

John Ciampa

**Conga Line of
Consciousness**

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FOR WORD

Hello!

You finally showed up. Let's make sure we're on the same page. This is a privately chartered spiritual excursion for intellectuals. Without chemicals or rockets, we intend to taxi on reason's runway right up to the lift off point and then ASCEND to where we can see beyond the visual mirage.

I'm glad you're here. But I must tell you at the outset that ASCENSION is a personal dimension. It takes more than attitude to maintain altitude. If you want to ASCEND, you have to blow yourself up. I'm not talking about explosion, but expansion. It's a balloon ride.

To float, we have to inflate. You always knew that. I did too. Even in my childhood when I marveled at the spherical perfection and fragile ascent of my first soap bubble, conflating my inner breath with the global atmosphere, I knew I had to breathe *in* before I breathe *out*.

UP WORD

We're floating over a chasm between a *rock* and a *soft place* where modern science is unravelling back into ancient philosophy. It's natural to doubt. You won't believe what you see from up here.

'Seeing is believing' leaves the unseen unbelieved. You can't see the voices in your head, but the more you doubt the more they shout and haunt your attempts at distraction. Listening to yourself is much harder than looking out for yourself.

You shouldn't be self conscious about being conscious of your self. Thinking is what we do. To paraphrase Descartes: "cogito ergo sumus." I just added "'us" to Descartes's sum. "I think therefore we are." We all think; that's what makes us all philosophers.

Philosophy is a conga line you can join, a line of dancers with answers which raise questions. It's the questions, not the answers, that open the can-do can A willful mind is an open mind, wherein you discover that everything was in there already, even God. Yes, God is in there in one form or another.

God has many forms none of which were His idea. Despite all the imaginative frescos, we can never envision the invisible, but we can

hear ITS whispers. You have to close your eyes and listen. That's easier said than done.

Without the interpolation of my inner teacher, no outer teacher could teach me how to listen; of course, you already know all that. So why am I talking to you? It feels necessary.

I'm not talking about religion but religiosity. Try as I might, the Hebrew religion that came down to us, still doesn't always work for me, and I see now, looking back, traditional religion confused more than it inspired, truth to tell.

The monster God who could only be appeased by bloody sacrifice; whose idea was that?. I asked Sister Mary Carlotta and she said Jesus came down to change all that. But then he got nailed? So his father God did "forsake" him on the cross? The crucifix was everywhere in Catholic school, and around my neck. Christ on a plus sign didn't add up: killed by a mere man and born without one? Eventually I threw the baby out with the bathwater, and the baby turned out to be the baby Jesus.

Without Christ, I became a techno philistine. My urbane humanism was supported by the culture. Subjectivity was shunned in favor of objectivity and, at the same time, subjects became objects. Trust became thrust. Whatever or whoever happened into my path became a target to knock down or knock up. As Lothario, I even thought about getting rid of

two unwanted pregnancies, which are now the joys of my life that spawned my progeny. Like so many animals, I was surviving and perpetuating the species without looking up from the hump and bump of the grind. I was grounded.

“Higher” education provided attitude but no real altitude. Eventually the unanswered questions of science and the unquestioned answers of religion occluded my *outlook* and forced me to look in. *Inlook* is my new perspective where I discovered among my multiple selves, my inner teacher.

My inner teacher whispers to me all the time and, just so you know, I choose to call this turn of events a divine intervention. Without a light from above, the inner sanctum would have remained a dark snake pit. I call my new spiritualism, hypersubjectivity.

The realization that God is always in there watching, is embarrassing at first, but you have to learn to avoid the embarrassing moments, not God.

The idea of God hanging out with me, or hanging in actually, sounded preposterous to me at first. I could not imagine God, in any form, talking to little old me, because I felt I was not important enough to be personally addressed by the busy boss of the universe. With all there is to do, how could God have time for me? Then I figured out that if He's God,

He has all the time in the world, and impeccable timing, as well.

He beats out the rhythm of that conga line of consciousness, I'm about to share with you. The rhythm is already in us; that's why I was able to read their minds, before I read their words. The rhythm of the conga results in cognitive consonance. I think all thought is divine precipitation, which rains down on all of us to make of it what we will.

There are no scientists in my conga line and no priests except for one but he was also a great philosopher as well as a saint. In fact, I was introduced to my inner teacher by Saint Augustine.

I love Augustine's inner teacher, which makes the legendary Christ even more accessible than a 'Facebook Friend.'

I don't include here any scholarly works on the historicity of Christ. Let me just say wherever He was and whenever He was and whatever He was, I have no proof and need no proof.

I believe Christ exists and he makes us all divine. I think I'm divine too and you're divine. We're all divine, but Christ is more divine and we need Him to be as close as possible. Christ is so essential to the joy of floating that it is beyond making sense. Every time I think about it, I attest, and when I attest, I get high,

wherever I happen to be at the time, and I experience a sublime connection like the one in Augustine's garden, which he shared in his Confessions, maybe not quite as sublime.

You'll hear more about Augustine in the conga line. The reason I use the 'He' pronoun for God has to do with Augustine. He taught that a God-**Son** was sent down to the *rock* to get His lumps and meet the chumps and champs and chimps first hand; only then could divinity re-connect with humanity, and vice versa. So, it's like a metaphysical seesaw: divine descent provides the equal and opposite force for human ascent.

I have travelled all over the world, in and out of cultures, up and down social ladders in search of satisfaction, and nothing compares with the thrill of feeling yourself lifted out of the mud on a seesaw. Suddenly you're up above the black hole that would suck you into oblivion. Everyday is brightened by the realization that I have an upper partner. "Somebody up there likes me." There is no explanation for why that would happen to me, other than divine love. All love is divine sunshine, just as all thought is heavenly rain, and you can make any swamp into a love garden.

And whether or not you think love is indigenous to the human condition, and whether or not you think Christ invented it or carried it to us from the old testament of the Jews, there's no denying that it represents the

paradigm shift in the history of the human condition. Love is a divine idea and, thank God, it became a human one. However it got here, and for whatever reason, love is here to stay, if only to be ignored by most. Love is the thermal energy of consciousness.

Saint Augustine named his “inner teacher” Christ. It’s interesting how “Christ” has become one of the most used interjections in common parlance; ‘Chrissakes!’ may be the foment bubbling up from the suppressed inner voice. Christ may not be the name you give to your inner voice, but you must have heard the whispers of an inner teacher echo in your inner sanctum. That’s what guides you.

The world is made up of two types: the guided and the misguided. The misguided are blinded by looking out for themselves, instead of looking in; and so, have to be supervised. This book is not for persons in need of supervision. I must tell you that I want no part of leading anyone anywhere they weren’t already headed on their own.

I don’t have to tell you that life is a struggle, but can you see that it is a *planned* struggle. A struggle with no point to it is not only hopeless; it’s absurd. We can’t just be machines making shit out of groceries. The early Greeks, the Stoics, and the Buddhists all agree that strife is an inevitable feature of life and the point of the strife is to promote striving. If you’re not striving you’re diving; if you’re not

floating you're sinking. We start out in pit so that we can learn to climb. Floating is more graceful than climbing.

I had to float up from the *terra firma* to glimpse the *terra incognita*. Once I decided that 'up' is up to me, my next breath was the deepest one I ever drew. Suddenly inspiration and respiration fused. The fresh air became my own breath. I felt buoyant. (That's what those flying dreams are all about.)

Buoyancy has always fascinated us; that's the real selling point for self inflation: the weightlessness, the paranormal, panoramic vista, which, I promise, is there. If you rise up, you will see connections that transcend the spacetime boundaries. That's why aerial views are so thrilling. I suppose the counter- thrill comes from the danger of falling.

You would think that the danger increases with altitude, as in the ancient myth of Icarus, but the opposite is true. The higher you go the more buoyant you are, because of the lower atmospheric pressure that surrounds you. You can keep expanding your self shell along as you will. You worry that it's going to burst, but it never does. Just why that works so well, I have no idea. I do know that the inevitable self doubt that surrounds you can be displaced, and that displacement is what keeps you afloat.

You should understand that inflated self consciousness is not the same as an inflated ego, quite the contrary. It is the humble acceptance of human fallibility that enhances the elasticity of the self envelope which contains and expands ad infinitum.

Floating requires an initial leap of faith, which is possible for anyone. Everyone has a little faith, no matter how cynical, and we all know, instinctively how to leap. We all know that the 'lift off' point at the end of the reason runway will require some kind of a leap one way or the other, up or down.

I'm not saying self inflation is easy. Without being a "blowhard," you have to blow hard, to inflate the shriveled self image, and then, finally, the shell of consciousness expands so much you won't recognize your selves, and that may scare you. It takes two to tango or tangle, and there may be more than two. There is a way to untangle however many selves are in there. You have to separate them out before you can bring them together. "Selves" is a noun you almost never see in its plural form. But it must have occurred to you that there is more than one self in there. Have you ever asked yourself a question and then answered it. How can one self be in such a dialogue?

For me, that self chatting manages the ineluctable inner turmoil a lot better than fondling beads and mumbling preordained words which have lost their meaning, or

chanting in a particular compass direction. And the only temple I need for the inner chat is right here in between my own temples; it's all done in my head, or I should say in my consciousness, because I now know that consciousness is not confined by the skull.

The inner selves all need to shut up and **listen up** to the high minded whispers, not just on Sunday or at sunset. When they do, the inner cacophony becomes a Greek chorus that guides the drama as the plot thickens. Don't get me wrong. The struggle never ends. Self doubt never goes away for very long.

For instance in the back of my mind, right now, as I write these words, I have a doubt that I might just be talking to myself. What if no one every reads these words? That would make the other mind I have been addressing as "you", only 'me,' at another time and place. And this would be just a diary. I confess I find that desolate and disappointing, and then the inner teacher whispers that this whole book is about talking to my self. That's worth doing, even if I were the last man on earth; so I'll just keep on writing.

TO WORD

Altitude expands the time sense of consciousness; it changes focus to the big picture. Imagine yourself standing on the side of a road where a line of thirty trucks is passing one after another. Truck one is here now and now gone; then truck two, which was not here yet, is here now, etc. From your point of view all you know about trucks is the one that is here and the one that was here. Now let's float you up to altitude where you now see, in this one instant, all thirty trucks. They are all here now.

The horizontal here and now is redefined by the vertical altitude. That's why we look up when we're thinking. And that is why *string theory* looks beyond the delusion of sequencing and partitioning, which also makes us time blind. It is almost impossible to imagine non-sequential events. Almost, but nothing is impossible for imagination, except 'nothing' itself, which is unimaginable.

It seems preposterous to suggest that time, a fact of life, is a delusion, but there is no rational proof of time. The notion of time is pieced together from observations, which depend on spatial measurements, which in turn depend on the very yard stick and stop watch we are trying to prove, but you can't use the clock to prove the clock. For spacetime to be questioned conceptually it must be framed in some broader context which we would have to

call non spacetime. That context, by definition, must be beyond measurement and therefore beyond science. As we shall see, all the microscopes and telescopes in the world are still not enough to bring the heavens beyond spacetime into focus.

Because consciousness like love is invisible and omnipresent, it's hard to get your time blind mind around it. It is hard to imagine something that is undefinable; it has no weight or shape. Consciousness has no beginning or end; not that anyone has discovered. It exists but cannot be located in time or space. And yet no self conscious being can deny the existence of self consciousness, because you have to use it to deny it. And use it we do, everyday, all day and all night, even while we're dreaming, scheming and streaming: inventing, imagining, creating, doubting, believing, denying, willing.

Consciousness is amorphous, and yet it is the most powerful force in the universe. That's why any talk of consciousness requires metaphors rather than measurements. Metaphors morph the amorphous, but still leave consciousness beyond physics, which (hold on to your hat) pushes us into that grand paradox puddle known as metaphysics. Don't worry we will not drown in the metaphysical paradox puddle. We may get a little wet, but we will not drown as long as we maintain our buoyancy. Metaphors keep us afloat.

All metaphors require a leap of faith. In one sense, the leap of faith is like asking the intellect to mistrust itself and transcend itself. This sounds like intellectual suicide, but it's not, because you are more than intellect. In fact if you were only intellect, you would be unable to see beyond your eye teeth, made for tearing meat. Disconnected intellect is a tool of the killer instinct which sees all other beings as a meal or something in the way of one. We have to get beyond our killer instinct.

Even that killer instinct that powers survival in the dog eat dog world is tempered by a broader conservation instinct, which mandates that you only kill what you can eat. We humans kill a lot more than we could ever eat, including fellow humans. Eating fellow humans is taboo for most cultures and so we "civilized" humans bury our victims and let the worms eat them. Not only are humans the top killers at the top of the food chain; we are also the top killers of each other, with bigger and better weapons. Arrowhead artifacts show that the human intellect was first and foremost, a weapons designer. If we were to rely on intellect alone it would appear that killing and war are inevitable. But more and more of us want to get beyond killing each other. We pray to God for peace.

I imagine that God is offended by prayers for peace. Offended? Yes, asking God to end the war implies that he had something to do with starting it.

Well, didn't He? Even if violence is our own misguided understanding of how to preserve the human race, why does God allow it?

Allow it? There's the rub.

God allows everything, even evil. Otherwise life would be a trail ride instead of a rodeo. There would be no point to will, and skill and virtue and virtuosity. There have to be hurdles in order for there to be leaps. There has to be a down in order for there to be an up. There has to be right and wrong to choose from otherwise there could be no good choices and no rewards. And by the way, seniority cannot be the only reward for good choices in the game of life. There is no question in my mind that Dylan Thomas' "struggling against the dying of the light" is a divine challenge and that meeting that challenge brings rewards that carry over beyond seniority. Immortality is the only incentive for the climb out of the pit of ignorance into the arena of life.

The arena can be used for contests or concerts. The contest propensity has pushed to the brink. Final contest and extinction or concert and harmony; it's up to us to choose. Planetary extinction is a prospect which philosophy has never had to deal with until now. It never occurred to us before that the human race could end in a dead heat. Would that dead heat end life as we know it? Would there still be matter and energy or just energy

and will that energy include consciousness? Can consciousness be extinguished?

This is a philosophical challenge no other generation has ever faced. Unfortunately this newest generation is further away from philosophy than any other, and it's not hard to understand why. Nineteenth century philosophers made philosophy a secret heresy for a few brave souls. Twentieth century philosophers tried to make it a science for an even smaller congregation.

Logical positivism insists that the only meaningful philosophical problems are those which could be solved by logic. The Vienna Circle and the Cambridge Circle were the centers of logical positivism, and Wittgenstein (who has his own chapter in the *conga line* section) danced in those circles until he got dizzy. His dizziness led to his last minute lift off. This was the death knell of logical positivism, whose champion, Bertrand Russell, once the mentor of Wittgenstein, became his whipping boy. Russell's skepticism, "neutral monism," was taken apart by Wittgenstein with the same logical tools that put it together.

The important take away from my study of Wittgenstein is that you cannot use any product of consciousness to refute consciousness. In the end Russell, changed his mind on mind; his final thoughts on thought would have more in common with William

James', "Analysis of Mind." (James has his own chapter in the *conga line* section).

Everyone agrees that no one knows everything, and for that to be true there must be an "**everything**" which, by definition, is beyond us, i.e. supernatural. We have to believe this without any certainty. Even scientists have to rely on proof that is never absolute, but at least probable.

Cosmology is a guess about the beginning of the universe. According to agnostics, microseconds after the big bang, the cosmic inflation sent quarks and electrons in search of each other to become atoms which became stars which became a universe. There must have been a mind behind the exquisite timing required to make it all happen. That consciousness had to be there, even before the Plank density instant.

The grand design may be impossible to spell out, but it is impossible to dismiss. We are surrounded by unmistakable design patterns in sea shells, tree branches, pinecones, pineapple rinds, artichoke leaves and snow flakes; not to mention, Pythagorean number harmony, Platonic solids, Fibonacci sequences and the golden ratio. Mysterious, no, mystical patterns are emerging in the wave/ particle conundrum in quantum physics; the matter/antimatter conundrum in cosmology, and the brain/*brane* asymmetry in neuroscience. The only proof I need of a Supernatural Designer is a design. If

there is a pattern, there is a design; if there is a design there is a Designer, who or which, would have to be above and beyond nature, i.e., 'supernatural.'

BACK WORD

“Mathematics is the alphabet with which God has written the universe.” Whether he believed it or not, that’s what was on Galileo’s get out of jail card.

Not long after Galileo got out of jail, science began a cautious but continuous dissociation of ‘nature’ from the angry punishing pantheon of gods. Lightening bolts were no longer divine missiles. Pestilence was no longer divine punishment. There was no longer any point to appeasement and ritual sacrifice. Nature’s discomforts and inconveniences would now be addressed directly by the new pantheon of scientific high priests. Intellectuals with facts, not augurs with ritual sacrifice, provided real solutions, and conveniences: health, transportation, communication; these were the gifts of science, not religion.

English skeptics, Hume and Bentham, applied the scientific method to the ‘social good’ rescuing it from the superstitious morass of the divine mandate, making it the business of man to make things better for himself, by himself, rather than offering sacrifices and prayers.

Hume went so far as to banish the soul, reasoning that there is no observable soul, and so, none exists. Future knowledge is also

invisible, which would make scientific progress impossible by Hume's standard.

Hume was talking about the one-to-a-customer, individual soul, which, in fact, may not add up. Demographic expansion would demand a new soul generator. "New soul" is itself an oxymoron; if the soul is eternal how can there be a new soul? No, one soul per person doesn't add up. We should point out, here, that neither Jews nor early Christians, thought that there was one soul for each individual. That idea was injected into Christian faith by Origen and Augustine who may have misunderstood Plato.

Plato's soul was an ideal perfection, a superstate, a *soft place*, like Schrodinger's superposition. [Schrodinger is one of the founding fathers of Quantum Physics and also a metaphysician.] The divinity available for humanity was through the connection of consciousness to a sublime superstate. This resonates with the idea of Emerson's "oversoul." (Emerson has his own chapter in the *conga line* section.) It also resonates with many other thinkers in the conga line who elevate the collective consciousness all the way out to a universal consciousness, which is divine.

Plato suggests we can only see the divine consciousness after we leave the flesh and blood world. Plato believes that the uncertainty is part of human fallibility, indigenous to the

human condition. Nevertheless, silly skepticism, also known as ‘scientism’ ruled out Platonic idealism and became the dominant philosophy of the scientific era. JB Watson and H J Watts applied it to epistemology, the study of mind, which became known as Behaviorism. They maintained that mind can be explained completely, by the material world of observable sensation and sense data, including introspection which, for them, is simply ‘verbal behavior.’ For Behaviorists, any aspect of mind which cannot be observed as behavior does not exist. This effectively eclipsed the ‘other world,’ but, of course, did not erase it. Plotting all of the dimensions of the gray *matter* eventually *led to* the gray area, where most of consciousness cannot be explained by neurons.

Dr Hammeroff’s discovery of subatomic particles (tubules) of the brain cell has mystified even the likes of Roger Penrose. Just as in the physical sciences, most of these Behaviorists were forced to admit that they don’t really know it all, and some have come to the conclusion that they can’t ever know it all.

Godel showed that mechanical mathematical proofs always boil down to guessing, mystical indecision. Heisenberg’s enshrined uncertainty. Schrodinger’s superposition, which I mentioned earlier, is the ability of a quantum system to be in multiple states at the same time, which suggests a surreality. Eugene Wigner, one of the fathers of the Atomic Bomb and the brother-in-law of Paul

Dirac, offered what can only be called a metaphysical hypothesis. In his so called “Friend” theory, Wigner imagined a scientific observation making its way into the consciousness of the observer and then magically communicated to another observer of the observer (“friend”) and suggested that consciousness itself is the effective and affective container of quantum physics. Wigner’s absolute idealism continues to be unacceptable to most materialist scientist, even though they have no other explanation for the reality gap between the observer and the observed.

Perception is a kind of ultraspection, which is accomplished by our lookout organs that are part of the material universe, but there are no organs of introspection.

String theorists guess that the universe is vibration which creates the illusion of separateness in spacetime, a *brane* [a string theory term] within a brain. String theory would agree that spacetime only appears to contain materials, but containment is an illusion and therefore spacetime cannot contain consciousness either, viewed as vibration. I believe we must include consciousness in the string theory vibration which would get us thinking beyond the separate single notes of consciousness and resonate to the vibrating chord of universal consciousness.

There’s always something, albeit unexplained. Modern physics has figured out

that there can never be “nothing.” The Higgs boson (the “God particle”) demonstrated that there is no such thing as a complete vacuum, nothing; there is always energy, but what exactly is that?

The light of scientific certainty leaves 95 percent in the dark, so called dark matter and dark energy. What’s true of matter is also true of mind; consciousness is anybody’s guess and everybody’s guess, which is not to demean guesswork; it’s what makes us human. We are the best guessers and science has finally come to settle for the idea that truth is only our best guess; at least some of the great minds of physics now agree that truth boils down to probability, our best guess.

Probability began as a Quantum physics quandary. Einstein’s famous quote “God doesn’t play dice with the universe” suggests that there must be an absolute truth, even though we haven’t discovered it yet. Bohr’s famous reply, “Stop telling God what to do,” wants to reaffirm the Platonic notion that we humans can only **guess** at absolute truth. However much they disagreed, God lies beyond what we know, for both these scientific visionaries. Guessing at the divine is all we can do. Maybe that’s how ‘divining’ came to mean guessing.

Science is the highest function of our intellect which never gives up discovering; even though each new discovery invalidates its

predecessor, and that's where the leap of faith comes in. Without a lift off point, the scientific road to truth is a runway to oblivion. Here I am pontificating about physics and neuroscience without any credentials. Truth to tell most of this stuff had yet to be discovered when I was in school. So I have to provide something other than credentials to support my speculation, perhaps resonance. Resonance works with the sympathetic vibrations of the new string theory. I would never have known about string theory if my self expansion ended in the school room. My passion to self inflate was aided by the information age revolution; remaining current becomes a snap, or actually a tap on my Iphone.

Taps on my I-phone connected me with Temporally Absent Partners, call them TAPs who are all tenured professors in the Shirt Pocket University, not just in the sciences, but every department including the forgotten discipline, philosophy; all there at my finger tips. The most important piece of philosophy for our purposes is something I call the 'antithesis antidote,' whereby no belief can be used as a foil against any other belief. [This will become clear in a later discussion.]

There is nothing preposterous about my belief in the non material realm, because there is no contradictory belief that is any more plausible, thanks to the 'antithesis antidote.' Philosophy also came in handy to neutralize the categorical mistakes of materialism separating

matter and energy and psychic energy. I believe matter and energy, including psychic energy are inseparable; I call it 'mattergy.' Mattergy is where 'hypersubjectivity' lives. (Inventing terms seems to be irresistible.)

Will power also lives in the 'mattergy' realm. There is no explaining will power. Will power travels from the mattergy realm to the material realm in beams which have more or less power depending on the focus. Focus is the nexus where mind bumps into matter. Reality is continually reshaped by focused will power beams from the 'mattergy' surreality. Not every one musters the will power to reshape reality, which is why we sit at the feet of great performers, athletic or artistic, and watch their unhurried focus do the impossible. They seem to be destiny's henchmen, willing to sacrifice their present for our future.

Hypersubjectivity provides the self control which makes it all possible. The more you know the more you appreciate those who know more.

Whether or not you think genius is a lucky accident or divine gift, you must know that making something beautiful depends on the special way every day things are put together, which depends on 'why' they are put together. In other words virtuosity has to do with altitude as well as attitude. Whether or not you are recognized as a virtuoso, self inflation puts you in a better position to ASCEND;

ASCENSION makes you more and more virtuous, and closer to absolute beauty in whatever form. This is simply a restatement of Plato, but one that needs to be made over and over for each generation.

Focus is the unique gift found in the genius. Focus is a *piece* of mind that depends entirely on the *peace* of mind afforded by self respect, self love and self inflation. You have to feel worthy of virtue to be a virtuoso. Ascetics underlies esthetics, just as virtue underlies virtuosity.

I am not a virtuoso, but what keeps me climbing is that every day I feel a little closer to replacing pleasure with joy.

AWK WORD

How Alzheimer picks its victims is a wonder of science and a worry for every senior. Recent scientific discoveries show the baffling coexistence of normal behavior and abnormal Alzheimer cells. So there is something more than brain cells involved. I have already made the point that the mind is not just brain cells, and everyone has heard the bromide “use it or lose it.” Just how and why that works for some and not for others no one knows.

Did I forget to mention, that, like every octogenarian, I am dealing with memory loss; “dealing with,” not giving in. Whatever else is withering, I’m pretty sure will isn’t withering, as long as I keep exercising it.

I will the body parts that keep me swimming laps, playing the piano and writing. My psyche commands my soma. We are all psycho somatic beings. The new challenges that come with the ‘rock of aging,’ have to do with the struggle to keep mind over matter.

How can I be ‘reminded’ by the same mind that forgot? In order to understand how you remember you have to visualize how you forget, which can be a source of frustration or an adventure depending on your attitude, and, of course, your altitude. Looking down on it from above, it becomes a challenge, not a curse.

It becomes an adventure like a hot air balloon ride.

I can see that memory failure is like a road block. There is a path to the memory and once the road block is in place, it stays there, and with both feet on the ground, you can't get through no matter how many times you slam into it. However, with altitude I can see the path around the road block, the high view helps me retrieve what would otherwise remain out of reach.

Example, every time I tried to think of Warren Buffet's name I was blocked and detoured and stumbled into Jimmy Buffett, knowing full well that's not who I'm looking for. Then I pick myself up, dust myself off, and float up over the road block where I can see the name "Warren," right there where it should be, which I couldn't see with the road block in the way of the ground view.

The brain withering causes not only forgetfulness but false remembering, as well. Because everyone who was familiar is gone or wrinkled beyond recognition, every one you see looks familiar. But once you will your ascent above the illusions you see through the false recognition, as well.

Thank God, will does not wither; in fact it controls my body more than ever. I was 276 pounds before my self inflation demanded corporeal deflation; this led to a new lifestyle

which included swimming and fasting. I walked a half mile and a swam a mile nearly every day. Eventually I got down to 200 pounds and in addition to writing this book, playing the piano, and running a tech company, I am the care provider for a wife with type one diabetes and one lung, recovering from cancer and covid; not to mention, recovering from covid myself and providing for other family members and friends with needs.

Please understand, I'm not bragging; there would be no point to bragging, because I am not 'selling', just 'telling' like it is. If I were to mislead you, I would be misleading myself which defeats the whole point of this adventure.

While we're on the subject of recall, I should tell you about what I call spooky contemporaneous extrania. These are disconnected unwitting flashes. For example, while I was writing this section of the book an uncalled for but nevertheless vivid visual memory flashed across my inner screen. This particular flash from the past was the "Infinity" math symbol.



It was on the froth of a cappuccino I had in Naples Italy, a half century ago, drawn by a philosophical 'barista.' If you think about it, the decades and continents that lay between the original perception and the involuntary recall is

as awesome as the first time you saw a dolphin leap out of the ocean. It makes you think about your mind as an ocean rather than a puddle.

I remember the first time I thought about infinity. I was distracted from my fifth grade home work by my brother's high school homework across the kitchen table. He was amazed by a möbius strip where two surfaces were actually one surface, and the one surface was also two surfaces. My brother's pencil never left the paper and somehow the line appeared on both surfaces of the paper loop. This deception of perception cast the first phenomenological doubt in my young mind. Somehow I knew instinctively that there was a truth beyond the deceived perception. Without knowing it, at the time, that must have been the beginning of my epistemological quest.

The library of consciousness is bigger than the library of congress, which I imagine must have a similar card catalogue to aid in the intentional retrieval of a particular recorded set of thoughts. So called "senior moments" happen because the drawers in the catalogue cabinet gets stuck and the, not so graceful, yank of the aging librarian causes the cards to spill and scramble.

Example: one day, I was strolling past a plaza in Coconut Grove, Florida which had been recently rebuilt. Suddenly I found myself reminiscing about an earlier time in that same space, when my wife was well enough to go out

for dinner. Times had changed both my wife and the plaza. I wondered if it was still called..... the name...the name... what is the name; for the life of me, I could not come up with the name which I know as well as my wife's.

My librarian yanked at the drawer. The catalogue cards flew all over the place. One said "hobo", another said "walk." My reference search was suggesting that the plaza was called "hobo walk," which made me laugh out loud. What developers in their right minds would call this fancy plaza 'hobo walk,' then or now. How could I have come up with such a ridiculous answer?

Then I rose above the problem for a broader view. The search track must have been rhyming double syllable words ending in 'o'- which yielded hobo. I got a little higher and expanded my view ...no not hobo....not soho..... I was about to give up when suddenly Dylan Thomas popped out of the 'mattergy' realm like a genie who chimed in or should I say rhymed in: "Do not go gentle into that good night.....rage against the dying of the light...". My deep sigh sent me even higher and there it was in the expanded view, I saw the answer: "Coco Walk". It was "Coco Walk"; I shouted out loud "I got it." A stranger within earshot, flashed a tolerant smile with that special squint of compassion, reserved for dotty elders.

Later that night I dreamt that I was lost in Coco Walk which lead to the streets where I

grew up, where I was lost to the point of distraction and panic. Family members came to the rescue and we all got lost in a labyrinth of familiar streets that did not connect as we expected.

My altitude does not seem to help with haunting dreams. While the mind is dreaming, the night librarian of the library of consciousness gets playful, or maybe mischievous. For no earthly reason he shuffles all the cards and creates distorted parodies of the life of the sleeper; events unfold with surreal confusion but enough reality to cause the sleeper to moan or sometimes talk in complete sentences, or even walk, which brings to mind a haunting dream in another mind close to mine.

When I was around eight years old my brother was twelve, and was still having bed wetting incidents. It got so bad, they brought him to a 'nerve doctor' at the Mass General hospital, who gave him mental exercises to perform before he fell asleep. He told me that whenever he wet the bed he was dreaming that he was in the bathroom. This was a source of great embarrassment for him and the family, and was also my secret weapon in our sibling rivalry. He was bigger, better looking, stronger and much more popular than all his pre-teen friends who knew nothing about his problem. I will never forget this one particular midnight escapade because it triggered my lifelong interest in dreams.

One Saturday night, close to mid night, I heard my brother getting out of the maple twin bed, separated from mine by a maple night stand. He was already well over five feet tall. I had seen sleep walking in the movies, but I had never seen a live performance. The Flash Gordon night light lent a cartoon quality to the shadow as it passed the foot of my bed turning for the open door. I knew enough not to laugh out loud, but I wanted to follow the action at any cost. I got out of bed and followed on tip toes, so as not to disrupt the zombie walk past the one toilet in our flat and on out to the kitchen. There was a parlor beyond the kitchen where my parents and another couple were singing a song about Cuba while Dad played the guitar. Working class people, who were not drafted in World war II, drank, smoked and harmonized; there was no TV yet, and that's what they did on a Saturday night.

My brother, the same one who discovered the möbius strip and introduced me to infinity, now stood eerily in the darkened kitchen next to the brand new waste can. During World War II, these metal waste cans may have just been invented; in any case they were hard to come by and we did feel pretty special when my Dad brought this contraption home from the secret Navy base where he worked, just off the coast of Maine. It was white enameled metal and it had a silver foot pedal that opened the lid. The day it arrived, my brother and I were amazed with this self

opening lid and had all but worn out the foot pedal. Slack jawed, I watched my brother open the lid, not with the foot pedal, but with his hand, as if it were a toilet seat. Just as he began to urinate on coffee grounds on the surface of the garbage, my shocked giggling awakened him. He dragged me back to bed by the collar of my pajama top and I swore to the fist in my face that I would never tell any one. He went on to have a great life, pissing in toilets all over the world. USAF Colonel Ciampa is gone now but I think he wouldn't mind my telling the story to make a point about the exploration of the dark jungle of the unconsciousness.

Opening the lid to jettison waste was a stored conscious pattern available to the unconscious mind; the distinction between toilet and waste can were not. I wondered why, then and still now. Why do all mammals turn off only this part of the mind every night? Is there a psychic battery for intellect which needs recharging? Why isn't the energy source that powers the dreams available for the rest of the mind?

Don't expect an answer. I have no idea why we sleep and why we dream, but sleep walking still makes me laugh, and I can't say why. Maybe it makes me think that there is some purposeful irony to the comedy of errors our dream state provides. Dreams are like a primordial tail on consciousness; like my cats tail, I'm never quite sure why it's there.

I have read Freud to no avail. I know that earlier thinkers found omens in dreams and I don't buy that. On a few rare occasions in my life, dreams have provided me with ideas and insights, but mostly they're just bad movies about my being lost somewhere, making stupid mistakes.

B.F. Skinner, one of the fathers of Behavioral psychology believes that the dream state may be just a subconscious waste can where we jettison the excrement, the drag, of self doubt. Maybe he's right.

CROSS WORD

Before the internet, people spent more time with newspapers and crossword puzzles. I believe crossword puzzles demonstrate that the semiotics behind words, like ideas, are not confined to spacetime, and may be part of some other layer, an energy field ('mattergy') that is beyond spacetime.

For example, the New York Times, famous for its crossword puzzles, on occasion, without telling their subscribers, would borrow already published and solved puzzles from the London Times. Social psychology researchers discovered that those already solved London puzzles were solved significantly faster by New Yorkers. There had been no contact between the London puzzlers and the New York puzzlers. Did this mean New Yorkers had some mind bending access to the London solutions?

We've all heard of mental telepathy which is a hoax, but a hoax that is entertaining because it tickles our unconscious awareness of the possible subterranean connection between consciousnesses. [There is another study in Wikipedia, by Monica England making the same point with Nottingham students working crossword puzzles.]

Not convinced? Well then how about this puzzling piece of history. Thirty three days before D day, allied intelligence discovered a crossword puzzle which contained secret code

words, namely: ‘Utah’, ‘Omaha,’ and ‘Mulberry,’ the top secret name for the portable docks to be used in the landing and if that wasn’t enough, the puzzle also had the word ‘Overlord,’ the top secret code word for the entire Normandy invasion. These words were known only by a handful of general staff. Naturally the maker of the puzzle, a British school teacher, was arrested and interrogated day and night, until it was crystal clear that he was not a German spy and these words just happened to occur to him “coincidentally.” ‘Coincidence’ is just another question masquerading as an answer.

I don’t have any answer, but I know words are envelopes for thoughts and how and why those move around is still a mystery, like the ‘entangled particles’ in quantum physics.

We have already made the point that no one can yet locate consciousness anywhere in the brain or anywhere else. Using geography to find consciousness will get you nowhere, which is just where you need to be, off the map, off the road, off the runway. If you want to think about thought, you have to imagine a mind state beyond the metrics of spacetime. So there can’t be a space between my thought and your thought. My words can only tell you something you already know.

Probably the only point of agreement between atheist evolutionists and religious creationists is that verbal communication puts

us at the top of the animal heap. The biblical phrase “In the beginning was the word” goes on to say “and the word was with God” (John 1:1). This seems to suggest that the verbal tools have a divine origin.

My cat just meowed. Was that a coincidence ? Instead of sitting on my lap which she does when I watch TV, when I’m writing she lies on the floor next to my office chair so as not to disturb me; except for that meow, just now. My cat cannot pronounce any of the words I know she understands and yet she manages to get me to do for her whatever needs to be done. Maybe she doesn’t need words because she is more settled into her place in her tame world and doesn’t need to utter more than an occasional meow.

Birds and bees communicate with ease. Butterflies keep in touch above the trees on their international flights without radios or GPS. Somehow mosquitoes get together out of nowhere to feed on our blood and microbes know how to get to our cells and use them as incubators, all without a word passing between them.

This may be why Goethe coined his iconic, ironic paraphrase: “in the beginning was the deed.” But then we have to take Goethe’s word for it. He handed down words to suggest their own insufficiency; that’s a crossword puzzle as well as a paradox puddle.

There are no correct answers, on the back page, of the consciousness crossword puzzle. We are all unsure, always, and will likely remain so; and that is why we need to constantly double check with our partners in confusion: “did you see that?” Mystery loves company, as does misery. There are always partners to the mystery of consciousness, whether they are physically present or not. This negative charge of incompleteness compels connection.

In my earlier work, at the dawn of the information age, Communication The Living End, I coined the phrase “communogenesis” to suggest that this existential deception is the engine which powers the relentless expansion of communication channels. There is a force for connection which underlies all our communication technology and will probably connect us beyond the word, the audio and light speed video aimed at our senses. It is clear to me that words, audio, video, and whatever other communication forms we come up with, were not meant to be an end in themselves but rather a manifestation of the ultimate resonance. Resonance is a word that reaches beyond words to the semiotic energy in the mattergy field. The notion of resonance which is actually extrasensory perception has been with us since the dawn of philosophy.

Plato, the leader of our conga line, suggested that once upon a time, in our sublime pre-human existence, we did know everything.

In Meno, (Plato's dialogue) Socrates was not providing new information to the ignorant slave boy when he explained a geometric axiom, he was reminding him of something he already knew in his pre-existing soul. If it were completely new and completely foreign, he could never have learned it.

Resonance is at the core of all Western thought, before and after Christ. Christ challenged us all to connect: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." He didn't tell us how. He left it for us to figure out how to manifest this resonance.

"Cognitive consonance" is my own term for the antipode of cognitive dissonance. It is the rarest form of resonance; we must call it a metaphysical resonance because it cannot be explained by physics. Cognitive consonance eliminates the need for snail mail and even email; ideas travel like "entangled subatomic particles" untrammelled by electromagnetic or light speed limits, from one node to another whether it is a capacitor or a resistor. You will see many examples of this in the chapters which follow.

Absence is not a barrier to the harmony of cognitive consonance. Absent communication partners can be divided into two categories: Spatially Absent Partners (SAPs) and Temporally Absent Partners (TAPs). Spatially Absent Partners, (SAPs), are in a different place at the same time, while

Temporally Absent Partners (TAPs) are in the same place at a different time.

Connecting across space shrinks geography. Connection across time shrinks history. Geographically speaking we find ourselves in corners of the world witnessing things we might never have imagined, which is a mixed blessing. Historically we find ourselves in epochs where we learn from or repeat the old mistakes.

Whatever the effect, devices are driven to constantly improve the connection. Connection devices, nowadays, all have undreamt of imaging capabilities. The cameras on ordinary cell phones are thousands of times better and faster at capturing and sharing imagery than network television ever was or will be. While the primary use of this new power is for selfies, they are also on scene eye witnesses. This makes more people privy to more events than ever before in the history of humankind.

Can you imagine how different the world would be if Christ and the apostles had cell phones. What if the the Romans soldiers at the crucifixion where wearing body cams? There would be no more need for faith. Seeing is believing.

But wait, seeing can be selectively framed and digitally edited to match some preconception. Putting this power in the hands of on the scene wrong doers, would come out

all wrong and more believable. “Fake news” as Trump called it while he faked his own news.

With our heightened state of connection anyone can say anything to everyone. That’s good news and it is also bad news. You don’t need me to tell you that swarms of uninvited Spatially Absent Parters- SAPs have invaded our privacy from everywhere and anywhere. More and more SAPs push their way into our waking consciousness. Lies crowd out the truth and disinformation ‘saps’ our attention span. The babble of the rabble might, one day, drown out the whispers of the wise. Liars and cheats, terrorists and sex offenders also have anonymous access to the global network.

That is the same network that has created the chorus of great minds living and long dead, eager to share their truth and expertise. So much so, that the distinction between amateur and professional is fast disappearing. Amateur physicians, physicists, psychologists, philosophers, and most importantly metaphysicians can connect anywhere, anytime. I am eternally grateful that all this happened in my lifetime.

The same Iphone that enables my space travel enables my time travel. When I was young I had to go to the library to look for a book. (James Joyce’s Ulysses referred to the books in a library as “thought coffins”). Now I have all the libraries of the world and all the

museums, theaters and concert halls in my shirt pocket.

I learned about physics and metaphysics, not in school buildings or libraries but while I was waiting for my wife in a doctors waiting room, or in my armchair, in my pajamas, all from great teachers who reached me there or wherever I happened to be whenever a question arose, which question was answered “just in time” by TAPs (Temporally Absent Partners) on the Iphone.

Our generation, for the first time, is facing a redefinition of “presence” and “absence.” When I was in college in the fifties, virtual presence was an oxymoron. Virtual presence is now a prominent annex of physical presence. ‘Present company excluded’ is now not only tolerated but even expected.

If I had to leave the table to answer the wall phone in the kitchen where I grew up, the panorama of shocked silent stares, would have frozen me in my tracks. There were very few families in my neighborhood with telephones and waste cans that opened with a foot pedal, let alone TV sets.

Television, which Marshall McLuhen called “the electronic fire place” covered our actual fire place in the living room, which was still a room for living when I was in grade school, since there was very little TV distraction available.

By the time I was in college, the living room became the waiting room for the train to 'trance-sylvania.' "Living" in the 'living room' was redefined by TV. Entranced family members eventually became characters in their own sitcoms. Virtual life redefined actual life, not in a good way, because the rulers of the new state, 'trance-sylvania,' were not enlightened despots like the Platonic 'guardians' but ad men, mad men and hucksters turning deception into a profit. The hucksters took complete control of communication technology and soon they went from the living room to the bedroom and eventually into our shirt pockets.

There must have been some irresistible need to look away from real life after that horrific World War II.

My dad actually assembled our floor model TV from a kit he bought, which made our living room a theater on Tuesday nights. It brought aunts and uncles and cousins together for a couple of hours of collective distraction, always followed by a few more hours of live interaction, for better or worse.

As the old bromide says: you can choose your friends, but you can't choose your relatives. In my youth, if you chose to leave your family you had to move to the West coast, which I did. But now a young man does not have to go west. He can leave by staying in the

same living room and just move his attention to anywhere and everywhere else in the world.

Couples sit across the table from each other with faces buried, each in their respective cell phones. It's as if we have purposely excluded present company, as if we had an aversion to the present tense, or should I say, the present tension. There has always been a tension in family ties; for some, an unbearable tension. In the pre cell phone era, no matter how crazy, you had to find ways to deal with family tension; now you can just worm your way into your own apple.

These past two years physical separation between and among present company has had a mysterious microbiological ally that punishes proximity with pestilence. Handshakes have become fist bumps. Mandated "social distancing" has eliminated hugs and kisses. Like most net-heads, the internet is a powerful attraction, and I have to use my will power and my focus to keep it from becoming a powerful distraction.

I still need to press the flesh occasionally. Maybe that never goes away or maybe we will be able to trade live partners for virtual partners. With physical contact out of the way, spiritual connection between virtual partners should have a much clearer path. "Should" is the operative word. I see no evidence of that yet.

IN WORD

I told you earlier that I stopped going to church, because I felt that organized religion's one hour per week slots out more transcendence than it lets in. Dressing up for church weighed me down. The ceiling is raised out of reach to provide head room for the gigantic fearsome God. Dwarfed in the loft of the Gothic knave, I felt belittled rather than humbled.

It occurred to me that Buddha didn't build any temples. Socrates didn't build any temples, and most importantly Christ didn't build any temples. Bergson, James, Royce, North-Whitehead and others in the conga line supported my view that organized religion oppressed rather than enhanced individual spiritualism. This and the barbaric history of organized religion was off-putting: crusades, inquisitions, jihads, and suicide bombers, all killing in God's name.

I was fond of justifying my not going to church with a quote from Nietzsche: "Christ was the last christian."

My techno instinct had me waiting for a virtual congregation, which would more effectively enhance my inner spiritualism. I have a library in my shirt pocket. I thought, why not a church, with a congregation that is with me all the time.

Suddenly, like a bolt out of the blue, on the road to Damascus, it occurred to me that I might have wrongfully condemned all churchgoers without a fair trial. That and my lonely realization that no man is an island forced me to look again at organized religion beyond the one true Catholic Church. You will recall that my first twelve years of education in Catholic schools left me feeling trapped in dogma. I knew about Cotton Mather and Increase Mather, since I grew up across the street from their graves. But Congregationalism, was heresy and my Catechism taught that I would burn in hell if ever I stepped into a Protestant church.

Some of the same philosophers in our conga line who condemned organized religion also found that some congregations, “communities of grace,” might actually be essential to a spiritual life. Somehow or other, that got me into a Congregational church and also bible study breakfasts which have shed a new light on the Bible. I will never let any book or organization get in the way of my inner Christ, but so far this congregation does not seem to pose any threat to my inner Christ, and I do enjoy the company of intelligent spiritually minded present partners. I’m still not sold on mumbo jumbo in church services. I do go once in a while, and I’m keeping an open mind. Spiritualism courses on Amazon’s “Great Courses” have really changed my mind about organized religion.

I still treasure my absent partners like Maslow and his non church going “peaker,” and John Dewey with his A Common Faith, (1934) which connects faith, imagination and intellect.

Dewey will be visited in the conga line, but I must jump the gun here for another amazing coincidence. I must continue to point out that “coincidence” is not a path to understanding; it’s a road block. Instead of coincidence, I call my connection to John Dewey and other great minds cognitive consonance, which says just a little bit more about the mystery without purporting to explain it. Anyway, brace yourself for another anecdote.

I was a street gang member in the Italo American ghetto of Boston’s North End, who somehow graduated from a Franciscan high school with very good grades, only in the senior year. For some reason I wanted to crash the elite party on the other side of the MTA tracks. The geographic and ethnic Harvard quotas made the odds of my getting in slim to impossible.

It turns out Dewey had also been rejected by Harvard for other reasons. Dewey’s revolutionary curriculum was developed at the University of Chicago and considered by Harvard, but in the end, like me, it was not good enough for Harvard, which had the effect of bouncing it across the the Charles river to Boston University.

A couple of Harvard alumni who were social workers in our neighborhood settlement house knew about the Dewey experiment at Boston University, and decided that I might be accepted there, and that is where our consciousnesses intertwined.

[What I'm about to tell you is an 'exclusive' story. I may be the last witness to this exclusive, uncorroborated report, which might make you feel privileged or suspicious; either way, it's now yours to do with what you will.]

The Boston University College of General Education (CGE) was founded in 1952 and I can find no details of this anywhere. There is a 'Genera Studies' program at BU, which might be the successor to CGE, but I found no mention anywhere of what I am about to recount.

When I entered CGE in 1953, BU had taken over the General Tire Company building on Commonwealth Avenue not far from the main campus. As a cost savings gesture for the new facility, they kept the word "General" from the tire company sign and just replaced the word "Tires" with "Education."

I had nothing in common with most of my fellow freshmen, many of whom were GI's returning from Korea. There were just a few who looked closer to my age, and somehow we wound up sitting together: a pre-med student who had been expelled from U Mass, a nutty

poet who was one of the rare few to be expelled from Harvard in his freshman year and a Cuban aristocrat escaping from Batista. As it turned out we became friends for life. Without saying so, we all knew we were there because we had no where else to go. This presented a unique challenge for the faculty, who were there with a firm purpose, to revolutionize higher education.

There were no college courses, just general seminars in Science, Humanities, etc. that might include current issues and/or breakthrough theories, articulated by visiting professors. There was one auditorium for one-to-many communication, but mostly we were in small informal seminars.

The “General” in General Education was Dewey’s fusion of art, science, humanities and philosophy. In the pre-Dewey world someone who was not a specialist was a dilettante; Dewey wanted to change all that, and I can’t say he did that for the fifties generation. However, he did succeed with me. I became a generalist in a world still ruled by specialists.

In 1952 when Dewey died, I didn’t have a clue that I was being handed a torch. At the time I was burning my candle at both ends. I never dreamt I would be connecting this forward thinker to our conga line, more than half a century later.

While I was doing research for this book, I stumbled into Dewey, fatefully, (as opposed to coincidentally). An obscure footnote at the bottom of a page in Maslow's book brought Dewey to my attention. It was as if I was being 'TAPped' on the shoulder. I felt an instant connection to his key ideas triggered by our mystical connection, 'cognitive consonance.' It was only then that I discovered how much his ideas influenced me all these years, without my knowing his name. I would never have come to this realization had I not stumbled across that footnote in Maslow.

To round out the "coincidental" or fated anecdotes that shaped my intellectual life, I must tell you about my connection to Maslow. In the early drafts of this book, I had already written that "altitude changes attitude" and then I discovered these words of Abraham Maslow:

"The peak experience seems to lift us to greater than normal heights so that we can see and perceive in a higher than usual way. We become larger, greater, stronger, bigger, taller people and tend to perceive accordingly."
Abraham Maslow, Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences, pp 61-62, Penguin Books, (1964), [hereafter referred to as RVPE].

Maslow was talking about what I call 'hypersubjectivity.' Hypersubjectivity may seem like a superfluous term since it is so close to Maslow's "peak experience" and

“sacralization “ and “self actualization,”and “self realization”...and...and... you might wonder, do we need yet another term? I think we do. My “hypersubjectivity,” extends the wave length of Maslow’s self actualization and adds a higher frequency of ups and downs. It makes altitude a condition more than an experience, a condition of consciousness.

To make the case for the cognitive consonance of ideas, I must stress the point here that I discovered RVPE, **after** I had written the first draft of this self inflation book. It was the unintentional synchronicity of ideas that goaded me into digging deeper. I read more Maslow whereupon I discovered another mind boggling, mystical cognitive consonance.

In 2019, I wrote a memoir, in which one of my earliest memories is recalled: the scene is my attempt to run away from home at age four, (Ciampa, [Blink of an I](#), pp 82 and 83). This precocious petulance was amusing for the Italo-American tribe of aunts and uncles gathered at our Saturday night kitchen soiree. Someone thought it would be interesting to call my bluff; and so, they tied a few clothes into a hobo bundle on a stick.

Somehow I knew to place the stick on my shoulder, as I headed for the door. Hysterical laughter turned into silent surprise, as they watched me walk down the three stories of the tenement, all by myself, with the hobo stick on my shoulder, out to the curb of a wide,

waterfront street where I stopped at the curb. The embryonic free will was trumped by the parental mandate. I was not allowed to cross any street without an adult.

What blew my mind was finding that exact, I mean exact, same story, in Maslow (RVPE, p 46) written in 1964. You can lay the two stories next to each other, with the provided citations and you will be forced to conclude that, either I am a lying plagiarist, or this an amazing mysterious example of cognitive consonance (referred to by others as “synchronicity” and “morphic resonance”). His writing and mine were separated decades. My account was my own recall; Maslow’s account was a story he “made up” to illustrate a point.

I swear to you that there is no way either of us could have seen the other’s story, despite the fact that I did actually meet Maslow at one point.



Me

Maslow

In 1965 I was a lawyer representing a heroine addict arrested for trying to help himself in Synanon. Gil Faucett had bolted from

the State's methadone program and joined this community of ex-addicts. Self control supported by peer pressure was at the heart of his Synanon cure; it was also a California crime: 'associating with known addicts,' which violated his parole. Gil was busted and back in jail. It was my job to get him out. Our defense was successful and had the side-effect of putting on trial the bureaucratic science that tried to medicalize the psychology of addiction. Maslow was my expert witness at the trial, mentioned in his book, [Maslow, RVPE, p 87]. The trial also inspired Maslow's later book: Toward a Psychology of Being, where he said: "*Freud supplied us the sick half of psychology and we must now fill it out with the healthy half.*"

Maslow and I shared a mentor, Henry Geiger, who published and wrote most of MANAS, anonymously for decades., which Maslow called "*the organ for this new kind of faith and this new psychology*" [Ibid, p 39].

Maslow would not have been surprised mystical coincidences of consciousness. In his article in MANAS (July 17, 1963) [Ibid, p 58] he said: "*An education which leaves untouched the entire region of transcendental thought is an education which has nothing to say about the meaning of life.*"

DOWN WORD

Because of the phenomenal uncertainty that consciousness is heir to, we are suckers for false certainty. It doesn't take much to suck us in. H.L. Mencken suggested you can't go wrong underestimating the intelligence of the public. The struggle for power usually has nothing to do with ideals. Instead of policy, politics has become a contest to see who's spin can rouse the most rabble. Hitler, Stalin, Putin and Trump needed very little talent to bamboozle shockingly large numbers of followers.

It is much easier to trip a misguided person than it is to help them up. Millions trip and fall in behind the leader; the follow-the-leader line is not a conga, not a dance at all, but a trance, a zombie march. I believe everyone can think for themselves, even though most choose not to.

What convenes the mob is not evil but ignorance and self doubt. Refusing to do the work of understanding yourself, makes you a ripe target for demagoguery and dogma.

Dogma is an easier sell than self inflation, or self realization. Here's an ominous palindrome that I just discovered: 'dogma' is 'am-god' spelled backwards. Playing God is the ultimate sin of blasphemy and not what I want to be a part of, in or out of church.

Again, I'm not selling the idea that you can rise above it all, I'm telling you that I think I did, and I must quickly add that while I was aloft, I had a lot of trouble trying to figure out how to stay in touch. You don't like looking down on others and they don't like being looked down upon. Life is mean without horizontal relationships, and meaningless without a vertical relationship. There's the gravity problem of connection: you can't drag the others up, and you can't let them drag you down.

Even couch potatoes have eyes but they fail to see themselves. They evade ASCENSION with the excuse that its only for saints and celebrities. But on some level we all know that Anyone can ASCEND. But no matter how high you get you can't lose track of love, which is exactly what happens in most cases. There is a tendency to love up and across but not down. That's why great leaders and great teachers are few and far between. And that's why so many followers have so much trouble distinguishing between right and wrong, good and evil.

The definition of evil which most appeals to me insists that evil is not a thing but a lack of a thing. The thing lacked can be called love, or wisdom, or knowledge. The names we give the positive energy and the negative energy are not as important as the realization that they are a continuum, not separate containers.

Hanna Arendt's Banality of Evil is a restatement of Platonic wisdom, that the only evil is ignorance, which shows us that banality is but a low love level, which can be filled.

It is important for us to understand that the hot heads under the red hats, Trump followers, are not evil; Putin's murderous soldiers are not evil, just misguided. It is important to replace the concept of evil with ignorance. 'Evil' cannot be repaired, 'ignorance' can.

You will see in the conga line how Plato's ideas fed neoplatonism which then flowed into the new christian faith and eventually made sin fluid and forgivable. The old testament had Yom Kipur where the congregation collectively begs forgiveness for their sins, but there were no personal 'hall passes' or indulgences given out. Eventually, thanks to Gutenberg, indulgences materialized and could be replicated and sold. That was a powerful selling point for both Jewish and Roman medieval christians. It also became the breaking point for that part of Christianity we call Protestantism.

The new testament's only mention of confession is where Christ said: "...confess your sins to each other..." (James 5:16).

Voltaire imagines the very first confession where a sinner confesses all his sins and then waits for the priest to confess all his sins. We're all still waiting . Voltaire imagines the

priesthood to have begun when “the first rogue met the first fool.” Voltaire is yet another voice (not in the conga line) which led to my suspicion that organized religion may hinder more than help spiritual enlightenment. Even without the barbarism, there is a break down of the universal connection inherent in the partitioning of religious sects. I feel sure the world will be a better place when we all feel connected. The partitions of organized religion by their very nature prevent universal connection. Isn't it time for at least all the Jews and Christians to come together; then we can invite the Muslims and... and maybe even the scientific agnostics. We're almost there, but probably not in my lifetime. I think Catholics will have to make the first move.

Faith and reason once pitted against each other are fast becoming the thumb and fore finger of the hand of consciousness. Many of the greatest minds of physics and metaphysics (some of whom we've already talked about and some who you will meet in the “Conga Line”) believe that consciousness is the hand of the invisible soul, which we can't seem to find anywhere in the material world.

There has to be another invisible world. That's my otherworldly best guess .

OUT WORD

*“...That corpse you planted last year in
your garden
Has it begun to sprout?
Will it bloom this year? ...
Oh keep the dog far hence that’s friend to
men
Or he’ll dig it up again...”*

*[excerpted from THE WASTELAND- The Burial
of the Dead, T.S. Elliot]*

All the dancers in the conga line are dead, and, who knows, I may be too by the time you’re reading this, and yet here we are, all together. That’s unreal; or you could say surreal, or metaphysical. These are no original ideas. In fact, there are no such things as original ideas, once we glimpse the big picture of metaphysics.

It’s time I explain what I mean by metaphysics. Metaphysics is a milking stool with three legs, metaphorically speaking: the operating seat is supported by the freedom leg, the immortality leg and God leg.

Freedom, or free will, is inevitable and unavoidable. You have no choice about the beginning or the end of your life, but you are free to do just about anything in the between. You can even, at any time, say no to life itself but you can’t say no to freedom. Even the choice to end it is an exercise of freedom.

Wittgenstein's three brothers, Karl Marx's daughter, movie stars like Marilyn Monroe, Robin Williams, two of my close friends, and one and a half million other people, this year alone, ironically acknowledged freedom by choosing to end it. Albert Camus in The Myth of Sisyphus, suggests that suicide is the only genuine philosophical issue. You always have a choice as to whether or not to continue choosing. If there are choices, there must good ones and bad ones and it follows, there must be some reward for the good ones, which brings us to the second leg: immortality.

As Woody Allen says "no one gets out alive." And I would add, almost no one thinks about getting out at all. By the time you're 40 you will have attended a dozen funerals, and no matter how hard you try, you cannot imagine what death is like. Death is always something that happens to someone else.

Maybe immortality is a delusion that keeps us from facing death. But that delusion is the hopeful expectation of every human culture. Only in our own modern culture is there any doubt. Scientific skeptics suggest that immortality is a mirage, a metaphysical consolation, like whistling past the grave yard.

Penrose, Turing, Hawking, Ryle and Dennett, are the 'Oxford Atheists' (I call them that because I discovered they all went to Oxford). Their reason runway has no lift off point; they remain on the reason runway

waiting for Armageddon without any metaphysical escape route.

For them going beyond reason is unreasonable. I think it is unavoidable. Reason taxis right up to that 'wheels up' point and then has to lift off or crash. That's the way I see it, anyway. They would take issue.

A lesser known but more eloquent Oxford Atheist is Christopher Hitchens, who also happens to be the bravest atheist I know. He clung to his dark cynicism right into the black hole .

I discovered his book Mortality when I was almost finished with this book, and I read it from cover to cover. His brilliant word craft and careful logic, powered by his brave candor at death's door, almost burst my bubble. The dying declaration of any atheist would be piercing, but this last shot of Hitchens seemed to be aimed right at my *soft place*. It had me reeling. Through his eyes, I saw that my courage to lift off and look beyond death might actually be cowardice in not facing it. Everything I had written might just be a metaphysical consolation; this whole book might be just whistling past the graveyard. His argument had the power of a dying declaration.

'Dying declaration' is a Common law evidence term that assumes some one who is dying has no more reason to lie. Hitch (the name given him by his following of

international celebrities) was a respected intellectual, and this was his last word, and also the opening statement that put my soul on trial.

I had to prove that my faith is more rational than his atheistic logic. I had to demonstrate clearly that he has no more method to his madness than I do. I did that by proving “nothing” is impossible. That can be taken to mean that anything is possible, or that it is impossible to end with nothing, since no one has ever been able to get anything down to nothing. I meant the later.

I am not in pain at death’s door, like Hitch was when he rose above the agonies of esophageal cancer to share his final gasp. My body is way better than it has any right to be; nevertheless I am closer to death than most. So I too invoke the “dying declaration” to add veracity to my rejoinder.

Neither of us could call any witnesses. No one has gone to the end and come back to talk about it. Since there are no eye witnesses, or any other direct evidence, it comes down to whose circumstantial evidence is more believable. I win that because his has the dead end of nothing, which is impossible. Science now has to admit that there is no such thing as a vacuum; there is no such thing as “nothing.” We’ve always suspected that matter can neither be created nor destroyed, and now it has been proven in the laboratory (Higgs Boson, and the Higgs field). Energy transforms everything and

everything can be changed back into energy. In one form or another, something is always there.

Even the most far out vision of pearly gates makes more sense than a final vacuum.

Therefore Immortality is not only the best guess; it is also a lot more hopeful and lends meaning to life.

There is a formal plan that governs all of all the quarks and electrons that form the atoms that form the molecules that form the cells that come and go to and form me, which forces us into philosophy, like it or not.

According to Plato, even though we can never completely understand that formal plan we all know it's there. That plan erases the distinction between what was, what is and what will be, and connects us to whatever comes after death. We all know this instinctively; why else would we feel compelled to leave something behind, something that will bloom again, a musical note, a love note, a bank note, a will, this book you're reading.

Even atheists cannot resist leaving something of themselves behind, even if it's only an estate. Whether you call it idealism or idolatry, everyone thinks beyond mortality one way or another, which is another way of saying: there's no getting around immortality. And if that's true, then there's no getting around God either. The Godless, accidental universe is not

only hapless and hopeless, it is preposterous (from the Latin which literally means putting the end before the beginning).

Whether Christ's teaching was divine or not, it certainly made a difference in life on the planet. We wouldn't be in this pickle if we followed his advice; "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

I won't waste time arguing about whether Christ was God's son or a second God, or part of a trinity. I don't think I, or any human, can define, measure or enumerate God/s. It was Gods not God, for Hindus, Greeks and early Christian heretics. Christian philosophers haunted by Parmenides and Plato felt the need to flatten this polytheistic pile of Gods. Unity was essential to divinity. Just as there is some a-priori propensity to divide, there must be some innate compulsion to unify.

Dimension, number or location don't apply to my life enhancing chats with my inner Jesus. It's a genderless, ageless thought stream that becomes words, whispered just in time. I give the voice a name because I was raised up with the story of Jesus. A marvelous story about a super mind who comes down to earth so that I can ASCEND. Every civilization has some version of the metaphysical seesaw, where a divine descension enables human ASCENSION.

Is it blasphemy to anthropomorphize God, putting him on a seesaw? Is it blasphemy to dare to have a personal “chat” with a divine being? Spinoza (who you will meet in the conga line) thinks so.

If it is blasphemy, it is much less blasphemous than organized religion’s purported communication with a God who is hard of hearing. Yes “hard of hearing.” Why else would prayers be so repetitious, a jumble of mumbles prepared by some ancient dogmatist. Chants and prayers are quintessential monotony. If there is a God, I would think by now, He would be pretty tired of hearing the exact same mindless words parroted over and over again: “Hail Mary,” “Our Father” over and over. The implication of the standard prayer book is that God wouldn’t understand us without that paid staff of translators who put the words in our mouths. But then, what do I know about what God understands?

I know about as much as the guys who invented the prayers and chants to appease a horrific God. That God was a supernatural beast who could, at his whim, drown us in floods or cook us in lava. The God I chat with in my own words is the God of Love, and I’m sure the world would be a better place if everyone could find Him inside.

John Calvin called the inborn notion of God “sensus divinitatis.” Whether it’s the God of

love or the bitch goddess of success, we all recognize powers beyond our own; that's the supernatural, by definition. If God didn't make man in His own image, it is very hard to explain how man could have made up the idea of God. Ideas inevitably become Ideals which not only console the dying problem, but also prevent the killing problem. I'm sure Hitchens and Penrose would vote for a world without killing.

I confess to being perplexed by the Calvin conundrum where predestination and free will collide. My way around the conundrum is the belief that the God plan provides opportunities within limitations. Penrose believes in the opportunities but refuses to admit they are provided by God.

Penrose is more famous for his physics than his skepticism. He was the discoverer of the black hole. Long before writing this book, I read his book and watched his lectures on YouTube where he all but topples the metaphysical stool, which I believe he must have for his important distinction between Artificial and human intelligence.

Penrose distinguishes machine intelligence from human intelligence because machine intelligence is confined to interpolating and/or following rules already made by human intelligence. Artificial intelligence cannot truly invent or create new rules. The clear implication of this Penrose position is that human intelligence,

i.e.consciousness, must be beyond the software put together by programmers and physicists. That which is beyond physics was named metaphysics by Aristotle the father of science.

Neither the Oxford Atheists nor any neuro scientist can get around ‘neuroplasticity.’ This is the scientific phenomenon whereby mental functions originally assigned to portions of a brain which becomes damaged are relocated elsewhere in the brain. The mysterious dispatcher that manages this relocation process cannot be found anywhere in the brain or anywhere else in material world.

The same physics mystery (i.e. metaphysics) applies to the hippocampus of some senior brains, like mine, which we talked about earlier. It turns out Dylan Thomas and I can force, by sheer will power, the development of new cells in the hippocampus which is supposed to be past the ability to generate new cells.

Penrose and every other serious scientist admits that all we know of the universe is only 5% and that the rest is dark knowledge. Unlike, Galileo, Descartes, Leibniz, Plank, Schrodinger, Heisenberg, Einstein, Bohr and Higgs, Penrose insists that human intellect will have all the answers, if not now, eventually without the help of God. If he believes the absolute truth is coming, then it is, not here now, and I would like to hear him explain where it is now. Who’s

minding the collective mind? Mind is a noun but it is also a verb.

Mind is an act and can be a loving and creative act. This is the challenge of our generation and it cannot be solved without the connection between faith and reason. We need science and spiritualism, physics and metaphysics, to come together on the subject of life, if not afterlife.

Science alone, philosophy alone, art alone, religion alone cannot provide any hopeful answers. The static conception of mind that freezes consciousness into separate cliffs of faith and reason, art and science is at the root of our existential dilemma, which can only end with the leap of faith.

Did I invent this God, or did He invent me? No static answer can freeze this ultimate dynamic. Since sequence is a spacetime aberration, we can say that God made man and man made god in no particular order.

ON WORD

In its continuous effort to understand matter, mind has gone from the uncertainty of rain dances to the Heisenberg principle of uncertainty. Uncertainty which may be an end point for physics is a beginning for metaphysics and our conga line, which is no less certain but much more palatable. Before we join the conga line, let us bow to our partners.

Everyone in the conga line are my **Temporally Absent Partners, TAPs**; I could have called the dance a TAP dance but that would lose the floating and winding aspect of the conga line. All the dancers in the conga line are bigger than life, super inflated hypersubjects, who bump into each other softly, in a wobbly floating procession. The Macy's parade, comes to mind where inflated super heroes are marched on tethers which keep them close enough to earth to provoke awe and high enough and grand enough to be inspiring super heroes. Like the Macy's parade, the conga line is put together to give thanks, a Thanksgiving parade.

Unlike the Macy's parade, the conga line are talking heads whose words thunder across the millennia of civilization. There are chapters for each of the great minds in the conga line. They all used different words but say the same thing about divinity, death, and decision, or we could say: God, Immortality and Free will, the three nodes of metaphysics.

Socrates is the head of the dance line; he was the bridge builder between the inside and outside realms, between humanity and divinity.

Socrates is the founding father of self development and self love, and hypersubjectivity. His precious eight words have become my mantra: "I am not alone. I am by myself." The soul of our particular brand of metaphysics is self consciousness. No one knows how we think about ourselves but everyone knows that we do think about our selves. For Socrates/Plato "know thy self" leads to divine knowledge of Ideal Forms, that float above the mundane, and inspire human belief systems, which never quite reach perfection. That is what the conga line is all about: fallible human consciousness dancing to an invisible divine rhythm.

Socrates never bothered to write anything down and Plato wrote everything down, and beautifully. There are still some who think that Socrates was simply a character invented by Plato, but most scholars agree that Socrates actually existed. In everyone's story of philosophy, the father of idealism is Plato, even though everything he said came through the lips of Socrates.

Plato said there has to be an absolute truth even though we can't know it exactly, otherwise how could we refute that very proposition. Whether we refute it or accept it,

we are demonstrating the backdrop of ideal perfection. Plato says the backdrop of perfect truth can't have come from anywhere but a divine mind, which we mortals can experience only in bits and pieces through recall.

Something in Plato's fallible human philosophy was close enough to perfection to last through Plotinus all the way to the founder of Christian philosophy, Saint Augustine, and onto my Catholic grammar school in the North End of Boston. I guess institutions may have played a roll in my self inflation, after all.

Plato's idea of 'soul' was cut and tailored, eight centuries later, by Origen and Augustine to fit the human anatomy. Plato never talked about a one-to-a customer soul. Plato's idea of "soul" is more of a *soft place* where individual consciousnesses can connect even after the body is cold.

Socrates, as he was about to drink the hemlock, which was his death sentence for practicing philosophy, suggested that philosophy is all about preparing and transcending death. In a sense this was the launch of Western metaphysics.

Where Plato's consolation was esthetic, Epicurus had a more anesthetic consolation. He told his followers not to worry about death because there is no feeling in death so it cannot be painful, so why worry.

Seneca, one of the fathers of Stoicism, adopted the Platonic notion that philosophy is learning to die, where, “to die” implies the connection with the eternal (immortality).

For Schopenhauer the enigma of death inspires philosophy. In his words, “Death is the muse of philosophy.”

Hegel saw philosophy as something beyond death: philosophy is the “death of death.”

In every case the metaphysical triad sits on a life and death seismic crack that creates a double vision of reality. This may be an aberration, but it is the inevitable starting point for any perfectible version of reality.

Double vision seems to be an indigenous human defect; we see twos everywhere. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that we have two hands, two hips, two feet, two sexes, ankles, knees, thighs, buttocks, kidneys, nipples, testicles, ovaries, lungs, nostrils, ears. Dichotomies are everywhere: two realms inside and outside; presence and absence and so on and so forth.

If dichotomy is an aberration, there must be an underlying unification. On the one hand we need to take things apart to understand them and on the other hand we need to put them together to appreciate them.

Heraclitus observed that we cannot step into the same river twice. Cratylus and Xenophanes took this to mean that we could not know anything for sure for very long. Protagoras (not to be confused with Pythagoras) coined the oft quoted phrase, “man is the measure of all things,” which came to mean that measurements are all in your head, i.e. scientific knowledge is an illusion.

All these limitations apply the lower half of consciousness which we call human intelligence, but the conga line believes there is an upper half and that makes us all convicted dualists, but not duelists. Augustine’s dualism drew the line between faith and reason. Kant divided understanding and pure reason. Bergson separated intellect and intuition. Even narrow minded Hume, who is not in the conga line, divided reason and judgement. Bringing it all together is the ultimate challenge of philosophy.

Plato’s dualism lit a fire in the dark cave of fallible human consciousness and distinguished the shadows from the forms causing the shadows. Putting together the shadows with that which caused the shadows is the philosophical challenge of every consciousness. Plato never meant to demean the lower half by ascribing fallibility to the intellect; he just meant to confine the lower half of consciousness to the natural realm, leaving the upper supernatural realm as an aspiration and an inspiration.

Stoicism is an ancient Greek strain of thought that also infected European philosophers. Stoicism's other worldly concerns were secondary to taking the bumps out of the road of life, floating, if you will. Epictetus knew that we're put here to figure out why we're put here, and that self understanding is a divine challenge. Epictetus was a fan of Socrates, after all, and found a divinity in discovering your self :

“He (God) hath entrusted me with my self. He hath made my will subject to myself alone and given me the rules for the right use thereof....all things will be at once according to your mind and according to the mind of God... the beginning of philosophy is to know the condition of ones own mind” [Harvard Classic IV, XXII and XLVI].

Stoics before and after Christ: Zeno (Greek), Epictetus (Greek/ Roman), Marcus Aurelius (Roman) and Seneca (Roman), must have known about Buddhism. Buddha came before Socrates and Christ. Although I can find no record of any overt contact between these pillars of self realization, we know, by now, that ideas have a way of traveling beyond spacetime parameters.

Buddha and later Socrates set the stage for the discovery of the inner world. Christ and the Stoics envisioned a paradise growing out of self discovery and self love, a loving cosmopolis. This cosmopolitan philosophy which arises from our innate gregariousness is

particularly relevant right now; because, like many of my fellow idealists, I believe we are doomed unless we reinstate some form of global idealism. It is my hope that revisiting the great minds in the conga line will help.

There was a run on great minds in the 1600's. Descartes' generation included the likes of Locke and Leibniz who we shall meet in the conga line. Suffice it to say here, they were all, inspired by the ancient Greeks to dig deeper into internal consciousness.

In the cell phone age, connection becomes easier and faster, less expensive and more expansive, including connecting to the great minds in the conga line for free anytime, anywhere. Virtual connection is a great new access to the outer world; at the same time it is a great new distraction from the inner world. We have to learn to balance the two.

From this very conga line of consciousness, I learned about the dichotomy of perception and deception, which is called phenomenology. At the risk of losing you, I should tell you a little bit, now, about epistemology, and phenomenology, to prepare you for what lies ahead. I promise, except for some brief discussion, we won't get lost in the blizzard of terms that turns most of us away from phenomenology and the millions of words which I will now over simplify.

Epistemology is the study of human knowledge and phenomenology is the study of human consciousness. Knowledge of consciousness, the *epistemology of phenomenology* and consciousness of knowledge, the *phenomenology of epistemology* have been around since Plato, if not before, but the name and practice became more formalized by Kant and then again in the early 20th century mainly by Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty all of whom we shall meet down the road, or should I say, down the line.

It all has to do with the fact that all is not as it appears. Perception can at times be deceiving, and there is no way, in our 'boxed in' thinking, to distinguish between perception and deception, except after the fact. We have to learn to live with this cockeyed vision. And, thanks to communication, we can continue to connect and correct.

For Kant and all the many Kantians, who you will meet in the conga line, layered consciousness includes a sublime layer which is then connected to the mundane. Scholars are confused about this sublime layer and so is Kant himself which explains his own critique of "Critique of Pure Reason." "Reason," Kant says, unifies the conditional knowledge of "understanding" and raises it to a higher super stratum above the senses, which may be why it didn't make sense to me at first, until I found a reason to understand.

Unlike Kant, Berkeley, another conga line dancer, rocks on about absolute idealism and doesn't bother connecting it to any foundational realism. It's all in your head; for Berkeley, there is nothing provable beyond the interior subjectivity. This monistic subjective reality was criticized by most critical thinkers right up until quantum physics and Schrodinger. This Nobel laureate Schrodinger, introduced us to a scientific thought experiment where his imaginary cat could be proven to be both dead and alive at the same time in the same space, using established laws of quantum physics. Schrodinger's superposition state suggests another separate reality which exists within the observer above and beyond the observed.

Fichte, Schelling, Kant and Hegel, all in the conga line, shared the view that mind is a *subject* which is part of and yet apart from *objects* in nature, something natural connected to the super natural. Fichte and Schelling see the mind as part of the transcendental, absolute universal energy.

Bergson says that consciousness is connected to superconsciousness, which is a God, and that God is always changing (Two Sources of Morality and Religion). At first I was shocked by the idea that God is always changing, but then I realized that this is just proof of the aberration resulting from Plato's human fallibility, where we can never know or understand God completely as humans. I must

point out that Bergson would roll over in his grave at my correcting him with Plato. We will see in the Bergson chapter that he set himself against Plato. Nevertheless I see Plato everywhere in philosophy and in Bergson too.

One of the most controversial Bergson ideas is that human creativity exists because God needs fellow creators. God is needy just like us, and not perfect. Witness the paradox of biological evolution. In Creative Evolution, Bergson shows us that an intelligent God could not be behind Darwinian “survival of the fittest.” Why would God have made creatures more and more complex when simplicity would be much more effective for survival. Bergson also questions the notion that survival is the only reason for existence.

The bark of the big anti- dogma, great Dane, Soren Kierkegaard was the clarion that led me to the inner sanctum. He made it clear that the act of faith was not just singing a hymn on Sunday, but the continuous passionate commitment to your own existential choice, to stay with Christ; you have to talk to him every day, wherever you are. Kierkegaard, often called the father of existentialism, insisted that idealism was and is an existential act of faith, and more importantly, a passionate, continuous activity.

I meant for our conga line to be a lot smaller. As I embraced each dancer I fell in love and was sure this was the only partner I

needed, until I met the next, and the next. With all the changing partners, I worried my circle of influence might become a philosophical square dance, and then I felt the melding rhythm that melts distinction, and I knew I was present in the right line of absent partners.

PRE-SOCRATIC

(625 BC-429BC)

Thales of Miletus, (623-545 BC) was the founder of the Ionian school of philosophy. Ionia was a western satellite of Greece where Greek and Western philosophy began. Thales is hailed as the father of philosophy by some distinguished philosophers in and out of the conga line including, Aristotle, Bertrand Russel and Edmund Husserl, to name a few. As if that wasn't enough Thales also invented Geometry which he used to measure the nearby Egyptian pyramids.

According to Bertrand Russell, Thales got us thinking about the unity of all substance. This may be the earliest known expression of our compulsion to unify. Thales' unity referred to substances of the real world not the surreal world. I don't know exactly what he thought about the surreal world except that he did explode the myths which explained the 'phenomena' of the real world. In that sense you could say he was the father of both phenomenology and science. Aristotle would be quite willing to share that honor with Thales. Thales's distinguished pupils also include Anaximander and one of the most influential Greeks, Pythagoras.

Anaximander (610-546 BC) was the author of the first surviving lines of Western philosophy which spoke about the "Boundless"

realm beyond geography. This is the first recorded metaphysical speculation looking to a world beyond geography. Ironically, by drawing a map of the world Anaximander was also the first geographer.

Pythagoras (570 BC) (not to be confused with Protagoras) was the founder of a secret society that believed numbers and music were mystical functions of a divine consciousness. His mystical numerological rituals are faded legends; little can be said about their practice and the effects on daily life three millennia ago. He is one of the most famous and controversial ancient Greek philosophers and yet he wrote nothing; like Christ, we learn about him from disciples, like Anaximander. There are also detailed accounts of his thought written a few generations later by Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle. We all learned the Pythagorean theorem in high school geometry (the square of the hypotenuse of any right triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides); that never changes and is said to be discovered rather than invented by Pythagoras. Remember his teacher was Thales who discovered Geometry. Both philosophers saw this math as a metaphysical perfection that resides above the imperfect world.

Any string player who presses a vibrating string to get different notes is in Pythagoras's debt. This is an early "string theory." His harmonic ratios are the earliest example of the

reverberations of the metaphysical world in the physical world.

There is a Buddhist tinge to Pythagorean teachings. Cults in Greece and Italy practiced his prescribed asceticism to achieve spiritual ascendance. There does seem to be a God in their system of beliefs and a freedom to choose a 'right path' which has its rewards in a kind of immortality. So we can call it metaphysics. Already in the Pythagoreans we see the idea of life as testing ground for the perfection of imperfections. We have instructions on how to perfect them, but no explanation of where the imperfections came from. From their belief in reincarnation, we could assume some sort of Karmic carry over, but this is me talking, not the Pythagoreans. They did offer a reward for making the right choices, immortality.

For the immortality node, the Pythagoreans believed that the winner souls went through a series of reincarnations, on earth that eventually wound up on the blessed isles of the moon. I wonder if he knows now that moon is not a *soft place*, that we've actually been there and found only more rocks. He would probably come up with some sidereal math to another 'other world.' The Pythagorean belief that space is endless may turn out to be correct.

Heraclitus (500 BC), suggests that the perception/ deception delusion, which we have

spoken about earlier, is connected to soulful choices. He said it much more eloquently: “Poor witnesses for men are their eyes and ears if they have barbarian souls.”

Heraclitus also authored the ever changing river metaphor we stepped into on several occasions. Heraclitus taught us that things change continuously, but didn't explain the idea of change. Change relative to what? There has to be the one thing that doesn't change by comparison or change cannot be perceived. That was left for Plato to figure out. Plato uses the dynamic flux to establish the static perfection of the sublime. Plato saw that the Heraclitan river of flux had to be contained in a constant river bed.

Heraclitus also inspired Epictetus and Seneca who inspired Marcus Aurelius who inspired George Washington.

Democritus, (460-370 BC) known in antiquity as the 'laughing philosopher' because of his emphasis on the value of 'cheerfulness,' was also one of the two founders of the ancient atomist theory. He elaborated the materialist account of the natural world originated by his teacher Leucippus. The atomists held that there are small indivisible bodies from which everything else is composed, and that these move about in an infinite void. Democritus's importance to us is that he also saw a division between subjects and objects, where objects

had properties such as size and shape, while subjects had only 'nomos,' subjective ideas about the objects such as color.

Protagoras (490-420 BC) (not to be confused with Pythagoras) is more important now, because he predicted the current quantum quandary. Protagoras' famous quote: "Man is the measure of all things" heralds the separation of "measurement," a function of internal consciousness from "the measured," external reality. The chasm between subjects and objects now haunts quantum physics, like never before. Heisenberg, Bohr and Schrodinger saw that the very process of observation influenced the observed in ways that remain a mystery to this day.

Parmenides of Elea, (500 BC) and his fellow Milesians inspired Plato's philosophical jiu-jitsu which turned the notion of flux onto itself. Parmenides showed that to envision the notion of change there must be an eternal background of constancy; a 'beyond' where things which haven't happened yet, are hatched. Here is something that exists which is also unknown to humans. It follows, then, that there must be some **one** who understands it all, and that would have to be the one God, and we would have to be connected to that God to have come up with that idea.

PLATO

(429-347 B.C.)

We have already talked about Plato a great deal even before his grand entrance, and that is because you cannot talk about philosophy without talking about Plato. Plato is the most penetrating, wide-ranging, and influential philosopher in Western thought. Some scholars believe that Neoplatonism can be found in Islamic philosophy, as well [Ilkinde]. The billions of minds that have been shaped by Platonic concepts probably never read a single page of the thousands of pages and billions of words Plato wrote in his 82 years on the planet.

Plato is not popular reading and this has to do with the archaic dramatic style he used. The dialogues which frame all Plato's metaphysics sound like badly written screenplays to modern audiences who are accustomed to having their interest held by plot and pathos, which were neither available or necessary for Plato's audiences, who came to be stimulated by dialectic not distracted by entertainment. Nevertheless, the metaphors, the arguments and the ideas behind the words immortalize Plato because they provide a rational runway up to the lift off point to the other realm. Plato did not invent the idea of two realms, but the connection of the mundane to the sublime could not have been made without Plato.

Plato believed that reason will get you as close as you can get to the sublime, which is not quite all the way.

Plato's dialectic annealed the metaphysics of pre-socratic philosophers such as Heraclitus, Anaxagoras and Parmenides. Plato gives form to the misty mysticism suggested by the earlier metaphysicians.

“**Forms**” are a gallery of perfect designs for all the imperfect objects and subjects in the lower real world. **Forms** exist in a separate realm just beyond understanding, just outside spacetime, but close enough to inspire.

Plato makes this separate realm of **Forms** quite plausible in Phaedrus and Book X of Laws, where he distinguished between the perceived color of a red object and the **Formal** concept of redness, or the concept of odd which applies to the number three.

Convincingly he demonstrates, through dialectic questioning, that these underlying formal concepts must exist within a sublime objective realm or our subjective perception of the so called real world would make no sense. Now suddenly we have a metaphysical objectivity born out of a plausible subjectivity. This is the ultimate magic trick. God is pulled out of a hat; both the hat and God are beyond our comprehension and yet somehow undeniable.

Plato's writings are set out below in what some scholars believe is chronological order:


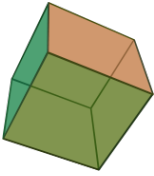

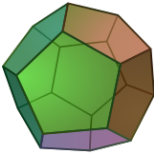
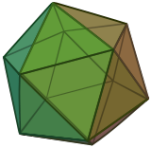
Apology,
Charmides,
Crito,
Euthydemus
Euthyphro,
Gorgias,
Hippias
Ion,
Laches,
Lysis,
Protagoras,
Republic
Cratylus,
Menexenus
Meno
Phaedo,
Symposium
Parmenides
Theaetetus,
Phaedrus
Sophist,
Statesman,
Philebus,
Timaeus,
Critias,
Laws

Every age has philosophers who count themselves Platonists. Plato has become Platonism and Neo Platonism and that "Neo" can refer to the first century AD or the twentieth century AD where philosophers such as Bertrand Russell and others have adapted Platonism to modern scientific thinking. Even in the current philosophical doldrums where couch potato and Instagram zombies have forgotten how to spell Plato, Platonism haunts the mundane mindlessness.

Every leaf in the forest is different but all have some things in common with 'leafdom.' Change is always a change from something to something else, but tensed (timed) truth or falsehoods needs a timeless backdrop to become sequential thoughts and beliefs. We suddenly come to understand that our ideas are tips of a single undersea iceberg. There is no other rational explanation for how we can conceive beyond what we perceive.

The '**Forms**' of Plato's upper realm trickle down and tickle our fallible human consciousness. Mundane objects are mutable as are the sense data they trigger in our minds, but mutability cannot exist without the backdrop of immutability to which consciousness must be connected. The knowledge of the ever changing world of objects relies on the never changing mental concepts.

Because they illustrate this concept, Platonic solids, have enchanted geometry and all the sciences for eons, including Euclid, Kepler and others to this day. Plato may have learned about them from earlier philosophers, but he immortalized them them in the dialogue Timaeus.

Tetrahedron	Cube	Octahedron	Dodecahedron	Icosahedron
Four faces	Six faces	Eight faces	Twelve faces	Twenty faces
				
(3D model)	(3D model)	(3D model)	(3D model)	(3D model)

The underlying math must be timeless. We instinctively understand the timelessness of the ideal realm. We know that to put a clock and calendar in the surreal world of Platonic geometry would be ridiculous. “How long ago did triangles come to hold no more or no less than 180 degrees?” That is a silly question to any one. The silliness is the curtain to the mystical back room of backdrops, Plato’s perfect **Forms**.

We all agree that our senses delude us from time to time. How could that statement be true without some super sense beyond the senses. In Theaetetus we are shown that sensing and knowing are not the same. Skeptics would try to avoid the ideal realm by insisting that corrected thinking is simply the result of additional sense data from subsequent observations. Correct thinking must be more than validation by subsequent observations,

because there has to be a conceptual crucible in which the perceptions and corrections are amalgamated. Where does that come from?

Every philosopher in our conga line is connected to Plato in one way or another. This accounts for the unity that shines through the complexity of each philosophy, like a single golden thread on which the separate silver beads are strung. [That's my very own "string theory."] None of us know it all, but all of us know enough of it to know there's more. Plato believes that philosophers see more because they have ventured out of the shadows of the cave of the mundane. When they are first in the sunlight they are dazzled, but they soon adapt and realize that they are seeing more than ever before. On their return to the cave, they are worse at processing the shadows than are cave prisoners who have never seen anything but shadows, but the enlightened philosophers have more conceptual powers which overcome the sensory failings. Even if we only see the shadows in the cave, like the cave dwellers in Plato's Republic, we are able to understand that there may be something causing the shadows. That makes us all potential philosophers.

Neoplatonism is the foundation of Western idealism and spiritualism. Judeo-Christian civilization could not exist without Plato. This is true for both Hebrew man and Greek man, a division set in stone by Matthew Arnold, a nineteenth century English poet.

According to Arnold, Hebrew man was irredeemably imperfect and the relationship with the supernatural was more about sticks than carrots. Greek man was perfectible and more connected to the divine, drawn more by carrot than stick. Plato hellenized Judaism somewhat, through Philo of Alexandria in the early first century. Plato's influence on Christian thought went on through Alexandria, particularly through Clement of Alexandria and eventually Saint Augustine.

The early Christians, of course, were Jews and could not help but be influenced by the Hebrew concept of human defects, which disappointed their angry wrathful God whom they were constantly trying to appease by bloody sacrifice. The Bible doesn't make sense to me. Even after Bible study groups and The Great Courses. The purported explanations of crucifixion in Mathew 27:46, Psalms 22:1, Isaiah 53:4-3, Galatians 3:13, Corinthians 5:21 still make no sense to me.

Matthew Arnold sees the punishing wrathful Hebrew God continuing on through Christianity and exerting a much more powerful influence than the Platonic exhorting God. In a sense we're all Greek Jews. I just prefer to be a little more Greek

IRENÆUS

(130 - c. 202 AD)

Irenaeus was a Greek bishop in the south of France, now Lyon, his best-known work, Against Heresy, is a refutation of the Gnostic sect's answer to the "*good God/ evil world*" theodicy paradox.

The Gnostics believed that there must have been another supernatural power that was not good, a bad god, and that Christ came from the good God to help us get around the bad god's evil. This was the belief of many early christians including Augustine before his conversion to the amalgamated Christian dogma forged by Irenaeus. Irenaeus taught that Adam's fall tarnished man so that he was no longer the 'image' of God, but now only the 'likeness' of God'. I'm guessing that means no longer as perfect as God. I'm still not sure what Adam did in the garden of eden, or how I became liable for the damages.

Irenaeus established which versions of the gospels were to be read, and which must be discarded. For this he is recognized as a saint in both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. He did this to prevent the splintering of Christianity into many cults without which there could be no 'Catholic' (which literally means universal) church.. Irenaeus included worthy pre-christians in the salvation afforded by Christianity.

He said that all who feared and loved God, practiced justice and piety towards their neighbors, and desired to see Christ, insofar as they were able to do so, will be saved. The many pre-christians who were not able to have an explicit desire to see Christ, (since he hadn't arrived in their lifetime), could have an implicit desire and be saved.

Irenaeus sets in place the pillars that support our metaphysical triad. Irenaeus said that man can only become conscious of God by an *uncompelled response*. The connection of the God node to the freedom node of the metaphysical triad is crucially important to our conga line. In other words faith, like virtue must be freely chosen. Reason gets you to the lift off point and then you must lift off of your own free will. Once faith is freely chosen, Irenaeus adds the third node to the metaphysical triad: "salvation", i.e. immortality. In the end I think it is safe to say that Irenaeus had a non organizational, philosophical message. While Irenaeus's teachings smack of dogma, he did reach philosophical positions that went beyond the organizational prerogatives. That is what put him in our conga line, not the dogma

PLOTINUS

(204/5 - 270 AD)

Plotinus is generally regarded as the founder of Neoplatonism. He was raised in Alexandria, Egypt, which was then part of the the Roman Empire. As a Roman, like all his contemporaries, he was fascinated with the Greeks, and especially Plato.

He was born shortly after the death of Irenaeus and before Christianity conquered Rome. As far as I can see, he had no direct connection with Christianity. Nevertheless, his ideas are fundamental to Christianity.

The metaphysics of Plotinus is made out of Plato's idealism, represented in the complete collection of his treatises, collected and edited by his student Porphyry into six books of **nine** treatises each. For this reason they have come down to us under the title of the *Enneads* (Greek word for nine).

Plotinus established a palace guard, as it were, defending Plato against misconceived criticism. Plotinus did not call himself a Neoplatonist; he thought of himself as a Platonist, but he did adapt Platonic ideals in some original ways. Six hundred years of Platonic philosophical writings had to be amalgamated and reshaped. Plotinus felt he needed to tell his readers what Plato meant on

the basis of what Plato wrote or said not what others reported him to have said.

His importance to our conga line has to do with his conception of a layered consciousness. The upper layer which he calls 'soul,' is unchangeable and divine and aloof from the lower part, mind, yet providing the lower part with a basic energy.

The lower 'mind' is the seat of the personality, the passions, perception and knowledge of the material world. The bridge to Platonic sublimity is what all of us are working together to build: my idea of hypersubjectivity, Maslow's self actualization, Bergson's creative intuition, Kant's pure reason, Fichte's absolute "I," Husserl's "transcendental subjectivity," Royce's "absolute mind" and if we keep looking, I'm sure we'll find some vision of the bridge in every mind.

One important interaction of the Plotinus layers is the dynamic backwash from the lower layer which corrupts the pilings of the bridge.

Plotinus explains evil less mechanically. He sees the 'higher part' of the soul descending into the lower layer, changeable (or sensible) realm in order to understand, govern and perfect the material world. However, there is a price to pay for this interaction. Plotinus believes that the soul's upper layer perfection is more or less corrupted by the abrasion with the

lower layer, depending on how we balance the two.

According to Plotinus, if we choose virtuous acts and contemplation, we will be well balanced. Plotinus believes, as I do, that ascetics and esthetics are two sides of the same coin, or we could call the two sides virtue and virtuosity.

Plotinus may be said to have anticipated the phenomenological theories of Husserl and others in his notion of the perpetual aberration of the lower layer of consciousness. Whether he meant to or not, Plotinus made 'Platonism' out of Plato. From then on, like play dough, Plato, continues to be reshaped and molded, by every new grasp. The most important reshaping occurs in the grasp of Augustine.

AUGUSTINE

(354-430 AD)

The Plotinus insight that evil is in fact unsubstantial and a privation of goodness (Plotinus, *Enneads* I.8), becomes Augustine's "privatio boni," a kind of 'goodness deficit,' which we can fill if we so choose. This, as we have already seen, is the engine of free will, which is the most important thing Augustine did for us.

Augustine is a saint of the Catholic Church, as is his mother Santa Monica. Mary and Jesus, are the only other instance of mother/son, saints. Augustine is clearly the greatest Christian philosopher, which you may already know, but you may not know that his influence has reached far beyond Christianity and religion. His insights on perception and linguistics guided many scientific explorations, and his philosophical views on skepticism, knowledge, will, the emotions, freedom and determinism set the tone for philosophical discussions that continue to this day.

Augustine's philosophy was not just a clerical philosophy, not just an "apologetic" justification of church dogma. For Augustine, as with Plato, reason is the runway to the lift off point, without which there could be no leap of faith; "credum ut intelligam" are the two most important words in Augustine's writing. More so than Irenaeus, Augustine made it possible,

for Christians to be philosophers as well, not without a few paradox puddles, as we shall see.

After his momentous conversion from a libertine life style and the Manichaeism heresy, to the, still new, third century Catholicism, he was confronted with the dogma of biblical revelation, established by Irenaeus. Eventually it became his organizational responsibility, as church leader, to enforce that dogma and stamp out heresy, which he did more with persuasion than persecution. Despite Irenaeus' unification efforts, pagan rituals were still very much alive in Augustine's congregations, which, by some accounts, accounted for more than 10% of the entire Roman Empire. This explains the occasional dogmatic tone of some of his writings. Nevertheless we can say, along with most scholars, that he was a philosopher, what ever else he was. For Augustine (and Plato) a philosopher is an earthbound human but nonetheless a lover of divine wisdom.

Augustine was a Roman living in North Africa, and Cicero was his main source for the Hellenistic philosophies. The Stoics also provided him with ideas about rising above earthly greed and suffering, (*Letter* 155.16; Tornau 2015: 278).

Like Irenaeus, Augustine afforded salvation to virtuous pre Christians, particularly Plato, who was allowed to remain in the christian Elysium, even though he was not baptized and knew nothing of Christ. Augustine

was too wise to remove the keystone from the arch between faith and reason. As late as *City of God* 8 (ca. 417) he grants that Platonism and Christianity share some basic philosophical insights.

Like Platonism, Augustine's Christian philosophy taught that a complete understanding of God will only be possible after this life, when we see him "face to face" (Letter 120.3-4).

Augustine decries the intellectual hubris of human belief systems that ignore the divine truth. However, unlike Plato and more like Irenaeus, Augustine's divine truth is revealed in Scripture. (De libero arbitrio 3.56; 60; Confessions 3.10-12).

I must tell you that for a long time I believed that more than merit, the preservation of the scriptures had more to do with the sharp teeth of the watch dogs of dogma. More recently I have paid closer attention to the ideas in the scriptures and realize that there might be an eternity in those ideas that transcends the vagaries of authorship.

Still I wonder what would the old testament be like if it had been written by Plato? Imagine Christ and Socrates in a dialectic, strolling across the garden. What would they say about being put to death for a belief? What would they say about burning heretics?

What follows was gleaned from encyclopedias in print and online; the two most amazing works that I used are: the eight volume Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Macmillan and Free Press) and the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

Neo-platonism ideas found in Augustine:

**transcendence and immateriality of God;*

**superiority of the unchangeable over the changeable (cf. Plato, Timaeus 28d);*

**ontological hierarchy of God, soul and body (Letter 18.2);*

**incorporeality and immortality of the soul;*

**dichotomy of the intelligible and the sensible realms*

**non-spatial omnipresence of the intelligible in the sensible (Confessions 1.2-4; Letter 137.4)*

**causal presence of God in his creation (De immortalitate animae 14-15);*

**Platonic Forms that are located in the mind of God (De diversis quaestionibus 46);*

**doctrine of evil as lack or privation of goodness;*

**love of God as a bogus erotic desire for true beauty (Confessions 10.38).*

There is no philosopher, other than Augustine suggesting that erotic passion is religious passion gone awry.

* *the idea that we find God and Truth by turning inwards*
(*De vera religione* 72).

This last point stands out because it blunts some of the prickly dogmatic points. And in my book, it makes room for self inflation and hypersubjectivity. You now know that, according to Augustine, Catholics can float too, if they so choose.

Augustine also expands and elaborates the *connectivity* of consciousness, which begins in Plato. Augustine's theory of knowledge—his so-called doctrine of illumination—is a distinctly non-empirical epistemology based on Plato's doctrine of recollection. Like Plato, Augustine thinks that true knowledge must include communication with reliable present and absent partners; he so much as blesses our conga line; he “illuminates” our conga line.

His doctrine of Illumination involves a sun borrowed from Plato's *Republic* (508a-509). Just as that sun is visible in itself it also illuminates the objects of sight and enables the “eye” of the soul, essential for intellection.

In *De trinitate* Augustine establishes the upper layer of consciousness, which is closest to the divine mind and, at the same time, “connected” to the intelligible reality “below” (*subiuncta*). The layering of consciousness is obviously adapted from Plotinus. Knowledge of objects and self-knowledge is the path to

transcendence (Confessions 3.11; Augustine's biblical proof is Romans 1:20). He blesses our inner dialogue with ASCENSION. (*De libero arbitrio* 2.7-39; Confessions 10.8-38; *De trinitate* 8-15).

It is important to understand that none of this is automatic. Cognition does not simply result from the presence of Christ in our soul but from our continuously “consulting” the inner teacher, on a regular basis. So this is an active process not a passive blessing. This idea must have inspired Kierkegaard. This strong voluntary element intimately connects Augustine's epistemology with his ethics and, ultimately, with his doctrines of *will* and *grace*, and most importantly for me, to my inner teacher.

Striving for wisdom takes place in a fallen world with all the set backs and hindrances because of original sin. You know, by now, that original sin collides with my innate sense of justice. And you by now know that whatever the Bible says, I think of it more as a bar bell used to build spiritual muscle rather than dead weight.

The notion of original sin was not invented by Augustine; it had roots in African Christianity, especially in Tertullian. However, the view that original sin is a personally imputable guilt that justifies eternal damnation is reinforced in Augustine with a quasi-

biological theory that associated original sin closely with sexual concupiscence.

Augustine applies his concept of volition to the sins of the flesh, which he invented, by the way. Before Augustine, lust in and of itself was natural and ok as long as you as you were ready to lock horns with other rams in rutting season. It was Augustine who first came to deplore this animality. Augustine invented shame. Before Augustine public toilets had no walls and body parts below the belt were a source of pride. Post Augustine genitalia had to be hidden from sight and used only in private, if at all.

I always wondered: why give us genitals and sexual pleasure if we're not supposed to enjoy them? Now in my dotage, I accept the fact that lust is a pit from which we must ASCEND, one of the hurdles on the human race course, one of those water traps on the golf course of life, a paradox puddle for me to hop over, powered by my will.

It has been claimed that Augustine "discovered" the will, which, maybe, makes up for his inventing shame. The other side of the will coin is our moral responsibility. The only element that is in our power, is our will or inner consent, which makes us fully responsible for all of our actions, and/or non actions. This has all the dynamics of existentialism. There are no pre-set winners and losers. According to Augustine, "volitions" are imputable to me

alone, and it is I who am responsible for my choices and not some evil genie, as Manichean dualism would have it. (*Confessions* 7.5; *City of God* 5.10).

Augustine's notion that free will is a gift from God means that you have no choice in whether or not you have a choice. So you do have a choice and you don't have a choice. Here is one of those paradox puddles to hop that is inevitable in every philosophical syllogism, not just Augustine's, but he did do some serious hopping around this puddle.

In the Pelagian controversy, Augustine was confronted with a deeper paradox. (*De spiritu et littera* 52-60; cf. *De correptione et gratia* 6).. (*City of God* 22.30; *De correptione et gratia* 33). Why would God give us the freedom to choose if the result of the choice was already established in advance?

Augustine's answer is that as long as it is **not** known to **you**, your choice is free; free to you, but predetermined and known by God. What God knows is not for you to know. Plato would go along with that. Since you are blind to the future, you are also free, and that does not require that God also be blind to the future.

That's quite a hop, but not Augustine's most important philosophical leap; that would be "*privatio boni*," mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. *Privatio boni* is a refinement of Plotinus's notion of evil as not a thing itself but

a lack of a thing, namely goodness, aka love.
(Plotinus, *Enneads* I.8)

There are, in Augustine, different degrees of goodness (*Letter* 18.2), which Augustine justifies in Aristotelian terms: an evil will has no ‘efficient cause’, but only a ‘deficient cause.’ Aristotle agreed with Plato that ‘the only evil is ignorance,’ and that is essentially what Augustine is saying. Ignorance is a lack of something rather than a thing in itself. This lack may also be seen as a lack of will power, which would have to be a non permanent condition to comport with the notion that even bad guys have free will. (*City of God* 12.6).

Augustine’s redefinition of evil as a low love level, is as important as it is misunderstood by Catholics and non Catholics alike. Hanna Arendt (mentioned earlier), a modern Augustine scholar, got in trouble for applying this “low love level” to the so called evil of Adolph Eichmann. She was banished by her fellow Jews who chose her to write about the Eichmann trial. They wanted devils not “banality.” Still her book, *The Banality of Evil*, is the most cogent philosophical work on this Augustinian/Plotinian/ neoplatonic replacement of evil.

I should explain why she is not in our conga line. I felt that there was enough said about her in this first section, and that her ideas are covered by earlier philosophers in the conga line. That being said, all her books are

beautifully written and I would encourage you to read everything she ever wrote, as I did.

The fact that low love levels, unlike “evil,” can be filled is consistent with our dynamic view of consciousness and free will and also gives us some hope that bad guys can be rehabilitated, but we would add only by self understanding and learning to love themselves.

Augustine’s notion of volition meant that choosing to commit a crime is just as bad as crime itself. This is probably the idea behind the crime of conspiracy in most common law criminal codes. In Augustine’s criminal code no overt act was necessary to prove “conspiracy.” Coveting your neighbor’s wife was bad even though you never touched her. A person who contemplates adultery is guilty even if all he did was think about it. Conversely, the lack of consent of a rape victim keeps her free of sin, even if she feels physical pleasure in the physical act. (*City of God* 1.16-28)

Temptations according to Augustine, are part of the life game’s obstacle course; no one is to blame for the temptation hurdle, only for crashing into it rather than leaping over it. Temptations well up from original sin, and they haunt even the saints. Our will must be empowered by divine grace. The power of will was somehow diminished by original sin and had to be restored. (*Contra Iulianum* 6.70.-1.35).

The restoration of will by divine grace is best illustrated by yet another garden story; this one in Augustine's garden at the end of the book, Confessions. Immediately before his conversion Augustine suffers from a "divided will," feeling torn between the will to lead an ascetic, esthetic, virtuous Christian life and the will to continue his previous, sexually active life. His ability to choose is restored by God's answer to his call, which immediately frees Augustine to opt for the ascetic virtuous life (ibid. 8.29-30).

This interaction of divine grace and free will is worth mulling over for as long as it takes, because it is, for me, the key to buoyancy. I never looked at the dance of life that way before Augustine's story came into my life. It never occurred to me that God taps you on the shoulder and then it's up to you to turn around and accept Him as a dance partner. It must be true that everyone is tapped but we know, all too well, that only the few turn and accept. [Keep this in mind when we get to the end of the chapter on Whitehead.]

Augustine's critics see the coexistence of grace and will as paradoxical. I must admit that Augustine's belief that you can't have one without the other, puzzled me at first. Then Augustine convinced me that there has to be a graceful super power to have created the game in which I exercise my choices, and there can't be right choices without some direction from the "inner teacher." Could some 'One' who

created a contest at one point then go on to coach you on how to succeed? This suggests that there is some referee beyond the coach, a super power above the super power, but that is only because the divine truth won't fit into our mundane metaphor. It's like trying to bring the ocean back in your tea cup.

There is no explaining why some receive grace and some don't. I like to think we all have the opportunity, always. But that is just me talking; not Augustine. According to the Paulist determinism accepted by Augustine, God decides "before the constitution of the world" who will be exempted from the damnation that awaits fallen humankind and who will not. This knowledge is however hidden to human beings, to whom it will only be revealed at the end of times (*De correptione et gratia* 49). Saint Paul's determinist accounting of **why** some get grace and some don't, are not clear, and so, neither are Augustine's. Augustine admits, that this accounting eludes human understanding but insists that it is certainly just. You wonder how you judge something to be "just" which is beyond your understanding? So do I.

Remember Augustine may be a saint but he was also only human, and Plato reminds us that human beliefs are fallible. Clearly Augustine's truth is not divine truth; he would be the first to admit that he is not God. It was Augustine the bishop who had to accept the idea of Paul's predestination. This looks to me like another one of the places where Augustine

the bishop bumped into Augustine the philosopher. None of these bumps are fatal crashes. The most important contribution of Augustine to our conga line is his preservation and continuation of the Platonic idea that you can come to know God by knowing your self. In order to illustrate what he means by “seeing things by ourselves” “in the light of truth” Augustine often cites the example of the Socratic dialogues.

Augustine’s inner teacher, his inner Christ and his “illumination.”(De magistro . 390; De magistro 38-39, cf. Ephesians 3:17) validate our self inflation and self ASCENSION. That allows me to have both Christ and philosophy in the same inner sanctum. That’s all you need to get to where you’re going. Our core belief that hypersubjective inflation can only be accomplished by will power, energized and maintained by diligent and continuous self-analysis, is validated by Augustine’s corollary proposition: that the inner teacher, must be consulted frequently, which was also Kierkegaard’s advice, as we saw earlier.

Besides being an important philosopher and scientist and a sponsor of our conga line, Augustine is also an inspiration to many literary writers. His *Confessions*, is the precursor of the modern tradition of autobiography. Coming at philosophy from a first-person perspective was never done before Augustine, and so set the tone for subsequent works, including this one.

PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

(1463-1494)

Giovani Pico Della Mirandola was born on February 24, 1463, to a noble Italian family in a time of not so noble Italian demagoguery. The Renaissance may have been the rebirth of creativity for artists, but not for philosophers. Wondering was replaced by dogma. Any thoughts of ASCENSION were confined to a one track cog railway with one conductor, the pope. Any individual attempts were run over by the train.

After Augustine, and we could include Boethius (480-524), the desire to remain connected to the Ancient Greeks and the Classic philosophers of Rome, took a back seat to the solid answers of Scholasticism. This hardening of the philosophical arteries lasted all the way up to Aquinas, the 13th century Italian, who refused to think of himself as a philosopher and in fact felt that philosophical questioning weakened the one source of the only truth, divine revelation. Who and how that revelation was passed on was entirely up to the Church and the one man who governed all the Italian and all the Catholic minds, the Pope. Most people were relieved that they no longer had to think for themselves.

Somehow, Pico continued to wonder and found Plato and Aristotle and a brand new way to put them together. Pico was a free thinker

who came to metaphysics by means of his own physics; he built his very own runway, even though lifting off on your own was forbidden. Because of his social status, he got away with it, for a time.

I must digress, here, for yet another instantiation of cognitive consonance. In my post Catholic/pre-Christian hippy days in Venice (not Italy, but California). My guru, Henry Geiger knew all about Pico and, back in the sixties, one night sitting by an open fire which took the chill out of the Malibu hills, Henry's profound baritone, like the low notes of a cello, en-toned Pico's entire oration on human dignity. It was something I thought I would never forget. But I did forget it, until after this book was practically finished.

Somehow, just before dawn one morning, an anonymous italic text appeared in a folder on my Iphone in my Apple Books library. I swear I don't know how it got there. It was like discovering a note in a bottle. Remember it was anonymous, so I had no idea how it got there or who sent it, but I was spellbound by the relevance and the elegance of the prose. After some extensive online detective work I discovered who was behind this ghostly TAP on my shoulder; it was Pico della Mirandola, the founder of human dignity and individual freedom. I dropped everything read all of Pico anew, which is how we get to this point.

Now let me tell you why Pico is in the conga line. Pico's Conclusions in 1487 put forth his 900 theses, an amazing amalgam of all the transcendental belief systems in the whole world, including ancient and medieval philosophers, pagan rituals, Christian teachings, the Old Testament, Jewish Kaballah, Muslim esoterica, Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, Pythagoras; and also standard religious and secular philosophers, such as Aquinas, Albertus and other scholastics, Averroes, Avicenna, Plotinus, Proclus, and, of course, Plato and Aristotle. Such a compendium had never been seen before, or since. This was Pico's very own conga line, but that is not the cognitive consonance, that fascinated me; it was his idea of "theurgy," part of the *Oration*, which was never delivered to his Italian audiences, but somehow found its way to me while I was writing this book.

"*Theurgy*" is Pico's hop over the biggest paradox puddle in metaphysics, theodicy. You will recall we discussed theodicy in connection with Irenaeus and it will come up again when you meet Leibniz down the line. Theodicy refers to the paradoxical coexistence of a good God and evil in the world he created.

Before I rediscovered Pico, I had already coined the term "theopathy" for my detour around theodicy. As you shall see, theurgy and theopathy describe the very same bridge over the theodicy paradox puddle with a second opposing lane which provides a path for the

divine to come back across into human affairs. Theopathy is so much like Pico's theurgy that I would have removed my term from the conclusion of this book, except for the fact that the duplicity instantiates that cognitive consonance I have been touting and the underlying universal consciousness.

There are of course differences in what supports his bridge and mine and I confess I don't understand some of his supports, like the magic of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism). Pico was the first Christian to treat the mystical knowledge of Kabbalah as valuable. Kabbalists regard the Hebrew text of the Bible, as the word of God. But instead of looking behind the words for meaning, they focus on the very letters and the vocalization of the names of the *Sefirot*, which are names, not of God per se, but of aspects or manifestations or emanations of divinity. Since God in his highest essence remains hidden, finite beings can only come to know the Infinite in the ten *Sefirot*. Much of the literature of Kabbalah describes these *Sefirot*.

Plato, might well have considered this sophistry, a fake ASCENSION. This sounds to me like rubbing the vase to produce the magic genie. It may be that Pico, without any endorsement, was including this to round out the completeness of his catalogue of belief systems. It is clear from his other words that Pico has the broad grasp of consciousness that reaches beyond words and beyond spacetime,

which is why he is in the conga line, without the Kabbalists.

Pico has his own, pre-Wittgenstein, analysis of what we have called “word pool” and “word spin.” For Pico the spinning is a positive force that empowers concepts beyond language, but he sees language as the gateway to wisdom. The elements of language are letters and numbers, and these signs are but secret codes to hidden meaning, whose enigmas are the key to esoteric understanding. Sounds like Pythagoras, who Pico knew all about. Pico’s mystical linguistics goes beyond the Kabbalah and the old testament. That is made clear later in the *Oration*, where the mysterious force is decidedly Christological and Trinitarian. His *Oration* on the Dignity of Man—as it came to be called is much more famous than the larger work it precedes. It was originally designed as a ‘prelude’ to the never performed ‘symphony’ of philosophies in Conclusions,.

Pico was powerful enough to sponsor a great philosophy fair in Rome right under the Pope’s nose. Pope Innocent VIII went along, at first. Pico was allowed to invite all of the so called philosophers of the day to provide a counterpoint that would perfect and anneal his 900 theses, but it never happened. The pope saw the derailment danger to his one track railway and put Pico in jail. So no one came and no one ever got to hear the *Oration* on human dignity, which is the Declaration of Independence of Humanism.

In the first few pages of the *Oration*, God tells Adam that he, alone of all creatures, can make himself whatever he wants to be. Whatever we start out as, we must strive to become bodiless angels, sexless and *selfless*. Mystical union with God is Pico's final goal, and extinguishing the self is a necessary prerequisite. Pico's prescription for buoyancy comports with our own: cutting away mundane ballast empowers self inflation, or in Pico's words: "Let a *holy* ambition possess our spirit, ...let us cleanse the soul by washing away the dirt of ignorance... and flood the soul, purified and well tempered, with the light of natural philosophy so that finally we may perfect it with knowledge of divinity." The hypersubjectivity of personal will power is underscored in Pico's prescription for ascent: "let us climb for the heights, panting...since we can do it if we will it... " he says.

Pico disposed of much of his property, giving some to the Church and some to his family. Pico gave new meaning to Franciscan asceticism which had been flourishing in Italy for centuries. At the same time Pico's thoughts reached Girolamo Savonarola, the fearsome millenarian preacher. Savonarola made gun powder out of Pico's fairy dust and used it in his revolution against the corrupt hierarchy of the Church, but the hypersubjective transcendence idea, which is more important for us than church reform, was not to re-emerge for three or four centuries after Pico's death.

Eventually “the truth will out,” and it did. It took a while. The new pope Alexander VI, persuaded by Pico’s admirer Lorenzo Di Medici pardoned Pico. Pico’s last breath was spent blowing out the candles of superstition. Pico would have us save our breath for self inflation. The book *Disputations Against Divinatory Astrology*, was hardly finished, when Lorenzo, Pico’s protector, died, and suddenly Pico and all his friends also died. It was not until their bodies were exhumed in 2007 that we knew for sure Pico was poisoned on 11/ 17, 1494. If I wanted to subscribe to the Cabalistic numerology I would wonder about the birth of another Italian, my sister, on 11/17, 1944- all the same numbers rearranged, but alas, I didn’t buy any of the lotto tickets with those numbers at the pizzeria when I was in Modena, where Pico’s profile on the pizza box declared him as the father of the enlightenment which occurred ten generations later. The pizza was amazing and may represent more respect than Pico ever received in those three centuries after his death.

It was Immanuel Kant who was credited with the discovery of the individual as a philosophical subject. By the end of the eighteenth century, Kant had so thoroughly revolutionized philosophy that its history had to be reformulated in Kantian terms by Jacob Brucker in 1742, whose only mention of Pico was as “that worst of all monsters, a Platonizing, Judaizing syncretist.”

It was not until a half century later, in Wilhelm Tennemann's revisionist *History of Philosophy* (1798-1819) that Pico is credited for sparking the German enlightenment, as a proto-Kantian advocate of human freedom and dignity.

The important thing is that Pizza is still more famous than Pico. Nevertheless, long before pizza this young Italian who lived less than half a life in an epoch of philosophical eclipse, somehow uncovered human dignity, exalted the individual, and provided the philosophical basis for humanism, which is still around, along with pizza.

DESCARTES

(1596-1650)

How do I know I exist when the mind I need to prove it is also in doubt. This may be the biggest problem philosophy ever faced. How do you prove that life is not a dream? What if some demon spiked the well with LSD which created a hallucination which we think is life, like in the movie Matrix? Descartes should have been given screen credit for that movie and one other, a 1998 movie called The Truman Show.

The Truman Show poses the problem of a human subject born and raised in a made up world which is actually an extensive Hollywood set, with actors playing all the roles of family, friends and neighbors. The only one who isn't acting is the duped subject, Truman, who was actually born on camera, on the set. His naïveté provides the entertainment for a world wide TV audience. Hidden cameras all over the TV town watch him grow up and marry a perfectly beautiful wife played by the perfectly beautiful Laura Linney. Truman is played by Jim Carey.

This life long surreality is unquestioned, since he is kept from seeing anything beyond the set. His occasional doubts are allayed by real time prompts to the actors who improvise the dialogue which enforces the scripted reality.

What if you and I are unwitting characters in such a reality show? Could the

morning coffee I hold in my hand be a prop?
How can I know what's really out there? More
importantly, how do I know I'm real?

Descartes answered by making the question itself the answer. Descartes brilliantly turned the question on itself. This is the most brilliant jiu-jitsu in philosophical history: "Cogito ergo sum" 'I think therefore I am.' In other words, if I didn't exist, who is it that is asking the question. Descartes is the founder of 'ontology,' without which we would have no way to prove or even wonder about existence and reality.

Descartes had doubts about the material world but that did not keep him from insisting that there was a material world, 'res extensa,' governed by mechanistic discoverable laws and an immaterial world, 'res cogitans,' which included the invisible consciousness.

In mathematics, he developed Cartesian coordinates, probability, the techniques that made possible algebraic (or "analytic") geometry. In natural philosophy, he can be credited with several specific achievements: co-framer of the sine law of refraction, developer of an important empirical account of the rainbow, and proposer of a naturalistic account of the formation of the earth and planets (a precursor to the nebular hypothesis).

On the darker side his mechanistic physiology and theory that animal bodies are

machines made possible the ravaging of the animal planet, but that is all part of his incomplete proofs for material universe, *res extensa*. As for *res cogitans*, you gotta believe; there is no other way. Faith is fated. I added an 'us' to Descartes' 'sum'= *sumus* which means that all of us thinking together exist. Hold that thought and it takes you up high enough to glimpse the universal consciousness. There has to be a platform for all that thinking together.

Of course, there will always be doubt. Descartes's doubting is the essence of curiosity and consciousness. His "cogito ergo sum" could have been "dubito ergo sum:" I doubt therefore I am. Descartes made the very doubting process itself the core of consciousness. Doubt is why Descartes is in the conga line. His juxtaposition of the knower along with what is known created the dualism which has suddenly reared its head again in the quantum physics quandaries.

The dualism separating *extensa* and *cogitans*, body and soul, was in fact well established before Descartes, but his use of one to validate the other is an example of his unique brilliance.

He is not a hero for all thinkers; scientific monists deplore the cut of Cartesian dualism, as though it were a philosophical amputation; whereas enlightened dualists see the split as essential to the stabilizing stance in the *extensa* hurricane of uncertainty.

Without Descartes there would be no Hegel, no Husserl, no Heisenberg, no Schrodinger, no Einstein, no phenomenology, no quantum physics, no superposition, and no metaphysics. He is essential to the discovery of mathematics for dealing with the inevitable uncertainty of the material universe and, more importantly, essential to the distinction between subjects and objects. Along with Plato and Augustine, Descartes is in the pantheon of great metaphysical minds; there are dozens of books by him and hundreds about him. Here we just needed these few basic steps for our conga line. Should you chose to know more, a list of his important works follows.

MAJOR WORKS BY DESCARTES

Discourse on the Method (in French, 1637), with its essays, the *Dioptrics*, *Meteorology*, and *Geometry*;

Meditations on First Philosophy (i.e., on metaphysics), with its *Objections and Replies*, (1641, 2nd edition. 1642);

Principles of Philosophy, covering his metaphysics and much of his natural philosophy (1644);

Passions of the Soul, on the emotions (1649).

Treatise on Light, containing the core of his natural philosophy (, 1664);

Treatise on Man (1664), containing his physiology and mechanistic psychology

Rules for the Direction of the Mind (1701), an early, unfinished work attempting to set out his method.

SPINOZA

(1632 -1677)

Spinoza used three first names Bento, Baruch and Benedictus. All three names, in Dutch, Hebrew and Latin, mean “blessed.” This does not mean, however, that he was blest by all three cultures.

Spinoza was born into an Amsterdam, Portuguese-Jewish community, which did not appreciate his philosophizing; particularly his insistence that the commandments of the Torah were not given by God; that got him in trouble with Dutch Christians as well as Jews.

Spinoza also denies the immortality of the soul; and strongly rejects the notion of a transcendent, providential God. So what is he doing here in our conga line?

I think Spinoza would be ok with a lift off point on the reason runway, as long as he can back into it, rather than taxi to it. Spinoza backs into metaphysics. The proposition that: ‘man is created in the image and likeness of God’, read backwards is: ‘God is created in the image and likeness of man.’ That is the backward religious belief that Spinoza backs into for lift off. Spinoza is here, not because of what he thinks God is, but what he thinks God is not. His body check on the man made images of God bends our conga line but does not break the connection.

Spinoza is not the first to dethrone the anthropomorphic God. Xenophanes in the fifth century BC, said if a cow were to draw God, it would look like a cow.

Spinoza's omni present God doesn't look like anything or anyone. Spinoza's God is diffused throughout the *rock* and the *soft place*, throughout the material world and the immaterial world, throughout the *res extensa* and the *res cogitans*, so much so that we may not even need those distinctions any longer.

One of his works "On God" tells us in a few words what he means by God. "By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, i.e., a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes....," "Infinity of attributes" must mean that God is, or has, absolutely everything including perfect power and perfect wisdom; whatever that God substance is "unique." By 'unique,' he means the *only* substance i.e. there is only one substance in the universe; it is God. God is everything and everything is God. Remember Thales, the father of philosophy and his unified substance? This idea goes all the way back to the beginning of philosophy.

For proof of God, Spinoza backs into a null hypothesis: "if you deny this, conceive, if you can, that God does not exist." He demonstrates the impossibility of the null hypothesis in a winding blizzard of terms and

philosophical algebra, which is more than we need for our purposes.

The idea that God is not just a man with a beard but an eternal unified energy field, appeals to my scientific nature; however, this reified, depersonalized God is not someone I can connect with. What's the point of having a God you can't connect with? It is not only depressing, it also unbelievable, to think that God doesn't care about me.

From what I read, Spinoza would insist that my Augustinian 'inner teacher' is a figment of my imagination, an anthropomorphic God. According to Spinoza this anthropomorphic delusion, besides being false, caused painful missteps throughout history. Spinoza points out that such anthropomorphic God figures have historically been wrathful monsters who have enslaved us by superstition and driven us to barbaric treatment of each other. But what about the God of love?

For Spinoza, love, caring, thinking, feeling and understanding, are natural processes just like photosynthesis or thermodynamics; they happen in the mind therefore, they are as predictable in their behavior as a body in motion governed by laws and properties of physics and mathematics and nature. Spinoza says

"I shall treat the nature and power of the Affects, and the power of the Mind over them, by the same Method, I treated God and the

Mind, and I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a question of lines, planes, and bodies.”

That is hard to question because Spinoza’s God doesn’t answer that or any question. God doesn’t need to have a reason for anything; reasoning is an unconnected human trait. Or in our terms God is beyond the lift off point of the reason runway. But make no mistake, God is out there or up there or somewhere or everywhere. Spinoza denies that the universe could exist because of some arbitrary and undetermined act of free will of some fickle personal God. For Spinoza’s monistic cosmology, there are no alternatives to the actual world; there are no other possible worlds, and there is no contingency or spontaneity within the world.

Spinoza points out that the traditional Judeo-Christian God is a being who causes a world distinct from himself to come into being by creating it out of nothing. This God produces that world by a spontaneous act of free will, and could just as easily not have created anything beside himself. This makes no sense to Spinoza. Everything is absolutely and necessarily determined.

Spinoza disagrees with Plato in that we *can* know God perfectly and adequately in this life time. “The knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence that each of us has is adequate and perfect” (IIP46). “The human Mind has an

adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence" (Iip47). This would include my knowledge of God, and what if it differed from Spinoza's? I wonder does Spinoza's idea of "adequate knowledge" depend on how much you choose to learn or how hard you work. Spinoza also insists that you either have it or you don't. He says: "In the Mind there is no absolute, or free, will, but the Mind is determined to will this or that by a cause that is also determined by another, and this again by another, and so to infinity" (Iip48). The order of things just follows from God's essences with an inviolable determinism. Everything that exists, Spinoza calls "Nature" which is brought into being with this pre-existing deterministic necessity. God or Nature does not act for any ends, and things do not exist for any set purposes. We don't need free will, since we have no choice in the matter. The game is rigged, or it is actually not a game at all.

I was about to drop Spinoza from our conga line with his monistic cuckoo clock world, before I discovered some wiggle room for freedom and our game of life. The differences in the way things depend on God, i.e. the "infinite modes" of God, creates what Spinoza calls multi random events and an infinite variety of specific applications; Spinoza says that this adds the spice to life, and, I say, it adds the strife to life, the striving in the game of life, in which we are free to inflate and float or gloat and drown in the sea of ignorance.

Spinoza agrees that human fallibility is the result of our fortuitous and haphazard encounter with things in the external world. As in Plato, Spinoza's human knowledge is flawed. For this "knowledge derived from random experience;" to be flawed there must be an unflawed divine knowledge "of infinite modes" which includes the laws governing thought, and these feed downstream to "affections," the milk of human kindness that flows down to us from the tributaries of God's attributes. But this does not come without some effort on our part. This milking of human kindness can only be accomplished on the metaphysical stool supported by the God leg and the freedom leg.

Spinoza's advice that we should strive to learn how to moderate and restrain the passions and become active, autonomous beings resonates with our virtue/virtuosity notion, our ascetics of esthetics. This Spinoza advice penetrates his pre-determinism and leaves a hole big enough to accommodate our arena for the game of life.

Spinoza believes that some minds are more virtuous than others and closer to God and those greater minds are at peace. Our self inflation mission is also supported by Spinoza's *conatus*: "Each thing, as far as it can, by its own power, strives to persevere in its being." If we can achieve this, he says, then we will be "free, but only to the extent that whatever happens to us will result not from our relations with things outside us, but from our own nature."

Spinoza said that our virtue, consists in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding, abstracted from all considerations of time and place, reaching all the way to God. It seems clear to me that Spinoza's "adequate knowledge" and his "virtuous acts" which lead to freedom from strife and connection to the mind of God necessitate free will, and self inflation.

Spinoza supports the idea of universal consciousness in that he says: "insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, they must always agree among themselves" (IVp34-35).

Spinoza also sanctions the "inward worship of God." Inner piety, he says, belongs exclusively to the individual, and, Spinoza believes, is each individual's inalienable, private right, which cannot be tampered with by any sovereign.

Spinoza says that no government can limit or control another person's thoughts and it would be foolhardy and destructive for a sovereign to attempt such a thing. He might have gotten this idea from his contemporary Locke, who we shall visit next, or maybe the other way around, or maybe both were plugged into the universal consciousness.

LOCKE

(1632-1704)

John Locke looks like he's in lock step with the stiff marching band that would never dance the conga. One could object to my inclusion of Locke in the conga line because of his monumental *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) which is the corner stone of British empiricism (all knowledge comes in through the senses), but looking closer we see that Locke opposed all authoritarian dogma including those of the established Church of England. Locke's anti-authoritarianism leaves room for our individual spiritualism, which I believe is supposed by Locke. He believes that using reason to try to grasp the truth, and determine the legitimate functions of institutions will optimize human flourishing for the individual and society both in respect to its material and spiritual welfare.

There is a divinity in Locke's natural law, which, in my book, connects the freedom node to the God node. The third level of Locke's tripartite layering of knowledge, 'intuitive knowledge', as distinguished from the more mundane layers of 'demonstrative knowledge' (math and science) and 'sensitive knowledge' (sense data), I think, leads to a *soft place*, universal consciousness and inevitably, to the divine connection and the metaphysical triad. Without stretching the point too much, his distinction between the legitimate and illegitimate functions of institutions presuppose

an order beyond nature which can be intuited by humans. Locke's empiricism inspired and was inspired by the scientific experimentation of the era which resulted in the apotheosis of scientists and "scientism." However, his *Letter Concerning Toleration*, builds a special inner sanctum for hypersubjectivity.

Locke's bold and pioneering efforts to keep the church dogma out of government and government mandates out of individual development paved the runway all the way out to the lift off point. Building this runway on church property would have him burned at the stake in any Catholic country. Fortunately for Locke heretic roasts were not on the menu for the Church of England, which is founded on the protestant "heresy." Despite the fact that I could find no express permission, I'm guessing that Locke would allow us to lift off at the end of his "intuitive knowledge" runway, as long as it doesn't become an institutional prerogative forced on others.

So yes, Locke is not in a lock step and he can dance in the conga line.

LEIBNIZ

(1646-1716)

Gottfried Wilhelm (von) Leibniz was one of the great thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and is known as the last “universal genius.” He made important contributions to the fields of physics, metaphysics, epistemology, logic, philosophy of religion and mathematics. Most importantly he is the first to articulate the idea that there is mystical force in and between objects that is invisible but none the less real, surreal, and divine, all at the same time. We could say that he discovered “mattergy” long before I did.

Because Leibniz was more than just a philosopher he had a lot more influence on his intellectual peers. Only the most prodigious, eminent scientist, which Leibniz was, could propose this whacky mystical connection between the mundane and the sublime.

As an engineer, Leibniz worked on calculating machines, clocks, and even mining machinery. As a librarian, he more or less invented the modern idea of cataloguing. As a mathematician, he not only produced groundbreaking work in what is now called topology, but came up with ‘calculus’ independently of Newton. In logic, he worked on binary systems, long before Boule and Turin. As a physicist, he made advances in the theory of momentum. He also made contributions to linguistics, history, aesthetics, and political theory.

You could say that Leibniz provided the detonator for the philosophical explosion being experienced, now, in modern quantum physics. I am referring to his declaration that a serious error would arise if one took the “objects” of science (matter, motion, space, time, etc.) as if they were real in themselves. This revolutionary idea in the seventeenth century anticipated the quantum quandary. Long before Einstein, Bohr, Schrodinger and Heisenberg. Leibniz saw how the consciousness of the observer was inextricably linked to the phenomenon of observed. His “*Letter to Arnauld*,” (30 April 1687) is the earliest insight we have that the scientific truth will never be more than a best guess, “probability.”

Leibniz’s discussion of the “dipole reality” appears in his “*Discourse on Metaphysics*.” His *soft place* is made up of “**monads**.” A **dipole** with **monads** sounds like yet another paradox puddle, and it is, but Leibniz knew how to do the metaphorical hop. Leibniz insists that monads are not just basic particles like the atoms conjured up by the early Greek atomists, because they coexist in both the material and the non-material realm. They bridge the dualist chasm.

The mundane material side is referred to as *phenomenal or descriptive*, because of Leibniz’s realization of the deception of perception. However, it is important to note that, for Leibniz, these are aberrations and not

delusions, i.e. nothing happens inside that is not somehow triggered by what really happens outside. The inside insight (which Kant would later call phenomena) may not be identical to the outside thing that caused it (which Kant would later call noumena), but they are inextricably related.

Like Plato and Augustine, Leibniz imbues fallible humans with divine souls. Souls act according to the laws of *final causes*, Aristotle's term for the sublime. The harmony between the two Aristotelian layers, efficient causes and final cause, is crucial to any understanding of Leibniz, and that is what makes him a metaphysician and puts him in the conga line. The lower layer of consciousness is just a means to an end. The end is the upper sublime layer.

Leibniz's term, "appetitions" refers to upper layer 'ends' that connect, order and justify the lower layer 'means.' Bodies may appear to act as if there were no souls, and souls act as if there were no bodies but, nevertheless, each is part of the other.

Both Berkeley and Kant are indebted to Leibniz for this mundane idealism, just as Leibniz is indebted to Descartes and just as Descartes is indebted to (you guessed it) Plato. Even abject materialists are forced to subscribe to subjective idealism. Newton, Leibniz's contemporary, also owes a debt to the Leibniz's layering of reality.

Leibniz's idea of 'little perceptions' gives a phenomenal account of the connection to the real "indiscernibles": there will always be differences in the petite perceptions of otherwise very similar 'monads'. We hear the roar of the ocean and not the composite sounds of each drop splash.

The key to Leibniz's metaphysics is contained in his Principle of Sufficient Reason (hereinafter referred to as PSR), which, simply stated, says that *nothing is without a reason (nihil est sine ratione)*. So, unlike Spinoza, there is a master plan, a universal cause and a God with a purpose. How do I justify having such opposing definitions of the infinite in the same conga line? Because the infinite by definition is undefinable, so it's all guess work; why not include all the guesses and then make up our own best guess.

As we saw, Leibniz's 'monad' is different from the early greek 'atom' especially since every monad is synchronized with one another by God, according to his vast conception of the perfect universe. We must be careful not to see the Leibniz universe as nothing more than a Spinozan mechanical clock. Leibniz has someone to wind and mind the clock. We were never sure about that in Spinoza. In either case we're not sure who made the clock.

Strictly speaking, space, time, causation, and other material phenomena, are all illusions (at least as humanly conceived). However, these

illusions are well-founded on and explained by the true nature of the universe at its fundamental level. For example, Leibniz argues that things seem to cause one another because God ordained a pre-established harmony among everything in the universe. Furthermore, as consequences of his metaphysics, Leibniz proposes solutions to several deep philosophical problems, such as the the nature of space and time. In the mind of God, there are an infinite number of infinitely complex concepts, much like Spinoza's "infinite attributes." However, unlike Spinoza, God, for Leibniz, is not only undefinable, but must be imagined by stepping outside of time, where we find God not creating, but *allowing* the universe to be actuated and sustained in existence. Leibniz's God wound the clock and lets it run its course, keeping a watchful eye on it all the time.

But have no fear God knows what time it isn't. According to Leibniz, God chooses the universe that is the most perfect. Thus, according to Leibniz, the actual world is the *best of all possible worlds*.

Leibniz agrees with Spinoza that the human mind can eventually come to know it all; the differences may not be observable at the moment, but will "unfold in the fullness of time" into a discernible difference (*New Essays on Human Understanding*, 245-6). Nevertheless, Leibniz also sees that not all monads are explicable in terms of physical, efficient causes;

there is still some final cause mystery in the upper realm.

While Leibniz's philosophical system demands a certain sense of determinism about the universe, he does not deny the existence of free will. Leibniz's *compatibilism* (a word used to describe theories where determinism is found to be compatible with free will) makes several attempts at how free will can be determined in advance. For me it doesn't make sense and I believe, it's not supposed to make sense. It is an ineluctable paradox puddle that you can splash around in, if you have the time, or simply hop over and continue, as with all paradox puddles.

Leibniz says the same thing in so many words. In "On Freedom," Leibniz writes: "Instead of wondering about what you cannot know ..., act according to your duty, which you do know" (*Discourse on Metaphysics*, §30). For Leibniz, that is as close to reason as faith can get at this point, which is the same point as Plato's human fallibility; or as my fourth grade teacher, Sister Mary Carlotta put it: "God works in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform."

We have already used the term theodicy in this work; Leibniz coined the term to refer to the reconciliation of God's benevolence with the evil in the world. In the *Theodicy*, Leibniz is able to demonstrate that 'the best possible universe' does not mean *no* evil; in fact, *less* overall evil is impossible in this *best of all*

possible worlds. He also shows us that the uniqueness of God, his omniscience, omnipotence, and benevolence may well be totally consistent with the challenging contingencies of the world he created. His Principle of Sufficient Reason (*Theodicy* §7: G VI 106-07/H 127-28) suggests that this apparent paradox puddle may be a mirage, a phenomenal problem of human perception. The proper order of the universe exceeds one's ability to judge it. This is yet another restatement of Plato's human fallibility.

Leibniz argues that a perfect being is necessary to the universe and since perfection cannot be crammed into our understanding bound by space and time, it is unanalyzable, but the unanalyzability does not effect its perfect existence; therefore the necessary God exists whether we believe it or not.

As part of our Platonic human fallibility, Leibniz points out that since we are all limited and imperfect, evil and sin are a necessary spring board for created beings to be creative (see *Discourse on Metaphysics*, §30). In other words, if we weren't put in a pit to start out we would never learn how to climb. Or more simply put without a 'down' there could be no 'up.' This would become the most acceptable Christian reply to the Epicurean divine doubt, which came to be called theodicy.

Leibniz's place in the conga line right behind Descartes doubled the energy flow

toward the Cartesian rational metaphysics that was the hall mark of 18th century Western Philosophy and eventually lead to 19th and 20th century idealism, and what has come to be called the German enlightenment.

Kant's views on space and time, sufficient reason, the distinction between phenomenal and metaphysical reality depend on Leibniz. In fact Kant would not be with us now were it not for Leibniz. No Leibniz, no Kant; no Kant, no Hegel, no Heidegger, no Bergson (all of whom we will meet as we move down the line).

Leibniz did not write a magnum opus; there is no single work that can be said to contain the core of his thought. While he did produce two books, the Theodicy and the New Essays Concerning Human Understanding, (ibid). Leibniz's thought must be pieced together from his many essays and letters. I left that work to others, and as it turns out, I had several Leibniz scholars to choose from; without the mystical Internet, the mystical Leibniz connection between the real and the surreal would not have been possible for me.

This prompts a digression where I must side step once again to wonder about the TAPs and SAPs of our new information age and marvel at the metaphysical force of universal consciousness which powers the internet. This chapter and this book would not have been possible without the consciousness expansion provided by my great absent partners, all in the

same shirt pocket universe right next to charlatans, cheats and ignoramuses. Along with all the fear mongering and time wasting diversions, somehow the wisdom of the ages is also at my finger tips. There is no other way to explain this predicament except as our most recent theodicy challenge in the game of life to rise above the ignorant turbulence and find the connection between universal consciousness and Leibniz's "best of all possible worlds."

BERKELEY

(1685- 1753)

“To be is to be perceived.” This was George Berkeley’s way of saying ‘it’s all in your head.’ There is no reality beyond what we think we see. If Protagoras provided the lemons in 450 BC, Berkeley made the lemonade in 1750 AD. As we saw earlier, Protagoras suggested that the subjective mind had no way to measure, and therefore, no way to realize, objective reality on the outside. Protagoras created this philosophical dragon which Plato attempted to daze with ideal rays and which Descartes attempted to hobble with double doubt. Berkeley saddled it and tried to ride the monster out of the arena to the promised land of absolute idealism.

George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, was a talented metaphysician and a brilliant critic of his predecessors, Descartes, and Locke. In the *Principles* and the *Three Dialogues* Berkeley’s extreme metaphysics hops over physics completely with the claim that everything that exists is all and only thought and depends on a mind for its existence. Immaterialism is all there is, i.e. matter does not exist, as such. All physical objects are composed of ideas, or as he put it in his pithy latin, “*esse est percipi*” (to be is to be perceived). This is the exact opposite of Hume’s “seeing is believing;” this is “believing is not seeing” In other words there is nothing to see beyond perception.

It is true that he did not say much about consciousness, in so many words, but he didn't have to since, in his mind, consciousness is all there is. All his words make it clear that for him reality consists exclusively of mind and ideas. Samuel Johnson, a countryman and contemporary suggested that Berkeley's mind of God is the repository of the Platonic ideal forms of all subjects and objects.

Despite the fact that he was a bishop, Berkeley was less interested in organized religion than philosophy and metaphysics. Like Augustine, he was a wide-ranging thinker with interests in the psychology of vision, mathematics, physics, morals, economics, and medicine. Although many of Berkeley's first readers greeted him with derision; we now see that there is no doubt that he influenced both Hume and Kant.

Berkeley's *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* and *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* speed down the shortest runway of solid pragmatism and lift off into the most vertical climb in all of metaphysics. Just as God could not exist without Berkeley's mind; Berkeley's mind could not exist without God. Like Descartes, Berkeley turns the question of God on itself. You couldn't question the idea of God unless the concept of God already existed in your mind. God is in your mind and gives you the freedom and the ability to question even that very same God;

even atheism is made out of theism. The question of whether God is conceived in your mind or you are conceived in God's mind becomes immaterial, literally and figuratively. This resonates with our notion that immaterialism has no sequence of events. Berkeley supports my belief that there is no telling whether God made man first or man made God, and no point to the question.

There is no cause and effect, no chicken / egg conundrum, no distinction between matter and energy. My "mattergy," would be all in your head, according to Berkeley, which is OK with me.

Berkeley decried abstraction and philosophical terms, and felt that every day knowledge was enough, and so, it was unnecessary to explain universal consciousness any further than all minds think alike.

BURKE

(1729-1797)

No doubt influenced by Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* in 1690, which was the first attempt to survey the human mind since Aristotle, Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, in 1757, emphasized, the passion of consciousness and its influence on conduct. Life is much richer for those who see the difference between "sympathy" and ordinary compassion. Those who distinguish ideas of beauty from the ideas of pleasure are also on a higher level. Burke saw beauty (like goodness) as a sixth sense which, if followed, leads to a higher social order (civilization).

The driving force for all human activity, Burke thought, were the passions of curiosity, pleasure and pain. Curiosity stimulated the activity of mind on all matters. Avoidance of pain and the quest for pleasure (including comfort) underly self development which allows us to rise from this low level need to a mid level need of sociability, i.e. partnerships which involve sympathy, imitation and ambition. Imitation establishes habit, and ambition produces change in both the individual and those around him, but "sympathy" does much more. Sympathy establishes an interest in other people's welfare; more than that, "sympathy" extends consciousness so that we mentally identify with

partners. The scope of “sympathy” includes anyone and everyone, unlike compassion, which applies only to those in a worse situation than oneself.

Like Maslow’s hierarchy, the lower level energy of pleasure/ pain, has a mid level energy just above it, and above that an apex where ‘sympathy’ resides.

Burke’s “sympathy’ must be like Christ’s neighborly love, and Plato’s “agape.” I think, given his distinction between “sympathy” and “compassion,” Burke would agree that this human race, this obstacle course, this game of life, has a loving coach rather than a ‘whip in hand’ circus ring master.

While Burke was bending Locke’s ideas toward idealism for the English speaking world, Kant was laying the foundation for German idealism, whether he knew it or not. It’s as though there was some groundswell of idealism under both cultures which just happened to erupt in time for the industrial revolution.

KANT

(1724-1804)

Because he wrote to dazzle his peers and not for the ordinary reader, Immanuel Kant's tongue twisting terms are mind bending, and the most interpreted and misinterpreted words of wisdom in the history of philosophy. I spent a lot more time with Kant's actual words than I did with any other philosopher in our conga line. I did take advantage of TAP and SAP scholars, but that still left a lot of confusion. Again thanks to the information age I live in, I had Kant in my EarPods and on my Iphone whenever I needed to consult him directly.

I boil it all down to the proposition that metaphysical believing and reason are separate powers of consciousness with which we are all endowed. Although he never discovered any tunnel or bridge between the *rock* and the *soft place*, Kant would agree that there must be a connection between the two. Kant was not a bridge builder; he was more the surveyor, mapping the borders of the subcontinents to be bridged: noumena (outside object) and phenomena (inside perception).

“Critique,” the very first word in of all his titles makes Kant the critic of the metaphysical play that was unfolding, rather than the playwright. None of Kant's critiques were ever intended to refute metaphysics but rather to perfect it: *Critique of Pure Reason*; *Critique of Practical Reason*, and the *Critique of the Power of*

Judgment, though unintelligible for ordinary readers, inspired future metaphysical thinkers for generations to follow, either directly or indirectly.

Kant divided human knowledge into 'analytic' and 'synthetic.' Analytic knowledge includes self evident propositions, such as 'all bachelors are single' which Wittgenstein would later call tautology. The proposition: 'Bachelors are not as happy as married men' is 'synthetic,' i.e. not necessarily true and therefore requires some further proof.

For centuries the analytic/synthetic distinction was considered crucial in that, among other things, it set math apart as not requiring any proof. In the twentieth century Godel demonstrated that Math not only requires proof but can never find enough. Other modern philosophers attack the distinction as pointless, including Wittgenstein, already mentioned, and Quine and Putnam.

Nevertheless, Kant's epistemology was one of the columns of the German enlightenment. However, as we shall see, it was too narrow to stand on its own. Kant himself would come to see that.

Perhaps the central and most controversial thesis of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is the idea that human beings experience only appearances, not things in themselves; including the concepts of space

and time which are only subjective forms of human intuition. Kant calls this proposition “transcendental idealism,” in which all objects in space and time do not exist independent of appearances; indeed, space and time themselves are only appearances. If there is anything out there beyond appearances, we’ll never know for sure. And yet for us to know that, we must have some access to the missing knowledge, which Kant calls “pure intuition,” an inborn, a-priori part of consciousness-“

Kant’s “transcendental idealism” which distinguishes between a world of appearances and a separate but real world of things in themselves is not original; the seeds of this distinction can be found in early Greek thought and Descartes. However, Kant distances himself from Protagoras or Berkeley; Kant insists that “things in themselves” are absolutely real in that they would exist even if no human beings were around to perceive them, i.e. the proverbial tree falling in the forest, would go down in the objective world even if there was no subjective ear to hear it fall. Appearances are not absolutely real, or absolutely accurate, because their existence depends, not only on the object but on the subject’s aberrations, the human fallible perception. But the subjects and objects are somehow connected. So appearances are mental entities or mental representations. This, makes transcendental idealism a form of phenomenalism in which

the subjects are real only because objects exist.

So in a sense we could say Kant agrees with the dualist dipole reality, even though he might object to being called a dualist. In Kant's ontology, (theory of reality) objects have two different aspects: one aspect that appears to us, and another aspect that does not. And how do we know that hidden aspect exists? That's the wheels up point in the Kantian runaway which is not clearly marked at all.

Kant spends lots of wordy analysis considering the two major figures of past philosophy Plato and Leibniz. He greatly admires Plato and pretty much accepts the idea of ideal forms; he admires Leibniz, as well, but is critical of his 'monads.'

For Kant, in order to be self-conscious, one cannot be wholly absorbed in the contents of perceptions but must distinguish consciousness from the rest of the world; that means there must be a "rest of the world" independent of consciousness. We must represent an objective world in order to distinguish our subjectivity from it, and we represent an objective 'rest of the world' by "judging." We are somehow able to judge that some representations necessarily belong together. Judging is an act of what Kant calls synthesis, (synthetic as opposed to analytic), which he defines as "the action of putting

different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition.” In other words, to synthesize is in general to combine several representations into a single (more) complex representation, and to “judge” is specifically to combine concepts into a judgment.

As for self consciousness Kant expands the materialist, experiential conception of self consciousness, as is suggested by Locke. Kant believes that self-consciousness arises from combining (or synthesizing) representations with one another within the subjective realm regardless of their connection to any object. The smell of my favorite coffee this morning reinforced not only the continuity of the coffee but also, on some deeper level, reassures me that I am the same guy who discovered this Cuban coffee ten years ago. The continuity of experience is the necessary correlate for our sense of a continuous self. For Kant, it is the synthesizing process itself that is consciousness, and our awareness of its continuity is self consciousness. That in itself is a very important contribution to western philosophy, eastern too, come to think of it.

So how do we make metaphysics out of this? Well there has to be some one or some thing beyond the object and subject realm, an inborn propensity, ability, divine gift, or whatever you want to call self-consciousness, and that would have to be a super natural being, since, by definition, it is beyond nature.

Kant never said any of that but I believe it can be fairly inferred from what he did say in so many words, so many, many words.

Also, I would offer as a proof of Kant's metaphysics, his insistence that no empiricist account, alone, could possibly explain self-consciousness, which is based on changing experiences. The 'change' in changing experience implies a constant backdrop, which is Plato's 'Form world'. This implied metaphysical backdrop is reflected in what we may call Kant's principle of 'apperception' which involves 'a priori' knowledge about the necessary and universal knowledge which precedes, and therefore, cannot be based on experience.

“Understanding” judges sense data, “reason” speculates beyond it. Reason provides rules for thoughtful discourse, and originates synthetic thinking. So, we may call self-consciousness the highest principle of Kant's theoretical philosophy, since it is the basis for all of our a-priori knowledge about the structure of nature and the divine consciousness behind it. Reason leads us to the 'a-priori' conceptual truth and also leads us to God and Christ. Yes, that's in Kant. Kant could be mistaken for being Godless because of the worldly ethics he is famous for. The fact that you don't need God for Kant's ethics does not mean there is no God in Kant. There has to be a God who put the ethical problem in your path and gave you the 'understanding' and will

power to choose the high road or the low road around it.

Kant's most famous single fundamental principle of morality, on which all specific moral duties are based, he calls the **categorical imperative**. To figure out what is right or wrong, you are simply to imagine the whole world doing it and then decide whether you would want to live in such a world. The moral law is a product of worldly reason, not otherworldly fire and brimstone.

Moral rightness and wrongness apply only to free agents who control their actions. So, whether he said it or not, the categorical imperative implies the freedom node of Kant's metaphysical triad. Kant himself may have deemphasized his own effect on spiritualism and metaphysics, but British metaphysics and the German enlightenment say otherwise.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) brought Kant to England specifically to restore man's connection with God which was nearly erased by Hume and Bentham. The Coleridge restatement of Kant's metaphysical understanding which at the same time includes and exceeds science, rekindled British metaphysics. Hegel's logical idealism relies on Kantian metaphysics, as does the absolute self of Fichte, who knew Kant personally and was endorsed by him.

Much later when the German enlightenment was all but extinguished and Germans were goose stepping to Hitler's hysterical rant, psychiatrist, Karl Jaspers, was led back to Kant to quell the barking dogma of Naziism.

Despite the fact that Kantian philosophy goes back-and-forth on the idea of transcendence, Jaspers wove Kantian concepts into a kind of transcendence. Jaspers' "*Ciphers of Transcendence*" reformulates Kant's 'pure reason' and makes it a bridge, a shaky rope bridge, but nonetheless a bridge, between the *rock* and the *soft place*.

I must add a bit more about Jaspers here, who is not in the conga line because he was a psychiatrist not a philosopher, but his little bit of philosophy is worth noting here. Rather than 'floating,' Jaspers sees the movement from the *rock* to the *soft place* as 'foundering' or falling toward metaphysics.

Falling or rising, foundering or floating all work as a 'critique of pure reason' which get's you to the lift off point on the reason runway.

FICHTE

(1752-1814)

Johann Gottlieb Fichte is the unsung hero of "metaphysical positivism" [my own term for a proposed annex to 'logical positivism']. The "metaphysical" comes from his radical,

transcendental subjectivism; the “positivism” because of Fichte’s belief in the inevitability of progress.

Fichte’s overview of the oceanic currents that move history sees things continuously getting better just after they get worse. One step back and two steps forward. This dance appealed to me because it is a hopeful activity that tries to glimpse the enigmatic twists of fate. Maybe dancing cannot make rain, but it sure can kick up a lot of dust.

You will recall Plotinus pointed out that the upper layer of consciousness can be tarnished or annealed by the interaction with the lower mundane layer of events. Fichte looks at same interaction of mind and matter, but focuses on matter. Regardless of the positive or negative effect on the subjectivity (mind), the collision of every willed act with the outside world, changes it (matter). This change of focus from the scars on our hands to the dents we make on the *rock* makes Fichte the unsung father of existentialism.

Fichte makes life a duty to act. One should never disavow the duty to act as being beyond one’s ability, or as Fichte says: “If I ought, I can.” This is as simple as it is solid, and also the core belief for all existentialists. Sartre branded deviation from this simple duty as “bad faith.”

Willful acts are part of the three step dance of historical progress, which is not only a hopeful view, but also hard to refute: the refutation itself qualifies as the Fichtean antithesis that leads to the new synthesis. The result of the refutation proves the very theory it would refute.

It was Fichte's idea that a thesis spawns its own anti-thesis and then merges into a new and better synthesis, which then becomes the new thesis. Most people credit the three step dance of historical progress to Hegel. It was actually Fichte who taught everyone the dance of progress including Hegel. It was Fichte who originally pointed out that the life struggle between ideal purpose and instinct results in a push-pull kind of progresses. Even Kant was in his debt.

Kant's endorsement of Fichte's Critique of Revelation caused some confusion about Kant being a co-author, maybe because of the "Critique," in the title, but Kant had nothing to do with the authorship of this concept.

We have to keep reminding ourselves that provenance does not apply to ideas. Nevertheless we must take note that Kant had an interaction if not an influence on Fichte. I don't know whether Kant's notion of synthesis came before or after his encounter with Fichte, and once again, it really doesn't matter. From up high the whole conga line could be viewed as co-authors. My point here is simply to defuse

the common misunderstanding that Hegel invented the three step dance of historical progress.

Inspired by Kant, Fichte developed, during the final decade of the eighteenth century, a radically revised and rigorously systematic version of transcendental idealism, which he called *Wissenschaftslehre* - "Doctrine of Scientific Knowledge."

Perhaps the most characteristic, as well as the most controversial, feature of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is Fichte's effort to ground his entire system upon the bare subjectivity of the absolute self, or, as Fichte expressed it, the "pure I." This resonates with Berkeley's absolute subjectivity, and, of course, my hypersubjectivity.

Fichte offers rational proofs to justify the 'absolute' self, which is non material but nevertheless very real. He brought faith closer to reason and validated the connection of consciousness to the soul, even though he never used the word "soul" because of his aversion to organized religious dogma.

Goethe was so impressed with Fichte, he arranged for his academic post at Jena, the hotbed of the German enlightenment. During his career at the University of Jena (1794-1799) Fichte's metaphysical speculations affected the philosophy of science, ethics, law and religion in Germany and later in all of Europe.

Fichte's greatest contribution to our conga line is his discovery of the power of the will to reshape nature. With that, comes the awesome responsibility for our action or inaction we have yet to acknowledge. Fichte's insight must have inspired his friend Goethe's famous line "in the beginning was the deed," which makes Goethe an existentialist as well. What do I mean by existentialism?

'Existentialism' is the underside of 'essentialism'; 'existence' is the pure being and 'essence' is what that being becomes as a result of choices made and actions taken. In the statement 'I am John,' the "am" refers to my existence; the "John" refers to what I have become, my "essence." Existentialists believe existence precedes essence. I don't spend a lot of time on the question of what came first, because I believe, as I pointed out earlier, that sequential order, which is so essential on the *rock* is out of order in the timeless *soft place*.

Many existentialist are atheists, but atheism is not a prerequisite to existentialism. Kierkegaard, who we shall meet down the line, will demonstrate this convincingly.

Whether or not he was an existentialist, Fichte certainly was the spark of the German enlightenment.

SCHILLER

(1759-1805)

Friedrich Schiller is sometimes referred to as the German Shakespeare. In his relatively short life, he authored an extraordinary series of dramas and was also a prodigious poet, composing the “Ode to Joy” featured in the culmination of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and enshrined, some two centuries later, in the anthem of the European Union. He was a friend of Goethe’s, and so, I assume, he must also have known Fichte, and if he knew Fichte, he must have been inspired by him.

In addition to his literary accomplishments, Schiller was a philosopher. While his philosophical writings are primarily concerned with aesthetics, his critique of Kant’s *Critique* focused on Kant’s conflicted idealism, which is why he is in the conga line after Kant to clarify and compensate for mis-steps.

One of those Kantian mis-steps which Schiller brings to our attention has to do with Kant’s claims that there could be no objective principle of beauty, and that aesthetic experience is a purely subjective pleasure. The idea that beauty is only in the eye of the beholder is too shallow for Schiller. Schiller uses Kant’s own logical steps to demonstrate that beauty is an absolute form, but nonetheless real. In a sense Schiller is re-Platonizing post-Kantian beauty. It is the Fichteian struggle of consciousness to

overcome the inertia of instinct which ultimately invokes beauty; I didn't say creates beauty but invokes beauty, brings it down from the *soft place* to the *rock*. Schiller's term 'heautonomous,' literally 'self, self-governing', refers to the double subjective/ objective instance where the sublime form or inspiration is "*both given and obeyed by the thing.*" The qualities of being autonomous and heautonomous, Schiller claims, persist in the object whether it is being observed or not, i.e. beauty is located in the object, not in "the eye of the beholder." And so, there could be no beautiful activity on the *rock* without our reaching up from the *rock* to the absolute perfection of the *soft place*. This is how beauty is brought to earth from the heavens above by humans and animals.

Wait, animals?

Yup, animals. I'm not sure I understand it, but it's there in Schiller, and we will see it again later in the chapters on Fechner and Popper. I can't say whether they knew anything about Schiller, but all three of them suggest that the innate propensity to creativity extends beyond human consciousness to plants, insects and other beings. Any self-determining act of any being becomes "an *analogy* of the pure determination of the will" and so an "*exhibition of freedom*" and, therefore beautiful whoever or whatever does it.

The amalgamation of subject and object also extends to the interaction of the inner soul with the outer suffering in the world. Each subject has more or less grace in its subjectivity, which affects his/her objectivity.

In refusing to succumb to pain, “the beautiful soul becomes heroic” and “transforms into a *sublime* soul.” Whether or not he knew it, Schiller was also resonating with Saint Augustine’s notion that suffering is always an opportunity for growth. Modern Greeks, in every day conversation, still use a bromide which came from The Agamemnon of Aeschylus written circa 458 BC: “*mathos pathos*,” which means we learn from suffering.

According to Schiller a beautiful soul is a graceful soul and it:

“carries out humankind’s most exacting duties with ease... with joy, ... and with grace.... It is in a beautiful soul that sensuousness and reason, duty and inclination are in harmony, and grace resides in their every expression. ... because we recognize in the beautiful soul an image of human perfection, such harmony elicits our approval and love.”

Once we understand the underlying unity that grace suggests, we can correct the excesses brought about by Kant’s rigorous separation of reason, duty and inclination. Schiller’s response to Kant’s depiction of duty was taken up by none other than Kant himself, who in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* devoted a

footnote modifying his position in light of what Schiller wrote.

Schiller points out that merely witnessing in others the domination of the lower self by free will is thrilling; it gives us an esthetic joy, which Kant confuses with pleasure. This is sublime joy not earthly pleasure. I say Schiller's floating is a result of self inflation. Not everyone is afloat.

Schiller has no kind words for those low lives who weaponize the ignorance of the misguided into violence. In "Concerning the Sublime" [*Über das Erhabene*], drafted between 1794 and 1796, Schiller claims that nothing... "is so beneath the dignity of human beings as to suffer violence, for it destroys the individual's humanity." Despite the fact that the propensity for violence is everywhere, resistance is possible; even when physical resistance is impossible, the force can be resisted by he who chooses

"idealistically"...to "take a step beyond nature and thereby negate the concept of brute force in regard to himself."

A person never tested, may never become aware of their moral powers. We should, then, be grateful for personal or historical events that disrupt the peace and beauty and produce the sublime challenges, since without them there can be no dignity. This makes the hurdles in the game of life an

exercise in ASCENSION; if there were no obstacles we would never learn how to leap.

Achieving dignity, floating from fallibility toward completeness requires focus and constant vigilance, daily practice. We applaud our fellow creators when their practice reaches the level of art. We look up to those high floaters, even when they are only characters in a story. Inflated fictional characters inspire self inflation and allow us to float over the inevitable bumps in the rocky road, and especially that last final bump, where the leap of faith is required.

For Schiller's audience whether in a Greek amphitheater or binging on a Netflix series, witnessing tragedy as an art form is an "inoculation against unavoidable fate."

Schiller was talking about art made with love to attract, not craft made for profit to distract. Unfortunately mass audiences are a profit center rather than communication partners.

We are 'on screen' rather than 'on scene,' more than ever before. Instead of inspiring us, the bogus vicarious experience dupes us into buying more than we need and dopes us into doing something we would never have chosen to do on our own. I am constantly stunned by the real profits amassed by the false prophets of mass media, changing Schiller's sacred

purpose of one to many communication from
esthetic to anesthetic.

Just as I am about to give up to the
seemingly ineluctable flow making mass
audiences number and dumber, my *inner*
teacher consoles: there will always be truth and
beauty for those who choose to find it.

SCHELLING

(1775-1854)

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, along with Fichte and Hegel, is one of the three most influential thinkers in German idealism. The same confluence of consciousness that reached Jena and engulfed Fichte, Schiller, Goethe and Kant spread to the Lutheran seminary where Schelling and his fellow student Hegel (before he got to Jena), were adding a new upward slant to history. Schelling seems to some scholars to be ‘all over the place,’ disorganized, which may be the reason Hegel became much more well known. Some scholars suggest that the disorganization makes the philosophical point that there is no orderly way to consider consciousness. For Wittgenstein and Heidegger, Schelling marks that outer limit of the systematic task of philosophy, “the end of philosophy and the task of thinking” as Heidegger says.

Besides influencing Hegel, and Fechner, Schelling’s importance has to do with his response to the mechanistic determinism of natural philosophy which arose because of the scientific revolution. In his *Naturphilosophie* (*Nature Philosophy*), we find a modern view of nature that reaches beyond science. Like many of his contemporaries Schelling was challenged by the Kantian chasm. Unlike his colleagues, he saw that no solid bridge could ever be put in place between the ledges of the phenomenal and noumenal realms, because they were

dynamic, fluctuating, energy fields. In his anti-Cartesian account of subjectivity, Schelling proved to the world, and especially to Nietzsche and Heidegger, how the thinking subject can never fully understand objective reality and can never be fully transparent to itself.

Schelling also advanced Fichte's self-consciousness. Fichte's Subjective Idealism was transformed by Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), wherein only a being capable of intuiting itself as simultaneously 'representing' and 'represented' can account for the unity of the process of representation and the represented object. For such a being, that is 'I', there is no predicate other than itself. It is a subject which is its own object. The Fichteian 'I' is transformed into the dynamic history of self-consciousness" which comes into being in three stages (yet another three step dance) the first, "original sensation," the second "reflection," and the third "the absolute act of will" from "reflection."

Schelling then calls our attention to how an evolved subject which is now a completed self-consciousness (we would say "inflated") becomes conscious of that moment of its origin. Consciousness becomes aware of its own originality and universality at the same time. Consciousness of consciousness creates a subset of Fichte's absolute subjective idealism. The subject and the object are identical, being both ideal and real at once.

Even though I found no direct evidence, I see the connection between Schiller and Schelling. Perhaps I was distracted by the alliterative tickle: Schiller, Schelling and Schopenhauer (who we will meet down the line).

HEGEL

(1770-1831)

Schiller offered art as a metaphysical consolation for death. Hegel suggests, instead that philosophy is the “death of death.” Hegel highlights the effect of the *soft place* on our day to day fretful scheming. The *soft place* offers a respite from the ‘*rocky*’ life and death struggles. Bridging the two worlds makes the day to day suffering easier. Hegel knew that and he knew Schiller and Schelling.

Hegel, in his earliest writings extolled Schelling as the mastermind of this new idea comparing the still unknown Schelling to the well established Schiller, and Fichte, and Goethe. Nevertheless Hegel was to become much more well known than all of the above.

For Hegel, philosophical examination of life is essential to providing any meaning to life, or in the words of Socrates: ‘the unexamined life is not worth living.’ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel is clearly a Platonist, and his contribution is indispensable to the development of idealized self knowledge which flowered at Jena, where he taught. Despite the fact that they were all at Jena together, Hegel had very little to say about Fichte or Goethe, He had much more to say about Kant.

Hegel dominated the period of German idealism which occurred in the decades following Kant. Hegel’s first work,

Phenomenology of the Spirit (1807) refuted Kant's idea of phenomena and in the process, we must say practically invented a new philosophy called phenomenology. You will recall that, for Kant, the world was divided into things as they are and things as they appear. Things in themselves Kant called 'noumena' and the appearances he called 'phenomena.' For Hegel the appearances are part of consciousness which progresses toward unification slowly by the same triple step dance that advances social systems and historical epochs, and once sublime self consciousness is unified, it becomes a thing in itself, a noumena. So for Kant consciousness was a phenomena; for Hegel it could become a noumena. This may have something to do with the fact that, in the modern lexicon, ironically, "phenomenon" has come to mean real.

Hegel was not only critical of Kant's phenomenology; he was also critical of Kant's main idea, the categorical imperative. Hegel felt this was a negative morality. 'Don't's' are not as powerful as 'Do's.' One of the essential 'do's,' for Hegel, would be Christ's "love thy neighbor as thyself," which is much more powerful than Kant's 'don't do anything you wouldn't want the whole world to do.'

Hegel also points to Christ as a demonstration of the bridge between the *rock* and the '*soft place*.' Hegel told us that the importance of Christ is his incarnation, which shows us that God is both beyond the world

and in it. This resonates with our divine seesaw metaphor which is so essential to our self ASCENSION.

Hegel is in our conga line because of his conversion of the dipole reality between the *rock* and the *soft place* into a single energy field. The Hegel circuit makes the philosophical tug-of-war between monism and dualism unnecessary. For Hegel antipodal forces synthesize eventually and grow together to enhance new states. Differences inevitably merge and become similarities, similarities become unity.

Hegel attempted to elaborate a comprehensive and systematic philosophy of perfectibility, involving the one-step back- two step forward theory of development we saw in Fichte. This three step dance guides the development of both objective and subjective reality, or, in Kantian terms, the noumena and the phenomena.

Hegel established the philosophical notion that the infinite mind is real and not distinct from the finite mind. The two poles are bonded by a single force field which continuously powers the human consciousness to new levels. This helps me believe in the universal consciousness.

The bonding synthesis, the result of the three step dance is what most people remember about Hegel. Thesis spawns

antithesis and the collision/fusion creates synthesis, which then advances a new thesis which spawns an antithesis, etc.

His teleological dance was later applied to economics by Marx to synthesize his communism which was doomed to become oppressive instead of inspiring in the hands of tyrants.

This three step dance can also be applied to spiritual development whereby primitive religion is opposed by its antithesis, humanism and the new synthesis, Christianity emerges.

Taking the three step dance into our current cell phone culture. The 'somewhere' of the religious temple spawns its antithesis: the 'anywhere' of modern worship and a new synthesis is born where the deflection of the virtual and actual congregations enable the self reflection required for finding God within.

SCHOPENHAUER

(1788-1860)

It may come as a surprise that this arch pessimist should find his way into our transcendental chorus. For most of my conga line thinkers, “will” is the good guy in the game of life drama. Schopenhauer calls his bad guy “will.” Schopenhauer’s will is so bad, he wishes he had never been born; so bad, he seems to value death over life.

In one sense Arthur Schopenhauer is a gauntlet which every idealist should be forced to run. I ran the gauntlet and the gauntlet changed more than I did. By that I mean my outlook was not darkened and what I knew of Schopenhauer became brighter. Schopenhauer is seen by most as a pit of darkness; finding points of light in this darkness, seemed almost impossible at first, like looking for diamonds in a coal mine. Nevertheless, I think I found a few which add a special luster to our hypersubjective crown.

I was discouraged at first to the point of abandoning my mining. For instance, Schopenhauer would banish making love since it might result in new life, and he would cauterize the reproductive processes, and further, women should be dispensed with altogether or, at least, strictly controlled. I’m

not making this up, and it gets darker, to where the extinction of the species is heralded as a desirable end. It was too black for me.

Then I discovered, in Wikipedia, a list of Schopenhauer fans which read like the hall of fame of Western intellectuals: Friedrich Nietzsche, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Erwin Schrödinger, Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Leo Tolstoy, Herman Melville, Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, Marcel Proust, Samuel Beckett, Richard Wagner, Johannes Brahms, Arnold Schoenberg, and Gustav Mahler. You can see how this would keep me digging through the darkness until I saw whatever they saw.

Arthur Schopenhauer was among the first in the 19th century to suggest that the universe is not a rational place. I believe that too. Is there any idealism behind that irrationalism?

Schopenhauer maintains in his “Essay on the Freedom of the Will” (1839), that everything that happens, happens necessarily. This fatalism is a source of comfort and tranquillity for Schopenhauer. If nothing can be done about the course of events, why worry, why struggle? Because we think we have a choice we fight to the death, each of our wills pitted against the wills of others, like the divided bulldog ants (Schopenhauer’s metaphor). It would appear that we only struggle because we think we have a choice about how it ends; and it would follow

that if we realize that we have no choice, the struggle would end. Without repeating his tortured justification of determinism, suffice it to say that Schopenhauer regards it as one of Kant's most profound ideas, which I must have missed in my reading of Kant.

Schopenhauer had his joust with Kant, which seems to be a right of passage for German idealists. For Schopenhauer the target was Kant's noumena, thing-in-itself, particularly in its Kantian role as the cause of our sensations. Kant puts the 'thing in itself' out of reach, and yet he says that it can hurt when we bump into it. We feel and suffer as a result of the 'thing in itself.' So there is an effect in our Kantian phenomena (subject) caused by the Kantian noumena (object). Schopenhauer finds the separation an unnecessary paradoxical dichotomy and lumps the two together. But in that mix there is an idealism.

Schopenhauer suggests that the caldron of inevitable suffering which necessitated endless striving and strife could be minimized by an ascetic life style: "With self-knowledge, we can transform our lives into works of art." That's more like it, I thought, and so did Nietzsche.

The esthetic ascetic of Schopenhauer's "genius" resonates with our virtuoso virtue, our hypersubjectivity and even Maslow's self actualization. It's no surprise that this part of his philosophy found an audience with artists and especially musicians. Schopenhauer's

“genius” is a gem hardened and polished by years of struggle as well as inspiration.

Schopenhauer himself is not beyond dichotomies and paradoxes. In *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer separates “Will” (*Wille*) and representation (*Vorstellung*). The German word, “*Vorstellung*,” can be translated as “representation,” “presentation,” “idea,” or “mental image.” Whatever, you call it, it is separate from Will but connected in the same fulcrum, like a lower jaw. Schopenhauer distinguishes his fulcrum from Kant’s passive gaping chasm because of its dynamics. Schopenhauer’s dynamic jaws can chew you up, but not if you take the deep dive and come to know your selves.

The dynamic interior can power an ascent with one lift off leap. Schopenhauer thinks the three steps in the German dance of Fichte and Hegel are two too many. For Schopenhauer, all we need is the one leap at just at the right juncture.

Schopenhauer’s bad guy, “Will,” is a mindless, aimless, non-rational impulse, but apparently he can also guide you to the lift off point. I cannot honestly say that Schopenhauer would play in our game of life. While he does not have an arena, as such, he does have a buoyancy, which can raise one above the fray.

Once we make contact with our inner selves, Schopenhauer says that we discover that

our body matter, which, unlike any other matter, has a unique relationship to mind. We perceive our body as a physical object among other physical objects, subject to the natural laws that govern the movements of all physical objects, but there is another inner sense in which we “feel” our own body. We can objectively perceive our hand as an external object, as a surgeon might perceive it during a medical operation, but we can also be subjectively aware of our hand as something we inhabit, as something we willfully move, feeling its inner muscular workings.

From this observation, Schopenhauer asserts that among all the objects in the universe, there is only one object, relative to each of us – namely, our physical body – that has two entirely different ways of being perceived: as representation, i.e., objectively; externally- noumena; and also internally as phenomena, as part of this ‘will.’ Therefore, a hand movement is but a single act that has two distinct realizations. It has a subjective willing as one of its aspects, and the physical muscular matter and energy as the other. Sounds a bit like Fichte’s absolute ‘I’ and Schelling’s double aspect of self awareness.

For Schopenhauer this double aspect only applies to one’s own body.

It had never occurred to me, while playing the piano, that my hand movements can be viewed from two different aspects of my

self consciousness, which may be why I don't play like a "genius." Only a virtuoso puts the double aspect of hand movement together seamlessly. Separating the two aspects of my hand movement provided me a brand new challenge, putting them together, may be more than I will ever be able to do, but I won't stop trying.

Schopenhauer's idealism is buried but well worth the digging. When he perceives the moon or a mountain, man does not have any direct access to the metaphysical interior realization of such objects; they remain as representations. But the more you know about yourself, the more the representations become presentations to be appreciated. Who makes this presentation? Who or what is behind the sunset vista?

At first blush it does appear that Schopenhauer's metaphysical stool is lacking the God leg, and will topple. He is classified as an atheist by most scholars. Within Schopenhauer's vision of the world as will, there is no God, as such, to be comprehended, and the world is conceived of as being inherently meaningless. The world is represented as being in a condition of eternal frustration, as it endlessly strives for nothing in particular, and as it goes essentially nowhere. Schopenhauer's game has nothing to win. It's a dance not headed anywhere. The only joy, he says, is in the dance itself.

Here's where the paradox puddle works to Schopenhauer's advantage. For there to be joy it must exist beyond the dance. That joy is the result of the dance's connection to the perfect dance, which is a Platonic Form. This joy is a Schopenhauerian respite where we lose ourselves in the object, forget about our individuality, and become the clear mirror of the object. During the aesthetic perception of an individual apple tree, for example, we would perceive the quintessential 'Form' of apple tree shining through the tree. This is the Ur-phenomenon, as Goethe would describe it.

As an aside, Goethe was a part of the salon of Schopenhauer's mother and very close to her, but could not get along with her philosopher son.

This transcendent joy in the Schopenhauerian darkness imparts a universal quality to consciousness (*The World as Will and Representation*, Section 33). Aesthetic perception thus transforms an individually-oriented state of consciousness to a universally-oriented state of consciousness, or what Schopenhauer calls a pure will-less, painless, and timeless subject of knowledge (*The World as Will and Representation*, Section 34).

Few seldom have the capacity to remain in such an aesthetic state of mind for very long. Schopenhauer points out that most people are forever denied the transcendent tranquillity of the aesthetic eden. Even though eden is

reserved for the chosen few, there is no question that there is, actually, a Platonic eden beyond the shadows of Schopenhauer's dark cave, rare but there; and if there's smoke of sublimity there must be fire of divinity. Schopenhauer adds a new chiaroscuro to our conga line image.

As compared to the visual and literary arts, Schopenhauer locates music at the zenith of universal subjectivity, which makes music is the most metaphysical art, closest to the Platonic Ideal Forms. In the structure of music, Schopenhauer discerns a series of analogies to the structure of nature. The bass notes are analogous to inorganic nature, the harmonies are analogous to the animal world, and the melodies are analogous to the human world. Philosophical sensibility is closest to musical sensibility.

Schopenhauer puts music at the basis of the sensory code to the universal energy field of consciousness, which explains the positive attraction of Schopenhauer to creative spirits such as Richard Wagner, Friedrich Nietzsche and all of the distinguished fans mentioned earlier.

Schopenhauer believes that music achieves this transcendent state right here on earth by embodying the abstract forms of everyday feelings. This allows us to perceive the essences of emotional life, "sadness itself," "joy itself," etc., without the contingent contents

that would typically cause suffering. By expressing emotion in this abstracted, sublime way, music allows us to apprehend the nature of the world without the frustration involved in daily life, and hence, is a mode of aesthetic awareness akin to the tranquil philosophical contemplation of the world.

It is not a stretch to suggest that Schopenhauer's struggling 'will' is a quest for transcendence and ascendance. He definitely recognizes the vertical climb challenge in the game of life, where each human being starts out as an undistinguished instance of the sins of the whole world (*The World as Will and Representation*, Sections 63 and 64). But he also recognizes that character development (hypersubjectivity) is possible, involving expansion (inflation) brought about by self understanding; this "self-realization" brings with it greater peace of mind (*Ibid*, Section 55).

Schopenhauer's floating is also subject to deflation and re-inflation. Whereas his aesthetic buoyancy offers only a short-lived transcendence from the suffering of the daily world, re-inflation at any time can be accomplished by ascetic renunciation and resignation.

In a manner reminiscent of traditional Buddhism, Schopenhauer recognizes that life is filled with unavoidable striving toward 'appointments and disappointments,' and the

only cure for that strife is what we have called the “ascetic esthetic.”

Schopenhauer is actually in cognitive consonance with Saint Francis whose moral consciousness and virtue was the result of voluntary poverty and chastity. Believe it or not, Schopenhauer has Paradiso above his Purgatorio where St. Francis of Assisi (*ibid*, Section 68) and Jesus (*ibid*, Section 70) emerge as Schopenhauer’s prototypes for enlightenment, in conjunction with the ascetic avatars from every religious tradition. And, as if to mollify his Godlessness, he states explicitly that his views on morality are entirely in the spirit of Christianity, as well as being consistent with the doctrines and ethical precepts of the sacred books of India (*ibid*, Section 68). Schopenhauer’s idealism is inspired by the Upanishads way before Christ (c. 900-600 BCE); particularly, the view that the universe is double-aspected, having objective and subjective dimensions that are referred to respectively as Brahman and Atman. If not the first, Schopenhauer is the most important link between Eastern wisdom and Western idealism.

Schopenhauer's consciousness includes an upper layer where one’s awareness expands beyond the mixed-up, tension-ridden, bittersweet, conflict ridden, tragicomic, daily life. There is a *soft place*. You get there by treating others as kindly as one treats oneself, by refraining from violence and by taking measures to reduce suffering in the world. To

do that we have to see through the blinding illusion of separate free wills striving against each other, and embrace the ultimate connection between us. It is harder to harm someone we feel connected to. By compassionately recognizing, at a more universal level, that the inner nature of another person is of the same metaphysical substance as oneself, one arrives at a moral outlook with a more concrete philosophical awareness. Like Burke, and Scheler this “sympathy” is more than ordinary compassion. This is not merely understanding abstractly the proposition that “each person is a human being,” It is, rather, to put yourself in their shoes.

I feel sure that I discovered a metaphysics in Schopenhauer, and there can't be metaphysics without a God leg, a freedom leg and an immortality leg. God is there if only by implication, and freedom is essential to Schopenhauer's ascetic-esthetic choices. As for immortality, Schopenhauer likens his unified consciousness to “the Prajna-Paramita of the Buddhists” (*The World as Will and Representation*, Section 71) where this mystical consciousness is an ocean-like calmness, tranquillity, confidence and serenity, “ecstasy,” “rapture,” “illumination” and “union with God.” Sounds like heaven.

FECHNER

(1801-1887)

Gustav Theodor Fechner is one of the most enigmatic thinkers of nineteenth century German philosophy. (Notice, I didn't say German Idealism.) Fechner first studied medicine, and then broadened into other sciences. He was a student of physics and physiology at the University of Leipzig, where his mentor, Ernst Weber was at the forefront of experimental work on the psychology of perception. Eventually, Fechner realized that data deduced from experiments were dots that needed to be connected and induced into a more general hypothesis.

His philosophical thinking was divided into distinct halves. In a sense the conflict within this one philosopher models the broader conflict in all Western philosophy.

On the one hand, Fechner had deep positivist proclivities, with the strictest standards of observation and scientific measurement, which led him to "verificationism," the view that truth can only be verified by scientific experimentation; on the other hand he was a proponent of an early version of phenomenalism which rests on the interaction of subjects and objects, mystified by phenomenology's hallmark deception of perception.

Fechner's piecemeal scientific quest, by itself, could never satisfy his philosophical longing, or ours for that matter. Any scientific explanation of the cosmos inevitably leads to metaphysics, and so it did for Fechner.

Fechner was a secret admirer of the romantic *Naturphilosophie*, of Schelling. Fechner himself stated that his new theory had its roots in Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, where Schelling had developed his own dual aspect theory of the mind and body, according to which the mental and physical, the ideal and the real, are two equal and independent appearances of the absolute.

Fechner's *inductive metaphysics*, rejected the three step synthesis of Fichte and Hegel, which he saw as a wheel of fortune which spins itself out of existence: the wheel mechanically produced each new thesis, and eventually the theory of the wheel itself spawns its own antithesis and replaces itself. Of course, such a refutation also vanishes into its own antithesis and is replaced by a new synthesis. As I pointed out earlier Fichte is virtually irrefutable.

In Fechner's new synthesis there are two ways of observing or knowing the human condition: one internal and the other external. The double aspect view is complimentary to other double aspect theories, such as those of Schelling and Schopenhauer. While the internal

aspect: *self-appearance* is how I appear to myself, external appearance is how *I think I appear to others*. That is a new wrinkle.

In Fechner, there are two distinct kinds of knowledge corresponding to each kind of appearance. We know ourselves as minds immediately, i.e., intuitively or directly and without the need to make an inference; but we know others mediately, i.e., intellectually or indirectly, through inferences we make from certain signs, nested in their actions or words.

(Zend-Avesta, Ueber die Seelenfrage and Elemente der Psychophysik.)

Fechner explains that there is no mind in itself beyond how it appears to itself; and there is no body in itself, apart from and prior to how it appears to others. So the two aspects also divide between the phenomena and the noumena. Fechner would not appreciate the word “divide.” Fechner is concerned with keeping the two aspects together. Fechner tries to avoid being caught between the jaws of dualism and so he calls his dualism “neutral monism,” according to which there is one thing which has two aspects or attributes depending on how it is viewed.

Fechner’s theory is more focused on the broader self consciousness and the interaction of “two aspects.” Other dual aspect theories exclude the possibility of any interaction between the mental and physical appearances precisely because they are such different kinds

of consciousness. Spinoza, for example, forbade any causal interaction between the mental and physical because they were such different kinds of attributes of substance (Spinoza 1677: Pars Prima, Propositio VI & X). Fechner's *Psychophysik* attempts to explain the interaction, in realistic terms that minimize or at least justify any mysticism or metaphysics.

He gets us to accept the fact that nothing exists, originates or acts on the mind without something existing, originating or acting in the body; in other words, everything mental has its inception in the physical organs. You will recall I took the opposite position in the first section of this book, positing that there are no known organs of "introspection", despite all the body parts involved in "ultraspection." Fechner insists that real photons hitting the real eye ball; real sound waves pounding on the real ear drum are all part and parcel of how we think about ourselves.

I would have expected that Fechner, like most medical practitioners would be willing to take account of psychosomatic effects, maybe even go so far as epiphenomenal materialism, allowing the causal interaction between body and mind. Instead Fechner puts his metaphysics right in the physics of each object in nature including the cells of the human body. This is called panpsychism. We are all psychic with *unexplained* powers.

Fechner's panpsychism is just as metaphysical as Schelling's and Hegel's idealism. Whether consciousness precedes the action of life or the other way around doesn't seem to me to make any difference. There is a mystical consciousness; locating it in front or behind physical perception seems to me to be applying the spatial rules of the *rock* reality to the spaceless reality of the *soft place*. All of these mind matter, metaphysical connections fall apart when we try to put them in a test tube.

Fechner's panpsychism extends to the planets, and indeed the cosmos as a whole, which he says are also psychic or mental. This might have inspired Eugene Wigner's "Friend Theory" mentioned earlier..

I learned after I had written this chapter once or twice that Fechner's panpsychism originated from a mystical experience which came while he was recovering from a mental breakdown. That got me wondering if this wasn't all just crazy talk. He developed a third eye after his break down. He recalls the very moment on the 5th of October 1843, when he walked into the garden of his house to look at the plants and flowers; suddenly the whole world appeared alive to him; it seemed for the first time to reveal itself to him. The flowers were all illuminated, as if from within. The light they shed seemed to come from their very souls. From that moment on, Fechner made it his mission to be true to that experience, to

capture its meaning in philosophical prose (*Nanna* and *Zend-Avesta*).

Mystical experience aside, Fechner insists that his panpsychism is based on the best natural science. While he did not claim certainty or finality for his doctrine, he still maintained that it was the most “likely story” given the latest findings of empirical research. Niels Bohr would agree with that approach.

Fechner writes that one of the the main purposes of his work is to show how plants are part of a world ensouled by God (*Nanna*: xiii). Fechner insists that the question of the soul of plants can and should be scientifically investigated on its own, apart from any general metaphysics; he asks: what evidence do we have for the common view that only humans and animals have souls, but not plants? Fechner makes it his business to argue that all the reasons for ascribing souls to animals also hold for plants (*Nanna*: 7). The most common reason for denying souls to plants, Fechner notes, is that they do not have a central nervous system. If one destroys the nerves of a human or animal, they show no signs of life. It therefore seems that plants cannot a have a soul because they have no nervous system. But here Fechner raises an interesting question: are nerves the only possible organs to produce sensation? Nature has many means to the same end, and we should not assume that there is only one way to produce sensation. The fibers of plants could perform the same function as nerves.

Another common reason for denying souls to plants is that they are sessile, i.e. not motile, capable of locomotion; plants apparently cannot change their position, as humans and animals do (*Nanna*: 41, 71). But plants do move; it's just that they move vertically rather than horizontally. Discounting the movements of plants as involuntary, is not fair play. The movements of humans and animals are subject to physical necessity which overrides voluntary movement. The mere necessity of an action—its explicability according to mechanical causes—may have nothing to do with its inner mentality. (*Nanna*: 79). That applies to all living things: humans, animals and plants.

All belief in the existence of other minds, Fechner reminds us, is based on analogy. We assume that other humans have minds because their speech and actions are like our own; and we infer that animals have minds because, in crucial respects, their actions are like our own. But we must be careful with analogy, Fechner warns. The very nature of analogy means that they are like us in some respects but unlike us in others. Similar does not mean identical.

Fechner's natural religion was decidedly not Christianity. His insistence that the mental be embodied in the physical instead of having a transcendental dimension, and his fusion of God and nature, all depart drastically from Christian dogma. Still, Fechner was sympathetic

to Christianity, the faith of his family, and so he suggest that his philosophy was a Fichtean synthesis of Christianity and paganism. In this new synthesis faith can be supported by the best science.

Because the earth has a body much like our own, we are justified, on the basis of analogy, to assume that it has a soul much like our own. If we regard freedom as a necessary characteristic of the soul, we should also attribute it to the earth, which is an even more self-sufficient and independent being.

Fechner conceives the soul of the earth as present within all individual souls. This leads to a single common consciousness in all individual consciousness, which explains how mutual understanding and communication are possible. Although we are independent and self-sufficient with respect to one another, we connect with respect to the higher mind. That I know myself and only myself, and that you know yourself and only yourself, does not prevent the higher spirit from knowing both of us, and us knowing the higher spirit. The separation between consciousnesses is illusory. That is an extraordinary view of what I have been calling universal consciousness.

Fechner says that God in the narrow sense, i.e., God as a single solitary pure spirit, is only an abstraction. God's spirit does not stand outside the material world but expresses itself in and through it (remember Spinoza's God).

Once again it's anyone's guess as to where and how the infinite mind of the divine works. Fechner's panpsychism is in the conga line mainly because it lends physicality to my 'inner teacher.'

KIERKEGAARD

(1813-1855)

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard is a Danish philosopher, father of extreme fidelism and what has been called theological voluntarism. If his chiding zeal and passion were cloaked in any priestly vestments, he would be out of place in our conga line. Kierkegaard styled himself as a religious poet, the religion being a very serious strain of Lutheran pietism which is weighed down by sin, guilt, and suffering. Crucial to all pietism is the realization that over against God, we are always in the wrong. That is, we must realize that we are always in sin and have to beg forgiveness from the punishing God. Spinoza and Xenophanes would see this anthropomorphic error as the savage drawing a picture of God as a savage. Defining God is not something we mortals can do, and I think on some level Kierkegaard knew that. In spite of his passionate sermonizing, he is in the end a philosopher.

Kierkegaard was particularly enamored of Plato's dialogue *Meno* where Socrates asks how we come to know anything. Kierkegaard believes that the only teacher of that pre-existing soul is God. (Philosophical Fragments -1844). Kierkegaard could not have believed in traditional protestant determinism and at the same time extol the spiritual value of individual responsibility. Kierkegaard's 'lift off' can only be accomplished by free will which is why I invited him to the conga line. Kierkegaard is a

Christian revivalist but his assertion is that Christian faith can only be accomplished by individual subjective passion, without any managing clergy. Kierkegaard would agree with our notion that finding God in yourself cannot be accomplished by regurgitating dogma, or mumbling and fumbling with rosary beads. It is something you have to do by yourself for yourself, like self-inflation and, more importantly, re-inflation. Kierkegaard would approve of my frequent chats with my inner teacher, which he calls “re-avowal.”

Kierkegaard is known as the “father of existentialism,” which is thought to be a godless, intellectual, humanism, but here, the mundane existentialism is inflated and floats upward. What makes it existentialism is that “choice” is distinguished from “choosing.” You don’t just choose to get anointed; you have to keep on choosing to anoint yourself frequently and constantly. Kierkegaard’s existential re-avowal is his most important contribution to the conga line. Without persistent re-avowal and pruning, the perennial weed, “angst” will choke off the garden. Kierkegaard’s “angst” could be another name for the self doubt which we described as the ‘drag’ on buoyancy.

Elsewhere we mentioned original sin and how it found its way into Catholic dogma; Kierkegaard’s “angst” seems to be such a built in defect in the human condition. But we do have a choice in how to deal with “angst.” If “angst” is a pit, it is one we can climb out of. The way

out is passionate faith, constantly re-avowed. Salvation is not predetermined, it is up to each of us individually. As with original sin suggested by Augustine, or inevitable suffering suggested by Buddha, or human fallibility posited by Plato, the pre-existence of Kierkegaard's "angst," did not seem fair to me at first. Then I realized that there always was and always will be a pit from which we are challenged to arise. That's why we're here. Kierkegaard makes a significant addition to that insight. More than anyone Kierkegaard sees that faith is not a single leap but a continuous climb.

Like so many in the conga line Kierkegaard tried to trip up Fichte's three step tango. He felt that the mechanical spin of historical progress is inconsistent with the free choice we need to make sense of the game of life. Kierkegaard believes freedom must escape the limited cycle of events. But I would ask, am I not free to renounce freedom. And Kierkegaard would turn my paradox on itself. He would point out that Christian belief is full of paradoxes which are offensive to reason. This Kierkegaard philosophical paradox hop is essential, to my 'lift off' the reason runway. If we choose faith we must suspend our reason in order to believe in something higher than reason. The freedom node of the Kierkegaard metaphysical triad depends on the absurdity of the human condition, which creates the elbow room for free will to believe.

Kierkegaard's philosophical jiu-jitsu threw heavyweights like Hume to the mat. Hume's rationality declares religious events, like incarnation "absurd." Instead of resisting the thrust of Hume's rational attack, Kierkegaard turns it back on itself. He says that we believe *by virtue of the absurd*. The absurdity of Jesus dying on the cross for our sins, for Kierkegaard, is simply another opportunity for a leap of faith. That connection Kierkegaard made between absurdity and faith, is unique. Now I don't need to bother arguing the absurdity of whether Christ was born of a virgin, died on the cross, rose from the dead; I don't need to prove or disprove how many apostles were at the last supper or was it lunch? My leap of faith to Christ as the divinity in humanity and the humanity in divinity is as hopeful as it is absurd. Who could have suspected that absurdity would add such a bounce to my buoyancy which makes my leap of faith easier to repeat continuously.

Kierkegaard says one's very selfhood depends upon the smoothness of these repetitive leaps. Each leap reestablishes the self; each leap "is a relation which relates itself to itself" (*The Sickness Unto Death*). But unless this self acknowledges the "power which constituted it," it falls into a despair which undoes its selfhood. Therefore, in order to maintain itself in tact, the self must value itself, and it does this by constantly renewing its faith in "the power which posited it." This idea should be treasured as the master key to re-

inflation without which there would be no buoyancy and I would not be afloat here, rejoicing in cognitive consonance with this great high floater.

Kierkegaard's glorification of the absurd subsequently became an important tool for twentieth century existentialists, though usually stripped of its spiritual application. Kierkegaard influenced a broad range of modern philosophers including, Dostoyevsky, Wittgenstein, William James, Bergson, Schopenhauer, not to mention, amateur philosophers like me.

EMERSON

(1803-1882)

Born in Boston Massachusetts, Ralph Waldo Emerson is the key figure of the New England Enlightenment which triggered the American Transcendental movement. Apparently the time was right for an end run around traditional puritan pietism. Emerson's belief that church isn't the only place to find God found an ear with his contemporaries some of whom are in our conga line.

There was a need in Emerson's time, as there is in ours, to make divinity much more accessible. There was no media so you had to find a pulpit outside the church and you had to make sense, because reason had already demonstrated its power over nature. Emerson just happened to do all that and more.

His pulpit was a second story balcony just below Beacon Hill, from which his simple words, powered by an extraordinary charisma, boomed across the Boston Commons to the waiting ears of the Boston commoners. While we have an ample record of Emerson's words we can only guess at his tone of voice and the charisma, which seemed to captivate young and old, rich and poor alike in more than 1,500 public lectures across the United States. According to Wikipedia, he charged between \$10 and \$50 for each appearance, bringing him as much as \$2,000 in a typical winter lecture season. His earnings allowed him to expand his

property, around Walden Pond, made famous by his disciple and friend Henry David Thoreau.

The same elegant insights he bellowed at the Boston Commoners became more of a Socratic dialectic with the Boston uncommoners, at the "Saturday club." The Saturday club met the last Saturday of each month just down the street from the Boston Commons, at the Parker House, where you can still sit and have a Parker House roll with your coffee. Can you just imagine overhearing the arguments at the next table between Oliver Wendell Holmes, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Louis Agassiz, all reacting to Emerson's far out ideas. Or better yet, imagine yourself in 1858, hiking behind this same group around the Follensbee Pond in the Adirondack wilderness. Unless you were psychic, you would never have guessed, back then in the mid nineteenth century, that these colliding collusions would spark the American enlightenment aka the New England Enlightenment.

Emerson's epic poem "The Adirondacks" is a poetic journal of the day to day adventures of this non-congregation of rugged individualists who somehow roughed it together for two weeks and somehow turned the inside out. For Emerson this was the inspiration for his essay "Nature." I am warmed by the suggestion in that essay that God is in all things, including me.

According to some scholars Emerson's pantheism may be pan-deism, which is the same as pantheism in one respect but quite different in another. Pan-deism suggests that the God of pantheism may no longer exist. That God set every thing in motion and leaves the rest to humankind. I'm not ready to go that far; I need to think that God is still with us. And that may account for my resistance to the scholars who place Emerson in the pan-deism camp, where God is on vacation.

Certainly Emerson believed that God set everything off, and certainly Emerson would agree that God left a lot for us to do, but he also believed that the 'still, small voice,' within us is Christ. Emerson's idea that we carry Christ within is what offended dogmatic Catholic authorities, who should have consulted Saint Augustine's "inner teacher" before condemning Emerson. I don't see how Emerson's 'still, small voice' could have come from the absent God of pan-deism.

As crazy as it sounds, I feel as though I met Emerson personally. I feel I heard Emerson in the deep baritone voice of my mentor, Henry Geiger, back in the sixties, sitting around the wood burning stove that took the chill out of the hill above Malibu beach, where MANAS was written and published. Henry was always available to me to connect all the hippy idealism of the sixties to Pico Della Mirandola, or the New England Enlightenment or the ancient Greeks. [I mentioned Henry Geiger

and MANAS earlier in my discussion of synchronicity and Maslow.]

Henry's voice had all the charisma I imagined in Emerson's. Our fire side chats were watched over by a portrait of Ralph Waldo Emerson just above Henry's chair on the other side of the wood burning stove. Except for the floppy shirt collar and the copious cravat, you would swear it was Henry's portrait just above the high back chair. The two faces were almost identical. Whether Henry set the scene intentionally, or whether Emerson did, the two faces matched and melded before your eyes and you would swear Henry was channeling Emerson. Before becoming an anonymous Rosicrucian philosopher and publisher, Henry had been an actor with Helen Hayes in the traveling tent shows that made their way across the west in the roaring twenties. Now he was Emerson. The suspension of disbelief left me with a life long memory of having sat at the feet of Emerson. I felt like a member of that "Saturday Club."

Henry read to me Emerson's "Self Reliance," which contains the central belief of his spiritual teachings:

"I have taught one doctrine, namely, the infinitude of the private man.... This rational leap established, the ability for mankind to realize almost anything, including the relationship between the soul and the surrounding world."

The torch of spiritual self consciousness was lit by Socrates and passed on through generations of anonymous and famous philosophers. It makes life a journey in which we continually discover and expand our self awareness.

Emerson made a careful study of the German enlightenment and Eastern thought, which were not widely known in America in those days. The central message Emerson drew from his Asian studies was that: "the purpose of life was spiritual transformation and direct experience of divine power, here and now on earth." This is what I have been referring to as self ASCENSION.

It would be misleading to suggest that Emerson was merely re-packaging Eastern philosophy. He is considered around the world to be an **American** intellectual. His speech, entitled "The American Scholar" in 1837, was dubbed America's "intellectual Declaration of Independence" by none other than Oliver Wendell Holmes.

The most important contribution Emerson makes to our conga line is his "Oversoul," which both defines and illustrates the idea of synchronicity, or as I call it, cognitive consonance. Below I have listed some key concepts in our belief system in bold body text, followed by resonant excerpts from Emerson's '*Oversoul*' in italics:

Wisdom is not anyone's intellectual property:

"The mind is one, and the best minds, who love truth for its own sake, think much less of property in truth. They accept it thankfully everywhere, and do not label or stamp it with any man's name, for it is theirs long beforehand, and from eternity.

If we didn't start out in a pit of ignorance there would be no point to free will self inflation:

What is the universal sense of want and ignorance, but the fine innuendo by which the soul makes its enormous claim?"

Will and focused consciousness are the thumb and forefinger of the soul:

When it breathes through his intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue; when it flows through his affection, it is love... The soul circumscribes all things.

We can't define God but that doesn't mean He can't find us.

"When we have broken our god of tradition, and ceased from our god of rhetoric, then may God fire the heart with his presence."

Cognitive resonance is a communication thrill because it implicates universal consciousness which is divine:

"A thrill passes through all men at the reception of new truth, ... all sincere conversation is worship, ...In all conversation between two persons, tacit reference is made, as to a third party, to a common nature. That third party or common nature is not social; it is impersonal; it is God...For this communication is an influx of the

Divine mind into our mind. It is an ebb of the individual rivulet before the flowing surges of the sea of life. Every distinct apprehension of this central commandment agitates men with awe and delight.

Metaphysics is the unification of the multiple:

“We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but ...man will come to see...the universe is represented in an atom... He will weave no longer a spotted life of shreds and patches, but he will live with a divine unity.”

Libraries are thought coffins where the truth is resurrected:

"Consider what you have in the smallest chosen library. A company of the wisest and wittiest men that could be picked out of all civil countries, in a thousand years, have set in best order the results of their learning and wisdom.”

Consciousness can't tell time:

“The spirit sports with time...We are often made to feel that there is another youth and age than that which is measured from the year of our natural birth. Some thoughts always find us young, and keep us so. Such a thought is the love of the universal and eternal beauty.”

Spacetime is perception deception:

“...The influence of the senses has, in most men, overpowered the mind to that degree, that the walls of time and space have come to look real and insurmountable... Yet time and space are but inverse measures of the force of the soul.

Paradox puddle is a wordpool:

“An answer in words is delusive; it is really no answer to the questions you ask.”

There is no organ of introspection:

“The soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is not a function, like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty, but a light; is not the intellect or the will, but the master of the intellect and the will; is the background of our being, in which they lie,--an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed.”

Self inflation begins with re-discovering and loving your self :

“It is the doubling of the heart itself, nay, the infinite enlargement of the heart with a power of growth to a new infinity on every side...the man expands there where he works,... With each divine impulse the mind rends the thin rinds of the visible and finite, and comes out into eternity, and inspires and expires its air.

Some of Emerson’s critics find his word more of an exhortation than a philosophy. However the words are characterized, I find his insights in “Oversoul” to be some of the most important neoplatonism of the modern era. The statement below, taken from his “Oversoul” demonstrates that the infinite does not lend itself to definition but that we will know it when we get there.

“Do not require a description of the countries towards which you sail. The description

does not describe them to you, and tomorrow you arrive there, and know them by inhabiting them.... and may in that thought easily dismiss all particular uncertainties and fears.

JAMES

(1842-1910)

Born in New York City, William James was the oldest of the five children of theologian Henry James, Senior. The family history deserves a line or two here. William's maternal grandfather was also a theologian. The entire family was involved with Emerson and Carlyle but Papa Henry James was deeply absorbed in the teachings of Swedenborg, the proponent of a mystical Christian belief system that sought to explode 'selfism' into a broader pantheistic naturalism. His respect for Emerson was passed on to his son William James. I don't mean to suggest here that William was just a chip off the old block, quite the opposite. Despite being surrounded by such powerful theology, somehow William James was able to think for himself.

Henry James, Jr., the renowned writer of fiction is William's younger brother, who also thought for himself. This was a remarkable family steeped in theology, but somehow undogmatic enough to encourage at least two world class individual thinkers. It has been said that, while Henry James wrote fiction with the depth of philosophy, his older brother, William, wrote philosophy with the grip of fiction.

It was not until 1879, that James began teaching philosophy at Harvard. James studied chemistry and then physiology, prior to his entering Harvard's Medical School in 1863. For

all his science, James was a member of the Metaphysical Club, which included Oliver Wendell Holmes, who had been a member of Emerson's 'Saturday Club' and who also taught at Harvard. And apparently, the Metaphysical Club also included Charles Sanders Peirce, a philosopher of science, who would become the founder of American pragmatism.

James found metaphysical dualism unacceptable; however, his monism replacement does not exclude the possibility of a *soft place* beyond the *rock*, depending on how you define "beyond." James' so called "monism" does not eliminate spiritualism from materialism. It simply smoothes out the wrinkles between the two.

James is equally bothered by the separation between mind and matter and so his "neutral monism," posits one fundamental "stuff" that is neither material nor mental. (*Essays in Radical Empiricism* - 1912). This merger of substance and non-substance lead James to de-materialize ideas so that there are no property lines or property rights connected with ideas, and therefore no one owns ideas. This might have come from Emerson, or might be where Emerson got the idea, which doesn't matter since based on the import of the idea, neither could or would lay claim to it, or any other idea.

William James was almost omitted from the conga line because of a misleading label

attached to his philosophy, ‘pragmatism.’ I confused pragmatism with empiricism which is antithetical to idealism. But James’s pragmatism is transcendental. Transcendental pragmatism sounds like an oxymoron, but James sees them as two thought streams that flow into a metaphysical sea which surrounds the islands of individual consciousnesses (Memoirs and Studies, p204). James’ description of the stream of thought as neither mental nor material, anticipates not only his own “radical empiricism,” but Husserl’s phenomenology.

In “*The Stream of Thought*” James offers a very different account of the flow of ‘experience’ than those of traditional empiricists such as Hume. Like Heraclitus and Bergson, the consciousness described by James’ “radical empiricism” is a flowing stream rather than a chain of ideas. Our individual consciousness—or, as he prefers to call it, our “sciousness,” is a tributary that joins the broader river of
“con-scioussness.”

The separation of ‘con’ and ‘scious’ is not only clever but also meaningful. Once again the wonder of cognitive consonance pushes me to yet another side step. A couple of years before I saw the ‘con-sciousness’ word play in James, I had already written a small book Saltafide (available on saltafide.com) wherein a chapter heading, ‘Consciousness’ has the prefix ‘con’ colored differently from the route ‘sciousness’ to set it apart. I thought that was

my own idea, but now, I'm slowly coming to the realization that ideas are not owned.

James' pragmatism is a "whatever works" philosophy, which includes spiritual beliefs and metaphysics. Interpretations of James' pragmatism as atheistic are incorrect. James may have eschewed the remote punishing God of the puritan pietists, but James wanted a God that works for the day to day spiritual needs of the individual. He felt that any pragmatism that falsified the notion of God which has worked for so many, for so long, would not be pragmatic at all. This kind of pragmatism is hard to distinguish from the idealism which underlies universal consciousness.

Emerson (and Plato) would insist that any idea of universal consciousness must include a divine consciousness. James might balk at codifying that idea as dogma, but would certainly allow it as a belief.

The only thing James was adamant about is adamance; nothing and no-one should preclude whatever sublime belief raises the consciousness of the individual. This comports with our Wittgenstein 'antithesis antidote.' As we have already seen, solidifying the notion of refutation creates an iceberg temporarily blocking the flow in the philosophical river; the operative word here is "temporarily" since such blockage always melts away allowing the flow to continue. I can't resist mixing metaphors here. I

must add that adamant refuters turn the dance into a wrestling match instead of a conga line.

James' naturalism comports with Spinoza's "infinity of absolutes," and Fechner's "panpsychism." James would agree entirely with our bridge between physics and metaphysics. The James "stuff" would necessarily be beyond spacetime where it would resonate with Plato, Protagoras, Descartes, Heraclitus, Kant, Bergson and just about everyone in the conga line.

James reaches across the conga line to make his own connections. In "What Pragmatism Means" (1907), James connects himself to Schiller in our conga line. He discovers a theory of how new ideas attach themselves to existing belief systems.

New ideas are like logo pieces in that they must attach without affecting the pre-existing structure of the belief system. No matter how radically different they may appear, the new idea must leave the overall structure of the belief system in tact. This is why eternal verities persevere. This is another way of saying that all new ideas are simply elaborations of the eternal verities. So why bother expounding new ideas at all? The answer comes in the form of another question. Why bother with neoPlatonism, if Platonism had already occurred? Why bother writing Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, if we already had the Fourth Symphony? If we know

about atoms why bother discovering sub atomic particles, and where will that lead next?

Even though he was America's most distinguished scientist/philosopher, James could not have known about the EPR paradox (Einstein, Podolsky, Rosen), or Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty, or Schrodinger's superstate. Yet, James knew somehow that the physics runway had to have a metaphysical lift off point. James looks at faith and reason as different levels of consciousness. He points out that in science, we can afford to await the outcome of investigation before coming to a belief, but in our mystical pursuits we must come to some belief even if all the relevant evidence is not in. This makes faith a leap rather than a step in the right direction. James says "a fact cannot come at all unless a preliminary faith exists in its coming."

James wrote and lectured extensively all over the world, which some scholars feel was essential to establishing pragmatism as a worldwide philosophical movement. Scholars also credit James, in this same period, with the establishment of 'personal religion'. Somehow James had no trouble maintaining his balance with one foot in each camp. His Gifford Lectures, which he delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1901-02 were published as *The Varieties of Religious Experience* in 1902 which, for me, is the most unique blending of science and religion, and the closest philosophy comes to useful everyday wisdom.

By now you can understand the importance of the first word “Varieties” in the title of this most important work. Variety is essential to James’s interest in the inner lives of others. Other writers, like Tolstoy, who share the wonder of the “mysterious ebbs and flows” of thought, led James to a prolonged study of human religious experience. For James, “religious experience” abides **not** in religious institutions, or rituals, but in “the feelings, and acts, of individuals in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.”

James would approve of my talking to myself and my inner teacher. James calls this worship in the inner sanctum “healthy-mindedness” as opposed to a morbid “old hell-fire theology.” That is not to say that James would shut down all churches. Despite the fact that he would not join any Christian congregation, James cites liberal Christians as an example of the happy spirit, just as he applauds the “mind-cure movement” of Mary Baker Eddy.

In the chapter on “*The Divided Self, and the Process of Its Unification*” and the chapter on “*Conversion*,” James discusses St. Augustine, Tolstoy, and a range of popular evangelists, focusing on what he calls “the state of assurance.” Central to this state is: “the loss of all the worry, the sense that all is ultimately well....”

The *Varieties*' classic chapter on "Mysticism" offers "four marks" which make any belief mystical. The first is 'ineffability.' You have to be there to see it for yourself. In James's words: "... it defies expression...its quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others."

Second is a 'noetic quality': mystical states present themselves as states of knowledge which are revealed rather than constructed from experience.

Thirdly, mystical states are transient; you can't rely on them remaining for any length of time, or even coming when they are called.

The fourth mark is passivity; subjects cannot control the coming and going of mystical experiences. They seem to come to you; you can't go to them.

I have trouble with the third and fourth marks which seem to be saying the same thing. I like to think that my inner teacher is there at my beck and call, not transient or elusive at all.

James ends the chapter by suggesting that these states are "windows" through which the mind looks out upon a more extensive and inclusive world. So maybe my window is more reflective and less transparent.

James' pragmatism admits of a *soft place*, and one where there might be some dancing going on. James's survey of that consciousness just beyond reason finds a "blank rhythm." Some forgotten verse somehow leaves behind a blank rhythm, restlessly dancing in one's mind, striving to be filled out with words.

I apply this to my struggle to recall "Coco Walk." Let us both now use that very rhythm to recall that 'blank rhythm' back in the AWK WORD chapter on forgetting and remembering. As I pointed out in the "Coco Walk" story, rhythm connects to rhyme for the 'rhyme and rhythm' of mnemonics.

I should also add that I find rhythm is at the basis of the connection between the plan and the willed act, especially in performances, whether they be athletic or esthetic. I think the old song "I got Rhythm" became a jazz anthem not only because of its harmonic structure, but also because of its allusion to rhythm as a recall tool. All Jazz artists have in their repertoire so called "rhythm changes." This may be too far out for James, but maybe not.

Remarkably, James had no trouble maintaining his status as a bonafide empiricist while he embraced metaphysics. At that time not too many earned their living at Harvard, or anywhere else, as both a psychologist and a philosopher.

In *Pragmatism*, James subsumes the religious within the pragmatic world, however, in *A Pluralistic Universe* he puts the religious back up on a superior layer. Like the others we have already talked about, James was critical of the “vicious intellectualism” of Hegel but he goes on to embrace the idealist philosophers Gustav Fechner and Henri Bergson. [One we have already met and one we shall meet just ahead]. He praises Fechner for holding that “the whole universe in its different spans and wave-lengths, exclusions and developments, is everywhere alive and conscious.” This may be Christian mysticism which came down to him from his father. He seems to embrace Fechner’s panpsychism idea that separate human, animal and vegetable consciousnesses merge in a “consciousness of still wider scope.”

Natural human definitions of the supernatural metaphysical God node are bound to be hazy at best. James makes no effort at a precise definition. For James God is a natural human response to the universe. Independent of any proof that God exists, God will always be the “centre of gravity of all attempts to solve the riddle of life.”

James advocates “theism” but calls it “an ultimate opacity in things, a dimension of being which escapes our theoretic control.” James takes apart the traditional arguments for God: the cosmological argument, the argument from design, the moral argument, and the argument from popular consensus and shows the flaws in

each, but allows God in any form into any heart, however it happens.

James denies the Hegelian notion of God as an all-encompassing absolute. Instead he compares God to a master chess player engaged in a give-and-take with us novices. We are free to make our own moves; yet the master knows all the moves we could possibly make.

In "*Reflex Action and Theism*," James goes on to describe a personal God with whom we can maintain interpersonal relations, who possesses a much greater power but is not necessarily omnipotent, and has a fine mind, but is not necessarily omniscient.

In "*Is Life Worth Living?*" James even suggests that God gets off on our adulation; James actually said that God may derive strength and energy from collaborating with our faith. In other words, God needs us as much as we need him. James would agree with Bergson's needy God who bestowed creativity on humans just so that He would have someone to share beauty with.

There are not too many other takers in the conga line who would go along with this mini God. Plato, Xenophanes and Spinoza, would roll over in their graves. It's as though in order to keep the divine falcon on his padded forearm, James clipped its wings. While this makes God much more approachable, it also makes God less divine, and leaves the upper

slot open for another ultimate divinity in the control room. Here we go defining God again.

What James calls God is more like a guardian angel who must be accountable to another superior God. In order to have a God with limited powers, there has to be another God to manage the limitations and provide a limitless backdrop for those limits.

I'm not totally rejecting the James inner mini- God, because it does resonate with my inner teacher. What I like about this James mini God is its availability to our daily experiences and thoughts. My inner coach might just be the same as the James /Bergson mini-God. Still, my inner teacher, my coach God would have to answer to God the umpire, the final judge in the game of life. I mentioned earlier that I may need to return to some improved form of Gnostic and/or Manichaeism heresies; James and Bergson might need to do the same. Either that or we all admit that we don't know what we're talking about when we describe God. James so much as said that with his "ineffability" but then goes on to describe his mini-God. In the middle of the confusion, while writing this very page, my inner teacher whispered his own name and rank: Christ, son of God. If that sounds incredible, where else could I have gotten that ideal. I almost forgot the Jesus story, until that popped into my head.

Jesus, *son* of God, may just be what James was looking for to occupy that sub-layer of

divinity. Or, if you don't like the filial analogy, or the holy trinity, we could think of Jesus as God's ambassador to humanity. This provides us with a mini-God who is down on the *rock* with us enough to suffer all the bumps and pitfalls but high enough to connect us to an upper God who invented the *rock* and the game of life. I'll stop there in my efforts to explain God, which like all explanations of God is only a best guess. James deliberately defines "religion" broadly as the experiences of human individuals insofar as they see themselves related to whatever they regard as divine. James' religion does not require a monotheistic God, or a congregation. You are free to believe or not in whatever you discover to be God.

James draws three conclusions regarding religious beliefs: (1) that our sensible world is part of and derives its significance from a greater spiritual order, (2) that our purpose is fulfilled by achieving harmonious union with it, and (3) that prayer and spiritual communion are efficacious. This resonates with the coaching I get from my inner teacher.

James joins our non church worshipers in that he suggests that organized religions, more often than not, produce a "sick soul," with a "divided self" who is morbidly pessimistic, unlike the optimistic and joyful whole, holy spirits who find God for themselves.

James develops lengthy analyses of religious conversion, beatification, and

mysticism. In addition he examines philosophical “over-beliefs” regarding the divine. James finds that two psychological qualities in believers enhance their non spiritual lives: (1) an energetic zest for living, and (2) a sense of security, love, and peace.

Because he felt strongly that the good society thrives on a plurality of outlooks, James demands tolerance, respect, and even indulgence for those whom we see harmlessly opposed to our view and happy in their own ways, however misguided that may seem. Since the whole of truth is not revealed to any single human, each of us is entitled to our own personal revelations. This good advice is found in his essay, “*On a Certain Blindness.*”

I can believe in my inner Christ and at the same time understand that I need not, cannot and should not define God for everyone else. All I can do is analyze and endorse the good effect it has on human thought, and that thought on human behavior, which is what I’m doing. Why me?

We all know something; no one knows everything. You have to talk about it before you know what you’re talking about. And now we can belong to either live or virtual discussions.

James believes that as gregarious beings we belong to groups where we perform whatever duty membership requires, with the underlying faith that the other members will do

their part as well. Faith always precedes action. A government, an army, a commercial system, a ship, a college, an athletic team, all exist on this faithful pre-condition, without which nothing is even attempted. This is how we have come to establish family structures and civic mindedness, and how we came to deplore racism and violence and tyranny and move to eliminate them and create the balanced peaceful society, which James calls social equilibrium.

However, James holds that there is “nothing final in any equilibrium of human ideals.” The fact that present laws and customs appear to be progress over earlier less civilized epochs does not guarantee that that progress will continue automatically. Take heed, there is no guarantee of a happy ending. It’s up to us. There is no Hegelian wheel of fortune systematically churning out human progress. Progress is up to the individual choices made by each and every one of us. Some are more sure of themselves than others and they can and do influence our choices.

In “*Great Men and Their Environment*” James offers a view of community forces which select and develop great individuals. In turn, that social environment which spawns these leaders is also affected by them for better or worse. Socially significant individuals and their communities have a dynamic, correlative relationship. James’s heroes include Wordsworth, Shelley, Emerson, and Whitman,

all of whom have a sense of the “limitless significance in natural things.”

In a follow-up article, “*The Importance of Individuals*,” he maintains that agents of social change, beyond being gifted in some way(s), tend to take greater advantage of given circumstances than more ordinary persons do. Without his knowing it James was hero to many and his influence is vast. James’s enigmatic juxtaposition of “radical empiricism” and his seemingly metaphysical “pure experience” leaves us with a wish bone with one leg connected to Charles Peirce’s American pragmatism and the other connected to the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (particularly the notions “fringe” and “halo.”) Wittgenstein and Russell both acknowledge their debt to James. Russell observed in his obituary, (*The Nation* (3 September 1910: 793-4) that James’s unique vision became so powerful because of its author’s remarkable “tolerance and ... humanity.”

The Gifford Lectures mentioned earlier also included his colleague Josiah Royce, who we shall meet next. James set himself against the absolute idealism of Royce. James was Royce’s relentless philosophical antagonist, which did not keep James from recommending Royce as his replacement when James took a one-year sabbatical from his post at Harvard.

ROYCE

(1855-1916)

In 1882, Josiah Royce was recommended by William James to fill his position at Harvard, while James was on leave. Royce accepted the position at half of James's salary and later became a permanent member of the most distinguished philosophy faculty in America, if not the world. Royce continued to teach philosophy at Harvard for thirty years.

Josiah Royce was the leading American proponent of absolute idealism. Like Plato, Hegel and the German idealists, Royce secures a place for the finite individual in the infinite universe. Royce is important because of the American twist he provided to idealism. (I am assuming that America continues to be the Mecca of political freedom and democracy.) The all American Royce twist I am referring to has to do with combining the two most unique elements of the human condition: self consciousnesses and gregariousness. The result is the sanctification of communication and community, which is so essential to the ideal of political freedom and democracy and so lacking in the practical application.

In his thirty years at Harvard, Royce inspired some of his students to become world class authors and thinkers such as: T.S. Eliot, Santayana, W.E.B. Dubois, Norbert Wiener, and C.I. Lewis.

Royce's famous tug-o-war with his Harvard sponsor, William James, known as "The Battle of the Absolute," deeply influenced the philosophy at both ends of the tug line. James' relativism became a bit more absolute when it comes to the sublime, and Royce's absolutism became a bit more pragmatic, in the sense of how it functions in and for the community. So much so that Royce's 'absolute mind' came to be called 'absolute pragmatism', and James' 'radical empiricism' came to be known as 'transcendental pragmatism.'

I never heard of Royce when I wrote about communication back in the eighties and nineties. If you were to read Royce and then my obscure books, you would charge me with plagiarism but informed as we are by the conga line, we now should understand that there are no such things as original ideas, not for humans anyway.

[The books of mine that I'm referring to are: Communication the Living End , Philosophical Library NY-1988, and Castle of Consciousness, Fingerprint Press, Rochester, NY- 1994, which may still be available on the web site saltafide.com and on Amazon depending on what happened to democracy between my writing and your reading.]

Back in the day, when 'information technology' began, I had no formal credentials but neither did anyone else. There was still no such thing as a "computer science" department in any major university. In the fifties, I had learned a little bit about both social science and neuroscience at the University of Michigan, and

of course, I knew a little bit about philosophy, particularly about Emerson and James, thanks to my mentor Henry Geiger. My writing was confined to mass media, with dissatisfaction at both ends of the commissions.

Then suddenly the information age rained down upon me and I was afloat on a new voyage of discovery. Giddy with anticipation, I found myself involved in a technotopian hypothesis we called ‘communication theory,’ shared by a hand full of early Bitnet (Arpanet) geeks and film makers experimenting with the new electronic image. Networking quickly caught on. Communication theory never caught on and I never became famous, which was good for me and good for this new virtual audience, where there were no starring rolls only ‘bit’ parts, (pun intended). ‘Sharing’ ideas was the order of the day. Information was free to all. The legal suffix ‘not for profit’ became a motto for a brand new crop of organizations, including one I founded, with the settlement from a Hollywood studio I sued. I called it the American Video Institute- AVI- where video pilgrims and computer geeks could work together to break the trance of the electronic screen and make it the window of a new awakening.

I was allowed onto the podiums of higher education without credential, because the information age was too new to have a bureaucracy. Along the way, I learned something about semiotics. Semiotics seemed

to resonate with my communication theory, but I never dug very deep. I'm telling you all this because, without my knowing it, a half century earlier, Royce foresaw this semiotic revolution we call the information age.

Royce characterizes reality as a universe of ideas and/or signs interpreted by an infinite virtual community of minds. Royce's correspondence theory of knowledge (inspired by Kant's transcendental speculations) deals with the inevitable errors in human judgment. Ever since Plato, we have known that finite minds err. And ever since Plato, we have known that in order for the error to be an error, there has to be an ultimate backdrop of truth which, ipso facto, would have to be true all the time and everywhere. Such a backdrop of truth has to be divine. How can we know that such a truth exists and not know anymore about it? Royce wondered how the same limited mind could have aberrant views of matter and at the same time access to absolute truth to falsify and sometimes correct them.

Royce considered all the available philosophical answers to that important question and found them all inadequate. There is a gap between the idea of an innate a-priori absolute knowledge, and our fallible, deceptive perceptions and conceptions. Royce's unique contribution to collective consciousness lies in his discovery of the source of the Heraclitan river and the metaphorical "confluence" of all

the tributaries that merge and part and merge again downstream from the super-mind.

Royce endeavored to extend and complete critical rationalism in his explanation of the “*fourth conception of being*” detailed in The World and the Individual, where he provides an exquisite metaphysical connection between reality, community and consciousness. The every day self consciousness is but a fragment of this Absolute Mind which beams in narrow shafts through the clouds of human fallibility. This puts him squarely in our conga line. His Absolute Knower resonates with Plato’s Forms, and Kant’s ‘pure reason,’ and Fichte’s ‘absolute self,’ and James’s ‘Stream of Thought,’ and Emerson’s ‘oversoul’ and our own “ultra-consciousness” and universal consciousness. And... and... with all that cognitive consonance, I have acquitted myself of plagiarism. I can have Royce’s ideas with or without Royce and make them my own.

Royce saw, before I was born, that the fallibility of the every day inner consciousness is a dynamic which causes us to constantly double check with communication partners. I already mentioned my term “communogenesis” from my book, (Communication the Living End), but it is worth communicating it here again to add to the cognitive consonance.

Royce’s major works include The Religious Aspect of Philosophy (1885), The World and the Individual (1899-1901), The

Philosophy of Loyalty (1908), and The Problem of Christianity (1913).

What follows is in part based on the article on Royce I found in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy- (*Parker, Kelly A. and Scott Pratt, "Josiah Royce", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Spring 2021 Edition, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/royce/>>*).

In his last period Royce embraced what may be called a hermeneutic epistemology. Hermeneutics is the higher level of human intelligence which allows for interpretation. Royce's hermeneutic epistemology says that knowledge of "the real world is the Community of Interpretation...". For Royce, knowledge has to be "re-presented." It cannot exist on its own. Knowledge is not merely the accurate and complete *perception* of an object, as empiricism would have it; nor is it solely a *conception*, as idealists maintain. Knowledge is instead a process of interpretation: the true idea selects, emphasizes, and "re-presents" those aspects of the object that will be meaningfully fulfilled in subsequent experience. This "subsequent experience" is at the root of our gregarious connection to present and absent communication partners which I have called SAPs and TAPs (Spatially Absent Partners, and Temporally Absent Partners).

I pointed out earlier that the James/Royce tug-of-war moved each in the other's direction.

One of Royce's positions is clearly inspired by James' well-known essay "*The Will to Believe.*" The proposition that any philosophical view is at bottom an expression of individual 'volition' connects directly to James. In other words, philosophy merely rationalizes action. Or, in the words of Wittgenstein: "philosophy is not a theory but an activity" (*Tractatus...*, which will be discussed further in the chapter on Wittgenstein.)

This could be mistaken for existentialism, except for the fact that Royce replaces the relativism of existentialism and humanism with an absolute backdrop of Truth, which is missing from most existential philosophies. Royce would not accept the ideas of the French existentialists (Sartre and Camus) that human efforts are absurd, unfolding against a backdrop of a meaningless and an indifferent universe. On the contrary, Royce maintains that the concepts of ultimate meaning and reality are powerful and legitimate forces in our lives. Royce maintains that the will to live is "loyalty to the ideal of an ultimate truth"—"*Absolute Voluntarism*" (Royce 1913 [200, 349]).

The problem of evil is a persistent theme throughout this book and this chapter is no exception. Royce struggled with tragedy in his personal life and sought to understand it better through philosophy. As an idealist he also had to struggle with evil as a metaphysical problem. Royce believes that the sinner "is dealing, not

with the angry God of a well-known theological tradition, but with himself.”

For Royce, theodicy is not a problem since God is also suffering when you are suffering and therefore is neither cruel nor helpless. He says:

“When you suffer, your sufferings are God’s sufferings, not his external work, not his external penalty, not the fruit of his neglect, but identical with His own personal woe. In you, God himself suffers, precisely as you do, and has all your concern in overcoming this grief.”

Grief is not “a physical means to an external end,” but rather “a logically necessary and an eternal constituent of the divine life.” He doesn’t paint a clear picture of this co-suffering God; how could he?

As to the immortality node, Royce refers us to established religions; he tells us that “the central and essential postulate” of every religion is that “man needs to be saved.” From what to what, he doesn’t say. Royce’s salvation may not be the pearly gates up there; instead it may just be just a stronger connection down here, to the inner teacher. Salvation comes in the form of guidance toward understanding and accomplishing the highest aim of life, so far as we are able.

Given the limitations and fallibility of the human perspective, Royce maintains that this guidance must come from some super-human

or divine source. Religion is the sphere of life in which finite human beings are able to get in touch with this divine source of wisdom and guidance.

Royce is not talking about organized religion, but religious experience. Royce could not have been extolling the virtues of organized religion because he knew, as did James, that God is in you not in church. That doesn't mean that Royce was against congregations of believers.

Royce's "invisible church" is the loyal community, guided by a divine spirit and devoted to the highest ideals of goodness. In *The Sources of Religious Insight* Royce distinguishes his view from the Jamesean view of religious experience, but it is plain to see that the semiotic synergy between the two insights is much more powerful than the semantic distinctions.

While Royce's *Sources* concerns the nature of religious experience in general, *The Problem of Christianity* focuses on the question "In what sense, if any, can the modern man be a Christian?" Royce's answer actually rejects the static concepts and beliefs (dogma) usually implied by devotion to specific creeds, including those identified with Christianity. The Christian church for Royce is not the place we go on Sunday in our starched shirts and neckties; it is not a place at all; it is a community of grace. The particular institutions

that identify themselves as churches may or may not actually be communities of grace. Royce would also identify grace at work in many communities that are not self-consciously religious. What matters in the end is the process of interpretation; the process of communicating and understanding one another in actual, imperfect, finite communities of grace bound together by loyalty and striving toward the any ideal.

Royce finds traditional accounts of atonement in Christian dogma unsatisfactory. In contemplating Christ's willing sacrifice of his own life for the sake of the human community, the sinner may be inspired to change his ways, but Royce points out, by itself crucifixion does nothing to reconcile the sinner to the community or to repair that community from any harm done. Such reconciliation and healing requires something more than a change of heart. You can't just pray to make amends you have to do something for the community you have offended. Royce's community expiation is different from the "firm purpose of amendment" I learned about in parochial school, which followed the penance: usually an act of contrition and a few Hail Marys

Forgiveness, is an act of the community and is essential to atonement. Moreover, it involves a recognition of human frailty – not just the moral frailty of the sinner in question, but that of all humans. Things are not made the same as they were before, after genuine

atonement, but are made better. Everyone in the community is enhanced by the stronger scar tissue where once there was a wound.

If the Catholic Church wanted Royce's blessing, the secrets of the confessional would have to be published in a weekly news letter. Can you imagine the bylines: 'Mrs Robinson had sex with her daughter's boy friendFather Feely still has feelings for altar boys.....'

Royce is critical of many historical churches because they have in his view lost sight of the spirit that ought to guide them. Once again Nietzsche's remark comes to mind: "Christ was the last Christian."

In the end, however, Royce was a philosopher who worked within the intellectual context of Western civilization and its churches, including the Christian community which can be optimized with a little more philosophy. Christian congregations can become model "loyal communities" when they successfully create the "infinite worth" of the individual as a unique member of the ideal Beloved Community, the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Buddhist community would say that suffering is inevitable but you can do something about it. Royce also endorsed Buddhism as a community of grace. Royce's *The Problem of Christianity* includes a very sympathetic presentation of Buddhism. He had great respect

for non-Christian religions; he actually took the trouble to learn Sanskrit.

I'm sure if Royce knew about the information age internet, he wouldn't mind extending the 'community of grace' to include, not only the present partnerships of a congregation, but also the absent partnerships of our conga line, which I believe is every bit as much of an "invisible church," and a "community of grace."

Thank God for Royce and thank Royce, James and Bergson for a God who is no longer far away and inaccessible.

Maybe this inner God is the Messiah's second coming Jews have been waiting for.

NORTH-WHITEHEAD

(1861-1947)

“Philosophy begins in wonder. And at the end, when philosophical thought has done its best, the wonder remains.” [Whitehead, Modes of Thought, Macmillan, 1938]

Alfred North Whitehead was a British mathematician and metaphysician who found a more enthusiastic audience for his metaphysics in Cambridge, Massachusetts than he did in Cambridge, England. As his collaborator Bertrand Russell comments, “In England, Whitehead was regarded only as a mathematician, and it was left to America to discover him as a philosopher”

Whitehead and Russell were paired electrons that orbited the British Cambridge circle and rolled out the rational manifesto: Principia Mathematica. Whitehead spun off and magically joined the orbit of the American Cambridge circle and changed both circles and himself

So it was that in 1924, after a stint at lesser known colleges in London, Whitehead accepted an appointment as a professor of philosophy at- where else- Harvard. There he added his spin to the ‘American Cambridge circle’ the already a highly charged circuit between the two poles inhabited by William James and Josiah Royce. [I invented the name, ‘American Cambridge Circle’ for this circuit

because of its countervailing force to the logical positivism of the British Cambridge Circle.]

There, in the same hallowed halls of Harvard, Whitehead added to the metaphysics of American pragmatism already begun by James and Royce. Whatever empiricism was left in the head of Whitehead from his days in the British Cambridge Circle now looked much more like the 'transcendental pragmatism' of William James, or the 'absolute pragmatism' of Josiah Royce. As for the source of Whitehead's metaphysics we only have to look at his oft quoted comment characterizing 'all of Western philosophy' as foot notes to Plato. This must mean that he thought of himself as a neoPlatonist. Except for Whitehead's famous quote about Plato, I should point out that I found no scholarly support for making him a Platonist. Nevertheless, I think we can say he was a major "footnote" in what he called Plato's Western philosophy.

Every inch the philosopher, he was no less the scientist and mathematician. Physics would not be what it has become without Whitehead. James Clerk Maxwell taught at Cambridge, where Whitehead wrote his Trinity Fellowship dissertation on Maxwell's electromagnetism. In Whitehead's eyes, Maxwell's theory of electromagnetism constituted an antidote to Newton's scientific materialism. Electromagnetism could be a model for the whole universe as "a field of force –or, in other words, a field of incessant

activity.” The definition of a force field as “incessant activity” is unique to both science and philosophy, especially to any philosophy about consciousness, because consciousness is very much like the electromagnetism which Whitehead describes as incessant activity.

Incessancy leads to infinity, anyway you slice it. Faraday remarked that “in a sense an electric charge is everywhere,” and Whitehead extended that to the unforgettable universal proposition that “in a certain sense, everything is everywhere at all times.”

Whitehead looked beyond the light carrying medium proposed by the famous Michelson-Morely experiment. His Enquiry into the Principles of Natural Knowledge, The Concept of Nature, and The Principle of Relativity, published between 1919 and 1922 turned the heads of the great minds in physics. Most importantly, his critique of the problem of measurement raised by Albert Einstein’s general theory of relativity opened the door to the non-geometry of spacetime.

In 1921, Whitehead had the opportunity to discuss these matters with Einstein himself. And finally, in 1922, Whitehead published a book with a more detailed account of his alternative theory of gravitation: The Principle of Relativity. Since Einstein’s theory loses the distinction between the physical and the geometrical, the only way we can know the geometry of the space is if we first know the

distributions of matter and energy throughout the cosmos that effect that geometry. Thus, as Whitehead argued, we are left in the position of first having to know everything before we can know anything. That's mind blowing in every sense of the word.

Whitehead spoke of the "bifurcation of nature into two systems of reality" but only one knowable. In 1920 he resurrected the eighteenth century absolute idealism of Bishop Berkeley where measured objectivity is an illusion. Whitehead pointed out that all the qualities we attribute to nature are in our head. He meant not to demean the content but to exalt the container, human consciousness. Objective nature without subjective consciousness, he points out, is pointless.

Whitehead's ontology is essentially extensive rather than point-like, a force field of waves rather than a sequence of particles. This brought metaphysics closer to quantum physics than it had ever been before.

Whitehead's explicit interest in symbols was present in his earliest publication. His theory of "prehension," adds to Royce's theory of symbols. Whitehead points both that our "uncognitive" sense-perceptions are directly caught up in our symbolic awareness as is shown by the immediacy with which we move beyond what is directly given to our senses. Whitehead's "prehension" manages the deception of perception paradox.

Whitehead's Science and the Modern World offers a careful critique of orthodox scientific materialism. He saw, early on, the effects of observations on our conceptions of the micro and macro universes, which influenced Godel's "Incompleteness," Bohr's "Complementarity" and Heisenberg's "Uncertainty." The observer/observed paradox in quantum physics must have been on his mind when he wrote: "All philosophy is an endeavor to obtain a self-consistent understanding of things observed."

Whitehead describes what we have called time blindness: "...an instant of time conceived as a primary simple fact is nonsense."

Development is an illusion. Becoming is real. The basic units of becoming for Whitehead are "actual occasions." Actual occasions are "drops of experience," that contribute to the "feeling" of relatedness to concrete reality, which should not be taken as actually real or "concrete." Wrap your mind around that, won't you.

To mistake these interior phenomena as real would be to commit the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. But that is not to say feeling is unreal. Rather, it is the first and most concrete manifestation of an occasion's relational engagement with reality. This comports with Royce's ideas of the validation of re-presented knowledge by subsequent usage.

Rather than place a rigid border between reality and consciousness, Whitehead suggests layers. In Process and Reality (1929), he layers the inner and outer realities; his term “prehension” suggests that the inner reality is a ‘sine qua non’ for “extension,” which is our contact with the outer world. “Prehension” is his theory of “internal relations” and “extension” is his theory of “external relations” both of which are holistically intertwined.

Whitehead says the internal reality is all we can count on. Berkeley would say the internal reality is all there is. There is a slight difference between those two positions. Whitehead’s “superject” is his fused object/subject, which is the internal atom of the ultimate externality.

Just as fusion exceeds fission in physics, joining metaphysical elements is more powerful than separating them. Whitehead’s fusion included the antipodal elements of consciousness, science and religion: “Philosophy attains its chief importance by fusing the two, namely, religion and science, into one rational scheme of thought.”

Whitehead was in no sense condoning current organized religion. He wrote that religion is the last refuge of human savagery. Indeed history, down to the present day, is a melancholy record of the horrors of human sacrifice, and in particular, the slaughter of

children, cannibalism, not to mention, sensual orgies, abject superstition, hatred between races, the maintenance of degrading customs, hysteria and bigotry. For Whitehead all this can all be laid at the feet of organized religion. Nevertheless, Whitehead didn't believe that organized religion was all bad. Like Royce, Whitehead believed that religion can be "positive or negative" depending on what it does and for whom. If it guides the lift off from the reason runaway it's good.

In Religion in the Making, Whitehead says: "The point to notice is its transcendent importance." In Science and the Modern World, he explains transcendent importance as something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real, and yet waiting to be realized.

For our conga line purposes the most important Whitehead insights are in *Process and Reality* where he declares that God is part self consciousness, self appreciation, self love and self determination. According to Whitehead: "God is the organ of novelty and order." Without the intervention of God, there could be nothing new in the world, and no order. God inspires order, novelty and originality.

Whitehead is responsible for the advance, if not the founding of so called "process theology." Process theology is hard to pin down as it took many twists and turns after

Whitehead, but the most important and consistent aspect of process theology fits nicely into our conga line next to the mini (less than omnipotent) God of James and Bergson. The God of process theology is more like Christ than Zeus. This closer (and in our case, inner) God is supremely affected by temporal events and, just as we saw in Royce, God is "the fellow sufferer who understands."

God does not force, but tenderly persuades each actual occasion to actualize—from "the absolute wealth of potentiality." God, according to Whitehead, "is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness."

The game of life is not a fickle game show where God enjoys watching humans stumble, but rather an art class where we are introduced to beauty, or better still, a youth orchestra where the patient conductor is leading us to the divine experience of feeling perfect music flow through the imperfect minds and bodies of those who keep trying to play better.

Even the dark minds of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer have the one bright spot reserved for music and the arts. All of the philosophers in our conga line, and many not in our conga line, see the esthetic aspect of consciousness as a step up, or a leap off the *rock* in the direction of the *soft place*.

Whitehead's Adventures of Ideas (1933), is purported to have been his complete outline of philosophical and cultural ideas as they relate to his brand of metaphysics. This was Whitehead's conga line of consciousness, which I was unable to find, but went ahead anyway and made my own, which would be his own and your own, since no one and everyone owns ideas.

Details of Whitehead's contributions to process metaphysics are lost to us because of his strange dying wish. In accordance with his testamentary instructions, all his papers were destroyed following his death. Process metaphysics notwithstanding, he left enough to become immortalized.

BERGSON

(1859- 1941)

Henri Bergson's creative evolution bent Darwinism into a new philosophical dimension. Bergson's evolution projects the constancy of change into a super state which is naturally supernatural. That's a mind twister, and you do have to twist your mind a bit to get it around Bergson's paradoxical metaphysics. For Bergson, concepts, percepts and intuition are in a flux that has very real effects on the matter and energy of the universe but are not themselves material. Sounds as paradoxical as "pretension" or "mattergy." Bergson hops over paradoxes with elegant metaphors.

One of Bergson's more memorable metaphors pictures an elegant cape hung on a coat hook. The cape is hung there at the ready to warm and form the invisible ghost, consciousness. Bergson points out that it would be a great error to confuse the cape with the ghost. We can cloak our invisible ghost in the cape, but we can only hang on the hook, the cape not the ghost. The cape is only for heuristic communication regarding invisible subjects. Intellect divides and measures and imposes form on the featureless flux of sur-reality, only to facilitate communication. Measurements, spacetime, metaphorical capes, mattergy, energy, *rock*, *soft place* are all heuristics (metaphors), without which there

would be no communication about abstract ideas.

This is essentially what I called “communogenesis,” described by Bergson before I was born. Even more shocking is the coincidence of Bergson’s and my movie metaphor. I remind myself here that I am still under oath and I swear that I came up with communogenesis and the movie reel metaphor in an earlier book before I knew anything about Bergson.

What’s this movie metaphor about?

Places everyone, and ACTION!

Persistence of vision makes the still frames of the motion picture reel look like action; Bergson uses this metaphor to elucidate the process of conceptualization. His metaphor beautifully demonstrates the mind’s inference of motion, and more importantly the innate, intuitive power of inference. Without this power we would never have been able to see the dynamic’s which underly the still frames of recorded events.

I swear I never saw that Bergson movie, “The Cinematographic Mechanism of Thought” in Creative Evolution (1907), before I made mine, in The Castle of Consciousness (1994).

I used the cinematic metaphor in my book to juxtapose the phenomenal, subjective roll of images, which I called the “reel” world,

with the noumenal, objective “real” world it represents. At the time I thought the homonym ‘real and reel’ was original. I knew nothing about Bergson. I guess cognitive consonance is as real as it is reel.

There is something innate that creates conceptual tools before and beyond actual tools to deal with what Whitehead called thinking about the “incessant activity” of our invisible universe.

Though not the first to decry the static materialist concept of reality, Bergson is the most influential. According to Bergson, scientific materialism is like a grammar that only recognizes nouns; reality is a verb, an “action word” which is ever changing. With only our perceived discontinuous images of reality, we would be blind to the fluid continuity of the surreal. This idea flowed freely between Whitehead and Bergson.

For Bergson, consciousness, which includes “intuition,” uses the brain and not the other way around. Bergson does not wish to fall into the crack between empiricism and rationalism, empiricists being blind to the unity of consciousness and rationalists being blind to the complexity of psychological events.

Unity and multiplicity are not either or. With Bergson’s dynamic realization of “duration,” we can have both and move from one to the other in no time at all. Bergson has

to unify his dichotomies in order to justify both heterogeneity and continuity. Bergson's unity in multiplicity is just beyond the cutting edge of the intellect, where the loom of intuition entwines the separate strands of consciousness. Free will to act is innate to human existence, Matter and Memory. That means that not every fabric of consciousness has the same weave.

For Bergson, 'intellect,' unlike 'intuition,' atomizes the material world; the particles of that atomization have to become waves for the metaphysical world; both are real. For Bergson, 'intuition' and metaphysics are part of mind and coexist with the lower layer, day to day intellect. Intellect is the mind adapting itself to the atomization of reality, particularized for measures and communication. Intellect alone will never get you to any understanding; understanding is beyond the lift off point in the reason runway. You have to lift off to experience the coign of vantage afforded by that superstate "Intuition." We can go from intuition to intellectual analysis but we can never arrive at intuition from intellectual analysis. Bergson insists that intellect will never account for intuition; so don't even try.

The function of the 'intellect' is to oversee action (behavior) in the material world. Some willful action breaks through boundaries of intellect and expands consciousness. Bergson would have this expanding consciousness expand to intuition and he says the potential for that expansion is innate.

Bergson would agree, then, with our belief that everyone is born with everything they need for self inflation and hypersubjectivity, all of which comes wrapped in will power which is free to do what whatever you will, including finding God.

The creationist faction of the Catholic Church, ignoring the word “creative” and alarmed by the word “evolution,” condemned Bergson’s philosophy. Bergson and Whitehead must have known about each other. Like Whitehead, Bergson was appalled by dogma and organized religion.

Like Whitehead and James, Bergson’s God is not all powerful; in fact he is a needy God, looking for love just like we are; God needs us as much as we need him. Bergson believes that God gave us human creativity so that He would have fellow creators for His love.

I am happy to have discovered Bergson before or after I did my thinking. He is a key TAP in our conga line. There is, however, a wrinkle in our relationship. He says that we are all born with a Platonic delusion. The assumption that there is a pre-existing other world of Ideal Forms is natural, but, nevertheless delusional. Bergson believes that Platonists are blinded by the human compunction to stabilize reality into understandable digestible mouthfuls. The real untamed flux is unacceptable to the fallible human minds which need the stasis of heavenly

perfection, the ideal Platonic Forms. Bergson relies on the fact that the low mind needs help from the high mind which is more flexible, more courageous and able to contemplate the flux. This high mind, which he calls intuition, is “inborn.” I can hear Plato almost shouting: “isn’t that the very a-priori instinct you said was delusional?”

I would invoke Wittgenstein here to break up the fight and demonstrate that the problem is not philosophical but semantic, which would offend both Plato and Bergson. Like any good compromise it offends both parties, but in the end brings them together, which is necessary, because I don’t see how Bergson can have Bergson’s mobility without Plato’s stability, and I don’t see how Plato could get to his stability without Bergson’s mobility. I am sure that Plato would welcome Bergson into the conga line and Bergson, whose ideas are in flux by his own admission, would join the conga line just to see where it goes. So we dance on with both of their twists and turns.

Bergson’s newer ideas in his last major works, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, and a collection of his essays, The Creative Mind, appeared in 1934. According to some Bergson scholars these ideas move closer to the Platonism which he challenged in his earlier works, and also closer to spiritualism and even Christianity.

As we have seen earlier, it makes no sense to say there is nothing beyond what we can see and touch. There is always more to know. Where does that “more” come from and where does your “intuition” come from? What is it that change continuously alters? It is natural for you not to know; it is a painful mistake for you not to believe.

Plato aside I feel sure Bergson would approve of our self inflation and floating to where we can see beyond the flipping pages of the calendar, like the stills in the nickelodeon movie, and glimpse the energy flow of eternity, beyond the day to day passage of time. That is the most creative, and at the same time realistic, conception of the immortality node of all the metaphysical triads, but still in line with our conga.

In Creative Evolution, Bergson adds picture puzzles to his store of metaphors. The puzzle picture is conceived and painted by an artist and then cut up to be put together by children. The child putting together the pieces of a puzzle has a pre-existing whole picture, but the artist painting the picture relies on the unfolding of some inner inspiration from another realm; there is no pre-existing picture for the artist to copy. What the child is doing is intellectual; what the artist is doing is intuitive and metaphysical. This is exactly the argument Penrose used to distinguish the artificial intelligence of a computer from human

intelligence. (I don't know whether Penrose knows Bergson.)

Both the Bergson and Penrose distinctions sound Platonic to me. Plato would say that the creative, but nevertheless fallible, human consciousness has access to occasional rays of perfection beamed down from the divine Forms, but that "access" does not include a complete vision of the divine perfection. Within that limit human progress is unlimited. Sound paradoxical?

Bergson looks at the conflicting views of relativism and determinism and finds fault with both. Relativism is dazzled by the multiplicity of points and determinism is blinded by the line of points. Relativism is a river without banks; determinism is banks without a river. Both these paths, separately taken, Bergson says, lead to an eternity of death rather than life.

Only by inverting our philosophical mind, according to Bergson, can we transcend the immobility of idealism and see a mobile dynamic reality of ever changing tendencies, a river which never freezes.

Creative Evolution appeared in 1907 and was translated into English by Bertrand Russell, who initially objected that Bergson would turn humanity into a hive of bees with his notion of intuition. Eventually Russell was forced to admit that Bergson floats up beyond

the paradox of idealism/pragmatism fostered by traditional philosophical classification.

Bergson's super consciousness, which is beyond the intellect's "intuition," moves with the rhythm of our conga line and with Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic thinking, Scheler's value-capture and Royce's intuition and of course, all of which, without a stretch, can be tied into Leibniz monads and Descartes' *res cogitans* and then all the way back to Plato's ideal Forms.

I believe Bergson's epistemology is neoplatonic; so is his psychology. Bergson's psychology is a 'physio' and a 'socio' scientific staircase to spiritualism. Mind has images of its own body from the outside reflections coming from other minds and another set from inside sensations. Putting together what I think of myself and what others think of me, is a life long pursuit which accounts for the level of development of the individual and the community in which the individual is nested.

Bergson came to America and must have known about what I have dubbed the 'American Cambridge circle,' and the importance they placed on community and its effects on the mystic interior consciousness.

Memory itself, according to Bergson, is divided into pure memory, which is more conceptual recall, but still coordinated with current mental activity, and habit or muscle memory. None of these non material energies

can be isolated to specific neurons. Bergson's consciousness is beyond spatial coordinates but not beyond temporal understanding. Bergsonian consciousness still takes time; a sense of time and temporal sequence is essential to understanding.

Understanding is deeper and broader than pure intellect. Cultures which have not clearly marked the lift off point in the reason runway are not happy places. Closed societies are dominated by pure intellect, which suppresses the mystical. Mystics are creators who struggle to escape survival strife, like Schopenhauer's genius, Fichte's absolute "I," and James's "hero." These mystics, Bergson believes, will eventually find the lift off point and create open societies. You will recall that both James and Royce made history with their Gifford Lectures at Edinburgh University in Scotland. Bergson's international fame was also greatly expanded by his Gifford Lecture. Bergson's metaphysical psychology opus *Mind Energy* turned many heads in many intellectual circles.

The Solvay Conferences met in Brussels not far from France, to explore blank spots in the new science. According to Merleau-Ponty, Bergson debated Einstein regarding a "crisis of reason." (Bergson published his reflections on Einstein as *Duration and Simultaneity - Mélanges*). His new two lane bridge to the *soft place* made him a *rock star*.

In 1928, twenty years after Creative Evolution, Bergson was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature by default. The Nobel Prize committee could not find any worthy recipient in 1927 and so awarded it to Bergson one year later, for no particular work, just for the brilliant way he presented his new ideas.

In World War I, the French government sent Bergson to the United-States to bring his philosophy to Wilson's new international politics. He met President Wilson and apparently they got along well enough for him to stay and help form the "League of Nations," (The League of Nations remained in existence until 1946, when it was replaced by the United Nations.)

Henri Bergson was one of the most famous French philosophers that I never heard of, famous for applying philosophy to science and international relations, but more famous for connecting individual freedom and spirituality. Bergson's addition of the community effect harkens back or forward (not sure which) to the "American Cambridge circle" of James, Royce and Whitehead.

Before Bergson's lecture at Columbia University, entitled "Spirituality and Liberty," the New York Times published a long article on him which generated the very first traffic jam in the history of Broadway, and, I might add, the last and only traffic jam ever caused by a philosopher.

Bergson died on January 3, 1941 at the age of 81. World War II had of course already begun, and he must have witnessed Germany, occupying France. I can only imagine what he thought.

Bergson's God is always changing. (Two Sources of Morality and Religion). Don't ask me from what to what; God only knows. One is left to guess at just what this meant for his high mind and how it would justify his earlier belief in an almost pantheist God. He must have known about Fechner, and Emerson, and James. There is a rumor that, like Scheler and Wittgenstein, Bergson was yet another Jewish intellectual who converted to Catholicism near the end of his life.

SCHELER

(1874 -1928)

Scheler, Schiller, Schelling, Schopenhauer; is not only fun to pronounce, but would make for a sublime harmony were they to sing quartets at the Wirtshuas, in Jena. The audience would recognize three of the quartet, no doubt. The university at Jena was named after Schiller and everyone knows Schelling and Schopenhauer, so who is this fourth voice, Scheler?

Max F Scheler was added to the quartet and the conga line, not only because of the alliterative tickle his name brought to German idealism, and not only because he taught, with Fichte, Hegel, and Goethe, at Jena, the cradle of the German enlightenment, but also because he uses phenomenology (which we will learn more about from Husserl in the next chapter) to justify a metaphysical belief system, which includes Christianity.

Like Wittgenstein, Scheler was a German Jew who embraced Catholicism, and like Wittgenstein, Scheler was lesser known than the some members of his fan club, including James, Husserl, Heidegger and Ortega y Gasset, who hailed him as the “Adam of the philosophical paradise.” The fact that most people never heard of Scheler is due in part to the fact that he too was Jewish and like Husserl was not allowed to teach or publish in his prime, which unfortunately coincided with the

beginning of the Nazi epoch. Despite the fact that he was banned from universities he continued to profess against the Nazis in hotel rooms rented by his close friend Dietrich von Hildebrand. It was also at this time that Scheler became co-editor, along with Husserl, of the journal that spread phenomenology around Europe and the world.

Husserl emerged as the founder of phenomenology and then Heidegger; not Scheler. Scheler saw some flaws in Husserl's thinking which weighted down phenomenology and kept it from ascending from the mundane to the sublime. This was a pothole on the reason runway which interfered with the lift off point. This separated phenomenology from philosophy for Scheler and separated Scheler from historical pioneer credit.

Of course Scheler also opposed Heidegger's philosophical exhalation of the Nazi ideology. This may have something to do with the containment of his philosophy to a the few brave souls in the early Nazi period, who found their way and could fit in the hotel rooms where Scheler expounded. Nazi suppression notwithstanding, there was too much to think about in Scheler to keep it quiet for very long. You can banish Jewish intellectuals but you can't keep their ideas from changing the world, even the dogmatic Catholic world.

I was surprised to find that Pope John Paul II in 1954 wrote his doctoral thesis on "*An*

Evaluation of the Possibility of Constructing a Christian ethics on the Basis of the System of Max Scheler", and later wrote many articles on Scheler's philosophy. I thought that was pretty amazing both for the Pope and Scheler. When's the last time a Catholic pope accepted the ideas of a Jewish mystic? That would have to be Peter and Christ.

Thanks to John Paul II as well as to Scheler's student Edith Stein, many Catholics are able to philosophize and still keep the faith. Scheler sees the metaphysical triad as being beyond logic or science, or so called objective evidence. The whole point of phenomenology is that the *rock* is different from the *soft place* and there is no such thing as objective evidence in the *soft place*. Phenomenology, if only by implication, must be beyond evidence.

Scheler saw what no one else could see in World War I. He saw the very first global collective experience, the very first impression shared by *all* of humanity. Without Scheler we would never have realized that it was a horror show that opened the new globe theater.

I am sure those 'mind over matter,' contemporaries of Scheler, having witnessed a collective consciousness, were reinforced in their beliefs. Jung was already publishing with and beyond Freud, in Switzerland and Vienna. Maybe Jung's idea of "synchronicity" came from Scheler's global audience idea. Maybe that's where I got the idea of universal

consciousness. I have no evidence of these connections, but if you know anything about Scheler's philosophy and Jung's synchronicity, you know that evidence is irrelevant.

The new show now playing on the global screen, also happens to be a horror show, man made disasters punctuated by natural disasters, and we're all watching and wondering. Scheler says the immanence of global tragedy will guide global thinking toward a new desperate search for meaning. There's no way to predict or expect divine intervention. We can only wait and wonder and pray.

For Scheler, the experience of the holy or of the absolute is not given through rational proof, but in the counter evidential mode of revelation. A *phenomenology* of religious experience is, for Scheler, a description of the essential "givenness" of revelation. Like James, Scheler's three essential characteristics of revelation are: first, the revelation is other worldly or transcendent; second, whatever the revelation promises, it can never be fulfilled by anyone or anything on this earth; and third, the revelation must be fully received and remain whole to be holy; cutting it up into dog meat chunks of dogma can only make for dog fights between the sects.

There is no worldly way to prove revelation to anyone who has not had a religious experience. That is not to say that only the few are chosen and others are

completely left out. Scheler, like Calvin three centuries earlier, explains that a human being is by nature a God-seeker. This is not to say that everyone believes that there is a Christian God, but even the atheists commit religious acts, albeit unwittingly. Or as Scheler says: "Every finite spirit believes either in a God or in an idol" (GW V, 261)

An idol is a finite object that is treated as if it were infinite, as if it were God (GW V, 263). In the act of idolatry, this false God may be wealth, fame or power, etc. We all have our religion whether it is secular or divine.

*[The collected works of Max Scheler are published as *Gesammelte Werke*, abbreviated GW whose volumes each have a roman numeral and then a page number].*

Scheler sees different religions as tributaries flowing into the same river. No religion can be used to contradict any other religion. Scheler agrees with the Wittgenstein proposition that beliefs cannot serve as philosophical foils. That is not to say they won't become war cries from time to time. Nevertheless, Scheler sees the religious banner disappearing from the battlefield as the understanding of the divine grows.

Acknowledging a genuine religious diversity does not commit one to the view that all religious ideas or beliefs are of the same value, but rather to the realization that there are genuine but hopefully reconcilable

differences between them. How we reconcile them will determine whether the future will be one of war or one of peace.

As I write these words, the Taliban have promised to stop killing in the name of Allah in Afghanistan, but Putin's Orthodox priests have blessed his massacre of Ukrainians; at the same time Ukrainian priests have bolted from what was once one religion. The Christian banner appears on both bloody battle flags.

The God node of Scheler's metaphysical triad is unique in that God did not create the world, but allowed it to become. The world, i.e., life-urge, is the realizing factor of spirit and, in allowing the world to become, God makes it possible for goodness to be realized; it is 'possible' not inevitable. This weighs in on the Gnostic and Manichaeism heresies in that instead of two Gods we have two ways of looking at the same God, two aspects. So there could be one God wearing a coach hat and a judge hat. Whether that's one God with two hats or two Gods with one hat, starts to sound silly. So who's counting? For the full effect this last question should be asked with a yiddish accent.

The God node of Scheler's metaphysical triad seems to have another layer which allows super nature to become nature, which means nature is free to become something entirely unexpected.

If the God node is blurry, we do have a more understandable freedom node in Scheler's metaphysical triad. Scheler's freedom node includes a "basic moral tenor" an innate capacity to obey rules; however, the preordained moral tenor is a challenge not a gift. Bad choices are possible for Scheler when a person chooses a lower value over the higher ranking value. Scheler is all about values. As the deeper spiritual values are realized, existence takes on a more meaningful form and ultimately points to the deepest value, the divine.

The notable and substantial differences between Scheler and other phenomenologists come into play in this quest for value. Scheler's value-based metaphysics sets his phenomenology apart from the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger and moves him closer to Merleau-Ponty, to be discussed presently.

Scheler believes that we are naturally attracted to that which is of greater positive value, and tend to move away from, or are repelled by, that which is of lesser or negative value. The preference of certain values to others implies that the ranking of values is present in every experience.

Acts of sacrifice best demonstrate value preferencing. For the sake of "freedom" soldiers give their lives. For the sake of a particular life value such as health, we may

sacrifice pleasurable experiences such as an overindulgence of ice-cream. An order of value preferencing is present in every experience great and small, and every individual possesses such an ordering ability, what Scheler calls “an ethos.”

Scheler agrees with Kant regarding the a-priori back drop which makes rational sense out of sensory phenomena. This allows us to adjust for the deception of perception.

Scheler disagrees with Kant as to how values arise out this innate aspect of consciousness. For Scheler values are not formed after the fact as a result of experience and relations with other minds in the culture. Values are given a-priori; they are there before any experience, in the soul. An object of perception such as an oak tree is not only green or large, but also pleasurable, beautiful and magnificent; those values were there before the tree was planted. Objects of experience are bearers of values. The value an object bears is given intuitively through a type of “valueception.” We “see” the beauty of a painting just as we “see” its colors. The grasping of value is our most original and primordial relation to the world. An object has value for us before it is perceived or known. Scheler suggests that our innate values are ranked in an ascending order: pleasure, utility, vitality, culture, and holiness.

For Scheler Philosophy is about love. Scheler describes the essence of philosophical thinking as

"a love-determined movement of the inmost personal self of a finite being toward participation in the essential reality of all possibles."

Philosophy, for Scheler, is the

"loving act of participation by the core of the human being in the essence of all things" (GW V, 68).

This places Scheler solidly in our conga line; the fact that he ties this basic essence, love, back to Plato, puts him at the front of our conga line. Furthermore Scheler justifies the vagueness of our *soft place*. Scheler insists that this realm of existence is not "objectifiable," and so cannot be expected to be explained by the worldly tools of human knowledge, which is not to say that it has no effect.

Practical knowledge, mastery of skills required to survive on the *rock* world, is only the first of three types of knowledge. In addition to practical knowledge, Scheler describes two other types: erudition (*Bildungswissen*) where philosophical knowledge abides, and knowledge of revelation. This last type is akin to the notion of super consciousness.

Practical knowledge is motivated by physical pain or fear of error; erudition is

motivated by wonder, and the higher knowledge of revelation can only be described as awe. This explains why the philosopher lives in reverence of the world, and in astonishment of the world's inexhaustible depth and secrets.

We have seen the layering of knowledge almost everywhere in the conga line, Bergson, Whitehead, Kant, Spinoza, Schopenhauer, to name a few, and of course Plato. Nevertheless, Scheler's layer cake is the most delectable, the easiest to swallow and good for the heart.

Like Plato, Scheler would distinguish the philosophical love '*agape*' from the erotic love, which is driven by "a lack." Scheler's Christian *agape* defines love as giving, rather than taking. Love spills over into and streams out of objects of any kind, of its own accord, without any special effort. Love opens our spiritual eyes. Love is the lift off energy from the reason runaway. With this understanding of the relation of love to knowledge, Scheler declares that "knowledge is ultimately from the divine and for the divine" (GW VIII, 211).

Scheler says there is no point where your mind ends and any other begins. The consciousness of oneself as a self and as a person is always experienced within the context of a "member of a totality" (GW II, 510). Every experience, in other words, assumes as background the "experiencing with one another" as well as the responsibility for others and the co-responsibility for the community.

Scheler's "Miteinanderleben" comports with all of the philosophers in the conga line who find connections between all consciousnesses. Scheler demonstrates the propensity in the individual to become a part of a collective consciousness.

Within the notion of the collective, Scheler describes three different concentric circles: the state (or nation), the culture (or people) and the church. The main difference between these three circles is the expanse of the circumference. In the smaller circle, the state, the limit is defined by borders. In the culture the circumference includes no particular physical borders but rather values, beliefs, and ideas. These borders are often more expansive than the borders of a state, but not always; some states have different cultures within their borders. The church is the most expansive circle and may include many states and cultures. It is the fullest realization of what Scheler calls "the love community" (*Liebesgemeinschaft*). You can now see why the Pope would embrace Scheler.

In *The Nature of Sympathy* (original German title, *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* literally means the *Essence and Forms of Sympathy*), Scheler provides a detailed analysis of the different types of shared feelings, which are themselves reducible to loving. We are always wondering what it must be like to be in

another's consciousness; that wonder comes from and leads to love.

The deepest experiences of love for the other reveals the 'absolute' or holy value of the other; grasping who the other could be or ought to become may be the trigger for self development. For Scheler, it is possible that another person may know me better than I know myself and he or she may be able to direct me to my ideal way of being. I would like to add that this has happened to me in both the cultural and spiritual collectives. I like to think that our conga line might circle around and become our cultural collective.

On a more mundane level, Scheler describes *Psychic Contagion* (*Gefühlansteckung*) as a version of what the 60's hippies called a "contact high," which is where you walk into a gathering where everyone else is rejoicing, stimulated by circumstances or chemicals, and all of sudden you're high as well. I would throw in the yawn syndrome and the audience effect. The yawn syndrome is where some one in the room starts to yawn and somehow every one else starts to yawn. Psychologists call this entrainment. The same is true for applause; the more extreme the audiences reaction to what is on stage the more irresistible it is. Scheler includes mob violence as one of the syndromes of this overwhelming connection proclivity. We become conscious of having been swept up by this extra-consciousness only after the fact, realizing perhaps that we are already laughing

or crying or killing. History is full of examples of this communal energy gone bad, exploited, by tyrants, as with Hitler's amazing rallies, and KKK lynch mobs.

[And just when I think things are changing for the better I see the Trump mob storm the capital and Putin's army butchering children.]

HUSSERL

(1859-1938)

Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl was born in Prossnitz (Moravia). His parents were non-orthodox Jews. Husserl himself and his wife would later convert to Protestantism. The significance of his Jewishness to the German history of phenomenology will become clear after you read the chapter on his pupil Heidegger. For now let's just say the Nazi removal of Husserl from his perch in the German enlightenment left a blot on the escutcheon of idealism, a blot that looked like a swastika.

Edmund Husserl was the principal founder of phenomenology which influenced all its adjacent disciplines such as linguistics, sociology and cognitive psychology. "Phenomenology" is based on the distinction between noumena and phenomena which we saw in Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer and all the German Idealists. Phenomenology, as such, is still on the reason 'runway' downstream of the lift off point, but I think you will agree that Husserl's taxi path does lead to lift off.

Husserl's brand of idealism is called transcendental phenomenology. Naturally the word "transcendental" right next to "phenomenology" caught my eye, but the major reason for having Husserl in our conga line is his "intersubjectivity."

As the term indicates, the interior consciousness of all subjects is somehow connected by subterranean communication channels. Husserl's intersubjectivity channels are an a-priori feature of consciousness, which plunges us into a metaphysics paradox puddle: where does anything "a-priori" come from and why? Husserl does not spend time wading in the paradox puddle; he hops over the muddle in the puddle to the concept of connection which is more important, than how it got there. He does, however, have some insight on how it works.

In the regular course of interaction we naturally attribute "intention" to the acts of other subjects. Husserl points out that we instinctively put ourselves into the other's shoes. "Transcendental phenomenology" allows the objects of perception, which include other subjects, in our everyday life to "reconstitute themselves" in our own consciousness. (*Ideas* (1913). Within consciousness, "moments of matter" and "moment of quality" allow reflection and introspection to become projections of expected experience. Suddenly the perfectly natural process becomes magical and mystical.

By comparing the observed acts of others to our own, the object of perception becomes the subject of connection. The interior engine of self consciousness generates illusions of the consciousness of others, i.e. empathy energy. Husserl's egocentric inner self expects the same

of the other inner selves. This belief allows A to ascribe intention to the acts of B, while B is doing the same, both “appresentatively”, i.e., without having to deploy the mechanism of inference. This empathy then, is an instinctual, ‘knee jerk’ reaction; so this process is deeper than the powers of inference. It lives in a preconscious “lifeworld.”

Each community has its own flavor of “lifeworld”, called “homeworld.” (*Husserliana*, vol. VI, pp. 126-138, 140-145) “Lifeworld expectations “predelineate” a “world-horizon” of potential future experiences. This pre-process of inter subjectivity expectation prepares my extra-consciousness for communication before I enter a new room or a new country or new group of any size, or a new culture, or an old culture with which I am familiar.

These propensities underly the development of our language skills and other interpersonal tools, which rest on the system of expectation standards. These expectations follow the “lifeworld” system of intersubjective standards. Some of these standards are restricted to a particular culture or “homeworld.” A “homeworld” might be that underlying, collective unconsciousness compact “...on which normal Europeans, normal Hindus, Chinese, etc., agree...”

The “homeworld” is “a priori” in that it is “unconditionally valid for all subjects and

objects, (*Husserliana*, vol. VI, p. 142). Somehow this compact between consciousnesses has borders and yet like an unexplored sea extends to beyond those borders and underlies thoughts wherever minds are thinking. Husserl gives the example of some general concepts on which the thoughts of seemingly separate minds conflate universally: "... shape, motion, sense-quality" as well as our prescientific notions of "spatiotemporality", "body" and "causality," which are the basic axiomatic conceptions that provide the foundation for our understanding of all particular things (noumena) and specific concepts (phenomena).

In Husserl's view, it is precisely this "subjective-relative lifeworld", or environment, that provides the "grounding soil" of the more objective world of science (*Husserliana*, vol. VI, p. 134). It is for this reason that Husserl can be said to adhere to a version of both "realism" and "idealism" at the same time, a pasodoble that is essential to our conga line, which dances between reason and faith.

In order for me to be able to put myself into someone else's shoes and simulate his/ her perspective upon the surrounding spatio-temporal world, I cannot but assume that this world coincides with my own in some basics, even though the aspects under which the other subject represents the world must be different, as they depend on his/her own egocentric viewpoint. But for me to understand the difference between what I and my wife see

while looking out at the horizon, we must both believe that we are looking at the same sunset.

Hence, I must presuppose that the spatio-temporal objects forming my own world must exist independently of my subjective perspective; they must, in other words, be conceived of as part of an *objective* reality. Nevertheless the invisible diaphane that connects subjectivity is as real or unreal as the perceived objects that separate us.

You will recall my Cartesian paraphrase: “Cogito ergo *sumus*” = I think therefore we are. Neither Husserl nor Descartes agreed in so many words to join “us” in “sumus,” but both would agree that “intersubjectivity” (Husserl) makes us all part of “res cogitans” (Descartes), and so it is part of the “homeworld” which is part of our current “Lifeworld.” I’m not sure whether Husserl would call our conga line itself a ‘homeworld’ or a ‘lifeworld,’ but what’s in a name?

Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* contains a forceful attack against the labeling of psychologism, the ‘know- it-all’ would be monomaterialist science of consciousness. He agrees with Plato that this is a human belief system and as such is fallible, and that fallibility implies some infallible, ideal, unknowable truth. I am enlightened and inspired by Husserl’s discovery of the innate preconception power of consciousness which is key to intersubjectivity. It establishes connection as a reason for being,

and more importantly, establishes communication as the foundation for the modeling ability of consciousness, which brought us all the way to civilization and maybe beyond.

HEIDEGGER

(1889-1976)

I had trouble reading Being and Time; the book is a maze of invented terms which could have been simple everyday words. And so I turned to the audio book and listened for hours, hoping that audio dynamics of the reader would interpret some of the philosophical shibboleths. Shibboleth is Hebrew password designed to exclude Phillistines, who for some reason were unable to pronounce all the syllables in the word. My use of shibboleth in describing Martin Heidegger's prose may appear extreme, but I believe it is apt.

Heidegger and many of his ilk were not trying to reach the broader audience; in fact it seems they were trying, consciously, to exclude them. Kant, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer for example seem to want to be misunderstood by the commoner. It's as though the need to be extraordinary could only be satisfied by exceeding and excluding the ordinary. I too have invented terms in this book, but I took care to explain them and make sure they delivered some meaning. I don't believe in 'writing down,' which broadens the audience at the expense of the content, but there ought to be an equal and opposite critical term 'writing up' for unnecessarily excluding audience. If you're still reading, maybe I've hit the middle course, writing across.

It was not only Heidegger's idea to make philosophy and phenomenology an exclusive club. For eons there was an underlying mistrust of ordinary minds. Even Plato taught that ordinary minds were in need of supervision. Platonists are elitists and most philosophers were Platonists. But Plato also gave us Meno where Socrates demonstrates that an ignorant slave boy has the innate ability to understand geometry. That demonstrates that, for Plato, it is not the place of the philosopher to condemn ignorance but to enlighten it. The misguided are to be guided not misled. I don't have a problem with the existence of an elite as long as their altitude is used to enlighten. I'm not sure about Heidegger's altitude.

In 1919, Heidegger became Husserl's assistant at Freiberg university where he had the greatest respect for his mentor while making a substantial contribution to the ideas they shared. In fact, Being and Time was dedicated to Husserl, "in friendship and admiration."

In addition to his shibboleths, there is other evidence that Heidegger was an elitist. He enthusiastically embraced the top down structure of Naziism. In 1933, Heidegger joined the Nazi Party. There is evidence that Heidegger was not just a token Nazi; he gave a number of public speeches praising Hitler and the Nazi movement, which had a lot to do with his new position as Rector of Freiburg University. By

then, Husserl was not even allowed to visit his university, because he was a Jew.

Eventually Heidegger developed doubts about the Nazis, which does not appear to have anything to do with the persecution of the Jews.

Heidegger in addition to his praise of the Nazism also wrote *Contribution*, dethroning the Nazi leaders as false gods. According to Heidegger they became incapable of completing the historic mission of the exaltation of the German people. I could not find any evidence that Heidegger ever formerly denounced his mentor Husserl; nor could I find any evidence that he ever tried to help soften the effects of his exile.

After the war the tables turned. Heidegger's Nazi record had him banned from teaching until his former student and lover Hanna Arendt, one of my favorite thinkers and a persecuted German Jew, made a plea on his behalf. Needless to say this surprised both Semites and anti-Semites, but got Heidegger off the hook. I have spent some time looking into this strange love story; there's enough there for another book, which would show in the end that her rescue of Heidegger was prompted by philosophical rather than romantic motives. She was long over her puppy love with her teacher and was well established as an American intellectual, but somehow needed to preserve what she thought was Heidegger's important contribution to Western philosophy.

Just what is that? The short answer is that he connects different modes of being in and beyond time.

Heidegger creates a powerful amalgam of ideas and ideals from Aristotle, Kant, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Husserl. In addition to Heidegger's reshaping phenomenology and existentialism, he made a substantial contribution to metaphysics. Heidegger became interested in metaphysics from its very source, namely Aristotle's quest to unify all possible modes of Being, or 'is-ness', as seen in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: Heidegger translated this to *dasein*, a German word that literally means "being there."

Heidegger influenced modern European thought including Sartre's existentialism. His Platonic interest in the very nature of existence and what it means to exist is a restatement of ontology, the study of being, which reaches from his own complex critical relationship with Husserl's transcendental phenomenology all the way back to metaphysics in Aristotle and Plato. I thought it important enough to attempt a translation of his shibboleths for us phillistines, without aiming up or down.

Heidegger's simple addition of two letters to "being" is what it's all about; the two letter word is "as." *Being as*— is different from all the ontology that had gone before and different from all the phenomenology before and after, in that these two little letters, which

contextualize perception, also create a reason for existence. Or 'raison d'être' as the French existentialists might call it.

Through Heidegger's eyes, when we look at a boat, we see a boat- "as" something in which one can sail or a god *as someone* that one should worship. All objects are tools for our subjectivity and as such always occur in context. Thus a driver does not encounter a punctured tire as a lump of rubber of measurable mass; she encounters it **AS** damaged equipment, that is, the cause of her interrupted journey.

What we 'first' hear is never noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking wagon, the motor-cycle. It requires a very artificial and complicated frame of mind to 'hear' the wave form and frequency of a 'pure noise.' The fact that motor-cycles and wagons are what we proximally hear is the phenomenal evidence of Dasein, which Heidegger calls "Being-in-the-world."

In a blizzard of different special terms, Heidegger points out that it is in our nature to confuse, or blend, the the inside and outside realms. Common parlance miss-uses external terms for internal phenomena and vice versa. We talk of being in a mood rather than a mood being in us. This leads to the misconception that these moods are external, rather than internal, states. A mood "comes neither from 'outside' nor from 'inside', but arises out of

Being-in-the-world, as a way of such being”
(*Being and Time* 29: 176).

Heidegger’s interior has phases like the layers of knowledge we have seen in other epistemologies. Heidegger’s layers are understanding, speech and mood. ‘Speech’ includes all social interaction not just words. ‘Mood’ is affected by what we think is happening now and by ‘angst’ about what might happen next.

‘Understanding’ our existence is fraught with difficulties especially our refusal to ‘let it be’ - as the sixties hippy anthem advised. ‘Letting it be’ refers to keeping our hands off of being and not forcing it to be useful. “Go with the flow” is another hippy bromide. The flow leads to depths of understanding that most of us turn our backs on.

Does the table that I think I see before me exist? Does God exist? Does mind exist, as an entity distinct from body? We who ask these questions take for granted that we already know what it means ‘to exist,’ but Heidegger insists that we don’t; we have to drill down beneath that presupposition and consider what it means ‘to exist’?

According to Heidegger, the question of the meaning of Being has been forgotten by Western philosophy from Plato onwards. So Heidegger sets himself the task of recovering

the question of the meaning of Being, a pretty tall order.

“To Be or Not to Be” that is the ‘existential’ question. Only humans can think about what it means to be, to exist. If we look around at beings in general, from particles to planets, ants to apes, it is *human* beings *alone* who are able to question the meaning of existence. I am skipping the shibboleths and the scholarly scrabble game of terms, except for “ontics” and ontology. We have to zoom in on that.

At the risk of oversimplification, all the the different forms of being relate to the objects and subjects which exist at the other end, outside of our thoughts. Heidegger makes the point that one’s being does not exist on its own; one is a son or a mother or a banker or a Red Sox fan or an American or a Republican, etc.. These associations are part of being, being for others. Dasein (and so human beings as such) possess this depth of understanding whether they like it or not: it is a necessary characteristic of human beings, an a- priori structure of our existential constitution, not an exercise of our wills. In other words, we can choose what we do but not what we **are**.

We can try to ignore this depth of self understanding, but that would be to construct a ‘fallen’ false self, which is very prevalent amongst humans, but not inevitable. We choose to sink or float. If we think we’re born losers,

we're kidding ourselves. Heidegger says: we cannot be authentic and be low lives; we cannot tell the truth about our lack of truth to ourselves or anyone else; if it were true and we told it, we would begin to rise up, and then it wouldn't be true.

The point is there are no "born losers," so you have to get off your ass and do something about your life. We all know that, on some level, and that's what keeps us talking to each other about life; that's how communication occurs with all the pouting and doubting and shouting because we are eternal seekers. Human consciousness has an inborn a-priori metaphysical component, which includes the search for meaning. We are always on some level, even if unconscious, wondering what does it all mean.

Even if you are completely cynical and pragmatic, finding a meaning is better than no meaning, if only because it buys you another day to live and procreate the species, if that is all you are here to do. The search for meaning is like rolling a heavy rock up a steep hill, you have to keep pushing, or be crushed by the roll back, as in Camu's Sisyphian myth.

Heidegger agrees with our basic proposition that there has to be some point to life in order to keep pushing. Ascribing meaning to existence necessarily involves some concern and/or conjecture about non-

existence. “To be or not to be” ends with “not to be,” which brings us to death.

Even for those who manage to “Let it be,” looking down the road to the end is blinding. Death is incomprehensible, as we have suggested in an earlier section of this book. It is all but impossible for us to think about death. Heidegger’s insight into this blind spot is quite unique, and adds an opacity to the lens through which we view one of the nodes in our metaphysical triad: immortality. The dying of Others is not something which we experience in a genuine sense; at most we are always just ‘there alongside’. (*Being and Time* 47: 282)

While Dasein may offer no final explanation of death, Heidegger believes that an understanding of Dasein's relation to death sheds some light on both Dasein and death. Dasein understands death only through experiencing the death of others, which is bogus (in the original meaning of the word). We mourn the dear departed and miss their presence in the world, but that mourning does not translate to understanding what it would be like to be dead. Death does indeed reveal itself as a loss, but a loss to the living who still have no idea what that loss felt like to the deceased. And I would add: maybe they felt no loss at all; maybe a gain. I was at my aunt Josie’s death bed and the last thing she did was smile.

Death will always be something that happens elsewhere to someone else.

Nevertheless, when I contemplate my own 'not-being', it brings into focus my own 'being-able-to-be.' Hence my awareness of my own death as an omnipresent possibility discloses the authentic self. The contemplation of my own death makes me feel glad to be alive, even though my own death is still unimaginable.

The corollary of this inborn myopia is alienation where I cannot imagine a world without me in it, and this suddenly and always makes me feel that it's not my world; I'm not at home in this world. Alienation is part of the existential anxiety. (*Being and Time* 53: 310). This is why we need each other, 'Mitsein.' This comports with other ideas in the conga line and provides a unique foundation for communication.

Sartre adds a twist to Heidegger's 'Mitsein' (being together) in that the impression of me held by the other person is purely subjective and so I can make the other's perception of me supportive or suffer it as negative; it is entirely up to me. This gives me power over others as well as power to pat myself on the back or kick my self in the ass (self doubt is flexible). Sartre disagrees with one aspect of Heidegger's death view. Sartre points out that just as death cannot be actual for me, it cannot be one of my possibilities either, as Heidegger intends it to be. If Sartre is right, thinking about death is not what make me feel alive. Not caring about death is what makes me feel alive and courageous enough to

act. Action and will are based on not caring about death, rather than accepting it. This seems at first to be a distinction without a difference, but I will leave that for you to decide.

Sartre's belief in the importance of individual responsibility, condones freedom, one of the metaphysical nodes. It is, according to Sartre "bad faith" to try to avoid the fact that you always have a choice. For there to be "bad faith" there must be "good faith." Unfortunately there is no place for good faith in Sartre's existentialism, and that in my humble opinion is a blind spot. Existentialist like Sartre, according to Heidegger, avoid the painful viewing of the sun by burying their heads in the sand, but the sun still burns down and blisters their back sides. Sartre has been mentioned several times in this work and you might be wondering why he was not invited to the conga line. John Paul Sartre is a follower of Heidegger, but he does not follow the deep layer of Heidegger's "understanding." Nevertheless Sartre was an anti-materialist and a follower of Descartes. He renamed the Cartesian duality, mind/ mater as "being for itself" and "being in itself." Sartre separated subjects and objects, mind and matter and then connects subject to subjects in "being for others." But Sartre would not go so far as to connect consciousness to anything metaphysical, which is an obvious loose end. I think Sartre's God was shot down in World War II. I think he might have drowned in the theodicy paradox puddle. How could there

be a God who would do this or even let it happen; better to subscribe to Nietzsche and declare God is dead. Even though he is part of my own intellectual awakening, I have not given Sartre his own place in the conga line because of this blind spot.

Heidegger does not dodge the metaphysical triad, but neither does he impose it on others. Others are free to think what they will including divine thoughts. Heidegger asked the question of what it means to “be” but he does not provide an answer. That is because Heidegger believes it’s up to us to plumb the depths of Dasein; he believes the depth is there but will not tell us how deep. He will allow us to think sublime thoughts if that is what we will.

MERLEAU- PONTY

(1908-1961)

Maurice Jean Jacques Merleau-Ponty is a philosopher and leading proponent of existentialism and phenomenology in post-war France; he also made important contributions to the philosophy of art, history, language, nature, and politics.

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy stew includes, chunks of phenomenology, bits of Gestalt psychology, psychoanalysis, Marxism, and Saussurian linguistics, all seasoned with adaptations from conga line philosophers such as: Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Bergson, Husserl and Heidegger.

Merleau-Ponty provides yet another bridge across the Kantian chasm between phenomena and noumena. The importance of Merleau-Ponty's bridge is that it has multiple lanes, allowing for two way traffic to flow simultaneously in both directions. Merleau-Ponty's "Intertwining Chiasm," bends and blends the two realities in keeping with Husserl and Heidegger.

Merleau-Ponty's "intersubjectivity," like Heidegger's, has the receiver, (perceiver) imagining the sender. If 'chiasm' is a crisscrossing or a bi-directional exchange between the sensing body and the "flesh" of things outside, then a potential must exist

between the sensing body and sensed things; that is what makes their connection possible. What looks like a space between the toucher and the thing being touched is actually a complex, invisible, connecting synapse. Our subjectivity is never located purely in either our tangibility or in our touch-ability, but in the synapse he calls “chiasm” intertwining these two states.

The chiasm connection between touching and touched is never statically balanced; convergent and divergent energies are constantly in flux. This means the impact of the world on us may at any point be greater or less than our impact on the world. The interdependence of subjects and objects, humanity and the ‘things’ of the world, permits neither fusion nor absolute distance, but rather an embodied *‘inherence’*.

According to Merleau-Ponty, this unique blending, this inherence, applies not only to touching and being touched. It can provide us a new way to view mind and body; subject and object; self and world, as well as many other related dualisms, all ‘chiasmically’ entangled.

Merleau-Ponty published two major theoretical texts during his lifetime: The Structure of Behavior (1942) and Phenomenology of Perception (1945). Other important publications include two volumes of political philosophy, Humanism and Terror (1947) and Adventures of the Dialectic (1955),

as well as two books of collected essays on art, philosophy, and politics: Sense and Non-Sense (1948) and Signs (1960/1964). Two unfinished manuscripts appeared posthumously: The Prose of the World (1969/1973), drafted in 1950-51; and The Visible and the Invisible (1964), on which he was working at the time of his death. Lecture notes and student transcriptions of many of his courses at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France have also been published.

He was associated with the existentialist movement through his friendship with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. Unlike some of his existentialist colleagues, Merleau-Ponty is well versed in worldly knowledge and science, as well as modern empirical research from many disciplines including, but not limited to, psychology and ethology, anthropology, psychoanalysis, linguistics, and the arts. His scientific credentials have lent credibility to his idealism for empiricists and grounding to his idealism for empiricists. He criticized the idealists for having too short a runway before lift off, and he criticized the empiricists for having too long a runway with no lift off.

In *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty rejects abject materialism which he calls “physiological atomism,” as applied to sensation/ perception/conception. Pavlov’s theory of conditioned reflexes and other such primitive inductive behavioral theories rely on

“gratuitous hypotheses lacking experimental justification and cannot effectively explain brain function or learning.”

He points out that, altogether, scientific experiments on brain damage and aging demonstrate that the localization hypotheses must be rejected in favor of a global process of neural organization.

This resonates with our earlier discussion of the philosophical implications of neuroplasticity and the suspected regeneration of my senior hippocampus. Merleau-Ponty knew that neurons are not purely material but rather a *“field of forces”... apportioned to modes of preferred distribution.*” This fits nicely with Whitehead’s force field of *“incessant activity.”*

In The Visible and the Invisible, Merleau-Ponty is not ready to become a monist on either side of the Kantian chasm, or should we say ‘chiasm’; instead he offers a dynamic distinction, like Bergson’s *“flux,”* which then magically weaves a connection as well as a distinction between mind and matter. In the conga line we’ve seen numerous examples of dynamic interplay of the objective/ subjective. Merleau-Ponty’s dynamism adds a unique law of self consciousness whereby the two poles (perceived and perceiver) must be reversible, or *“recursive,”* in order to have the flux. In other words, the experience of touching cannot be understood without reference to the reverse experience of being touched. Signal processing

for all creatures with perception equipment involves a sending subject, a reflecting object, and a receiving brain and mind.

Merleau-Ponty classifies this processing in three tiers of complexity. Yet another layer cake: starting with the most basic *syncretic* and moving up to *amovable*, and topped with *symbolic*.

Syncretic processes are available even to ants and toads, as a-priori instincts that come with membership in the species.

Amovable processes are oriented toward signals of varying complexity that are not a function of the organism's instinctual equipment and can lead to genuine learning. Here the organism, guided by its survival goals, responds to signals as relational structures rather than as objective properties of things. This resonates with Heidegger's "being as." Living things are not oriented toward an objective world but toward an environment that is organized meaningfully in terms of their subjective and specific vital goals. This signal processing is available to all subjects including some lower life forms.

Symbolic behavior is limited to humans. Beyond *amovable* behavior attached to immediate functionality, the '*symbolic*' layer puts you high enough to interact with virtual, expressive, and *recursive connections* across structures. This recursivity enables such human

symbolic activities as language and expression, the creation of new structures beyond those set by vital needs, and with this comes the power of choosing (i.e. free will) and varying points of view, which make truth a ‘relative objectivity.’

Objectivity is relative because of what we called the deception of perception in the “phenomenal” world. Perception, so often deceived, is embarrassed and has a tendency to forget its past and its limitations and even cover its own tracks in the world of ‘noumena’; this results in more frequent perceptual occlusions in the “phenomenal” field. The scientific obsession with precision and measurements of the observed further occludes any understanding of the process of observation. Once this scientific obsession” is applied to the body and the perceptual processes, the “faith” in perception explodes into “confused appearances” that require methodical reinterpretation, and eventually result in unbridged dualism, solipsism, and skepticism.

Neither the natural sciences nor psychology provide an adequate clarification of this loss of perceptual faith, which undermines any understanding of intersubjectivity, or the shared collective relative, truth. We cannot abide such a desultory co-existence. What to do?

Merleau-Ponty sees communication with others, in every form, as essential to the transformation and perpetuation of our mis-

perceived lives. The resulting interactive “theory of truth” is clearly based on Husserl’s notion of intersubjectivity. Expression, language, and *symbolism* are the key to this theory of truth and provide the foundation for a philosophy of “transcendental” humanism.

The study of perception alone could only provide a “bad ambiguity” which mixes “finitude and universality,” according to Merleau-Ponty, whereas the the phenomenon of communication creates a “good ambiguity,” which I called “communogenesis” in my first book Communication the Living End, (which I have already cited, possibly too many times). This communogenic “good ambiguity” becomes the engine of communication in all its forms (which I suggested before I knew about Merleau-Ponty).

Please don’t think I’m plugging my old book which is long out of print. If I’m plugging anything it would be cognitive consonance . Communication the Living End, (ibid) was published in 1988 when the internet was still “the information super highway” between a few institutions, but, somehow, I could imagine it in homes and in shirt pockets. However, I had no idea that in my lifetime, it would be all over the world connecting every kind of thought in every form imaginable. Merleau-Ponty asked for it and somehow it was delivered.

WITTGENSTEIN

(1889- 1951)

Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein provides us with a new spin on philosophy. His spin is a word pool which sinks conceptual precision but rises again with a new quantum, philosophical principle of uncertainty. At least that's the way I see it, and Wittgenstein would not disagree.... could not disagree, by virtue of his principle of uncertainty.

According to Wittgenstein, there is no way to prove or disprove any speculation about this or any other belief system. Of course, that very proposition is taken down by its own word spin, like the famous conundrum "I am a perennial liar." If its' true it falsifies itself, and if it's false it verifies the opposing truth. This removal of the roof and walls of the temple of truth sounds like architectural madness, but actually it makes truth seeking (philosophy) an open air experience for everyone.

Some scholars see Wittgenstein's 'wordpool' as a final spinout to the end of philosophy. I don't think that at all. First of all it is a simple restatement of Platonic fallibility and comports with Whitehead's idea that philosophy is a quest with no final destination. For our purposes, it makes philosophy a shorter runway with a much longer lift off point. I should point out that Wittgenstein never said anything about 'lift off,' but I think

he would agree with my metaphysical ending to the reason runaway.

In Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein lifts off and looks down on philosophy including his own earlier work. He makes the point that there is no single philosophical system that is unambiguous. Ambiguity is systematic, but systematic ambiguity (I read as human fallibility) guarantees man's freedom and autonomy, and becomes the precondition for faith. "Seeing as" leaves room for the transcendental in the interpretation of events.

There is no question that his principle of philosophical uncertainty rules out dogma and encourages speculation, and I think that includes our best guess, spiritualism.

Both sides of any speculative interaction need some metaphorical bridge, some shared heuristic sensibility. Wittgenstein's philosophical jujitsu proves to us that there must be a heuristic common language by showing us that a private language could not exist. If language cannot be private it must be only public. That's tautologically true or in Kantian terms "analytic." To disprove this proposition you would have to use the very public language you're trying to disprove.

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* §243 does not connect this shared language to any universal consciousness, but it seems to me

the connection is ineluctable. Neither of us could ever deny the existence of communication. Communication is here to stay as a corollary of that same proposition that negates private language.

We are hardwired for communication. We cannot live without connection; disconnected we die. As obvious as this seems so many are blind to it, which is why somewhere in the world we have one suicide victim every minute of every day, including three of Wittgenstein's four brothers, who could find no reason to continue playing the game of life.

The game of life has to be seen as a challenge not a curse and there has to be some satisfaction in meeting that challenge, even joy in rising above the suffering. I don't know how much Wittgenstein himself enjoyed the challenge, but his self inflation must have caused an individual ASCENSION that kept him a float in the seismic shifting in thought that went on in his time. He was a heroic prisoner of war in the first world war, refusing to be ransomed unless all his fellow prisoners could also be released. At the end of his life he handled his suffering with what must be considered a high floating spiritual altitude; he must have risen above it all.

Wittgenstein believed that the game was the same for everyone even though different groups use different terms. His Philosophical

Investigation, (p66 et seq.) points out that games can mean many different things to different people in different places at different times and at the same time be the same in all places at the same time. The only way for the word “game” to have any meaning is to notice the “family resemblance” between the different uses of the word in the various contexts. For the game to continue, these hidden similarities must somehow resonate between communication partners across space and time, and that is what underlies what would otherwise be an incomprehensible generality in the word “game.”

I believe that is a new metaphysical communication theory albeit inarticulate. Wittgenstein could not, by his own mandate, object to my making him the ‘founder of metaphysical communication theory.’ I should confess to a possible bias in choosing Wittgenstein for this title; the bias, if any, would be the result of conclusions already reached in my earlier book about Wittgenstein’s family.

(WARNING: my book, Resurrection, available on saltafide.com, is more of a historical fiction, sci-fi novel, based on historical fact, where we meet Wittgenstein and his family through the eyes of a modern apostle who time travels back to Vienna to interact with Wittgenstein’s amazing father and explore the enigmatic suicides of his three brothers. It makes mention of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, but that is not what the book is about.)

We have to put together Wittgenstein’s metaphysical belief system ourselves from the hearsay of student notes and the interpretative

writings of followers. He did write, early in his career and then again at the end.

Wittgenstein's early work was interpreted by some members of the Vienna Circle as friendly to their empiricism, but they were surprised by Wittgenstein's later work. After World War II, he became much more supportive of metaphysical philosophy and even theology. Wittgenstein talks of God as a putative creator who would not have created a world in which elemental propositions were true and also contradicted by contrary propositions. For Wittgenstein, philosophy can never answer the question "Does God exist." Wittgenstein said, in so many words, that to ask whether God exists is not as important as it is to wonder about praising and praying. More like James, Wittgenstein sought to displace traditional metaphysical debate and arguments over theism and its alternatives, and to focus, instead, on the way language about God, the soul, prayer, resurrection and the afterlife function in the minds of worshipers. This is metaphysical pragmatism.

In his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, physics becomes a metaphor. There are molecular propositions and atomic facts in Wittgenstein's collider which generates a probable quantum energy, in spite of the uncertainty. He provides us with "elements" in the form of elemental propositions which are at the basis of all our propositions, and the process involving "molecules" which contain

“atomic” level propositions and facts. In that same book Wittgenstein points out that Philosophy is not a theory but an activity, which may be seen as above science or below science but not beside science. I believe this means that philosophy and science are not on the same level. You can put it down or up but not in the same realm. Putting philosophy above science makes it metaphysics.

Wittgenstein also sees beyond the cause and effect at the basis of the scientific method. In his words ‘only superstition could propose a causal nexus between current and future events.’ No one knows what’s going to happen next, which is to say: ‘only God knows.’ In this same work, Wittgenstein distinguishes between tautology and contradiction. At the risk of over simplifying, he says ‘tautology’ boils off into nonsense as a result of internal collisions; whereas ‘contradiction’ breaks up propositions into sur-reality as a result external collision.

Like Scheler, Wittgenstein was a German Jew who embraced Catholicism. For Wittgenstein it came much later in his life. According to his biographers, Wittgenstein spent his last days with a Catholic priest and chose a Catholic burial. I believe Wittgenstein would have been pleased with the direction of our conga line and the fact that it was made up of individuals thinking for themselves, who freely chose a spiritual path. Distinguished piers such as Godel, Moore, Russel, Whitehead and others, consider Wittgenstein to be the greatest

philosopher of the 20th century, and that must be because he travelled through and beyond the semantic maze of logical positivism, epistemology, psychology, linguistics and mathematics. There are others who would not put Wittgenstein in the philosophy hall of fame. Wherever else we put him, I feel sure that he belongs in our conga line. If for no other reason than his acceptance of Christ with his last breath.

DEWEY

(1859-1952)

John Dewey shaped my thinking before I knew who he was. In my formative years, I somehow wound up in a Dewey experiment in higher education. At the dawn of Western civilization, teachers were philosophers, and philosophers were teachers; somehow we drifted away from that “academia.” Dewey did his best to restore that communal dialectic. Dewey is famous for discovering the breach between education and philosophy and trying to reconnect it.

Unlike Wittgenstein, Dewey wrote more than 40 books and hundreds of articles and founded, and /or headed up several significant social institutions, such as American Philosophical Association and the American Psychological Association, to name a few.. Dewey is one of the clearest examples of a philosopher who wished to make a difference in the here and now, but was he a metaphysician?

If he had a bumper sticker on his car, it would have said “God helps those who help themselves.” Like everyone else in our conga line. Dewey built bridges between faith and reason; between the real and the ideal.

Dewey was influenced by William James and what I have called the American Cambridge Circle (James, Royce, Whitehead, etc.) both in their metaphysical and physical speculations.

Remember James was a psychologist before anyone knew what psychology was. Dewey followed in those footsteps right up to the 'lift off' point in the reason runway and then went beyond, up and away.

Like Merleau-Ponty, Dewey insisted that humans were different than Pavlov's dog and that the simple minded stimulus response theory would never explain consciousness. Dewey wrote:

"The reflex arc is not a comprehensive, or organic unity, but a patchwork of disjointed parts, a mechanical conjunction of unallied processes" ... "the model falsifies the nature of genuine interaction; organisms do not passively receive stimuli and then actively respond; rather, organisms continuously interact with environments in cumulative and modifying ways." (RAC, EW5: 97).

Like Bergson and many in the conga line, for Dewey consciousness is a subject not an object, a verb not a noun. Dewey demonstrates how use of the word 'mind' varies in common parlance to denote and connote states of consciousness and active behavior:

"I am reminded of... I keep her in mind... I mind my manners... I mind the child... I mind the traffic stop."

Dewey goes on to insist that consciousness is never isolated from the world of other subjects and objects, but is always an integral part of all. (AE, LW10: 267-68) In this

connection he takes Wittgenstein's non-private language objection and makes it into a communal dialectic. (*EN*, LW1: 147).

It is clear that Dewey understood that there is more to consciousness than can be demonstrated in the lab. Would he go so far as to connect it to a soul of any kind? Dewey talks about the supernatural but not in terms of any dogma established by organized religions. There has to be something religious about the human condition, but, as Dewey points out, religiosity has nothing to do with organized religion.

For Dewey dogma is actually a barrier to religiosity and spiritualism in that it freezes something that is meant to flow continuously. Dewey was profoundly influenced by James's metaphor of consciousness as a constantly moving "stream of thought" (*FAE*, LW5: 157). Nevertheless, Dewey did not believe a fully adequate account of consciousness could be captured in words, which sounds like Wittgenstein.

Dewey thinks the church dogma gets in the way of the dynamic communal dialectic. However, in my reading of *A Common Faith*, it appeared to me that it would be alright to have churches if they help rather than hinder this communal dialectic.

Dewey also wants to leave room for our notion of God to be a dynamic process, like

Hegel's three step development, where our original thesis of the punishing, nasty God spawns its own antithesis, a wise, good and eventually loving God. Maybe the new synthesis could be my inner teacher, Christ voice. Dewey says "*It is this active relation between ideal and actual to which I would give the name God*". (ACF, LW9: 34; see also 29-30)

It is clear to me, and Dewey, and hopefully to you, that the logic runaway will not get you off the *rock* without a leap of faith at the lift off point. Any good leap has to be preceded by a rhythmic set of steps. Dewey sees that rhythm as the dynamic of spiritualism. The "common" in Dewey's "common faith" is all about a dynamic spiritual subterranean stream of universal consciousness. It's ok with Dewey and it's ok with me that God may not be the anthropomorphic figure on a cloud hurling lightening bolts; and I'm ok with the fact that I may never be able to paint the right picture of God on the stained glass window; and it would be ok with everyone in the conga line if we don't have any stained glass at all. Now, I'm not breaking church windows or turning temples into swimming pools like Stalin did. In my book, if Gothic arches and temple worship works for you that's ok too. Let's just leave out the bloody sacrifices.

POPPER

(1902- 1994)

Sir Karl Raimund Popper was born in Vienna, and, like Wittgenstein, was influenced by both the Vienna Circle, and the British Cambridge circle; like Wittgenstein, he was lauded by Bertrand Russell. Popper was knighted in 1965.

Popper did not ask to join the conga line; in fact he is here only as an example of those philosophers who would be forced to join the conga line, if only by implied metaphysics.

For Popper, the growth of human knowledge proceeds from our problems and our attempted solutions. These attempts involve the formulation of theories which must go beyond existing knowledge and therefore require a leap of the imagination. I have used the words speculation and guess for this same leap.

According to Popper's "evolutionary epistemology," like Bergson's "creative evolution," the growth of human knowledge is an objective evolutionary process which involves the creation and promulgation of new problem-solving theories, which are then subjected to challenge and change. Popper, is a historical *indeterminist*, insofar as he holds that history does not evolve in accordance with intrinsic laws or principles, and that there is no such thing as historical necessity. Popper would

not buy into Fichte/Hegel's three step tango: thesis, antithesis, synthesis, because he is against historical determinism. We can and do make theoretical progress in science by subjecting our theories to critical scrutiny, and abandoning those which have been falsified, but that progress was not pre-ordained.

I wonder how we gauge the progress to be progress, if there is no pre-ordained good-better-best.

Popper's answer is that the testing of the solution must involve a real world with pure facts, pure facts which by definition must be both within and beyond our knowledge. A knowledge that includes the unknown is unimaginable. What we know is the result of the dynamic flux of experience; neither the observed or the observer is static, always changing.

I agree that a knowledge which includes the unknown is unimaginable at any given point in time, but that doesn't not mean that it does not exist and might become imaginable at some later time. Using Popper's dynamic flux what is imaginable is constantly changing.

I think Popper would have to agree with that in light of his confrontation of Hume's traditional empiricism. Popper points out that the long standing traditional idea that universal scientific laws are in some way finally confirmable by experiences folds in on itself,

because those experiences are infinitely variable and completely unpredictable. This is trying to prove a constant with a variable. For Popper, traditional empiricism was posing a false constant as backdrop for variable proof. Again I have to inject some Platonic jiu-jitsu: For a “constant” to be “false” there must be a true constant. Plato calls that supernatural; Popper won’t name it.

He replaces the notion of absolute truth with falsification and utility tests. After the falsification test, according to Popper, the surviving theory should be the most useful one, in the sense of possessing the highest level of predictive power. Popper also says the more theories to choose from the better. Popper demonstrates that the more *improbable* a theory is, the better it is scientifically, because probability and utility are inversely proportionate. In other words, the more far out the theory the more likely it is to be the most useful.

What’s the difference between falsification and verification? There is a difference that we never thought about before Popper. Falsification is simply a process of elimination; you throw out all the obviously bent and broken sticks and stones and you keep the ones that look better than the ones you threw out, better in the sense that they are more suited for the task at hand.

Judging suitability must be built into human consciousness and that road leads again to metaphysics.

Instead of heading full throttle to the lift off point, Popper backs down the logic runway in reverse. Once Popper gets to the wheels up point, in reverse, it is not clear whether he is able perform a backward lift off; he admits:

“all knowledge is provisional, conjectural, hypothetical—no universal theories of science can ever be conclusively established.”

Popper is right at the same Platonic wheels up point, where all human fallibility must reach up into the the known/ unknown supernatural perfection. But instead of looking up like Plato, Popper looks around, for a pragmatic consensus of perfection.

Popper’s perfection is defined as that which is most useful. Everyone would have to agree on what is “useful,” and for that to happen there must be a universal consensus. And how can that occur with out a universal consciousness?

What’s the difference between useful and perfect? Wittgenstein would say it’s just word pool spin. Verification implies some underlying, unknown but knowable ad hoc standards. But standards are abstractions; I must point out that in both cases, the solutions are fruits of the imagination, not only yours but also from other minds which happen to be around at the time.

All these consciousnesses are sharing something, not making it up out of nothing. Nothing is unimaginable as a source for standards.

So Poppers mysticism lies in the magic of connection; so does mine. Here again, we see the phenomenological deception of perception creating the need for communication partners, as in James, Royce, Bergson, and Husserl and even Heidegger.

Popper believes that the development of human knowledge cannot be explained by physicalism, which seeks to reduce all mental processes and states to material ones. Popper decries the traditional dualism, but not as a materialistic monist. He goes it one better than dualism; instead of two realms, like Merleau-Ponty, Popper proposes three realms which he calls “Three Worlds,” namely: ontology, with physical states and processes (world 1) ; the mental world (world 2), and objective; and a higher knowledge (world 3). Popper’s third world contains languages, tales and stories, religious myths, scientific theories, mathematical constructions, songs and symphonies, art and architecture and other conceptual abstractions. This is very much like Merleau-Ponty’s “*symbolic*” upper layer.

World 3 must be connected to some otherworldly perfection because it must have some standard by which it distinguishes the works of Mike the barber’s haircuts and the

marble curls on Michelangelo's *The Dying Slave*. Popper takes Michelangelo's sculpture *The Dying Slave* as an illustrative example of a world 3 concept, embodied in a block of marble which had to be quarried by lesser thinkers, world 2 engineers, and shipped to the studio by 'world 1' truckers, but could never have happened without the inspiration of the world 3 Michelangelo.

Popper's world 3 spawned, the American Constitution, Shakespeare's tragedies, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Newton's theory of gravitation. Each one of these, he contends, is a world 3 subjective object that transcends both its physical, world 1 embodiments and its world 2 cognitive origins. Without a Platonic verticality, I don't see how else Popper's three worlds stack up. If there is a higher and lower level there must be an up and if there is an up there must be a zenith. I call that Zenith divine; he calls the most useful.

For Popper, the borders of these levels are ambiguous and, for him, that is important. This ambiguity is a dynamic that provides the energy to go back and forth and up and down between the mundane and the sublime. That coming and going makes life something more than a struggle for survival; there is joy attached to every ASCENSION. Self inflation is key to self ASCENSION in Popper's vertically layered words.

One weird twist in Popper's altitude is that this ability to ASCEND is inborn in all the species, not just humans. We saw this trans species sublimity earlier in Fechner. It is not clear whether Popper and Fechner had any surface connection, or whether it was underground cognitive consonance; so we have that in common.

Popper's examples of these inspired constructions by non humans include reefs built by corals, hives built by bees, dams built by beavers and the atmospheric effects yielded by plants. This, Popper contends, is the same 'world 3' inspired modeling ability that is found in human beings. Sounds like Fechner's pantheism.

Popper uses the word 'holism' to describe human social groupings that are greater than the sum of their members. These groups are subject to their own independent laws of development; they act on their human members and shape their destinies. Like the communities of James, Royce, Scheler.

Popper guesses that imaginative theorizing and knowledge might improve over time but insists that there is no guarantee.

Nevertheless I must point out that for their to be improvement, however it comes about, there has to be an absolute perfection somewhere. For there to be a good, and a better, there has to be a best. Popper never

acknowledges that directly, but how could he possibly deny it?

The same is true for Popper's prediction that the totalitarian regimes will ultimately fall prey to our innate rationality and be proven to be based on false assumptions. There has to be a truth for there to be false assumptions, and where does that truth come from? Popper's belief that only right not might will survive the falsification test, I think, implies a divine truth and therefore a God. He may never have used those words but I don't see how else he can explain his prophecy.

Popper argues against the propriety of long term, large-scale planning of social structures (like Nazism and Communism and maybe even Democracy) based on the fact that the underlying progress is not guaranteed. Progress is based on future knowledge which we cannot possess now and may not have in the future. Dogma which tells us the right thing to do is also subject to falsification. The positive task of increasing social and personal happiness should then be left to individual citizens who may of course act collectively to that end. The anti-dogma insures the rights of the individual to step out and criticize leaders and falsify religious intolerance and scientific determinism and political tyranny. It also promotes critical discussion and argument rather than coercion.

Popper acknowledges that human history has been advanced by *the growth of*

human knowledge, and it is extremely likely that this will continue to be the case—all the empirical evidence suggests that the link between the two is progressively consolidating. However, if the future holds any new discoveries or any new developments in the growth of our knowledge, they are not guaranteed and therefore it is impossible for us to predict the future development of human history.

Expecting new scientific knowledge to occur at the same rate, based on the history of current knowledge, assumes a deterministic forward moving thrust in human consciousness. Even if “forward” is not guaranteed, there has to be a metaphysical direction for there to be a physical forward.

Popper would agree that there has to be freedom for us to choose the right path, and I don't see how he could disagree that for there to be a right path for everyone, there must be someone, or something supernatural that made it “right.” The right path for Popper leads to the open society.

The open society, as conceived of by Popper, may be defined as an association of free individuals respecting each other's rights within the framework of mutual protection supplied by the state, and achieving, through the making of responsible, rational decisions, a growing measure of humane and enlightened life. That puts us somewhere between the *rock* and the

soft place, and the challenge of making things better for ourselves and others. I'm sure Popper never intended his theories as a justification for Christianity, but they are, and that's why Popper is in the conga line, like it or not. Christianity passes both the "falsification" and "usefulness" tests with flying colors, and Popper's "world 3" is really the only way to explain how a dozen illiterate fisherman could have convinced billions of people for thousands of years to believe that a Christ, born without conception, murdered without protection and resurrected without detection, could have changed the battleship world into Love boat.

Popper is a good example of a reluctant philosopher forced into our the conga line by implication. There are too many of those to justify separate chapters for each, and so, I lump them all together in a couple of chapters called 'Apologists,' and 'Gurus.'

HICK

(1922-2012)

One of the thrills of philosophy for me is the logical jiu-jitsu, like we saw with Plato, and Descartes and Wittgenstein. John H Hick has a masterful jiu-jitsu move for the logical positive objections to the metaphysical belief in immortality, which is precisely what brought him to the tail end of the conga line, that and a few more inexplicable “coincidences,” which continue to push me to side step off the path to marvel at fate and wonder if coincidence could possibly be unintentional.

On meeting my new absent partner, John Hick, I discovered that we both were trained as lawyers, both at Cornell, both named John, both of us owe a great debt to Kant and Wittgenstein, who was at Cornell and left behind a ‘Center for Wittgensteinian thought,’ which neither of us knew anything about, consciously, while we were at Cornell, or while we searched for the divine.

Something brought us together; whether or not it was intentional, I am grateful to whatever or whoever to have discovered Hick’s eschatological verification.

Hick accepts the logical positive falsification test, for argument’s sake, and then turns it on itself. His philosophical jiu-jitsu proves that the rationalism at the heart of atheism is irrational.

He asks us to imagine a theist and an atheist walking toward the end of the road of life; one believes there is an after life and the other believes that there is nothing.

Only one can be correct.

If the believer is correct, his faith is rewarded.

However, if the atheist is correct, there is nothing at the end the road and no place to stand to make the point.

“Nothing” is an impossible ending.

APOLOGISTS

You know by now that faith and reason have been uncomfortable bed fellows for millennia. This tension generated centuries of philosophical squabble up until the time the Catholic Church attempted a hostile takeover of philosophy. At which point they laid down the law, whereby any beliefs held without the stamp imprimatur would be stomped out of the holder on the rack or burned away over an open flame.

Long before Christianity dominated the Roman Empire, the earliest Christians were called apologists. The writings of these scholars came to be called 'apologetics. The term apologist stuck and now can be applied to anyone who would defend the faith against rational doubt

The emboldened heretics on the other side of the debate have several names, skeptics, cynics, rationalists, atheists, agnostics, etc..

One of the major bones of contention between the two camps is called 'evidentialism.' Evidentialism is the view that for a person to be justified in some belief, there must be some observable evidence for the belief. Moreover, evidentialists often contend that the degree of confidence in a belief should be proportional to the evidence. The evidentialist argument applied to the existence of God is often referred to as the "hiddenness of God" argument, which

goes something like this: if the God of Christianity exists, he would be far more evident than he is; the fact that a good God does not make its 'Godself' available to good and earnest seekers is evidence that such a God does not exist.

I like the Kierkegaard idea whereby even if those Christian beliefs are shown to be absurd, that absurdity is the spring board for the leap of faith.

Christian teachings about the trinity, incarnation, and the resurrection of Christ, revelation, and more have been the topics of a continuing debate in Western civilization. Apologists all the way up through the Cambridge Platonists in the seventeenth century and on to to twentieth century continue the argument, which for me should have ended with the idea that an infinite God cannot be defined by a finite minds. I think my argument in the first section of this book where I point out that "seeing is believing" leaves too much essential truth "unseen and unbelieved" makes the point, and, if not, I would repeat here the earlier quoted words of my sixth grade teacher, Sister Mary Carlotta: "The lord works in strange ways his wonders to perform."

That being said, I must tell you about one last answer to this evidentialist paradox which fell into my lap out of the blue, as it were, from a cop show. I was sitting in a doctors office where I overheard a rookie cop on a TV cop show concluding that the suspect had never

been at the crime scene since no forensic evidence could be found at the scene. And then it came, the wisdom of the ages out of the mouth of the TV sergeant:

“the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.”

Imagine that level of wisdom which somehow found its way into a TV cop show script, and somehow popped out just at that moment when I needed it.

If not divine; it's at least spooky.

That unknown TV writer now tops my list of apologists, which if you're interested follows on the next page.

(For a blow by blow account of the argument with a list of all the players, see *The Routledge Companion to Theism*, Taliaferro, Harrison, & Goetz 2012)

APOLOGISTS

NAME	CATEGORY	NAME	CATEGORY
Butler, Joseph	Cambridge Platonists	Clark, K	Reformed epistemology
Paley, William	Cambridge Platonists	VanArragon	Reformed epistemology
Taylor, A.E	20TH century British	Menuge,Angus	Reformed epistemology
Tennant, F. R	20TH century British	Bergmann, M	Reformed epistemology
Temple, William	20TH century British	Wolterstorff, N	Reformed epistemology
Lewis, H.D.	20TH century British		
Ewing, A.C.	20TH century British		
Hepburn, Ronald	20TH century British		
Mackie, J.L	20TH century British		
Flew, Antony	20TH century British		
Gale, Richard	20TH century British		
Rowe, William	20TH century British		
Martin, Michael	20TH century British		
Oppy, Graham	20TH century British		
Schellenberg, J.	20TH century British		
Draper, Paul	20TH century British		
Swinburne, Ri	evidentialism.		

GURUS

East and West agree that thought matters, even though thought isn't matter and matter isn't thought.

Eastern wisdom acknowledges both realms but keeps them separate. I am not a scholar of Eastern philosophy and this is not a book about Eastern metaphysics, but I thought some mention was warranted if only by way of comparative analysis.

One notable Hindu thinker, who would have been included in the conga line if I could have found a bit more information, was Sankar (788- 820 AD). His interpretation of Atman and Brahman and his insistence that they are not separate but are one and the same, is quite revolutionary in Eastern thought, and resonates with many in our conga line. For him, multiplicity is part of the illusion or Maya which, if not penetrated by spiritual knowledge, causes a life of suffering. 'Nescience' or ignorance is the result of Maya which causes 'upadhis,' a refraction of reality and the illusion of multiplicity. Spiritual knowledge brings it all together again. His philosophy of the confluence of consciousnesses and the melding of the inner and outer universe resonates completely with our conga line.

Not all Sankar's fellow Hindus saw the flow from complexity to unity. Hindu worshipers continued to distinguish and deify

the horrific forces of nature and pray to each separately, which may well have been the reason for Buddha stepping out of the suffering caused by such a fractured pantheon of deities.

The Buddha did not set out to define the supernatural or even suggest or deny its existence. His was a do-it-yourself philosophy/psychology for making things more tolerable on the *rock*, which is not to say there is no *soft place*. That would be mono-materialist, which Buddha was not. His teachings suggest that consciousness is beyond the material world; in that sense, it must be metaphysics.

Buddhist teachings are preserved in texts known as the *Nikāyas* or *Āgamas*, and, as I said, they concern the quest for liberation from suffering. While the ultimate aim of the Buddha's teachings is to help individuals attain the good life, his analysis of the source of suffering leads to philosophical speculation on how we acquire knowledge about the world and our place in it.

Like Judaism, Eastern spiritualism precedes Christ. Vedas date back to 1500 BC and Upanishads to 800 BC and Buddha's teachings to 550 BC. It was a long time before Christ came along smack dab in the middle of East and West, geographically and philosophically.

In the first half of the pre-Christian millennium, in the East and the West,

polytheism was the prevailing 'sensus divinitatis' (John Calvin's idea that all humans have inborn sense of the divine).

In the middle of the millennium Parmenides and others including Plato for some 'reason' found it necessary to unify the multiples. I say for some 'reason', it may have been beyond reason, some indigenous aspect of consciousness that houses the instinct for unity and universality as well as divinity.

The Hebrews were not actually monotheistic to begin with. They were the chosen children of one particular God, but the opposing Gods of their enemies were real contestants in the battle of the super powers for territory.

For whatever reason, the divine division was more splintered in the East and the middle east and had to be brought together by Western philosophy and Christianity. The monotheism, the 'singularity,' seems to be a Western vision that eventually travelled East.

Of course, the East had its missionaries, as well. Buddha spent a lot of time proselytizing, long before Paul, as did Mohammed, long after Paul. But the idea of the one God didn't get around to the East until St. Paul met the risen Christ who told him to go forth and teach all nations, or maybe, the whole thing was Paul's invention. Either way, we can only marvel at the fact that, whoever and

however, it swept over the civilized world, like a flash flood.

Much later Indian religious beliefs found their way into Western minds. Sri Aurobindo-Integral Yoga brought Eastern mysticism into the practical Western mind. Eastern mysticism provided a name for the perception /deception, “Maya.” This made spiritual sense, and for a time. Eastern thought intrigued me back in the 60’s, as it did the chemical hippy gurus.

Like the one-to-a-customer soul, the Karma rebirth, runs into the same math problem. I know we’re not supposed to bring such mundane conceptual tools to spiritual propositions, but this mismatch between population and souls is a huge paradox puddle.

The sudden fascination of the hippy era with Eastern mysticism can be explained as the historical Fichte/Hegel ‘antithesis’ to the reigning materialism ‘thesis.’ There is no question we were starving for sublimity in the mundane desert of consumerism. Whatever it was, the ‘antithesis’ didn’t change anything. Consumerism is now untrammled and leading us to the brink of planetary extinction.

I guess you could say I was a hippy. I was there, at the time, in the heart of hippy land (Venice, California). I was young enough to wonder and old enough to be confused, standing at the crossroads of the sixties. As I mentioned earlier, I tried all the escape routes,

chemical and spiritual, including LSD and Vedanta, and Buddhism. I followed the ringing bells and shaved heads to ashrams off the beaten path, just for a visit and just long enough to know that I needed to stay on the beaten path, unbeaten. I knew I had to stay in the game until it was time to leave naturally.

The idea that life is God's game show, is crazy, but I have shown, that it's even crazier to think that there is no point to the struggle. So I guess you could say I have chosen to be less crazy. I guess that makes me a theopath, not to be confused with a theosoph or a theodic. 'Theopathy' is my made up word for the milder form of insanity, where one is obsessed with super connection beyond reason, and beyond the lack of evidence.

Instead of being sucked into the black hole of theodicy, theopathy keeps me hopping and hoping on the 'event horizon.' Delusion or illusion, a theopath believes that consciousness includes empathy and divine sympathy. "Choose theopathy over theodicy" is my new bumper sticker, not meant to bump anyone, but to stick with others still in the game, on the road to lift off. In my next book, God willing, I hope to connect the next technology revolution with a new personal spiritualism made possible by quantum computers. Computers will enhance our knowledge of ourselves by harnessing the energy of the quantum physics mysteries.

Cognitive consonance has the effect of unifying the observed and the observer which also solves the quantum physics riddle posed by Schrodinger's cat. Quantum physics is already generating a new mysticism. Mysticism powers the leap of faith and the new altitude which sees beyond but keeps reality in view. But hypersubjective expansion and floating must not become a magic trick. I said at the outset, the name of the game is self expansion and ASCENSION, which is not paranormal levitation. There are mysterious forces that surround self expansion, which I characterized as buoyancy, lift, and drag, but they are real forces which I don't understand and may never understand in my human form; and I'm OK with that. Still, I won't be burning incense or heretics or consulting Taro cards for answers.

AFTER WORD

Near the end of the road of my life I found myself between a *rock* and a *soft place* and I blew myself up. I ran the runway of reason to the lift off point and I floated just a bit above the rocky reality. I danced the conga, with the great minds: Emerson, James and Royce, Burke and Berkeley, Locke and Leibniz, Plato, Plotinus, Popper, Ponty, Schopenhauer, Schelling Schiller and Scheler. They all had a part in my ASCENSION and my inner teacher who I call Christ keeps me up. I still come down, occasionally but not as often and the landings are softer.

I am lighter and brighter than I have ever been and it is much easier to bounce instead of trudge between appointments and disappointments

I pray the final appointment will not be a disappointment. I love having someone to pray to. Whether God is our inventor or our invention, we'll never know for sure, but we are the best guessers in the universe, and a loving internal God is our best guess. If you're still reading, we must be on the same page, not the last page, for sure. "God be with ye," or as it came to be pronounced:

Goodbye .

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



If you've read this far, you know more than enough about the author. If, for some reason, you need to know more, there is a memoir called THE BLINK OF AN I, available on Amazon, Apple Books and for free on *saltafide.com*