, whilst "bottom aloof" fear, in terms of their career, if they're known to lack confidence.

3) I've often repeated the words, "balance, respect, and love". They apply here, the third position being the "balance" or middle ground, suggesting nothing is totally black or white. We're all somewhere between top and bottom aloof.

The twist to this follows next. We should not assume people are a "top aloof" or a "bottom aloof", because our annoyances of someone's standoffishness, may result in their cruel treatment if we get it wrong. Yes, a little humiliation is good for us all occasionally, but humiliating those on their "hands and knees", can lead to psychiatry or worse. I've mentioned the "respect" aspect often, in terms of individualism, it's important. As for love; yes, but what's your definition of it?

Amidst depression

Here's a brief suggestion for the more severely depressed. Depression is patently unmotivating, but when you feel like doing nothing, I might suggest two easier things.

When I had psychotic depression, thankfully my mum would force me out of bed every day, by tipping the mattress high enough that I'd fall onto the bedroom floor.

I didn't want to do much, but incidentally, and amazingly, I had started dabbling on the piano (maybe there's an extra thought there). However, when I just got going a little, I invariably enjoyed having a bath or a shower. A walk might have been doable too and could also have made me feel a bit good about myself. However, I'd have to stand up: the settee was comfy; then go and get my coat, put it on, then my shoes as well. If they were lace-ups rather

than slip-ons, it could have been a total "deal breaker".

In time, walking exposed a measure of the severity of my condition. At the bottom of the scale, slow laboured steps, a slumped body, both head and eyes down, and a purposeless demeanour, betrayed depression; whilst purposeful walking: chin high, as part of a generally confident body language, particularly if passing strangers, and with much more speed and straightness of path, gave away a more elated mood.

If you can move along that scale enough (and you might be needing meds if you struggle to rise until way into the afternoon, everyday), my Holy Grail, is get a dog. Not only must you walk it, but outdoors you will find you become more approachable by having a dog. I promise you that last outcome, because people shy away from mentally burdened looking loners. Frankly, that's what the realm of professionals, such as,

therapists, counsellors, psychologists, and psychiatrists, are there for.

A dog is a massive icebreaker. In the UK alone, there has been an explosion in the popularity of owning them.

Looking after a dog is a responsibility. That means your focus may shift a bit from you to the dog. That alone is very mentally healthy.

Those who have heard the pre-eminent psychologist Jordan Peterson speaking, possibly on YouTube, will know of his emphasis on taking responsibility. He's worth checking out.

If possible, then, improve your walking, maybe enjoy more baths, and start thinking about one day caring for a pet; even a hamster. I'm very serious, yes, because any living creature is a responsibility if it's in your care; including you!!

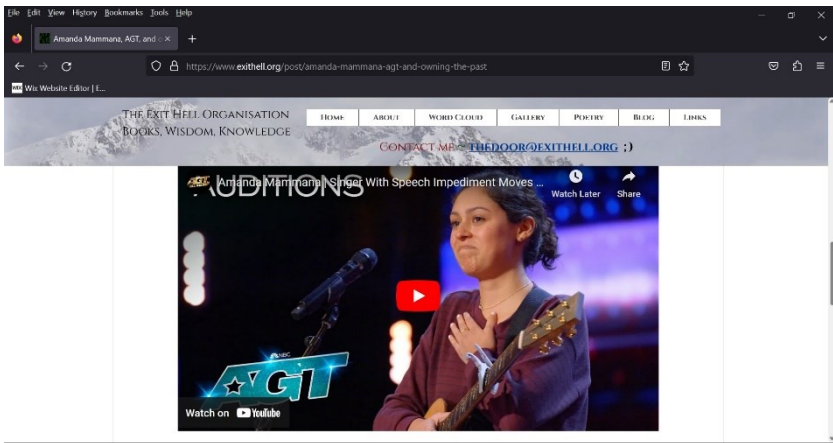
Jesus (the man, not a god, in my opinion) was recorded by St Luke, in chapter 16 verses 10 to 12 of his gospel, as saying people who can be trusted with little, can be trusted with much, and Jesus went on more. Perhaps he ultimately alluded to a responsibility for our own selves, and other people afterwards?

Most obviously though, for the love of "God", don't take street drugs, try to cut alcohol back, and if you're already working on nicotine cessation, I hope you nail it. I smoked for some decades too.

By the way, no-one is perfect, for example, I'm an overweight diabetic, couch-potato. Please wish me luck as well?

Amanda Mammana, AGT, and owning the past

I really like the young woman in this America's Got Talent video. She'd had a hard time, somewhat linked to her speech impediment, but she got through it.



I still maintain that when you exit your "Hell on Earth" and become the genuine you (and it is Hell to not be you), then you totally understand that you wouldn't want to change any of your past, such as removing the suffering, because that's what made so much of you.

See this quote by Rumi.

"The cure for the pain is in the pain."

We all have different paths and challenges. I think taking life one day at a time matters. By becoming ourselves, we start loving ourselves. It can be really cruel, because many never get to that point of loving themselves; worse still, that can make having empathy for others hard too.

People talk about depression being the product of dwelling on the past, and that anxiety is a worry about the future. I think an achievement of self-love negates the past's influence, and it puts you in a much stronger emotional position, to tackle challenging and unpredictable things in the future.

To love, is living in the now, as we're often told to do, and with an inner love, like Jesus' "the Kingdom of Heaven is within" suggests.

The paradox Colin Jellicoe shared

My best friend was Colin Jellicoe. I visited him countless times over an almost 20-year period, initially as a customer, because he had an art gallery on Portland Street, Manchester.



In the late 1990s, one of the two buses that took me home from work, would pass his address every day. It took me about two years, then

something in me meant I had to use a lunchbreak to visit his basement gallery. I've amassed a large art collection since then. It becomes a bug, and I've now met both many dealers and artists alike, whilst always buying further works from Colin too, starting from that first visit.

We became quite close, for example, he would tell me things I can categorically say, he wouldn't generally share. At that time, we'd chat for about 90 minutes. I'd say something like, "I ought to be going", and as if by an unwritten etiquette we'd always enjoy a further 30 minutes or so, talking at the door, before it seemed right to open it, and this happened countless times.

Colin died in 2018. I miss him. He was popular. He shared a wisdom with me. Despite having little money, he kept his gallery going for decades. His wisdom was a paradox, which you could reduce to something like -

"in order to last at something, you must last."

I draw several things from that at once. It's a bit like a Buddhist Koan. I'm leaving it with you.

The logic of now

According to some, anxiety is linked to fear of the future, which to a lesser or greater degree is unknown. Similarly, past regrets, mistakes, and losses, etc., may fuel depression.

For me, life is about continuity, threads, and focus.

This blog needn't be too long: there's only one logical point, but I first unashamedly bring in Jesus. I think John 15:13 is hugely important. It says, "No one has greater love than to give up one's life for one's friends." (CEB)

It might be foolish to read the Bible in anything but the most useful way, which I think is reached with a critical mass of some form.

Giving your life for your friends doesn't mean you physically die. It means you commit, like Colin Jellicoe did to his gallery, as the previous

blog suggested; but at one day at a time. So, live for today, the moment, the now, as so many people tiresomely keep suggesting; me too.

The threads in your life, and continuity, might give an understanding, and even stability. It builds very slowly. So, take a choice and let it unfold, maybe through a relationship, religion, career, or vocation. Viewing an entire lifecycle is likely to cause stress. That's why many musicians learn instruments via a grade system of eight exams. It's a massive job. In fact, part of my path was learning piano from scratch at 21. After about seven years and around 4,000 hours practise, I passed grade eight with merit, and it took me en route to another part of my life, and there was a long way to go. It never ends.

C of E, Rome, Nature, C of E

I converted to Catholicism when I was around 30. That was after a much earlier childhood exposure to the Church of England's flavour of Christianity. The influence of my late first wife encouraged me to become confirmed into the Roman church, which incidentally recognised my original baptism.

The above changed when I started thinking a lot about love. For example, whilst Jesus represents pure love, such as his acceptance of crucifixion, I saw no other absolute or pure examples. Even my own parents made it hard for me to find.

Then I thought without nature we are unable to live, especially in terms of oxygen. I viewed nature as all giving and all love. So called Pantheists think nature and indeed just everything, is God, i.e., "pan" or all, and "theist": believer in God. It's a logical viewpoint, but of

little day to day utility in terms of how to approach our lives, and the people in them.

I failed in my search for overlapping ideas, about the virtues of nature itself and the Catholic church, and my attendance to Mass became unreliable. After a brief foray with the "Legion of Mary", which is essentially a Catholic cult (as is Opus Dei and others), I somewhat drifted away from Catholic thinking.

I achieved full circle years later, because I found different dimensions of comfort by again attending a Church of England church. All my past experiences helped, but by understanding that there's little we all know within theism, to aim for more childlike tacks with sincerity, and to have confidence to start making our own minds up, as to what God is saying to ourselves as individuals, as opposed to assuming a total uniformity of humanity, then perhaps faith becomes more accessible?

I suggest open minds and continued seeking. Look for threads everywhere. Be truthful, and yes, probably like Jesus said, as recorded in Matthew 18:3, "I promise you this. If you don't change and become like a child, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven."

Bearing in mind that "the Kingdom of Heaven" has been said to be within, and I think that means being our genuine selves, then there's something here to consider.

"Life is like a box of chocolates", chess, bridge, piano, and everything else

I see a parallel in life and creative endeavours, or something like chess, in fact bridge even. Looking at the last two, you begin with rules. For example, those associated with chess, the legal movements of pieces, etc., can be learned with comfort in a day, but whenever I have played the game, I've laboriously thought, if I do "that" they'll probably do "that", then I'll do that; and it was hopeless. I always lost. I needed a more subjective, rather than objective approach. That's why I marvelled at masters who would sometimes play perhaps 20 games at once, making moves in seconds compared to the minutes of each individual opponent. The master would use intuition to make their moves. Higher level bridge players can bid their hands in a similar way. Lesser players do well with somewhat mathematical systems like ACOL, but it's slower, and doesn't cover every statistical abnormality of the shuffle and deal.

Artificial intelligence is becoming frighteningly powerful for some. I studied neural networks in the early to mid-nineties. Back propagation was clearly the best system at that point. You'd train the network many times, by giving it data and telling it what it is. Eventually, the theory goes that you then show the network something it doesn't know, and you ask it what it is. It could work very well. The overlap with the gaming examples, ought to be clear.

I've always told my wife that pianists don't learn Bach pieces. The thing is, they learn how to play counterpoint, i.e., melody against melodies, as opposed to pieces based on a melody with an accompaniment, which became more and more typical, after the Baroque period.

The skills to play counterpoint, include complete independence of each finger, from the others in the same hand, and all the fingers need to be strong. You can't take your eyes off the music, and need to read very well, unless you memorise.

It takes thorough rhythmic independence of the hands. In total then, you are "riding the bike", and you either ride or don't ride a bike. That's how Bach playing is, rather than studying/learning dozens of individual pieces.

Things start clicking. Just how so, isn't known. We similarly don't know what is happening in a back propagation neural network. What is a fact, is that very long-term dedication is needed, until a critical mass is reached. Personally, I don't think it is anything like radioactive isotopes, having a precise point. I think there is a woolly or nebulous region, which is identifiable by a faster rate of increase in skills, than had previously felt typical.

Every week the late Roy Castle told my generation, that "dedication's all you need".



Perhaps St Paul in 1-Corinthians was helpful too, because “faith, hope and love” would appear to me to be perfect, in our acquiring skills we highly desire. I think the Zen Buddhist notion of not thinking so much about the destination, but enjoying the journey, is utterly relevant.

All that’s left to say, is that I wasn’t really talking about chess, bridge, Bach, or anything else, was I? When you hit the critical mass, life...

makes more and more sense. Validations of your personal thoughts and attitudes increase. It's more fun, and the soundtrack is great.

Keep GOING !

My Royal Society of Arts 22/02/23 evening Zoom script/ presentation

“I want to talk for five or six minutes. It’s about individualism and the notion of mavericks, with personal references in it.

Today, individuality is hampered by the plethora of options, but almost five decades ago, when I was eight, the effects of physical maternal abandonment, put me on an unusual path. My trust, and chances for self-esteem, were very damaged. That made fear colour everything in my life. I wasn’t taught to read either. I had to learn the so called ‘hard way’. I did manage to get through C. S. Lewis’ ‘Mere Christianity’ though. I don’t believe in the supernatural, but I took things from his book anyway.

My early 80s comprehensive school was very like the one in the film ‘Kes’. It reinforced my distrust and fear. I think the headmaster, almost

subliminally taught us never to complain, and to fight our own battles; and I always have.

To attempt to avoid people, after uni I went into computer programming. I had two positions in my first three years of work, then a five-year gap, followed by a third and last job for 13 years. Throughout this time, unbeknown to me, I was parenting myself, whilst cruelly watching my peers, do everything people do in life. I loathed my first two jobs, and was made so poorly, that I continued getting worse, even after quitting work. A psychiatrist diagnosed schizophrenia, and I was admitted to hospital. Later, 'psychotic depression' became a more accurate description. That's gravely serious, but less so than schizophrenia.

I like the idea of mavericks, but not with labels. I was made redundant from my third and longest job, in 2010. My first wife passed away in 2012 (it wasn't a good marriage.) Then in 2014, literally on the 12th of February, out of work and

alone, you could say my self-parenting got a massive boost, because at 45, I'd been through enough in life, and I chose happiness; just like that. It took a moment. I became me.

Mavericks might 'reinvent wheels' by their life experiences, but their convictions have got to be stronger than academic based ones. Herman Hesse famously wrote, 'wisdom cannot be imparted. Wisdom that a wise man attempts to impart always sounds like foolishness to someone else ... Knowledge can be communicated, but not wisdom. One can find it, live it, do wonders through it, but one cannot communicate and teach it'.

Despite this quote, I believe that if enough people, share their wisdoms that were arrived at in isolation, faith increases, and common-sense can emerge. A discovery shared in a book, represents a single strong such one, with copies of it, or references, being necessarily weaker. Of course, the strength of our life experiences, are

never more obvious, than when we choose them in preference to anything else, to make vital life decisions.

My website is - www.ExitHell.org - I suggest a download of my 42 paged 'I am' book, for further reading. It's on the site.

I mentioned label avoidance, that includes identities and group mentalities. At 45, my life started. As I said, it was a choice. I'd finally learned how to love myself. In other words, I'd realised my individuality. Then I started assuming similar in others. They could be equally opposite to me, so respect also started emerging. I was never meant to be Elon Musk or Ed Sheeran, just like they were never meant to be me.

Globally, individualism will fail, due to imbalances in climates and natural resources. What I strongly guarantee though, is that micro and macro conflicts both feed and start, through

group mentalities, labelling, and the crass obsession that some people have, with collecting identities. Why have identities, only to get upset when they're not validated?

That's it. They're my thoughts for this evening.”

Grand exploitation

I've lived in the same Manchester suburb since 1997/98. The city centre has changed much in that time. Businesses come. Businesses go; but in the last few years, an explosion of flat and apartment building has occurred right in the city centre.

It's one thing to seek perceived uniqueness by the social encouragements of having tattoos, but this following list of common denominators surely can't offer people much in terms of difference: German cars, lip inflation, Botox, teeth whitening, prowess in mixed sex gyms, and having victim-hoods to fashion brands. These are only small factors now, when you consider the way that city centre living is so powerfully drawing people in.

It mustn't be apparent to people, that the strength of advertising on television and the internet alone, is very clearly enhanced, by

having all your customers and target customers, in the same small physical space, inadvertently selling/ tempting one another. Human adverts for the desires, wants and routes out of frustration become all around; they are *it*: part of a "grass is greener" metropolis, the perfect capitalistic consumer scenario, and one which the designers of; perhaps that "human zoo", love to watch its critical mass being approached.

Falling out with people 101

Proselytisation attempts over years, originally towards myself, but later on, towards my second wife in isolation from me, have led me to break off communications with our adjoining next-door neighbours. They present as ostensibly upright Evangelical Christians, with previous professional backgrounds. That slowed me down in forming a more accurate appraisal of them. Charitably speaking though, I did extend the assumption, that they didn't hold the view I had, that in extreme cases, religiously converting one half of a marriage could lead directly, to the divorce from one another, of the two people in that marriage.

Some lessons quickly followed, after I stopped talking to “next-door”. Firstly, and self-evidently, 55-year-olds have much more to learn. Then of greater value, we should reflect on any personal disagreements, fall outs, etc. For example, feeling angry or hateful towards

people, costs lots of energy. It is better to be patient and give people chances, whilst all along, allowing them to erode your respect for them, insidiously, and effortlessly on your part. When respect has gone, you're handed a gift of disrespect, disregard, or even disdain; and it "just is". It needs no energy or maintenance.

Each new life lesson presents choices. Wrong ones might become clearer, if their upkeep is ultimately deemed too costly and energetic, especially after any denial goes. It's then we get to say, "... not doing that again". The adage, "back to the old drawing board", seems relevant here; or, "if at first you don't succeed, try, try, again".

I feel nothing for "next-door". Thankfully, they also seem to have stopped trying to proselytise us both.

One day at a time

As a much younger man the pressures upon me seemed greater, and with poor mental health I was not equipped to cope, or as in the chicken and egg metaphor, the pressures caused my poor mental health.

There's so much going on today. In highly developed capitalistic countries, navigating life is like going through a minefield and quagmire combined. Whereas by living in the Amazonian jungle, your concerns would be more like food, shelter, procreation, fire, clothing, etc., alone, in daily cycles. There'd be no hankering for the next new model of Mercedes Benz car; or having career aspirations. The same is true of nomads in the Sahara Desert. There's an almost infinity less of bothers and concerns outside of the most developed countries like the UK.

When I finally stopped smoking, after several attempts; in the early stages I would say to

myself, I didn't smoke yesterday, I can do it again today. That was a good example of taking life one day at a time. Incidentally, I quit in 2012.

I was talking with my wife today about younger men, or those under forty. She told me that her own younger female friends, report that their boyfriends find commitment almost impossible. Straight away I said, they don't take life one day at a time. If they did, rather than viewing something as a life sentence, it might seem manageable; but they want to keep their options open and not be sacrificial in any way. Also, they're made to feel they should have ambitions, aspirations, and goals, etc., to be things or somebodies. That's because they live in the UK though, and not the Amazon, Sahara, or Papua New Guinea, or somewhere.

The bigger, faster, better, brighter, greater, stronger, taller, longer, etc., etc., are not as achievable when taking life a day at a time. But

planning, and always living for a future that might or might not happen, may cause anxiety. Whilst failure could lead to depression. I've spoken before about balance being important, so life should never be black or white alone. By standing outside of the crowd and learning the true value of the things in life, not just objective ones, but the harder to figure out ones too: the subjective ones, like love; and then by taking chances on your measure of it all, you might get happy.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, a 19th century champion of individualism, and leader of the transcendentalist movement, said "it's not the destination, it's the journey." That's what I'm saying. That's an important lesson that life taught me.

What, you mean I'm not lazy and good for nothing?

Apart from the vital functions that our automatic nervous system deals with, for example, keeping our heart beating, and lungs breathing, most aspects of being a human, or a member of the animal kingdom in general, require motives.

Remember that time when you simply didn't want to get out of bed. You worked for little remuneration to do another person's bidding, who made a great deal?

Depression is an insidious disease. In the UK it is now over diagnosed, alongside anxiety. One logical reason why those two conditions go hand in hand, is that the increasing deterioration in the all-round functioning of a depressed person, means their social and occupational abilities decline. Any ambitions become increasingly unlikely, and fear and other negative feelings

can follow. At an existential level, what was perceived to make up a person's life, not least their social, occupational, and even spiritual aspects, are challenged.

Remaining in bed, is closer to logic, than laziness.

Dream stealers

On entering the world, I knew almost immediately that I was not going to succeed in a worldly manner. Living in a capitalistic country, meant I was surrounded with ambitious, materialistic, and competitive people. My peers and I were all young, and it was hard not to keep the default narrative going, after all, by not doing so, was a general fail in the eyes of the majority. "Failure" required humility or humiliation, one or the other. I had never realised, due to taking things very much for granted, that school was much more to do with a programming than an acquisition of knowledge. Directly and indirectly, we had been encouraged to get the highest mark, but importantly, one higher than those of others; by jumping the highest high jump, sprinting the quickest hundred metres, maybe dating the prettiest girl or most handsome heartthrob, winning the most prizes, being offered a place in the best university, to study one of the most prestigious

subjects. We may have even extended this mentality, towards comparing our dad's car with the cars of other dads. School uniforms helped level us on the surface, but nowadays, some children draw the cheapest Android phones from their blazer inside pockets, whilst for others it's the latest Apple pro. Apparently, trainers were an item of status also, at one point.

I started learning the piano from scratch almost straight after leaving university. The year was 1989. I was 21. It was a most gigantic undertaking, and I still play regularly. I instinctively knew I had found myself in a total power hierarchy, but I had naively not seen it coming. It was not my own fault. More than anything it was misfortune. Piano became my substitute career, but it was a skills hierarchy. No-one got in the way. Well, that's a partial truth. People tried to mock me for learning it. That's where the title of this blog comes from. There are "dream stealers" in this world, who are not only content to trample on you in your power

hierarchy; but they want to put you off succeeding, in your own personal skills hierarchy, which has no bearing on anyone but yourself. Maybe at school, they didn't even do the high jump, and you didn't compete with them in the hundred metres sprint. I'm going to swear for the first time in one of my blogs, because despite the above, they still wanted you to knock the f***ing bar off when you jumped.

Watch out of for the dream stealers, that's their path. Good luck to them.

Forgive me : the curse of memory

Having personally taken a medicine on a daily basis, that is known to affect cognition in terms of memory, and especially its short-term aspect, I got to realise, that much of how I had treated people in the past, had been coloured by memories of the less significant events; those that lingered.

Because my recording of such memories became a lot less effective, after many years of taking those tablets, I would need to consciously try to retain them, or they'd be likely to go. Subconsciously, and very importantly, I began assuming that others are that way too, and it became a useful societal model.

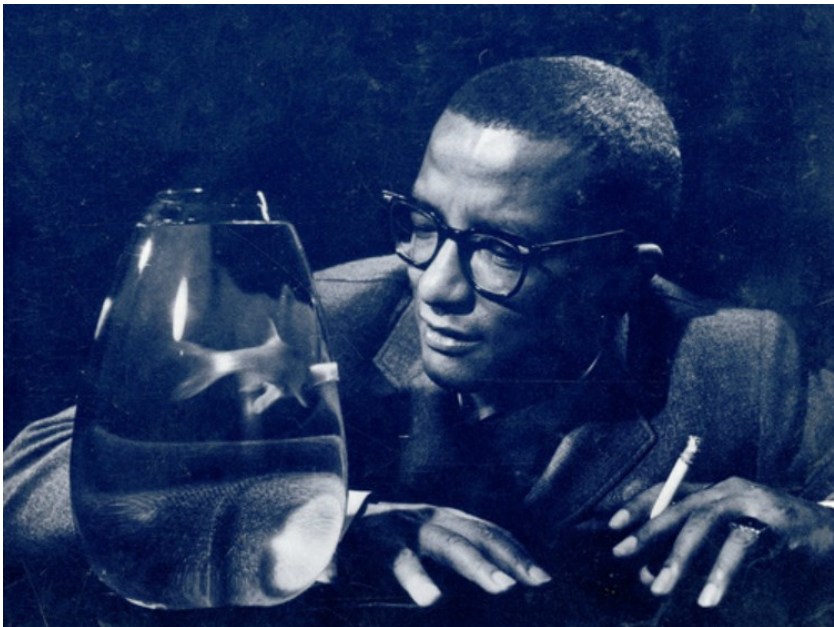
We will always remember the most shocking, painful, and otherwise significant events that we experience, but I learned that life would go on happily, whether we very actively ignore the pettier stuff, and assume others did the same, or

that our poor mental cognition does it for us, consequently influencing our behaviours.

What does it matter what the root of our actions are, when others see us in the same positive way regardless? It's another life choice, perhaps linked to Christian forgiveness, but more tangible.

Something to live for

Billy Strayhorn wrote the song "Something to live for". It was based on a poem he wrote in his teens. In the late 1930s it was very hard to be openly gay. Like many songs, it talks about meeting one's love to achieve happiness.



Like the other attachments this website shuns, people can be another. An individual *requiring*

a partner, who finds one with an emotionally self-sufficient nature, may have an unhealthy situation, possibly leading to control. Two such more in need people, may form a co-dependency. Two self-contained people are more likely to get to grow together, with a more grown-up or adult balance; whatever that is or may become.

Some people live for God. The truth is, there is nothing to live for that isn't already there, but we keep looking for it. The adage that we come into the world with nothing, and leave it with nothing, is so true. That's quite helpful, but the catch is that everything in the world, including our families, friends, neighbours, jobs, hobbies, possessions, skills, statuses, and dreams, are overwhelming, with any one of them able to seriously disappoint us.

Religious thought propounds God's existence and "his" consequent pursuit. Saint John said, "God is love". Carol King sang, "Only love is real. Everything else is illusion", and countless others

between the times of those two, have been saying the same. Jesus once shocked, by telling a group of people, "Before Abraham, I am". The 'I am' has always been there, it's Buddha's totally detached state. There's the world, and alternatively, there's "I am". Love, truth, Christlikeness, God, "I am", all of these, and similarly expressed equivalents, point us to inner living, to our insides. Jordan Peterson wrote, "get your house in order". And that's all you can do; then hope for the best; and maybe even face nothing but endless pain. Why did Saint Paul say, "Now faith, hope, and love remain -- these three things -- and the greatest of these is love."? (CEB)

Truth, genuine realisation; love if you like, can make the rest pointless, or at best external. That's more or less what Hell is. It's being lost; drifting, endlessly looking for a happiness, that is already under your own nose, and has always been there from the start. I promise you; Hell is on Earth and Heaven is within. And after our lives end, I guarantee that energy remains, if

only because science dictates that. Energy and matter are perfectly pure, but before the Big Bang, there was only "I am", or love: God.

Leaving Hell (on Earth) calms your mind, and unlike the "getting warmer" type search game, we played in our youths, let's play "getting colder" now. That's about the only map out there!

Curiosity

Einstein often mentioned curiosity. For example, he was quoted as saying, "I am neither especially clever nor especially gifted. I am only very, very curious."

Times come along when curiosity is all we have, and in the absence of love; our faith and hope may be resting upon it. The world is full of interests within incredibly diverse aspects; but only for interested people. Hedonists on the other hand, accept the status quo or you might say, their current level of whatever it might be. They do not prioritise learning.

People need continuing motives to keep things going, and with sufficient energy. Growth for its own sake can be reason enough. Pleasure categorically suggests stagnation.

At times we get stifled by people. Maybe promotion at work is unfairly blocked. The world

will always produce blocks of various manifestations, but if personal growth runs alongside these external vulnerabilities, life is more manageable, because in reality, our inner aims are the only reliable deals on the table.

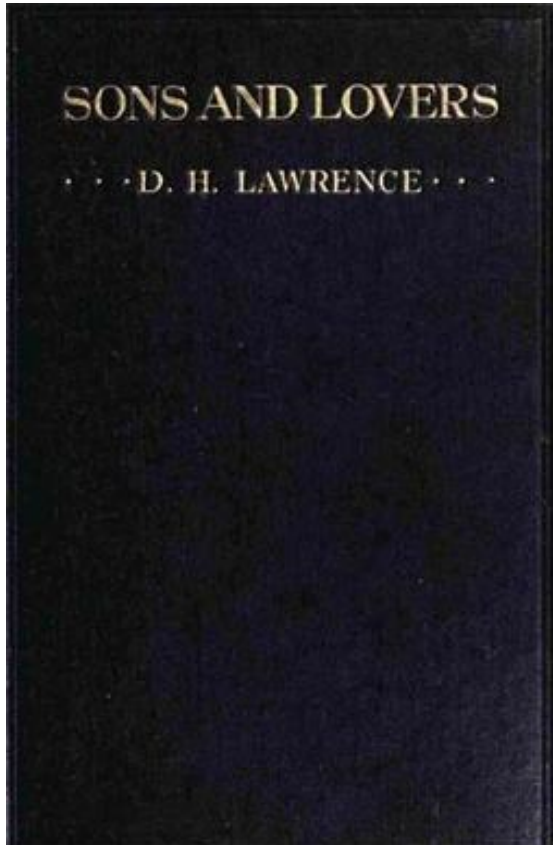
The character / personality continuum

There isn't a character / personality continuum as such. Anything that way would need to be rather nebulous around its edges. Truthfulness over deception, or humility before conceit, are strictly diametric. In fact, both those examples form part of the more complex former one, which I think is useful to look at.

One of the initial mentions in my "I am" book, is its reminder of D. H. Lawrence's character Mr Morel. The point made was that life involved very few options at that time, the early 1900s, whereas choices are uncountable now.

It is no wonder in the modern era that personality has become a monster that leads to a societally acceptable, and even encouraged, dishonesty. It is used as a weapon of social competition and progression. As people reach middle age and onwards, candour has more chance of mocking the externals of personality,

albeit, and ironically, after many exploitations of younger affected people, have been made by the machine that is popular culture.



It's also no wonder that neurotic illnesses such

as anxiety and depression, are prevalent in young people, because the pursuit of reality or a more genuine life, is a very lonely and self-isolating one requiring great strength, as opposed to the highly default paths of least resistance that "off the shelf" routes allow. Strength and lack of it, is another dichotomy that overlaps the one in the title of this piece.

My own poem, Sonnet #7 - "A conceptual verse", from 2017, states "Good character beats personality". I shared it at an open-mic event when I was about 50. An older man I respect said "if only it did". I was disappointed. I wanted character to prevail, more to the point, in the developed world. This has so many fundamentally important repercussions. It even overlaps with my oft quoted taking of the Matrix film red pill, over the blue one, or a proverbial removal of wool from our eyes, and it being the route to social confidence amongst pretenders. It's another expression of an Exit from Hell !

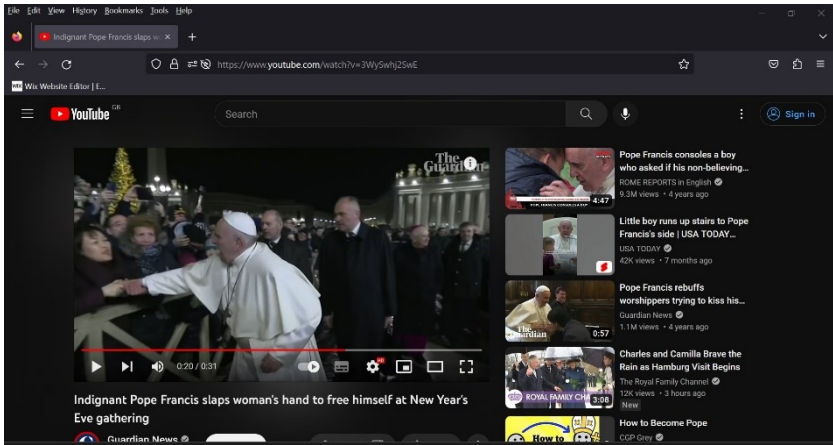
Two forms of perfection

People will understand a difference between the following, but they're worth clarifying. Conscientiousness does not imply a perfectionist personality trait. It means, for example, that work is done to a best ability, and not out of neurotic obsessive compulsiveness. It's just the right thing to do. That's an all-round positive.

Work can be carried out to the same equivalent level by a perfectionist, but their attitude is likely to impact on other people, perhaps in term of unwarranted criticism.

The Roman Catholic church lists some hundreds of saints which it asserts were perfect. Pope Francis might struggle to join them, because despite being the representative of Jesus Christ on Earth, and through the mystery of the Trinity, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and God the father, are equal, and furthermore, his papal infallibility, in recent times, he was irritated into

hitting someone, as caught on camera (see the picture or the video on the website).



As a more numerate than literate person, I doubt perfectionism through mathematical sense and logic. But conscientiousness in all its aspects is very desirable, as it overlaps positively with moral, ethical, occupational, social, political, and even religious aspects. Like everything else in my thoughts or opus, it propounds a more internal rather than external basis. The personality trait 'perfectionism' on the other hand, can easily spread from one person to

others, and that tends to happen if it's uncontrolled, whether its impact is wanted or not!

The herding instinct

If you read my five-minute story on this the website's Origins page, you may learn that I tuned pianos in the 1990s. For over a year of that time, the piano teacher there: the same man who'd hospitalised me, began giving me lifts to and from every Saturday and Sunday. His name was Ronnie, or Ronald Chadwick. He was elderly and has sadly passed away now. Self-taught on the piano, and a bricklayer by trade, he had a professional piano technique (as captured in the YouTube video I've shared), and he knew many regional piano dealers. He's clearly demonstrating for one of them in the clip. You must agree that Ronnie was very unusual, talented, and a complete one-off maverick.

Particularly on the car journeys, a favourite topic that Ronnie returned to was brains, specifically, the use or non-use of them. He was certainly not academic, and despised "didactic" approaches to piano playing, as he'd say. Those

included dictates in the guise of "interpretations", of great classics.



Ronnie coined the term "herding instinct" and would point out manifestations of it. More often than not, motorway drivers drove so dangerously close and at speed, that a mindless creature like the sheep and its group descriptive noun was perfect.

I don't apologise for writing so many words to get to the phrase in the title, because I'm happy for Ronnie to be a part of my website. What Ronnie made very apparent to me, was the lack of thought in the country, the evidence is everywhere. Simply put, most people do not use their brains. They follow a path of least resistance. They copy others. The positive, is that it needn't be like that. Using our brains is a habit that we can get into, even if it's a chore to start with. Any skill is easier with practise; yes, really. Anyone who has been a university undergraduate, will probably have met academical formidable people with no common-sense. That's a common stereotype. They needn't be. It's a choice to use your brain in everyday ways, you don't just do it.

This website is strong on maverick personalities, however, as daft as it sounds, you do have to choose to use your brain, even for the multitudinous tiny things. Many people are in total worlds of their own. Ronnie, for example,

would make something out of knocking on a door. He would never use a doorbell if he could audibly knock. It simply saved electricity. This attitude times dozens and dozens, was Ronnie. This is what I mean. It doesn't happen immediately; you have to work at it. Eventually it is habit forming, but never without that work and an initial choice; or you can be a capitalist drone, or similar!

Exit hell? Exit herd? I am leaving this with you.

Sin begets sin

It's curious that Chapter 8 of St John's gospel has been featured in this blog before. In its 34th verse, Jesus answered, "I assure you that everyone who sins is a slave to sin." (CEB)

I've witnessed how one thing leads to another, and how the normalisation of any particular illegal or antisocial behaviour makes them increasingly easy to start copying. In the last couple of years, the "jumping" of red road traffic lights, has become so common that more cars jump them than not in my area. Littering and fly tipping is something that begins with a "seed", or literally a scrap of rubbish, but it then follows an exponential path. Sadly, knife crime in the UK shares a similar function of growth.

Most people are sheep-like, both in picking up bad habits from others, but worse still, by allowing them to become innate, in the unchecked way that fashions in the broadest

sense manifest. And patently, the same mechanisms are stimulated by marketing gurus, fashion designers, and all exploitative minds. More recently two very brief and unhelpful mantras have evolved and spread in this manner. Neither featured much in my own 1980s youth and undergraduate years. One is "be kind", which I've already blogged about, and the other is "not my problem". I think wide propagation of the latter one will clearly damage any society.

My point here, is that I think Jesus was suggesting that the longer you spend on a path, whether positive or negative, then the harder it is to get off it, regardless of the nature of the path. Other examples are gambling, drug and alcohol addictions; and frankly, endless pointless habits (read on).

The word "sin" is not so helpful, and it can certainly point us to "The Ten Commandments", or "The Seven Deadly..." Personally, I think we

should be more aware of **path** in general. Sins can be viewed as behaviours that follow deceptive and snowballing routes. They might be bad for ourselves, others, animals, and/or the wider natural world. They needn't be seriously criminal. And for example, antisocial actions like fly tipping, might truly have started with the attitude of dropping minor litter on footpaths, or chocolate bar wrappers out of car windows. Maybe it's not their problem to take it home, after all, in a dreadful capitalistic country, with perhaps millions of less than fair financial exchanges occurring daily; I don't know, by the hour even; who cares? We're all at it. Everyone is bent... ; ho hum...

In Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, or OCD, a recurring and pointless "sin" against self is happening. For sufferers, daily unnecessary checks and/or behaviours can become a serious handicap. But they began somewhere, before a "sin begotten sin" mechanism took over. Reiterating then, I think the deceptive and

snowballing nature of this particular **path**, is more important to realise than the knowing of right from wrong alone. Not many can't appreciate the difference in the previous poles, despite their behaviour. Some people, including C.S. Lewis, think this knowledge is automatically instilled in us at birth, and we therefore don't need to be taught it. They add that it is a proof of the existence of God. Of course, I'd personally say, "what do you mean, by God?", but I get the point.

“Don’t worry, Be happy”

The song with this title was released by Bob McFerrin in 1988. It seemed like an unquestionably good and sensible idea. I remember it being sang in a suitably matter of fact manner. It was a no-brainer so to speak. Back then, as today though, hordes look all over for happiness. So, for example, materialism might offer it: the latest German car. A new look: whitened teeth, tattoos, or designer clothes may attract it to us. People entering our lives could solve everything; couldn't they? We might think that career progression, along with a perceived higher status, and any associated power, is the Holy Grail; or that the gift of children might be the sine qua non of bliss. For some, instant fixes of hedonism may answer needs for happiness, and on tap, for example, pornography/ sex, alcohol, drugs, computer games, and gambling.

The daft thing is that happiness is under everybody's noses; now, at this moment! Not that

it is that simple to realise; but happiness is categorically something you choose to have. I personally think, that if you have been through Hell, the ultimate choice of happiness is an easier one. Choosing it when you have never veered off the "straight and narrow", in my opinion, is more of a default than a conscious decision. You might wonder how somebody can logically be sure they are happy, when their experience suggests they're ignorant of alternatives.

Even L. Ron. Hubbard, the controversial, late founder of the Church of Scientology, both knew and shared, that "*the truth of the matter is that all the happiness you will ever find lies in you*".

Nobody can possibly give you the key to happiness, but I promise you that everything mentioned in the first paragraph, represent figurative "houses on sand", as alluded to by Jesus in Matthew 7:24-27. The trick, ideally, is to build our "houses on rock", and make each

one, a totally individual "construct". By the way, it doesn't necessarily involve religions, but they may not harm. They may even help. Rather, it's within. It's God if you like, but no two person's gods are the same, thus placing any definitions in the field of semantics.

I'll share my own viewpoint anyway: everybody (and perhaps nature too) is God. Furthermore, the chief point of life is to first realise that, and then begin to enjoy the ramifications of it.

Fear and forgiveness

For most of my life I was in fear. Everybody feels some anxiety about change for example, but deep-rooted fear stemming from mistrust, is very likely to impact on our lives more so than healthy levels of anxiety will.

I think an early onset of fear comes with a "confirmation bias" effect: we overly look for and find, things to be scarred of, rather than let things scare us on their own accord, as and when. Looking back at my own life, I think my paranoid illness, and the insight I lacked, was therefore no wonder.

A fearful person puts out signals such as guarded body language, and suspicious speech, or a lack of it. Some people are very receptive to these messages, and they know how to capitalise from people who reveal them. Without self-awareness, when we get scarred, we don't know its root, how it's not our fault (especially when

an early onset is involved), and we failed to turn that fear into controlled anger, or another emotion we can more productively use.

Both fear and anger directly affect us: we feel both, and they may be unpleasant. Reiterating, some degree of anxiety is useful, but it's a fine line between feeling anxious and the related emotion of fear. John Lydon's autobiography is "Anger is an energy". Whilst anger can be positively channelled, its positive and negative sides lie precariously apart.

Here's where forgiveness comes in, because forgiving the people that took advantage of your propensity to be scared, and who you ultimately felt anger towards, helps to remove it. That's the link between fear and forgiveness. With this new tack, and insight, your fear should become less automatic too.

Whilst you needn't be a Christian, or a follower of any religion at all, St Matthew reported in

chapter 6 verses 9 to 13 of his gospel, that Jesus told us how we should pray. The church based the famous Lord's Prayer on this. Following on from those verses is a suggestion: "if you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you don't forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your sins." (CEB)

In line with my personal thoughts and interpretations, I think our heavenly Father forgiving us speaks volumes, because we are the heavenly Father! More so because my words draw again from John chapter 8. Verses 31 and 32 say, 'Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teaching. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."' (CEB)

“Lucky to be me”

Leonard Bernstein wrote "Lucky to be me". It shared the sentiment of contentment at having met someone special. I particularly like the Bill Evans and Monica Zetterlund recording.



But it's a dangerous approach to have someone "make you whole". You need to be whole and then meet someone else who is also whole. That way there's less scope for co-dependency.

Just like TV's fictional Doctor Who, who has been through many manifestations, and for example David Bowie the late pop musician, who also did the same, I think it is only natural and sensible, that we go through versions of ourselves, until we find one that generates the least friction with other people, whilst allowing us to engage in what is meaningful to us; and practically speaking, to function financially and/or occupationally with a happy outlook on life.

For some people, their earlier lives may have been Hell on Earth. The fact that each one of those steps heads towards a version demonstrating "a happy outlook on life", suggests they were once less happy. But that's not totally accurate, because the goals of a 20-year-old may be different to those of a 30, 40 or 50-year-old, for example. However, I assert that Hell is definitely on Earth, and the longer your stay there, the wider your eyes ultimately become, the more balanced you are, and crucially

then, the less fooled you are that making a compromise should be frowned upon. That's negative capitalist thinking, not a human being's reasoning. The former instils comparisons and competition, because they help to fuel the national engine, which ultimately competes with other nations' engines too, with no end to it all. For many, that widespread and endlessly propagating model, can be hard to rise above. Adages such as "when in Roman do as the Romans", "if you can't beat them join them", and sadly, "I'm alright Jack", may all relate, and are broadly what the system encourages.

Three routes out of this position may be -

- 1) A superior education: private school, or grammar school, followed by Oxbridge or another prestigious university.

- 2) Religious beliefs: you may distance yourself from everything worldly and recognise the existence of a higher power.

3) My experience is that having suffered plenty enough, on account of the world and other misfortunes, you *CHOOSE* happiness, which has always been under your nose. So, find it, and take it.

Godspeed.

Foolish identifications

It is hard not to hold some identities, but I humbly imagine, that the most extreme examples of human situations, such as those that were forced upon European Jews and others, during World War 2, may have challenged the most profoundly and fundamentally held personal views.

I'm going to suggest we avoid harbouring identities, but not because of the reason above, and not because anything any other person has written or said. My ideas are all my own. Anybody who is used to my writing, will know this subject has been cover by me before, not least in my "I am" book. I don't apologise for repetition. The thing about these thoughts, or words of wisdom, if you will, is that presentations in different ways, or in different places, and in fact by many different people, can enhance the chances of any messages being successfully passed on. If for example, you focus

on John's Gospel in the Christian New Testament, Jesus describes himself as "the Word" (1:1-14), "the Light" (1:4-9), "the Shepherd" (10:1-18), "the Bread of Life" (6:35-59), "the True Vine" (15:1-17), and "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (14:6). Long winded academic ramblings might impress academics, but are so exclusive, as to be near worthless to non-academic people, or in other words, the overwhelmingly greater sized everyday majority.

The longer anybody stays alive, the greater the chance that any identity they will hold, will be directly challenged by the beliefs and attitudes of others, or indirectly by unavoidable life circumstances. I want people to consider that there is no logical, intelligent, or emotional reasons, to firmly hold defining ideas about ourselves; and especially not, to base self-confidence, group connections and/or affiliations, or understandings of who we are, on what are often precious, but non-tangible ideas we have,

and even guard. To a lesser or very greater extent, simply having these, makes us vulnerable to hurt and offense from the conflicting views of others.

Of course, I have not been in a concentration camp. I did not survive the living damnation of somewhere like Belsen or Auschwitz, but I did work in a cutthroat commercial software house in the early 1990s. That doesn't sound like so much at all after the previous context, but it was a very big deal for me, because not long after starting my 18 months there, I was quickly subjected to regular unfair bullying, with management both seeing and ignoring it. Midway through that employment, by definition, I became psychotic. Therefore, I did not know I was psychotic, but my thoughts were increasingly mad, or crazy. It was a very insidious process. I started hearing derogatory voices in the third person, which appeared to come from people physically next to me. They were so real I only learned they'd been

hallucinations, by talking to a very good CPN (community psychiatric nurse) over twenty years afterwards. The voices kept coming across as things like, "he's a yes man", "he's ruined his career", and "he'll never live it down", and they were always in the precise vocal tone of the person who was apparently saying them.

Being regularly bullied at your place of work is serious, but also being bullied by imaginary derogatory voices in the third person, makes it very challenging. I resigned, and perversely, things got worse, because I was a psychotic with no medical interventions at all. In a word, my mental condition *annihilated* me as a person, placing me most profoundly, at square one. At that position, you might kill yourself, become a heroin addict, or try to start from scratch. I did the latter. It took twenty years to properly fix myself, and in all honesty, me, or anyone else in that kind of position, can never be sure the fix is permanent.

I don't write massive academic tomes. I'm telling you; I know. The penchant for collecting identities, more so these days than ever, is dangerous. To a lesser or much greater degree, it makes you weak and vulnerable. There's no reason for it. That's why Jesus said, "the Kingdom of Heaven is within", and Buddha implored us to detach. Take this or leave it, but those precious and defining opinions of yourself, are totally pointless. They are your Achilles Heel. Had I not had them in the 1990s, my life would have been very different. It was those meaningless aspects which in me, were so painfully stripped. I love me now. It took a long time to rebuild me: over twenties years. Some things like my career, and many of my friendships, were irreparably damaged. Many don't make it after such a blow. I'm not saying we're all risking similar, but I categorically assert, that your identities are totally pointless vulnerabilities. They will definitely cause you problems of some degree, from the minor, to the cataclysmic.

”He’s a bizarre combination”

During a more poorly time in terms of my mental health, I was hearing voices as if coming from people who were immediately present, but I didn't know at the time that the words were hallucinations. Sat in the passenger seat, of the Triumph Dolomite car that my brother's friend Matthew was driving, and in the late 1980s, I randomly heard him say, "he's a bizarre combination", bearing in mind there was no-one else there. I believed that was real for about 25 years, and subsequent imaginary voices became much nastier.

It's not uncommon for people to be divided into two broad groups. One could be the intelligent and/or academic types, who might have less common-sense due to having been under involved in trials and tribulations, those stemming from regular decisions and the cause-and-effect lessons stemming from them. Then there are people who have few formal

qualifications, but they take chances. They face their fears. Some of them say they went to the University of Life. Their confidence gains have them learning to "wing" things, bluff, or make it up as they go along. I was in the former group until my mid-forties.

Without balancing these life approaches, intellectuals might be unfairly or meanly utilised. Whilst those demonstrating confidence, both real or pretend, and with common-sense, might be able to fool people; as managers though, their shunning of reasoned discussions in favour of dictates, betrays their background.

As I have said elsewhere, I think a more modern collection of pointers, based on Saint Paul's "faith, hope and charity", is "balance, respect and love", with balance in the modern world being absolutely vital.

Embrace your aloneness

Almost a decade ago I coined the phrase, "embrace your aloneness". At 44 I was unemployed, surviving on £500 (GBP) per month. I'd been made a widower, after 18 years together; the last six in marriage. I had no friends, apart from the gallery owner Colin Jellicoe. I had a severe mental illness, and my geriatric, arthritic and incontinent dog, was evacuating indoors daily, but I hadn't the heart to euthanise her.

I was quite a poor general prospect, and certainly little attraction to a new partner. Continuing to write, my poems took a turn, and often became like journal entries. That's where the title "My beautiful diary" is from. They started revealing a philosophy which hadn't emerged beforehand, because my imposed state of isolation had apparently been a necessary catalyst for it.

For example, on the 18th of January 2014, aged 45, I wrote "Amidst depression" and "The road home from Damascus" on the same day. Both poems suggested that something needed to change !

Amidst depression

I'm not incarcerated, but there's nowhere better than my bedroom to go. I smashed the egg-timer. Sand no longer torments me, and I listen to the sad chamber music of Kenneth Leighton repeatedly.

I keep thinking that I must be bad, because why otherwise would I spend every day alone, listening to music and confusing people online with mood-swings? When I look back at my life I don't remember ever acting out of pure love. I always got my reward. As such I'm reaping what I've sown. Hell is on Earth.

I've convinced myself that everybody's alone,
only people just haven't realised it.
We live lies. The sooner we realise this truth,
the sooner we can become our true selves.

My god has betrayed me. I'm in the jungle,
and those who perish rot to the ground.
Carbon recycles, but as for souls,
it's the biggest fallacy of all, a bigger trap
than thinking sex is for anything -
but procreation.

I'd like to believe again, but this time
I know I'm bad. Even the priests' expressions -
tell me.

That's made it really close in on me.
I must be strong though:
I'm still here.

18/1/14

The road home from Damascus

John 4:8 - Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

He'd believed in God,
and an afterlife.
He could meet folk again.
Then it dawned on him
that everyone has an agenda
and doesn't act out of pure "love" alone.
People want,
giving while receiving their rewards.
Everyone is proud.
He'd been betrayed,
and realised that this "love"
did not exist. It followed
that God must be a delusion,
making him think,
as he was alone and wretched,
helplessly watching people starve
and die slaughtered,
that maybe Earth is Hell. -

Some of us twig this,
whilst others pretend forever.
He wanted to pretend,
but sought the truth.
Had the few saints out of the billions
been the only approximation to "love?"
He wondered if he had become bad from birth,
like baptism was another joke,
or if he chose to be bad later?
He amazed at what people felt
when deluding about "love."
If the truth be known,
he'd never felt anything but a glimmer,
his entire life.

18/1/14

* * *

I realised there was no perfection in love, but today, I would add the caveat, outside of Jesus Christ. Then with further consideration, I realised I was wrong, because surely it is found

in nature, or "Mother Nature" I you like. I was becoming pantheistic; however, I'd never ever heard the word before. What happen next was made possible because of Facebook, and the connections I had on it, to old school friends and some people I didn't really know, because I was called a "pantheist". I was thrilled to have discovered something for myself, rather than reading it in a book and deciding I was that. In a way, it chose me. Heck, on the strength of it, I even joined the Green Party briefly, because I hadn't reached the point in my life where I was avoiding labelling.

Five days after writing the above two poems I wrote the one below. I've said before, decisions happen in a flash. Collecting data can take any amount of time, but choice is momentary.

Truth

I searched for it
my entire life.
Then I realised
it had been there all along.

Nature asks for nothing.
She feeds us, clothes us,
warms us, body and heart.
Nature must be love.
We take advantage
and she forgives.

I saw a robin today.
Surely it was God
with its characteristic trust.
I shared moments
in my space; its space.
I smiled at its lack of dogma.
I know simplicity was divine.

23/1/14

It became clear that before anything else, I needed to love myself. I learned how to talk to strangers, even how to reveal my dreadfully nicotine-stained teeth in a smile; the latter being made possible as I knew any visual aspect, was like a proverbial iceberg type metaphor. My smile was made infectious because it hinted at genuine individuality, and how cruel misfortunes, both unfair and even unusual, might have facilitated that outcome. **I was embracing my aloneness**, my uniqueness, and that was all I could do. Either that, or I could be a clone. Life stemmed from there, eventually beginning.

Still in my mid-forties, despite everything that had happened, and importantly; because everything had happened, things started !!! And that's the paradox. I eventually remarried, and successfully, but not to the cliched "ideal" person who just walked into my life and made me happy. I made me happy first...

Jordan Peterson said, "I know you're full of snakes. I know it. Maybe I know it more than you do, but we'll play anyways."

After entering the world, I started voluntarily walking dogs for the RSPCA, every Thursday. I also joined a writing group in Manchester city centre, and attended every Monday evening. My poems were very well received, but I thought they might be, because many had previously been accepted for publication, by international literary markets. I'd been regularly submitting work over the previous few years.

Ultimately, I wrote my autobiography: "Embrace your aloneness". Life started for me, not in a small part after my acceptance of that dictate. Soon afterwards I met Michelle. She'd also risen above misfortunes. Despite our snakes we had a shot at life together. It's not easy, but neither of us are quitters. We married on Valentine's Day 2015 : my 47th birthday.

* * *

If you do nothing else, drop your victimhood. Stop harming yourself, whether by neglect, or through substance abuse and other addictions. Then, however thick the camouflage is, because the world remains atrocious, count your blessings. They might only be hidden by denial and be just under your nose.

* * *

Godspeed.

The smell of fear

There are at least two books I wish I could have simply uploaded into my brain, whilst leaving the rest on my “never likely to be read” list. Perhaps direct upload will eventually become closer to reality, as in the imaginative film, *Total Recall*, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sharon Stone. Until then, the ability to read is gigantically powerful, but was never a skill at a serviceable level for myself.

Regrettably, I expect the pair I allude to, might have clarified later in life, how my personal and overriding **fear** was rooted, and could have helped me to overcome it. Those books are John Bowlby’s “A secure base”, and Susan Jeffers’ “Feel the fear and do it anyway”.

I highlighted the noun “fear” previously, to reinforce its singular form. That’s because fear originates from a point. The alternative is implausible because it would imply a

synchronisation of emotional triggers. My blog on page 102, **Sin begets sin**, suggests a similar seeding mechanism, but whilst both sin and fear are insidious, the former is more personally controlled or curtailed, whilst the latter suffers from external dictates.

One of the most challenging aspects of fear, is the degree of insight coupled to it. For example, it is possible to be scarred, and personally not realise it, because your own behaviour fails to inform. The younger you are; and God forbid if you are a child, there's great scope for your fear to grow, and it could then form part of your emerging personality.

Greater degrees of fear trigger automatic responses such as those found in nature, for example, like the kind exhibited by gazelles to avoid their capture by predators. That same primitive emotion has featured in our own ancestors, and from the beginning. The problem today is not that it is still there, but that it is

disproportionately strong, because we are no longer chased by sabre-toothed tigers and that kind of thing!

Much of what determines how individuals succeed in developed capitalist democracies, is not qualification based as my own state school implied. It's not who you know; though that can help more than qualifications, but rather, it's much more basal indeed. It relates to the savannah, or jungle. It's about courage, initiative, and strength. For some people those factors are compromised before "adult" life begins.

I called this blog "The smell of fear" because it's not just about failing to get on with pathological levels of stress, anxiety, and/or fear, regardless of how others view their severities, but rather it's the emerging numbers of lions, snakes, and hyenas, i.e., bullies, opportunists, and thieves. Offices become the savannah, and society the jungle. Without saying anything, your body

language betrays everything that is exploitable about you, making you a gazelle on constant alert.

Worse than this, if you don't view predators for what they are, and that they'd just pick someone else if not you, then paranoia emerges from your anxiety, as your fear keeps growing and your trust vanishes. It's a process, and you increasingly see just badness, whilst losing more and more sight of the good. It almost becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. It's called "confirmation bias" by psychologists.

Like drug habits, sex addictions, gambling, alcohol, selfishness, greed, or the above referenced general term "sin"; the key is to not initiate behaviours. That might essentially, be why Christians erase "original sin" through infant baptisms. But not everyone has the option to dodge fear, especially children. God help those whose insight fails, stakes rocket, and all solutions evaded personal resources.

Here's me sat at my Roland digital piano, with my late, very beloved rescue dog, Angel. I adopted her from the RSPCA, who I used to voluntarily walk dogs for. Dogs, classical piano playing and writing, were never suggested to me at school or university, or my home life, but they were what I needed, like part of a life map!

Be a seeker. Find your life.
Sincerely, Godspeed once more...

Michael...



It...

Excluding out-and-out scientists, the concerns of academics mainly centre around the distillation of pre-realised material, and its cross referencing. Conversely, mavericks produce work based on personal discoveries, which they often didn't mean to have, and whether they are fresh ones within a field, or well-trodden ideas, it matters not, because everything is new to the maverick. By sharing all their independently made realisations, we all still benefit, because even a reinvention of the proverbial wheel, can further strengthen accepted thoughts, but only when it stemmed out of isolation.

Overall, studying recommended books provides a dispersal of existing accepted knowledge, it categorically cannot validate or corroborate it. The protective nature academia exerted around itself and its practises, is counterproductive. Ironically, colleges and universities operate as closed shops. Threats from outside thinkers are

immediately filtered because they will lack extensive lists of references and/or bibliographies. It's a "keep it in the family" approach.

The following quotes, from myself and thirteen others, who I probably don't deserve to share any company with, are listed in this very deliberate order of mine. Whilst there is little formal source referencing, the way they overlap and intertwine does a good job substituting for that, and it helps to clarify, what "It..." is, whilst not forgetting, that **Hermann Hesse** was accurate, in saying "wisdom cannot be imparted"!

In sincere good faith...

Jesus Christ - (Luke 17:20-21) --- "Pharisees asked Jesus when God's kingdom was coming. He replied, "God's kingdom isn't coming with signs that are easily noticed. Nor will people say, Look, here it is! or There it is! Don't you see? God's kingdom is already among you.'" (CEB)

Jesus Christ - (Matthew 19:14) --- "“Allow the children to come to me,” Jesus said. “Don’t forbid them, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to people like these children.”” (CEB)

Tom Hanks - (Forrest Gump) --- “I’m not a smart man, but I know what love is.”

Carole King - (Thoroughbred) --- “Only love is real. Everything else is illusion.”

Bhagwan Rajneesh Osho --- "Once you have loved yourself, you will love God. And it is not a question of choice. It is when you have loved yourself that God starts falling in love with you."

Ram Dass --- "The spiritual journey is individual, highly personal. It can't be organised or regulated. It isn't true that everyone should follow one path. Listen to your own truth."

Friedrich Nietzsche --- "No man is more inferior than those who insist on being equal."

Ram Dass --- "The game is not about becoming somebody. It's about becoming nobody."

Hermann Hesse --- “When someone is seeking, it happens quite easily that he only sees the thing that he is seeking; that he is unable to find

anything, unable to absorb anything, because he is only thinking of the thing he is seeking, because he has a goal, because he is obsessed with his goal.

Seeking means: to have a goal; but finding means: to be free, to be receptive, to have no goal. You, O worthy one, are perhaps indeed a seeker, for in striving towards your goal, you do not see many things that are under your nose.”

Buddha --- "Do not look for a sanctuary in anyone except yourself."

Buddha --- "The root of suffering is the attachment."

Michael Holme --- "Embrace your aloneness."

Michael Holme --- "Only compete with yourself. Everest is locally known to the plain and humble.

Albert Einstein --- "If you want to live a happy life, tie it to a goal, not to people or objects."

L. Ron Hubbard --- "The truth of the matter is that all the happiness you will ever find lies in you."

Paramahansa Yogananda --- "Humans become angels on earth, not in heaven."

Hermann Hesse --- "For different people, there are different ways to God, to the center of the world. Yet the actual experience itself is always the same."

Robert Greene - (The 50th Law) --- "Understand: as an individual you cannot stop the tide of fantasy and escapism sweeping a culture. But you can stand as an individual bulwark to this trend and create power for yourself. You were born with the greatest weapon in all of nature—the rational, conscious mind. It has the power to expand your vision far and wide, giving you the unique capacity to distinguish patterns in events, learn from the past, glimpse into the future, see through appearances. Circumstances are conspiring to dull that weapon and render it useless by turning you inward and making you afraid of reality. Consider it war. You must fight this tendency as best you can and move in the opposite direction. You must turn outward and become a keen observer of all that is around you."

You are doing battle against all the fantasies that are thrown at you. You are tightening your connection to the environment. You want clarity, not escape and confusion. Moving in this direction will instantly bring you power among so many dreamers."

Jim Carrey --- "Your need for acceptance can make you invisible in this world. Don't let anything stand in the way of the light that shines through this form. Risk being seen in all of your glory."

Jim Carrey --- "I am Heaven."

Get a hat and be a man

Firstly, I mean “person”, not literally “man”, but the connotation was stronger with “man”.

My third major job took me to a local university. Initially, I coded software in ‘C’ for an Astro chemist. I know: “beam me up Scotty”. I was soon struck by how two of my colleagues wore the precise same clothes, or types of items, week after week after month after year.

As someone who was well acquainted with classical piano music, and its composers, I remembered how Eric Satie was labelled the Velvet Gentleman, because he allegedly had several identical jackets in that material, and he always wore one, hence looking eccentric. And that spilled onto his music to, because he wrote bizarre, tongue in cheek performance directions on scores, such as stuff about parrots, etc. They seem to me to have been justifiable and necessary reactions to the late romantic period,

which had got carried away by overly embracing Wagnerian excesses, which needed derailing.

Satie invariably hung out with other creatives in the cafes of Montmartre. My colleagues were quite unimaginative, after all, they were computer technicians. So, I ultimately viewed their choice of dress as a uniform.

I tried to brainstorm uniform wearing -

It might suggest you know your mind, and who you are. That way it portrays some strength and conviction.

It might say work is work, and you're not distracted by irrelevant peripheries. You work both consistently in amount and quality.

When we were at school, the uniform levelled us in important socioeconomical ways.

* * *

The major underlying aspect here is consistency, which can rise above competitive and worldly vanities, linked with wardrobe sizes, but the blog's title referred to hats?

Buy yourself a nice hat and wear it always. Many people may forget you after having had a brief and casual exchange, but there's a better chance they'll not forget your hat; and incidentally, you must forget it! Hats can also serve as a measure of a person's lack of self-consciousness. That's a good vibe to broadcast. They also offer some positive benefits of a uniform, without covering an entire body!

I could have called this blog, "**Be consistent and be an adult**". The hat I ultimately settled into daily wearing, was a blue leather beret, I ordered it from this Polish company, which was established in 1926. Therefore, -

I suggest - www.sterkowski.com

A numeric diffusion

Long after the event, an elderly friend of mine told me he had been trying to cultivate the habit of silently counting to ten, before responding to somebody, to help him find a less angular and more reasoned reply or retort, of course, that's after having been made annoyed or offended. I was once that person, after meaning to be funny and friendly, firstly, I didn't come across as such; and two, I was not privileged to a full count of ten. It resulted in a catastrophe.

Surely this method was not new and original. In fact, it has been postulated that the Roman Emperor Augustus from 27 BC to 14 AD, who was known for his bad temper, but also his encouragement of both the education and cultural enrichment of the populace, would mentally run through the alphabet in such heated situations.

Unsurprisingly, politicians are hopeless in this manner, or they choose never to pause and consider before giving an unprepared reply. So, in the UK for example, they tend to offer fixed party lines in robotic fashions. If probed towards more contentious areas, multiple and unrelated deflections ensue, until there's no more point or time to go further, as in filibustering.

In contrast to this, there are well known people on social media, who consider their responses effectively, and take the time need to do so in unflustered ways. For example, Jordan Peterson, Elon Musk, Richard Dawkins, and Sadguru. I once saw Elon Musk pausing for around about 15 to 20 seconds before he answered a question. He wasn't in an argument as such, but was certainly being scrutinised, over what the interview viewed as a very counter intuitive behaviour on Elon's part. Elon was completely calm, and it was an inspirational moment. Peterson is perhaps the more stressed. I think people might be keen to derail him, as he

talks about many and broader subjects, which can attract a wider audience. Elon is more about cars and space rockets, and granted, many side-lines including energy; so, massive subjects, in fact.

If you do try to count to ten, whilst moderating a reply, you might find it's a long time, and silence can easily aggravate anxieties. Maybe try "1, 2, 3" first, then build on that. Who knows where it will take you? But it should be towards practise rather than hopes for quick results.

Fine tuning identities through precious free speech

Some people who live in countries where you can speak without dire repercussions, often on social media platforms, so you needn't travel, and with a noted exception of university campuses, you needn't be physical presence, can find themselves sharing opinions as a daily norm. Sometimes they even add trailing qualifiers to their messages, such as, "just my opinion", because it has become assumed, that given something is an opinion, then not only is it morally, ethically, and even legally Okay to share it, but that it is most deeply and intrinsically correct. Like a religious view, why shouldn't it have some degree of societal protection.

Personally, (listen to me, "personally"); I think very many people, after having decided what their identities are, assume, or even demand, that other people should respect them; or in fact,

go further than that and validate them, actively even. Just as their many general opinions are intrinsic and true, so too must their identities be. Ignoring or trashing them, to any degree, is quite sinful, unreasonable, and heinous, they'd think.

I'm not a scholar, but loosely speaking, I think a shift has taken place in the 21st century, from an Existentialist leaning of individuals to a Postmodern like Identity Politics, with its strong and multifaceted group options.

Figurative lynch mobs both regularly and easily emerge within the internet, because of this group bias. University debating societies, hone leaders. All of them energetically protect the ideologies, but frankly, because such ideas feedback into their identities, they are more than that, they are fundamentally essential and sacred to them. Damned right they need free speech. On the other hand, the individual, albeit a difficult state to reach, is a self-contained one. Groups requires a continuous battle for the

dominance of their peculiar assertions and mantras. It often involves the insistence of outer, nontangible, and nebulous thought. This can bring out the worst in people, especially as they are not in it alone. That's why I chose the expression "lynch mob" above. It has a positive, "if you're not with us, you're against us" ethos.

My own position is clear. I've shared it in my 42 page "I am" book, and elsewhere. I'm going to add, that anybody can quickly join a group, but finding your individual self can take decades. They say, "Roman wasn't built in a day". I shouldn't need to add this concluding remark, but today is very different indeed to the past.

* * *

Truly, nothing of real value, stems from simply joining a pre-existing group.

Two forms of self-sabotage.

I'm going to tell you two very profound and important things in this piece. You may well already know them, but since no-one has told them to me, I'm guessing that I've been mixing with those that didn't know this, or they're not commonly spoken.

The first thing is that people are not especially creative, right? What I mean, in practical terms, is that people who engage in creative activity, are more likely to excel, because they are statistically more available, and receptive, when a greater than normal creative burst becomes facilitated. For example, you hear of writers having the muse. At other times they may complain of writer's block. They don't control it. I saw a YouTube video which featured Bob Dylan talking about his early lyrics. It referenced early albums, but particularly the song "It's Alright, Ma" from *Bring It All Back Home*. Seriously, google those lyrics. Bob plain did not know where

some of those early lyrics came from, and admitted to the interviewer that it had gone, and he simply could not write like that now, but gosh, was he thankful he did at the time. So, this is the nature of creativity. And if you NEVER TRY, it will never fill you up. Love it and do it. I started writing in 1997, and piano playing in 1989, sometimes I've had a proper brush with it. Believe me. Don't be your own saboteur. At least give it a chance!

Number two is another thing you can self-sabotage. Look, Jesus Christ is in your life, if you live in a Judeo-Christian based culture. You simply cannot escape it. It's too basal, too fundamental. The behaviour of most half decent people is completely rooted in laws and attitudes stemming from the Bible. Think about it! However, most people think you must believe in the supernatural to be a Christian, or indeed a Jew. But they also place ghosts and vampires, or even the Loch Ness monster, in that camp, and they laugh at it.

This is my personal angle on it, and I will leave it at this. If religions did not involve supernatural gods with powers of executing miracles, do you think peasants, and tribe members, or forest dwellers, nomads, and what not, are going to buy the f***** words of some missionary type, telling them to pray, when their lives involve abject deprivation, disease, and persecution?

There's not a version of any religion for the poor, that involves a rewrite for the rich and smaller minority.

* * *

Leave that with you.

A mental health review

Here are some thoughts about long-term #mentalhealth

When I was much younger, I hit psychosis level, then 25 years later I was still not fully right. What? Is this a suggestion that we never fully recover from profound mental illness? It seems to me that maybe we never do so, at least not 100%. If only crystal balls could predict the future. However, we remain poorly with increased, and hopefully increasing, levels of life experience to ensure better choice making to come. Sadly, gaining from those experiences might have made a difference to us right from the start, and they suggest the adage, “Good judgement comes from experience. And experience? Well, that comes from poor judgement”. What a blow: we missed things early in life, and through a lottery like situation, others obviously didn’t?

Today, many young people complain about anxiety, as if it was unnatural to have any. However, after many years, and the profound ramifications of time, accepting similar neurotic symptoms, as if they're residual, must become obligatory. Psychiatry and other interventions help to a degree, but there's a point, however unfair and/or cruel, where acceptance, and some mental setbacks, pains, or discomforts have to coexist.

In other words, stop waiting for a “cure”; whatever that even is in the context of serious mental illnesses. But rather, help yourself by avoiding street drugs like cannabis, taking some exercise, having regular sleeping habits, eating well, avoiding alcohol, and being compliant with your medication, because any one of these can categorically improve things for you. If need be, a reduction in medication can be discussed with your doctor, but bear in mind, coming off some long-term treatments like lithium, can be dangerous.

The route from arrogance to “sir”

When you aren't known by someone, and they misinterpret your display of assertiveness, as arrogance, for example, it's not all lost.

As in the blog, “**Get a hat and be a man**”, I suggested that consistency is valuable. No-one is going to call an actual boy, or a man-child, “sir”. That's mostly down to their changing behaviours, which don't demonstrate firmness of any personality traits or attitudes.

Respectability can result, after giving and maintaining an impression (hopefully in a genuine, natural, and effortless way), that says you've lived sufficient life, to have settled into a workable behaviour; one that from the outside looks workable too. Added to that, by avoiding small talk, with the mindfulness not to make others who tend to engage in it feel small (we're all at different states), and to look and feel comfortable in silences, well, this may be a way.

Ordered quotes from the complete verse of Michael Holme

These quotes stem from twenty years of writing poetry, and they demonstrate increasing mental clarity, which ultimately led to the medium's demise, because it insisted that more direct non-fiction had to take over.

Despite some chronological reordering of these fragments, the chosen presentation is designed to further strengthen the inner cohesion.

* * *

“The beat of a butterfly wing a hundred years ago could have changed everything.”

“I searched for it my entire life. Then I realised it had been there all along.”

“Make an early decision and hope that your luck holds out.”

“Acceptance dissolves ego.”

“Most of all, I am.”

“Denial of aloneness promotes control of masses.”

“We all end up being us, even if we are evil.”

“Risk your life to have a life.”

“They say, ‘feel the fear and try.’”

“I find a mirror when we grate.”

“Intelligence needs data, for fresh knowledge to emerge.”

“I saw a robin today. Surely it was God.”

“No two people are alike. We must all be messiahs.”

“It’s good to freely say ‘no.’ Opinions are respected.”

”Never gamble more than you’re prepared to lose.”

“Only compete with yourself. Everest is locally known to the plain and humble.”

“Pure trust is impossible without laying down your life.”

“Be aware that most folk act. They are not better than you. Be you. Honestly, be true. You are amazing. Just do.”

“What a blessing to live life without needing to begin.”

“Our pain in life is easily a strength.”

“Mad people are not mad. They saw truth once.”

“Projection of empty minds should remove paranoia.”

“He realised we grow at different rates. For some 20 is like 40, and many never grow up at all.”

“It's hard, but the ‘before-me’ bit has a name. It's called Hell.”

Tackling OCD bit by bit

The problem that is obsessive compulsive disorder is close to home for me, but not directly. I refer to a close relative. Consequently, I've watched a long-term and severe problem emerge progressively, even insidiously.

It's very common to be distracted, with almost anything on our minds from the trivial to the critical. Given that is so, if we ever ask ourselves whether moments ago, after we had just carried out a basic, daily, and automatic action, such as turning a key to lock the door we'd just closed, we may not remember doing so. But giving-in to that doubt can feed OCD.

There are some occupations that have perfectionist characteristics. Take these three examples: those who code navigation systems in cruise missiles, surgeons who carry out life or death operations, or else planners and civil engineering executers, of the more significant

and highly expensive new buildings. And of course, there are countless other roles that need to be “just so”. But such a mode at work might spill in to domestic, recreational, and other everyday situations. I once had a sports car with no wing mirrors. When I changed it for a regular hatchback car with wing mirrors as standard, it took a significant amount of time for me to trust them. They were 100% unambiguous reflective surfaces, but when pulling out from a parking position, or changing lanes on the motorway, I effectively needed second and third opinions.

I think OCD will have a root cause that relates neither to a simplistic personality trait of obsessiveness, or one of compulsiveness. Whatever the root, and if it is indulged, genetic or otherwise it can worsen. I believe psychiatry recognises more than one variant of OCD. In terms of my initial allusion, there’s a type that stems from a deep fear of hurting people. A sufferer may drive their car passed a cyclist on their way home, then be plagued with worries

that they might have knocked that person off their bike. To quell their anxiety, they go back and check the overtaking spot, at the same time, feeding a vicious circle and walking deeper into the quagmire of the illness.

Nipping this in the bud is a great defence, even if it is genetic. My blog post, “**The witness**”, discussed how useful it might be to watch ourselves from outside. OCD, or other generally habit-forming behaviours, might be good additional subjects for scrutinisation.

Here's one of my pointless behaviours. It's not pathological, but it's unwanted. When I turn a knob on a modern digital radio; typically, the volume control, then rather than letting my physical senses, and those of others, be the single dictate in the action, I find it's impossible not to let the final arbiter be the displayed numeric level. Typically, it must end in a '5' or a '0'. It's not unlike having an irrational avoidance of stepping on the gaps between paving stones!

Waiting for the 1% whilst maintaining the art

The earlier “**Two forms of self-sabotage**” blog suggested that creativity is something that is outside of us, but it can take anyone over. The more dedicated we are to an art the more statistically likely excellence might occur.

Intuition, or simply commonsense alone, should suggest that groups like film directors, pianists, violinists, sculptors, or painters, etc., with global recognition, and being the greatest in their fields, occupy tiny minorities. However, the more dedication that was offered and continues to be offered, the greater the chance that exceptional world standards can be reached.

Those small minorities attract overwhelmingly high fractions of both public, and any specialist interest. Perhaps the most striking example is that of film directors. Steven Spielberg must have many hundreds of millions of people view his work, whilst more niche or perhaps local

directors, may be thrilled if a thousand people sit through one of their films. Film directing is a bit of an anomaly in the above list because its path to greatness is less definable. For example, to be a great pianist, you will do something like study your eight grades locally, go to college, maybe have masterclasses, start concertising, then perhaps study abroad at a great conservatoire, e.g., Moscow or Paris, and make more connections, etc., etc., and it's a steady climb.

Without collectors, i.e., buyers, amateur players, less than standout professional players, listeners, and viewers, these industries would not exist. I say industries rather than art forms very deliberately, because without complex financial networks to enable, facilitate and sustain them, these essentially entitled non-self-sufficient occupations, wouldn't be viable, and would be harder to pursue. As greatness is essentially a numbers game, resting on favourable statistics, greatness would become rarer.

In essence, artistic structures are very much full of the more mediocre members, and their purpose is to make possible a world in which creative genius can be discovered, protected, and witnessed.

Beyond personality

The current implications of the word “personality”, and the surrounding assumptions, have very clearly multiplied in an exponential fashion through the last third of the twentieth century, and all the current one. So, in my case, it’s fair that I say I’ve witness about 50 years of change, beginning with my late father installing a television to our family home. At that time there were channels BBC 1, BBC 2, and ITV alone. Channel 4 came later.

The roots of modern personality stem from even earlier times. In terms of the science or humanities subject psychology, depending how you view it, everyone certainly has a personality. They may have pathological levels of introversion or be a life and soul of the party extrovert. Both are personalities. But society has developed a misconception that these extremes imply a continuum from not having personality at all, to having one, like it’s a metric, and other

important traits are overlooked, for example, conscientiousness, which happens to be quite invisible most of the time, as it happens.

In the UK, the Rank Organisation had successes like the “Carry On” films. They featured many exaggerations of behaviour, but tongue in cheek, and not directly copiable. On the other hand, Hollywood icons including a “bad boy” James Dean, and “blonde bombshell” Marilyn Monroe, have been pivotal in creating images to spawn clones, albeit initially requiring the most confident to pull them off, but ultimately being made easier as styles diffuse through society, and safety is provided by proverbial numbers, at least within the ceiling of an age-based impressionability demographic.

The box office continued to be very successful, not least with its role of dictating elements of popular culture, including clothing fashions. Then, the advent of popular music videos (and without music videos if bands like the Sex

Pistols were considered) almost totally took over the general influences, suggestions of off-the-shelf role models, personas, attitudes, and group affiliations. Essentially, pop groups were propagating information about how they behave, the ideas that they found important, and how you might overlap with them. The messages or information was both freely and readily available, and a single defining choice away.

Groups always offer an element of safety in numbers, whether that's within a handful of people, or the one billion that make up the Roman Catholic church. Catholicism is not something you identify or connect with, in just one moment, but the transparency of pop bands, which must necessarily and intentional be a market friendly design, even when it's more peripheral, both need and offer easy entry routes. However, there are always less commercial and enigmatic bands. For example, years after lead singer Ian Curtis' suicide, Joy Division's bassist, Peter Hook, revealed he had

not known what Ian had been writing and therefore they'd been gigging.

Along with Hollywood, large-scale influences continued, with comparative metrics based on media sources, being clear. Popular music took over as an image creator, if only because songs are produced more frequently than films. However, popular culture and its mechanisms, then allowed reality TV to emerge, and not by a small degree. Social media significantly augmented personal expression, with very little restrictions. People could certainly copy less and experiment more. This ran parallel with an obvious shift in parenting and schooling, because compared to previous generations, such as those who grew up in the seventies and the eighties, on balance, young people had become much more confident.

Nations like the UK continue to obsess about personality, and unfortunately, even within politics. Less developed countries have less call

for it. Too them, it's one of Jesus' houses built on sand, because it is ultimately pointless, if only because modern assumptions about personality are dampened by the increasing age of their witnesses, and despite comparative statements suggesting one person has "more" personality than another, those controlling mechanism only affect the impressionable. In fact, they are non-tangible and effortlessly disregarded.

In conclusion, personalities try to tap into assumptions, themselves existing on the back of ideas propagated all over and by every media method. Any validity, maybe kudos, and/or strength, has market driven links and forces. Despite the preferences of the majority, "everything turns around", and fickleness alone can ultimately finish something. As always, try to look inside. Try to be true x

Stay rooted and unreal

Be changed. Loose people, gain people, be a Dr Who, or like David Bowie, rather than remaining in your original manifestation of yourself; especially a parochial one.

Those people you've known forever, who've also been known forever, by you and your mutual local familiars, have a vested interest to maintain continuity of the status quo. It makes life less complex, safer, requiring less work, less imagination, and it generates less stress. But for every one of those reasons, it is not real. It involves diluting the potential of everyone in such a group. It's an approximation that's more like co-dependency than friendship. It's a shared denial: the classic "Emperor with no clothes on".

Of course, moving into the unknown is more pressing for some than others. Jimmy Somerville's classic "Smalltown boy", is still relevant, but was highly so on its release in 1984.

Wasting time meditating

I've been interested in religions, spirituality, and any related subjects, since the early years of my relationship with my late wife, so mid to late 90s. She eventually practised meditation within her commitment to Kriya Yoga.

I never saw the point of her meditating. At least I didn't see any tangible effects. Then I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 1998. Soon afterwards I was prescribed Risperidone, and later Quetiapine. Doses varied from moderate to very high and back. Antipsychotics will slow the firing of neurons in your brain: it will slow you down. Socially, occupationally, physically, and in other ways, and certainly on balance, they can be advantageous. I soon made a connection between anti psychotics and the stilling of a mind by practising meditation.

That natural stilling, a patently more desirable process than relying on drugs, must be

questionable, if a psychosis follows its mastery. To prescribe it acutely to a newly diagnosed psychotic person, would be crazier than the problem itself. So, there's an issue: if you became psychotic but could successfully meditate, how is further meditating going to fix your problem, and frankly, if you don't practise meditation and get psychotic, you won't possibly learn it quickly enough to help you, and medication will most likely be a better option.

There's another element to this that I want to share. Before I had much involvement with psychiatry, I was amidst the study of classical piano. I'd reached advancement through a decade of daily practise. My mother insists I would be dead without the piano. At some time in that decade, I would have killed myself.

On the surface, meditating appears to equate with the cliches of either watching grass grow or paint dry. Whilst reading musical notation from the printed score, and playing a piano, or indeed

another classical instrument, emotional, physical, mental, and even spiritual aspects can become in tune, like it's all increasingly and deeply holistic.

Switching the world off is not a case of easy, hard, or otherwise, but with advancing pianism, it just is, there is no other way to play. Ironically, it is meditating without having wasted time meditating, i.e., doing nothing.

Very importantly, my personal view of the goal of meditation, is not that you still your own mind, which is a short-sighted aim. Rather, it is to assume, conclude, project onto, whatever, that everyone's mind is still! That's where the real gains come from.

Advanced instrumental scales and arpeggios in endless permutations, can be perfect to play in themselves, and they're always a worthwhile study. Start learning a musical instrument. I mean it!

Artistic depth

Given that I've spent 10,000 hours over 34 years practising the piano; I'm in decade three of art collecting, worrying more about wall space than costs, and have written poetry and nonfiction prolifically over 26 years now -

I've realised that visual artists are driven to communicate, but don't know what it is they want to say, and often their message is hidden by private purchases.

Instrumentalists may only appeal to feelings, and there's an overriding neuroticism about that.

Poets and songwriters overlap, but poets are less likely to be commercial. That gives them license to write almost unfathomable word salads, which some people admire, not least because it offers a membership, that's in the form of an insistence that their brains can reach the same

profound level of that of the poet. However, with music on the radio, etc., and the potential for riches, having breadth of connection is the usual songsmith's way.

Then there are writers. A new book from a bestselling author will sell quite well regardless, whether it's something like "The Satanic Verses", or Harry Potter, and everything between them. But when a fresh writer comes along, they can write about what's outside of them, which includes their potential readership, or what's within themselves: their personal realisations. If they want to sell, they might do the former. The bigger are the sales, for some of them, the bigger the ego is. But to write most artistically, is to maximize creative concentration. It's to risk ridicule, anger, or other frictions. It takes courage, insight, charity, energy, time, and WORDS; from within.

With my own 55 years of experiences, and being mindful of the last sentence; in terms of

creativity, if I had to choose between my advanced piano playing, or my writing and what it implies, I'd keep my writing, because if one person could read my words, and avoid the sort of damnation on Earth that I experienced, which ironically produced my words; then my words should remain. Their potential is greater than any pianism.

A spot of Facebooking

Having not uploaded a blog for three weeks, but realising I'd had a busy day on Facebook, I thought, no reason not to share some of that activity, hence this blog in the order the statuses were written.

Beginning in the small hours of Monday 17/02/23 and leading to those of the Tuesday after.....

>>>

It is 2:15am. There is nothing at all wrong with my left knee. I went on a 30-minute walk around 1:15am. I can't sleep now. My brain is insistent on thinking about non-existent problems with my left knee.

* * *

A clever young woman I noticed on a thread on here, reduced a Friedrich Nietzsche quote to her statement that it's, "just moral relativism. Nothing more." I'd not got a clue what she meant, but I'm pretty sure Nietzsche is highly respected, not least by Jordan Peterson, who is amongst the brightest of people in the world. Anyway, I asked her, "can you go beyond your cleverness?" She didn't get me...

* * *

The irony is that the conscientious are poorly and not working, and the "not my problem" brigade, are running everything #TheUK

* * *

Russia pulling out of a deal supporting world food security. Not WW3 at all, not one bit...

* * *

There's a point in a person's life, where they naturally dislike somebody, whilst feeling a bit troubled to do so, because they've no objective reason for it. It might feel a bit like being a racist, or a homophobe, but it's directed to an individual rather than a group. In time, it could be realised, that there's nothing wrong with that person, per se. The problem is that a feature of theirs, in their personality, their attitude, how they look, anything really; highlights a characteristic in the former person, they themselves dislike having. You can keep pushing people away, hoping no-one else on the planet, gives you the same reaction, but with getting on for eight billion around the globe, good luck with that, or you can find the humility to change yourself.

Just my rambling for the day...

* * *

Here are some places and situations, I can just about mention, that my severe mental illness has led me into. One of the features of bipolar 1 disorder, a profound illness, is the poor judgement/ risk taking behaviour of mania.

Mental hospital x 3

Jail cell x 2

Strip search x 2

Finger prints taken

Court x 2 (for and against)

Top of a Hulme tower block, with three complete and utter strangers, 2 black men and a street prostitute

Hospital, overdoses x 3

Shoplifting x 2

There're all sorts, but I'm getting a lot better now. Most of that stuff was a life or two ago.

* * *

I started a degree in Theology in 2006. I was experiencing some aloneness, because my first wife was fighting septicaemia in North Manchester General Hospital. That took her seven months in an Infectious Diseases isolation room. I visited her four hundred times. (I've had all manner of extreme life experiences, which lead me to write). Anyway, part of my coping back then, was The University of Wales at Lampeter's, distance learning course. I didn't get beyond one unit, but that one was about a fascination of mine, religious cults, or as they say, New Religious Movements (NRMs). I wrote two 1,500-word essays, which were marked. I think they both scored 55%. One was a general, what are NRMs? essay, and the other was about whether they brainwashed people. As it happened, Clare did the third one, 3000 words about the so-called New Age. It was a great essay, but only scored 40%. It was very radical, and a personal academic experiment. It could have been 40% or 70% with nothing in-between, so which one? She got her answer, you must

conform and not be a maverick. Of course, I've taken that second part further, myself. BTW, my two essays are part of my prose, so they're in my EVERYTHING book, for example.

Why tell you this now? Well, I received this beautiful second-hand hardback copy of the pictured book today. I've known about it since the course, and it was published the same year, 2006. It is the number one world summary on this subject and incredibly compelling for me.

I thought this might interest someone.

The art of conversation

When I was first in the Priory Hospital in 1992, a nurse told the small group of young males I was in, that her colleague could fascinate them, simply by telling a Monday morning story about for example, a purchase of knickers over the weekend. We were all troubled and anxious, because we had no conversation, or the ability to have one. How did she do this?

Many years later I realised two things: it's not just what you say, but how you say it. In terms of psychology and/or psychiatry, that has two sides. Underwear stories can become interesting through an enthusiastic and expressive delivery. Whilst slow inexpressive monologues, about seemingly very little, can aid a diagnosis of severe depression.

The other thing is the content; because interesting stories are in fact everywhere, but people don't look for them, or perhaps see them,

understand them, or are receptive to them. That's hardly surprising when someone is obsessing about themselves due to their severe mental illness. However, it's at that other side of the hill they're struggling to get over, and not so hard to navigate once they are there.

* * *

This piece sprung from me leaving the house to buy milk, less than an hour ago. The story I told my wife when I returned, from just buying milk, stemmed from this -

There are three convenience stores, and two barbers within a two-minute walk of our house. By going to my chosen provisions store, I ignored one of the other ones. However, I've not been there for a month. Previously, a staff member wouldn't accept my polymer five-pound note, because a thumb nail sized piece of it was missing from a corner. She handled the matter clumsily, so I took the tack that if some of my

money is not accepted, all of it won't be, and it's a buyer's market. I usually socially engage with shopkeepers, including her. I view my neighbourhood as a microcosm. When actually buying my four litres of milk, and a nutrition drink, the lady (I've known for a quarter of a century) said three pounds "something". I said "what?". She repeated it, but I still looked on, not drawing money out. Then she said five pounds "whatever it was". Smiling, I said "how about that, a customer who doesn't want to be undercharged." She also smiled.

Leaving the shop to head home, I passed the Barbers next-door to where I'd just been. The barber had no clients and was sat talking on his phone, in the shopwindow. His lack of industry was no surprised to me. We caught each other's eye, and he immediately broke the gaze. No doubt he remembered the following -

The previous and final time I was in there, some weeks ago, I asked him how much he'd want to

clipper my hair and beard, bearing in mind they don't put a price list on the wall. He said £20. I told him the other barbers-shop charge £16, and he can let me have the cut for that price, or I can walk out. He did it for £16. When I sat in his chair, I said "if you don't publish your prices, it is reasonable for the customer to assume you might be making prices up as you go along. And if that's assumed, it is also reasonable for the customer to negotiate." The cut involved three minutes of skilled clipping. Nevertheless, afterwards, I made him agree he hadn't remotely just done a £20 job (extrapolated to a hypothetical £400 per hour rate).

* * *

It is surprising what is all around you. It's about perspective and involvement. Life is under your nose. Choose it!

Fishing is not about fishing, and other paradoxes

I was taught how to fish by an aging uncle when I was very young. It was the mid-seventies. I'd been given a cane rod, and bubble float tackle to catch fish. We caught only eels that day, but it sold the hobby to me, and whilst fishing less, I still try.

The sport changed for me as I got older. In 2001, I wrote the poem "Lymm Dam", the second stanza of which, began by expressing the sentiment, "I'm soon by the lake alone, but not viewed as lonely." This implied that when we are physically alone and inactive, outsiders may think we look a bit like loners. I was a loner at the time. I hated my job. I had no friends, and it was solace to be peacefully by the lake.

I did catch a few small fish back then, but increasingly, I just wanted to be quiet and with nature; perhaps to feel part of nature; because I saw it as fair, reasonable, non-premeditating,

scheming, or exploitative. Nature offered what was not in my world. In fact, many activities reach levels beyond what the surface appearances might suggest.

Juggling isn't just about catching balls. Tai Chi is not a sequence of utterly pointless moves, it offers health improvements. Forrest Gump banged home this notion in inverse, having run for many months, with great outside interests, he suddenly stopped in the middle of nowhere, and turned to speak. Expecting the most utterly profound words, people silenced to intently listen to him. He said the classic and hilarious movie line, "I'm pretty tired. I think I'll go home now."

Do what makes you feel good, even when not doing it

The logical implication here, is that some things offer enduring positive benefits, that are independent of any sources of action. Whilst others work in temporary or even temporal ways.

In the 1980s, my late father bought a cabin cruiser moored on Lake Windermere, in Cumbria, UK. It was a Shetland 570, happening to be 5.70 metres long. I was thrilled it had a 70hp Mercury outboard motor and could reach speeds over 20 knots.

Eventually, my dad moved to the area. I think buying the boat whilst he was a single parent (between 1976 and up to when I left for university in 1986, aged 18) provided him with some therapy. He never told me at the time, but I think he was always intending that move.

Sailing was fun, not least because few boats were ever in the middle of the lake back then, and consequently, no speed restrictions were in place. Gliding over the water in a powerboat gave a sense freedom, matched only, by doing similar, but on a different boat. However, for me it was transient, like the effects of a drug. So, there was no real, or inner, lasting benefits.

Fast forwarding to today and social media, I saw a video of a really long speedboat, with six outboard motors, all shoulder to shoulder. It was extremely fast, perhaps even 100 knots. After watching a few more similar videos, computer algorithms assumed I liked to see videos of fast boats.

Outboard motors are no different to cars and motorbikes. You will not see very many which house powerful engines, without there being obvious visual details of the engineering ferocity.

As children we were exposed to this mentality, not least through the TOP TRUMPS card game, which filled our juvenile minds with pointless comparative statistics, and stronger capitalistic, competitive instincts. I think some of my peers are still figurative playing that card game.

As said, dad's boat had one 70hp outboard motor, yet an online algorithm tried to wow me with one powered by six such 600hp ones in sync. No doubt owners of such extreme mechanics attract people to themselves, and perhaps to a slightly lesser degree, do owners of highly expensive cars too; whilst not for the car per se, or the boat either, but rather; a hope, founded on automatic assumptions and/or implications of what another person's material ownership might suggest.

So, what should we seek to be feeling good, even when we're not doing it?

I don't know and wouldn't presume to tell you, especially when you consider there are approaching eight billion people on the planet.

But I want to offer this, that you read **Chapter Six of the Gospel of John**, with your broad, open, and imaginative mind. Maybe one day it will mean something, and maybe not. Saint John was a very profound man. He even wrote the **Book of Revelations**. You don't need to be religious, or to believe in supernatural things at all. I don't believe in an external god. Have the license of your own interpretation...

As I say,
Godspeed.

Infidelity

It begins with a glance...

Change, by a heart attack if need be

Assuming you get to a resus bed in hospital, have faith in your medics during your stay. "What? you'd been told you just need to have faith in God" The word "God" could blur. You just need faith [period]. Maybe God is goodness; that people studied medicine?

Surviving a heart attack and any associated cardiac arrest, might go beyond "resus" in A&E. You may have been self-reliant. Now you might have needed others, more than anytime in your life. You're probably numerical mature in age. You and your peers could have gotten through life without any "major wake-up calls", until this point. (I was 55). It may have been a brutally severe experience, and too much for anyone.

Some people though, are so used to challenges and setbacks, that fates like this are in a figurative "day's work", and furthermore, clichéd phrases like, "pick oneself up; dust oneself down,

and carry on", may suit, if physically and mentally possible. The latter part, to carry on, is the only deal worthy of consideration. You can dwell and feel sorry for yourself, but for how long?

Introspection is one of the most powerful human processes, and it might begin by a gift in disguise; perhaps even masquerading as a heart attack. Like Rumi suggested, **"the cure for pain, is in the pain."**

Something made a 99-year-old gentleman from Brentwood (reported in the BBC website page linked below), get baptised and confirmed in the Church of England, at such a remarkable point in life.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-esssex-25759217>

BTW: I'm not trying to proselytise for the CofE, or any religious organisations in the broader sense. I'm just trying to point out, that there are no time limits to make personal changes !

Laughing alone

This can mean that you find your own jokes funny, and laugh at them, regardless of those around you not being affected. It could be due to your sociopathology. You might be downright uncouth and undeserved of any positive reactions. Whereas group laughter is a form of cultural agreement, and of similar bonding strength as supporting equal sports teams, or liking equal music.

Sometimes, spontaneously laughing can diffusion a situation which might have been embarrassing. It does so by acknowledging the embarrassment and removing the sympathetic discomfort of those around. It's a display of humility, turning a possible minus into a plus.

Then there's laughing whilst *physically* alone. I think this is a sign that you've reached a "living in the now", where you're not brooding very much about the past you can't change, and the

future that hasn't even happened. Pointless and unhelpful thought patterns are common in developed countries. However, if you're an Amazonian hunter, poison darting your food from the canopy of leaves and branches above you, you don't worry about the past, or whether the monkeys will get wise to your blowpipe and move out. This life is much more straightforward.

The end of my "I am" book strongly criticises us having excessive numbers of choices. It cites them as a great problem in developed countries. We're complicating gender for example, and it has become a very contentious political issue now. Amazonians have very few options, and certainly not ever, ones like gender. When our minds are not continuously bombarded with choices, they can settle into a mode that works. Mother nature will make many of the jungle dwellers decisions for them, and by trotting them out over the course of the seasons and annual cycles, their reactions and behaviours

will reach a natural and reliable states, as if by gravity. The existence of their basic human needs, à la Maslow's pyramid, are the simple proof of it, and are mostly bottom tier features. The higher tier western things around technology and politics, etc., don't feature in the jungle.

So, what has this got to do with laughing alone? Well, laughing alone is about emptying our heads, not of memories, but of endless considerations. Some people meditate. I've played classical piano for 34 years up to now. I think we can help our minds become more nebulous, and/or subjective, or less analytical, and with any advanced skill at a reasonable level of mastery. As it happens, I've noticed I now struggle with mental arithmetic. I'm 55, but in my twenties, whilst I was working as a C programmer, without writing notes down, I could juggle half a dozen algorithmic thoughts in my head at once. Imagine me unleashing that

mental power on my life problems that I couldn't actually solve !

Software needs to be bug-free, unlike life, which probably should never be perfect, as that might cause stagnation. However, my older brother's continued coding, ultimately in Cambridge, the "Silicon Valley" of the UK, has led to him, and many other professionals in the city, to suffer from obsessive-compulsive disorder, and it should be no surprise that some leading OCD specialists, have made the area their base.

Here's the thing: humour enters us, and we can laugh alone to ourselves, after troubles exit our mind: the pointless ones. There will always be trouble, but worries about the past that has passed, and the future that might not even happen, make the most fun people seem dull !

Choose your poison

What a shortsighted goal, to navigate life making your choices, because you think they will make you happy, and in the least amount of time as well? If it feels good, you think it must be right. Your ignorance of the capitalistic roots of most images and implication around you, hide the fact that you are craving dopamine hits, and basic antediluvian things like drugs, sex, alcohol, and spending money, are central. If that wasn't a clear enough picture, in more recent years a large industry has built up for thrill seekers: skydiving, zipwires, bungee jumping, and for the ultrarich, fatal journeys to the wreck of the Titanic, and/or jaunts towards the Moon!

Then you have a life changing event; because you will, and you curtail the dopamine cycle. Your emotional thrills equate to stories you can tell people, whether how crazy you were: the "live fast die young" rubbish, or the impossible job of trying to make someone feel what you felt,

when you were floating in a chamber and looking at our Earth, from 80, 90, or however many miles high in space, before going back down again. But both what and where is your treasure: the truly tangible stuff?

What makes us happy anyway? The question misses the point, because as with the brain chemical type hits above, even longer term, perceived good times, come and they go, because external influences are at play. That's why we say,

“everything turns around”,
“this too shall pass”,
“what goes around comes around”,
“as one door closes, another opens” &
“the tide will change”, etc.

Jesus Christ is reported in the Gospel of John, Chapter 6, as being insistent about the food people should eat. Christ said their ancestors ate ‘manna’ and died, but his “food” gave everlasting

life. He'd lost many followers by the end of that increasingly strong discourse.

Pursuing feelings should be a folly, if only by understanding that thoughts alone can affect them, and vice versa. Work, toil, labour, pain, and time, require virtues for them to be endured, especially as their outcomes are not accurately predictable, and they're a distance away.

Even the most holy amongst us, don't know what God is. God is a mystery, and that means faith is involved. Sometimes, like I'm trying to say, we should wholeheartedly pursue a path with very few short-term rewards, and just hope for the best!! I think this is something Jesus meant. He wanted us to try and mimic him, because we might find joy and peace that way.

Life takes faith. We don't know where we are going. Short-term pleasure gives a short-term well known result. People even see psychics because they don't like not knowing. Matters

may be worse, if we know of people who did nothing but labour with no fun at all. It looks so relevant to me, that Jesus accepted Crucifixion, for multiple reasons, including the one in this context.

I think joy is the satisfaction that occurs, after you've **chosen your poison**, i.e., you've embarked on a route with little immediacy of pleasure; possibly with little happiness at all, but you have the faith; maybe even the "faith, hope and love" (as St Paul said), to know it's the ***only*** deal.

Everyone around you, with the Internet in their pockets, buying and having things delivered often the next day, eliminating social logistics with Facebook, etc., are distracted. Digital smiles proliferate, everyone is telling everyone else, that they are happy. **And you? Swallow your poison, and hope you become God !**

22 minutes past 22

I have a science background, and initially specialised in chemistry. As undergraduates, my fellow students and I had to tackle some post A-level mathematics, which my tutor Dr Brian Sutcliffe, would always describe as “hairy”. Being completely directionless as a young man, I skipped much of my whole degree, including the “hairy” mathematics! However, unlike the rest of the course, the maths was apparently non-skippable, and a pile of A4 sheets, i.e., the whole course, was handed to me before I went home for the summer after year two. It was 1988. I had no tutor, internet, or fellow students to plead with, for their marked and returned answers.

Never in my entire academic experience, was I made prouder, because after doing somewhat more than half of those sheets, alone, and having had Brian reply to me, he had written that I was obviously a competent mathematician!

Here's the address of his obituary, on the website of the Royal Society of Chemistry -

<https://www.rsc.org/membership-and-community/member-obituaries/obs-2021/professor-brian-sutcliffe/>

So what? Well, looking back at the title, it's a 24-hour formatted time - 22:22 - and people like me, number-centric (maybe a bit on the spectrum too) if you like, find such symmetry jumps out. I'm permanently looking for logic and patterns in car registration plates, too.

Having spotted the run of number twos once, ultimately it will occur again, and you will see it, and it could become a "thing". Apart from 11:11 and maybe midnight, or 00:00, every other time lacks that degree of evenness. Many times of day have a symmetry, like 13:31 or 21:12, etc., but 22:22 is probably the best, for want of a better adjective. The rest are the - 13:55 - type nothings, which don't stand out.

Without much further thought, you can begin to imagine how clocks might appear to be trying to tell you something other than the time. A psychotic person may be easily convinced, by regularly seeing the same number pattern!

There's a psychological mechanism called **confirmation bias**. For example, a severely depressed person will think everything means they are rubbish, and the evidence is all around them. Here's a good example: when I had psychotic depression, I was approaching a stationary young couple who had a pram. Reaching about 4 metres from them, they crossed the road. I literally felt hurt, because in my mind, they were getting their child safely away from me. Back then, my life was dominated by such misinterpretations of reality.

Without being psychotic at all, we can all obsess, ruminate, or fixate on things, possibly leading to

an example of **catastrophe thinking**, with its endless what-ifs, negativity, and overthought.

Hoping for luck?

The Origins page of my website is my way of stating how I'm qualified to share my thoughts. Occasionally on social media, etc., you will see a short biography, or bio, that suggests a person has studied with the **University of life**, or they attended the **School of hard knocks**. I have felt at times with the former, that it was a reaction against clever academics who might have little commonsense. Either way, such statements are meaningless without details. Even with details, one person's hard knock is another's daily routine.

I think courage is the right attitude in life, and to go along with any opportunity, knowing that your first significant chance, might be your last!

The last word on creativity

I wrote this blog about creativity just now. It's important.

My greatest discovery, through having embarked on piano playing from 1989 until today, and by trying to write, from 1997 until today, was the realisation, that no-one is an artist, and no-one is creative. I'm neither a pianist nor a writer. I play the piano, and I write. The important point is that creativity is *outside* of us, and the more we involve ourselves in different so called artistic pursuits, then the greater the chance, that that *outside* creativity, has of channelling through us. Therefore, we *facilitate* creativity. We must never arrogantly think that we are creative, or worse still; artists. I definitely learned this from experience: 10,000 hours sat playing pianos, and around 5,000 hours writing.

There is an incredibly important consequence to this: I started playing the piano at 21 years of age. I play a lot of advanced music now, at least for a hobbyist. I could barely read and write when I started writing. About a week ago, I posted two of my prose books to a pen-friend in the US. He's a retired Professor of English, still an FRSL (Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, along with Barry Hines and Lynton Kwesi Johnson, and many more). I was 29 years old when I began painstakingly trying to write.

We are told we are a scientist, or a mechanic, or a data operative, or a cook. We believe it to be true because our childhoods dictated so. We may have gone to a school that failed us, because our parents couldn't pay for our education.

NO-ONE is a writer, or a painter, etc.; rather, an *outside* creativity is the artistic one. We just channel that energy; and the more time we dedicate to channelling it, then a numbers game is increasingly in play, that statistically gives

greater chances, for greatness to occur; but it's between *outside* creativity and us, not *us* alone!

HAVE A GO !!!

Speak your mind



This Maggie Smith meme appeared in 'Word Porn' today. That's a Facebook group I follow. You ought not to be surprised that I'm a forthright person, hence the website! But I only got that way through a couple of decades of pain and frustration. The shaking that Maggie refers to could be a 20-year occasional experience, or more. It may never leave! I didn't read "Feel the fear and do it anyway" by Susan Jeffers, but it

must be the same thing! It's life. Fear, or anxiety, makes you shake.

In 1992, a colleague who had bullied me for the last year or more, told our boss (who was present with just the pair of us), to give me a certain task that I didn't want. I must have looked incredibly awkward and pained when I raised my voice to stamp down "No!" My boss gave me a stupid look of false surprise and said nothing. It was the hardest thing I'd said to anybody in my life. I was livid with my colleague, shaking, and probably red faced, etc. I was just 24, he was a bit older.

In about a month a list of jobs appeared on the office wall. I'd been assigned that job. I resigned first thing next morning.

The next occasion in my life that I needed to speak with a great difficulty, it was a bit easier. Then the time after, it was easier still; and so on. I'm 56 next month, I take forthrightness for granted. It's how I am; but that first reaction in 1992 was absolute murder for me, and I then had

to make it 100% firm by resigning. (BTW: life has shown me I did the right thing, because I got to become me, despite everything x)

Speaking out when your emotions are frankly scary, is a learned skill. If you don't study it, I think you might risk a life of "bondage". No-one told you, that life was going to be easy. Well opening your mouth is part of the hard bit. Violence gets you in trouble with the police. Broadly speaking, society/ the system/ whatever, doesn't want you to have a voice. Older people like me can remember school being, "shut up, put you hand up to speak, and say 'yes sir', 'yes miss', 'no sir', 'no miss'". I wonder why that was?? Or did you go to a private school??

Some would say a voice is your most valuable asset: a liberating life giver. It's not about bloody-minded brazenness though, it's about having a balanced mindset.

Good luck, and Godspeed.



Newton Heath, Manchester, UK.