

BOOK 66: THE PROLEPTICON

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BOOK 66: *THE PROLEPTICON*

1. On Ontology

What are we? What are the essential characteristics, qualities, or properties of our existence? Tough questions to be sure – the toughest. Perhaps, a simple analogy could provide a “map” for the course of our existence. We are a subject, but potentially, we could be substituted for by any other object in a suitable analogy. So, let’s say, we are a car. The subject – the car – exists, and this constitutes a temporal frame necessarily. Therefore, by being a subject existing, *time* is the first property of our existence, and it is related to the concept of *self*.

English poet, John Donne, astutely noted that, “no man is an island”. The car as subject representing self is not doing so in a vacuum. We are the car on the road, and the road constitutes a spatial frame necessarily. Therefore, by being a subject existing relative to other things existing, *space* is the second property of our existence, and it is related to the concept of *other*.

The car has velocity, and it moves along the road. This movement constitutes a state of *change* necessarily. The self is changed by the movement, and otherness is changed by the movement. *Change* is the third property of our existence, and it is related to the concept of *relationship*.

The car has direction, and it moves along the road one way, and not all ways at the same time. This direction constitutes a state of *intention* necessarily. The self intends to move in a particular direction, for whatever reason. *Intention* is the fourth property of our existence, and it is related to the concept of *motivation*.

The car can accelerate and decelerate. Perhaps, I can offer that acceleration relates to the concept of *influence* – the self acts at a self-determined pace. Also, deceleration relates to the concept of *consequence* – the self reacts to resistance from factors within *relationships*, and outside of personal *motivations*. Therefore, a fifth and sixth property of our existence is that we *influence*, and we face *consequence*.

Therefore, a starting point for an ontology on being human would use the car analogy to appreciate that we are a *self* in *time* among *other* in *space*, that experiences *change* through *relationship*, and *intends* to participate through *motivation* such that we *influence* happenings, as well as face *consequence*.

If we take the analogy one step further toward epistemology, then the notion of a stoplight along the road determines how we experience phenomenon. We *obey* (green light), *resist* (amber light), and *defy* (red light). Therefore, we are a thinking-thing that has six fundamental properties, and we obey, resist, or defy within our environment.

This book is structured into six sections aligned with the properties of being from this rudimentary ontological proof.

BOOK 66: *SELF IN TIME*

2. On Otherness

Although I was once guided by the Cartesian rationalist maxim – *cogito ergo sum* (“I think therefore I am”) – it was my unfortunate duty during university studies to encounter the work of psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan. Lacan’s take on the *cogito* was based in deeply cynical skepticism, and he purported that our articulation of thoughts could be a mere by-product of some other force or entity’s process of conceiving.

Essentially, for Lacan, we would be understood as having no autonomy or free will given that we were not genuine thinking-things but rather automatic expressions of some other thinking thing’s activity in conceiving. This Lacanian conceit isn’t intuitive to anyone, but it is set up as a valid philosophical proposition directly against the conclusions of Descartes’s philosophical meditations which brought us the *cogito*.

Descartes has been one of the most brilliant minds among humans, but who said he had to get everything right? Still, is it productive to prove his maxim wrong through expressing a theory that is in polar opposition, such as that of Lacan’s existential skepticism?

I propose the following rational maxim – *vinculum alius ergo sum* (“Another bond therefore I am”). This is an **absolute** truth because I perceive otherness that I do not recognize as being myself, and that fact constitutes a guarantee that I am an autonomous thing at the level of perception. There can remain the Lacanian post-structuralist hermeneutic of suspicion regarding my “thinking” as being a genuinely autonomous process, but my perception of otherness through bonding (*vinculum*) is assured, and this necessarily defines an innate characteristic of *self*.

BOOK 66: *SELF IN TIME*

3. On Introspection

We recognize through our senses that there are multiple dimensions of *space* (a line, a plane, a 3D environment). Perhaps, there are multiple dimensions of *affect*, for example, anger or loss are simple affective states, but grief is a kind of combination of anger and loss. Grief has a sense of greater dimensionality or complexity as an affective state than anger or loss have, individually. Then, could *thought* also have an aspect of multidimensionality?

Linear thinking would constitute a mode of thought where meaning is produced through linear configurations – an idea moving (or forming) from one node in the discourse to another node. For example, the thought, “ice hockey makes me happy” is a linear thought traversing discourse from a single node (the sport of ice hockey) to another node (the feeling of happiness).

Circular thinking adds a dimension to linear thinking – “ice hockey makes me happy, but chess makes me bored”. With circular thinking, meaning is produced through planar configuration where an idea moves (or forms) between multiple nodes within related discourses.

Bordered thinking adds yet another dimension to circular thinking, constituting an ‘isometric’ configuration where an idea forms through reflections within the planar-structured discourse – “ice hockey and sports make me either happy or sad, but chess and games make me either excited or bored”. Bordered thinking adds only an extra “pseudo” dimension to the discourse through navigating the discourse in reflective ways.

Finally, *recursive* thinking articulates thought in a kind of 3D configuration within discourse. Recursive thinkers ask, “why am I concerned about my emotions regarding sports and games?” The discourses for these kinds of thoughts are navigating a ‘z-axis’ of evaluative nodes for inquiry.

Perhaps, introspection and metacognition are connected to development in the dimensionality of thought. I have also considered that certain mental disabilities may be best characterized through the recognition that those individuals are inept at, or yet incapable of, recursive thinking.

Would training exercises in recursive thinking increase the likelihood of introspection and self-awareness for an individual, and potentially stimulate greater moral competence in society? Would similar exercises be of use to some of the mentally disabled?

BOOK 66: *SELF IN TIME*

4. On Affect

All human beings have hormones; there are male and female hormones in all people. *Affect* as a lower faculty of reasoning has a male and female component – two sides of the same coin. The male hormones provoke *aggressive* affective responses to stimuli while the female hormones provoke *emotional* responses to stimuli. There is nothing inherently “good” or “bad” about the expression of aggressive or emotional responses.

Many contemporary women have faulted when accusing men of “toxic masculinity” and this is as much true as the fault of previous generations of men accusing women of “hysteria”. Women are capable of being toxically aggressive, just as men can be emotionally hysterical – each of us have male and female hormones which stimulate a lower faculty affective response to stimuli.

The relevant issue is whether affective responses are being expressed rationally or irrationally. Rational expression requires mediation of the higher faculties over the lower faculties of reasoning. Rational expressions of affect – aggression or emotion – are productive to society and/or the individual. Essentially, productive expression of aggression focuses on healthy contest (one against another), while productive expression of emotion is concerned with healthy bonding (one with another).

BOOK 66: *SELF IN TIME*

5. On Trauma

Over the years, I have noticed through conversation as well as through literary review that psychoanalysis has increasingly fallen out of favor in popular culture. Many have an aversion to psychoanalysis because they misconstrue the field of “talking cure” therapy to be based in examining sexual neuroses.

Additionally, feminists have vehemently rejected the canons of psychoanalysis because they were developed almost entirely by wealthy, over-educated, heteronormative, white males, such as, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. The feminists promptly threw the baby out with the bathwater.

Nevertheless, psychoanalysis has some things going for it as a method of analysis, especially with respect to the logic chain of *trauma-disavowal-fetish*. Forget sexuality for a moment, because *fetish* need not imply sexual neuroses or sexual deviance – that is merely one application of the concept. Instead, *fetish* emerges from the notion that in a person’s mind they are always traveling down a mental road through the process of thinking. A *trauma* is a rupture in the road – the traumatic event is akin to an earthquake sundering the landscape at your feet. You cannot continue in the same direction without crossing the newly-formed chasm. The traumatic rupture has broken the chain of association in your mental process of meaning-production.

How trauma converts to fetish is through *disavowal*. To leap across the chasm is fretful and to search for the mental tools to achieve that task requires close and careful examination of the trauma (often too uncomfortable for the individual). Instead, the trauma is disavowed, and thoughtfully, the individual pursues a new path determined by the profile of the traumatic chasm. This new path that is followed constitutes the fetish. The fetish is a single feature of the trauma that can be navigated – just one of the chasm’s edges – as opposed to facing the entire chasm which is psychologically daunting and therefore disavowed.

If you apply the logic chain to a sexual fetish it might work something like this: a boy is finding it difficult to psychologically navigate all the ideas he has about the sexuality of woman after an early traumatic experience with a female (perhaps, his mother pushed him away from her breast), and now he disavows the trauma of his mother’s rejection and fetishizes a single element of sexualized woman that he feels he can think about, talk about, and control in his thoughts – breasts. This boy grows up and proudly identifies as a “boob man” – he’s into breasts. I’m into butts, and I’d absolutely hate to discover why. However, we can understand our quirks (including non-sexual related ones) through considering the *trauma-disavowal-fetish* logic chain of psychoanalytic method.

BOOK 66: *SELF IN TIME*

6. On Freud

If I could reimagine Freud's modernist categorical distinctions for the human psyche (*id*, *ego*, *superego*) and devise a similar understanding for the postmodern human psyche, it would be as follows: the I.A. (Inner Anarchy), the A.E. (Alter-ego), and the A.I. (Artificial Intelligence).

The Freudian *id* was defined by its state of repression as well as through the laymen understanding of it being partly atavistic sex-monster and partly primal violent release. For the postmodern psyche, we might imagine the *inner anarchy* component which instead of being understood through unorganized instinctual drives follows laws of entropy. The I.A. is geared to have us respond to stimuli through manifesting motivations which require the least conscious energy expenditure. The I.A. is operating when we hear the phone ring and contemplate the value of answering it, or when the social media advertisements interrupt online surfing, and we tarry with hitting the mute button.

Whereas, Freudian *ego* was a mediator defining the boundaries of the avowed personality, the *alter-ego* is necessarily schizophrenic in nature, and it mediates the boundaries of self against the simulacral-self that is draped ovetop within the psyche. The representation of postmodern identity is two-pronged: self affirmed and simulated alter-self performed. The alter-self is mediated within the virtual social forum. The A.E. works to distinguish the simulacral fantasy self from the genuine self.

Finally, the *artificial intelligence* component of the postmodern psyche threatens takeover of the alter-ego through promotion of absorption into a hive-mind anti-hierarchical social structure. A sense of superiority for the A.I. is achieved through acts of absorption of the self by otherness, as opposed to the Freudian *super-ego* where superiority is achieved through self-absorption.

This theory of the postmodern psyche may develop further as we move past our reflections on technology and shift to a truly "post-human" status as beings.

BOOK 66: *SELF IN TIME*

7. On Addiction

I have had cause to consider why it is that I have never been susceptible to certain addictions that plague the lives of so many others. For example, in my young adult years, I exposed myself to habitual alcohol and drug use, however, living with sobriety since then has never resulted in “cravings” of any kind. I can partake in recreational use of addictive substances whenever without feeling temptation of any kind to indulge further. Additionally, I do not believe that for me personally this is tied up in notions of ‘self-control’ as much as it is related to how I regulate my internal clock.

This may be speculative and reflect a bout of pseudo-science on my part, however, I have noted a variety of positive effects from having rejected timepieces in my life. I have not worn a wristwatch in almost thirty years. Also, I have an uncanny knack to know the time within minutes even after not having seen a clock for several hours. I have concluded that my “internal clock” is fine-tuned because it has to compensate for a lack of an external timepiece on my person.

I conjecture that my seemingly high “self-control” in not falling prey to common addictions is in fact my high “self-regulation” of time – or the sense of time – through refusing to carry a timepiece on me. One might argue that a craving is regulated by a perverse sense of time passing, therefore, if your internal clock is more highly regulated then you may have better control over the sense of time passing such that it helps you appreciate the nature of a craving and then you can dismiss that unwanted alert with enhanced strength of will. It is a possibility, I suppose, but we require researchers to test the hypothesis. Only time will tell if science can qualify the quantification of our mental mechanisms.

BOOK 66: *SELF IN TIME*

8. On Dreams

During a period where I was studying at the university, I was fortunate to make the acquaintance of renowned Canadian director and author, Guy Maddin. We discussed film and got onto the topic of the oneiric – dreaminess. Both of us were at a loss to cite a single movie which had accurately represented the dream experience through the cinematic apparatus. I went home and thought about it carefully.

Was the answer to the conundrum rooted in the “cut”? Editing in film – creating cuts between shots – demands a certain quality of critical attention from the viewer. The spectator is aware of the cut in visual media because changing shots also changes spatiotemporal coordinates for the viewer as they realign with the *transcendental subject position*. The nature of the camera is to align the viewer’s perception with that of the apparatus itself – the apparatus generates a transcendental subject position that is not inherently the position of the viewer, but which invites the viewer to assume that position as an ideal one for taking in the visual presentation.

However, in dreams there is no apparatus, but instead there is our own mind generating a sense of the visual field. The cut in dreams does not require critical attention and our position can change without having to realign with an external object such as the cinematic apparatus, or camera. In dreams, we have a *direct subject position*. The dreamer does not become critically engaged with the mode of representation because that mode does not originate from an external source.

Cinema and other audiovisual media forms attempt to be immersive, interactive, and interpellative, however, dreams don’t make the attempt because they have those aspects innately. After discussing the issue with Guy, my conclusion was that cinema would have to rely on the long take (such as in Coppola’s *The Conversation*, or Welles’s *Touch of Evil*) to properly emulate a dream experience. The cut in cinema will disrupt the oneiric effect in significant ways.

BOOK 66: *SELF IN TIME*

9. On Neurosis

What is it to be neurotic? No one like being accused of this condition, but sometimes it feels like a bit of a catch-all insult. Simply, neurosis is a state driven by compulsions and complaints without a sense of related causes. A neurotic is making much ado about nothing. Perhaps, the truth is far from the current understanding. I would like to suggest that neurosis is related to fatigue.

When there is a surfeit of sensory information, the body actively blunts the senses to reduce the excessive flow of information being transmitted from the body to the brain. The mind can only process so much data at a time without raising the risk of becoming unprepared for potential threats to survival in the environment.

This notion recalls the “myth” that humans only use a portion of their brain power at any given time. Essentially, it is true though, and only mythological in how people interpret the phenomenon through percentages. Most tend to understand that by only using a portion of the brain’s “power” we could also somehow “unlock” our full potential and become super-geniuses, or even, super-powered beings. The reality is that the brain is geared to push only so hard because resources must remain available as a matter of survival. We must have brain power to rely on if a situation suddenly changes and it is an emergency that we engage our mind quickly for solving a new, difficult task.

This brings me back to the issue of fatigue as it relates to neurosis. With sensory overload, the body slows or stops the flow of information. The mind searches for the “missing” information as it relates to sensory data that has just been processed. If the individual’s mind is capacious then they will begin producing “pseudo-information” about the sensory-based stimuli which is still in the process of being analyzed by the brain. This pseudo-information could be referred to as “flux-truth” or “fluth” for it being information that appears true but in flux (because it is in fact confabulatory information). Interpreting fluth produces compulsions and complaints because the cause of the fluth cannot be identified, and the mind is unwilling or unable to blame itself for the confabulation. The result is neurosis.

This is my laymen musings on the topic, and I would feel more confident about my hypothesis if it were shown empirically that neurosis affects highly-intelligent people more than people of average or lower intelligence. Ergo, neurosis is more common for capacious minds that can be filled with “fluth”.

BOOK 66: *SELF IN TIME*

10. On Providence

They say that if we put an infinite number of monkeys at an infinite number of typewriters, they will eventually produce a copy of the Bible, or the works of William Shakespeare. This is an intuitive fact when considering variation across an endless time period. However, what would we say if we sat down just ten monkeys and let them type for a year, and at the end of that year we had pages that could be assembled which constituted a copy of Othello or the Book of Genesis?

Would it be intuitive that variation across time had brought about the result we had been seeking over such a short period? It is unlikely that many people would be compelled to believe that it was “coincidence” – we got lucky and the ten monkeys in one year made an achievement that would normally take near-infinitely longer and with a near-infinitely larger workforce. No, we would be checking under the typewriters for some sort of mechanical dongle that had been pressing typewriter keys. We would be leaning on the researchers to admit that they had doctored the results. Some would be hailing God for the “miracle”. We wouldn’t believe that statistical possibility had brought about the result.

Perhaps, coincidence is never mere statistical possibility being realized, but rather, it is design even if we cannot appreciate or understand the causes. I have experienced coincidence that upon further analysis I could trace to the workings of my unconscious (knowledge I didn’t realize I had stored), or a kind of collective unconscious (society behaving in patterned ways). Also, I have analyzed some coincidence such that I came to recognize that it wasn’t in fact what had happened wasn’t very unusual, but it had been fortuitous for me and so I wanted to imbue it with extra meaning so that I could feel good about myself (like finding money on the ground in a park).

Yet, there are coincidences where I have crunched the numbers statistically and then not been able to dispel the incredible happening as paltry and explainable through known mundane factors. Those coincidences are still adding up for me and I cannot deny that they imply some form of Providence. How I design my faith is perhaps the paramount concern because faith breeds self-deception if you are not rigorous in your methods of analysis on extraordinary phenomena which each and every one of us experiences in this strange world.

BOOK 66: *SELF IN TIME*

11. On Nostalgia

Homer's *Odyssey* presents us with the definitive example of nostalgia – the feeling of longing for home. Nostalgia has been a fertile theme across media forms, and for me, *Robocop* (1987), did an excellent job of framing a Homeric journey as defined through the affective condition of nostalgia.

In *Robocop*, mangled police officer, Murphy, is beginning to realize that he is a cyborg as opposed to an android. Murphy is “tapping” into the memories of his human life and searching for details of his past. Access results in Murphy journeying to his former home where he had raised a family. More memories are triggered as he explores the empty house. Murphy was journeying to a house as a location, and when he arrived, he was longing for what home once was – a place. Nostalgia is a feeling based in loss and it focuses on something you want returned.

However, I considered the antonym for the word, nostalgia. Searching online turned up nothing, and many people were discussing *carpe diem* as the opposite of nostalgia. Where nostalgia is based in a feeling of loss of a moment or place, *carpe diem* is a feeling of capturing and holding a moment or place. This was a fair assessment by the users online, but I was seeking to define a “negative” feeling of loss for a moment or place. The word for the negative feeling should be the proper antonym of nostalgia which defines a positive feeling.

In the end, I uncovered no definitions being offered, and so, I developed my own neologism – *aponostalgia*. Aponostalgia used the prefix apo- (lose, away, off, destroy), and therefore this new term is essentially negative nostalgia as a feeling. If someone desires a return to the past simply to experience the pain, disdain, or disgust associated with those moments or places then they can be said to be feeling aponostalgia.

For example, over the years, I have often reinstalled the video game, *Gears of War 2*, to play online multiplayer for the popular third-person shooter series. However, I don't do this to reflect on positive feelings from the past. My online *Gears of War 2* experience was a colossal waste of time and rife with anxieties and misery. The game was riddled with exploitations, from general quality of service issues to modding and hacking. I spent hours fruitlessly pursuing players that had cheated by “glitching” out of the playing map of the game environments. I was even remote hacked through Xbox when a malicious *Gears of War 2* gamer pinged me, hacked my IP, and then took control of my computer mouse and began attempting to lock me out of my laptop. I made it to the router and killed the connection just in time.

It would be wrong to refer to my feeling of longing for *Gears of War 2* online gaming as a nostalgia because it is a negative feeling. I have only wished to return in order to express my contempt or see the very structure of the game world decimated and destroyed. When I feel the need to reinstall that game, I am experiencing *aponostalgia* – a strong feeling to return, but not a positive one.

BOOK 66: *SELF IN TIME*

12. On Coincidence

Often, I encounter people who believe in the power of coincidence, yet there are unique definitions for what constitutes a moment of coincidence. For some, seeing a “magic” number on a storefront or taxicab door is a coincidence, while others who have no system of meaning for those numbers would find such an event meaningless. Other times, events come together, and we cannot explain why, so we conclude that this is an example of coincidence. However, with more information we may no longer understand the event as coincidence, for example, one woman has been hit with lightning on three separate occasions in different parts of the country where she resides. Then, we find out she has a metal plate in her head, and we question the supposed coincidence status of the events.

What could be another explanation for what we perceive as coincidence? I would suggest a theory based in the laws of spatiotemporality and human perception. We perceive multiple dimensions of spatiality (zero dimensions of a point, one dimension of a line, two dimensions of a plane, three dimensions of a 3D environment to support 3D objects, such as, pyramids or boxes). The tesseract is a theoretical four-dimensional spatial construct which we can represent graphically similarly to how we can draw a cube (3D) onto a piece of paper (2D). Humans do not perceive a fourth spatial dimension with our physical senses.

But, what of time? Perhaps, zero dimensions of temporality is like the point – a moment. One dimension of temporality is like the line – our history through time, and our lifetime. It seems we cannot directly perceive more than one dimension of temporality, similarly to how we cannot perceive the tesseract, but rather merely the representation of it in our 3D world. Then, could coincidence somehow be a representation of multidimensional temporality?

BOOK 66: *OTHER IN SPACE*

13. On Morality

Physicist, Stephen Hawking, once mocked Intelligence Quotient (IQ) ranking as an idiotic system where those who take pride in their IQ rating are “losers”. He wasn’t entirely wrong because IQ testing has yet to provide laymen with a proper understanding of its worth as a measure. The reality is that if an individual took an IQ test for the first time, they would likely score around thirty points lower than after taking an IQ test every day for a year and then recording their score. Did they get that much “smarter” by the end of the year? No, but they have learned the logic of abstract patterns which are privileged in the standardized IQ testing method. Therefore, IQ testing measures only one kind of intelligence, and arguably, does a poor job of that.

A “cold score” for IQ tests would be more appropriate if someone were attempting to impress others with proclamations of their high intellect. A cold score would be the score that you receive on an IQ test having not prepared at all in at least ten years.

Furthermore, who the hell cares about IQ? The rating which should concern everyone is a person’s Moral IQ score. What does it matter to us if someone is the best at completing calculus problem sets if they are also serial child murderers? Do we revere them for their intelligence? How perverse! However, Moral IQ can measure intelligence that serves good thought and pro-social action. There would be utility for raising the prestige in society of those with high Moral IQ. Moral IQ test questions would focus on gauging a respondent’s ability to understand complex issues related to hypocrisy, prejudice, deferral, persuasion, introspection, dignity, dogma, and utility, to name a few.

BOOK 66: *OTHER IN SPACE*

14. On Generalization

Two “researchers” from the University of Delaware received funding to publish in peer-reviewed journals their “work” on a confirmation-biased study to prove the Cultural Marxist tenet and generalization that “all white people are racist”. Their method involved measuring facial dimensions which they connected to testosterone levels.

Cesar Lombroso would be proud because centuries earlier he pioneered work in criminology when he used cadavers in city morgues to measure the skull sizes of dead prostitutes to determine physiognomic characteristics as indicators for criminal behavior. Experts in the field of criminology promptly debunked Lombroso’s work once that discipline began to emphasize science and empiricism – proving something without relying on prejudice.

I can’t say for sure what has gone wrong with the University of Delaware and why that institution has supported instances of regression in pedagogy. They aren’t the only university guilty of such things. However, the racist study at the University of Delaware does bring me to a point on generalization, and what activists refer to as “everythingism”.

Generalization appears to be a heuristic device for structuring perception of the world. Generalization is a method for making more accurate predictions on happenings in the world. We generalize for the purpose of experiencing life in a more stable way. Thus, generalizations can be understood to promote rational thinking.

However, generalizations themselves have to be articulated rationally to achieve their goal. The generalization that “fish stinks” can be a rational one if the individual stating this prejudice also knows themselves to have a weak immune system whereby exposure to the bacteria of stale fresh is very dangerous at a personal level. This generalization about fish serves that individual positively. Can the same be said for the generalizations, “whites are racist”, “blacks are lazy”, or “women are bad drivers”? It is unlikely, although to check for rationality of the prejudice one would have to be familiar with the specific details of the life for the person subscribing to that generalization.

Prior to condemning someone for their generalizations, we should consider whether it would be a justifiable prejudice, if the shoe was on the other foot for us.

BOOK 66: *OTHER IN SPACE*

15. On News

There has been much ado about the stigma of “fake news”. Yellow journalism is whatever you want it to be based on how you feel. People have their news sources that they trust and others which they reject or despise. Very few people “triangulate” their news sources. Triangulation for how you receive local or global news is a strategy for fact-finding and for attaining genuine political enfranchisement.

For example, there is an event which has happened – a school has been shot up and the domestic terrorist has already been killed by the law enforcement authorities. Conservative news sources are focused on the fact that the shooter was transgendered, the liberal news sources suppress aforementioned detail and highlight lax gun control regulations and laws, and socialist news sources key in on the brutality of how the police dealt with the terrorist who was an “oppressed” and “vulnerable” individual.

To rely on a single news source with a particular political bent is to only learn part of the story. Arguably, you cannot consider yourself truly politically enfranchised if your knowledge of current affairs comes from single news sources, or multiple sources which all have the same political alignment.

Fake news is a phenomenon of postmodern hysteria derived from lack of political enfranchisement, and this phenomenon would have little significance and import to contemporary discourse if people were willing and able to triangulate how they received news of current events.

Fake news as a phenomenon is a form of interpretation rather than there actually being such a thing as “fake” news. News is news – it is a story spun on a particular event. However, the interpretation of news can lead to a conclusion that the news is either to be subscribed to, or rejected (and thus, fake). The only truly fake news would be akin to Orson Welles’s 1938 radio broadcast of H.G. Wells’s *War of the Worlds*, whereby some naïve listeners panicked believing that the science fiction story was being reported as an actual occurrence.

How contemporary society uses the term “fake news” keys in on a process of misperceiving opinions as facts. A news source is knowingly spouting opinions and dressing them up as facts – this is fake news. Of course, this notion is almost always a matter of interpretation. There is also an aspect of the fake news phenomenon as a mode of interpretation that is currently repressed in our contemporary discourse. What I am referring to is that fake news is a process of disavowing facts as being mere opinion. Therein lies the true danger of the fake news phenomenon.

BOOK 66: *OTHER IN SPACE*

16. On Literacy

The human eye experiences constant involuntary fixational eye movements called *microsaccades*, and these movements teach us that the eye is always doing **work** when the person is conscious and observing their environment. However, new digital media forms have increasingly relied on mobile framing and fast-cut editing to produce a dramatic effect and sense of immersion for a viewer. The apparatus begins to do the work for our eye, and arguably, our eye becomes more passive in its mode of operation and observation.

Early cinema was nothing more than recorded theater and the camera was static, positioned ideally as if it were a single audience member in the theater with the best seat in the house. Later, mobile framing (camera movement) and fast-cut editing brought about a dynamic happening as represented through the apparatus of audiovisual media.

Professional wrestling has been increasingly reliant on this new form of representation as a means of translating kinetic force through cinematic style as opposed to through actual physical bodies crashing together in the “squared-circle” of a wrestling ring. For pro-wrestling this “invention” of pseudo-impact for their form of audiovisual entertainment was a matter of necessity because class-action lawsuits regarding long-term injury for the wrestlers threatened the viability of the entertainment form. The camera moves fast in pro-wrestling whenever there is a high impact move, and this means the wrestlers don’t have to give it their all to “sell” the move.

However, in televised pro-wrestling the camera’s movement is also movement done for the viewer instead of forcing their own eye to translate the kinetic effect through active visual analysis. Online web browsing has also developed a “windows” principle for easy-to-navigate user interface, and surfing through social media posts is often akin to a rapid montage edit sequence in movies or the shaky zoom effect in pro-wrestling television spectacles. Traditional media required that the eye do the work whether by reading words across the lines of a page in a book or analyzing the ‘tableau’ of early cinematic *mise-en-scene*. Whereas new digital media forms do the work for the eye.

Through constant exposure to new digital media forms, the eye becomes lazy. Later, the eye is easily fatigued when engaging with traditional media, such as books. In time, it becomes psychologically painful to engage with traditional media because it feels like arduous work which the eye has not been training for. This effect may explain the rise of illiteracy among youth, as well as the decreasing rates of reading for adults.

If humans become acclimated to having the work done for them in all things, then this spells disaster for our species because when it comes to meaning-production generally, the form that does the most work for you without asking you to do anything is **propaganda**. A less literate society is also one prone to propaganda, ideology, and activism.

BOOK 66: *OTHER IN SPACE*

17. On Expertise

Imagine a man who works out at the gym six days a week, including vigorous cardio, and free weight sessions where he lifts to the point of “failure”. A few years later, with a good diet, you might expect this man to be extremely fit and strong. He did the work to attain that result. Another man jogs on Sundays and when he visits the gym two times a week, he quits the cardio workout halfway through and does a few chin-ups before heading home. We imagine this second man to be relatively wimpy as compared with the beastly fitness fanatic.

To continue this musing, let us imagine that the beast and wimp meet in a bar on the weekend. Do we expect the wimp to challenge the beast to a physical contest? No. We all know the result – a bloody nose and sore ass for the wimp. We could all see the inevitable result beforehand just through a visual evaluation of their respective physiques.

However, in recent decades, intellectual wimps have challenged intellectual beasts shamelessly and often, especially through online forums. Author, Tom Nichols, has noted this phenomenon as the “death of expertise”. Why is this happening? It seems to me that several major transitions have caused an “average” thinker (our wimp) to believe that their mental strength equals that of a tireless thinker and one who has trained hard in intellectual-based pursuits (our beast).

Firstly, the Industrial Revolution caused a social shift from rural to urban development thus provoking a certain kind of social indoctrination best achieved through standardization of education in schools. Secondly, the post-war ideology beginning in 1945 shifted the age-old priority of killing young men on the battlefield to fostering their potential as useful cogs of industry through post-secondary education programs. Thirdly, the Reagan-era shift from manufacturing-based industry to service-based industry in the West provoked an emphasis on more intellectual-based post-secondary programs given that service work is more intellectually-engaged than that of manufacturing work.

All in all, people became smarter, and they know it – and good for them, sincerely. However, the historical imagination for intellectual superiority has become a **fetish** which operates through disavowing the fact that the average intellect remains mediocre overall. The average person is much smarter today than the average person in 1930, 1750, or 300 BC. Yet, the average person today is just as dumb as compared with geniuses or experts of today as was the case for average people in previous centuries when they compared their intelligence with the geniuses and experts of their day. The death of expertise phenomenon highlights that this fact about the historically consistent discrepancy between average and superior intelligence tends to be denied by average thinkers today.

The good news is that all it takes is tireless intellectual work to be the equivalent of the gym beast – and almost anyone can do it if they put in the hours.

BOOK 66: *OTHER IN SPACE*

18. On Privilege

The concept of “privilege” has always been one that I find vexing. Sure, I have privilege and some aspects of my life have given me a great advantage over others. However, I have resisted accusations of being privileged that are based purely on superficial markers, such as, being white, being male, being hetero, etc.

So, I’m a white, heterosexual male – that makes me privileged? I can’t remember any Rockefellers cutting me cheques, or Clintons inviting me to galas, or Trumps handing me jobs. It would feel absurd to me if I accused Lori Lightfoot of privilege because she is a gay black woman – no, she is privileged because she had a powerful position as mayor of a major metropolis in America.

Privilege is associated with what you do socially, and not what you are superficially. If the human race had some kind of fantastic machine that could bring people back from the dead, and we decided to resurrect Bruce Lee, would he feel privileged? Of course! But would he feel privileged because he had martial arts and acting going for him, or would he feel privileged because he was Asian? The latter is absurd, and it wouldn’t be on his mind whatsoever.

In fact, if he discovered that he was selected as a ‘token’ Asian over several other candidates that might have been chosen for resurrection then one might imagine Mr. Lee feeling deeply insulted. For Bruce, his sense of privilege was related to the hard work he had done and the talent he had honed. There is no privilege in what we are superficially, and each of us can ameliorate or worsen our position in life through how we act, and not how we appear generally.

Any society which would privilege a notion of “privilege” that is geared for judging people superficially should be questioned on their basic values and their shadowy intentions. Discrimination is real – it is action taken against someone based on that individual’s superficial markers. That would seem to suggest that accusing people of “privilege” based on their superficial markers is a form of discrimination.

Can a progressive society justify engagement in a *two-wrongs-make-a-right* philosophy? Would that society driven by *lex talionis* ideology not simply become the example that M. Ghandi warned us against where “an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind”? Such a system seems to epitomise regression.

BOOK 66: *OTHER IN SPACE*

19. On Decisions

MIT produced a rudimentary **game** with a single mechanic – a choice between making a car swerve into pedestrians on the sidewalk, or instead collide with other pedestrians using a crosswalk directly ahead. This game was named the Moral Machine, and it was designed to present moral dilemmas.

For example, the Moral Machine sought to learn whether players would decide to swerve into an old man on the sidewalk in order to avoid hitting children using the crosswalk. Effectively, the Moral Machine tested how people value other human lives based on superficial markers. It sounds idiotic, right? Were MIT researchers measuring moral competence, or instead reinforcing prejudices?

The Moral Machine was considered to have import to car manufacturers who are currently developing an array of self-driving vehicles. How do we “teach” the car to “target” if collision is inevitable with there still being some opportunity to direct the vehicle at the site of the collision? Does the car’s computer know to hit the elderly man on the sidewalk by swerving when it is an available option and all to avoid hitting the little girl at the crosswalk?

My question is the following: do we want to teach computers who have no inherent human bias, our bias? The machine should not be expected to judge, nor be programmed based on our ever-shifting, and often irrational, prejudices. Human prejudice changes with the wind – a hundred years ago the boogeyman was Jews, then twenty years after that it was homosexuals, forty years ago it was young black males, and today it is white heterosexual males. Tomorrow, the boogeyman might be old lesbians, or Asian men who own cats, or people who wear green underpants. What a fiasco to keep up!

The answer is clear: the car should never swerve. Pedestrians have a responsibility to remain aware at crossings, whereas they are not expected to walk down the sidewalk paranoid that they might be taken out by a swerving vehicle. Cars that swerve and hit people usually kill those people because they were completely unaware. A pedestrian at a crossing might have a chance to jump back, or at least prepare their body for the collision.

In conclusion, a machine should always be programmed to operate in such a way that is most consistent with people’s anticipatory strategies against error or fault in that machine’s operation. Machines can’t make moral judgments and should never be expected to.

BOOK 66: *OTHER IN SPACE*

20. On Work

You have probably had hundreds of coworkers in your life (at least dozens), and they each came and went providing a unique profile of helpfulness and hindrance. However, perhaps, there are truly only four types of workers: workhorse, flake, grinder, and parasite. These types are categorized across two primary dimensions: effort and capability.

The workhorse exerts great effort but is also highly capable – they typically become a team leader. On the other hand, the flake constantly requires greater motivation to work and although they too are capable, the effort isn't there. A flake may try to fill a leadership position in order to redefine a project's goals to better meet their ever-shifting expectations. Those attempts may increase their motivation, and thus, the flake puts in more effort at work. If the flake leadership works out, they likely convert to a workhorse, but if it fails, coworkers are left in the lurch.

There are two other types of workers, and neither are apt for leadership roles, with the first being the grinder. The grinder puts in the effort, but they lack capability. Grinders are put on simpler tasks because they lack the ability to be autodidactic at work. Grinders require clear instructions and appropriate supervision.

The final type of worker is the parasite, who puts in little to no effort as well as demonstrating low capability on tasks and projects. The parasite does not adapt, they are not autodidactic, and they require constant supervision. They drag down other coworkers, and they can be identified through their shameless boasts about “fucking the dog” at work. They come in late and knock off early. The parasite will rely on nepotism, bullying, or sycophantic behavior to retain jobs.

Most importantly, the parasite will target flakes and deflect attention from their own poor performance by exposing minor lapses for uninspired flakes. If a parasite has the second least seniority to a flake it is assured that the flake will be “shit-canned” even if they were capable of becoming a workhorse at that job because the parasite will relentlessly target that flake who lacks seniority.

The approach seems intuitive: identify parasites and remove them from the workforce. But watch out for when grinders become the boss because they usually keep parasites around to deflect anyone noticing that the new head honcho has low capability. An important reminder for any employer is that the presence of the parasite may be the reason that the flake lacks motivation in the first place and has yet to transform into a workhorse.

BOOK 66: *OTHER IN SPACE*

21. On Prostitution

The “oldest profession” is rife with mythology, and one particular bias against prostitutes which we are familiar with is that they don’t **choose** the profession, but rather, they are exploited through abusive men which results in those women trading sex for money. Should this prove to be true then it would present a significant social problem.

However, what if most prostitutes choose that profession not even for the money as much as for the risk? – they are adrenaline junkies. We certainly recognize that some people by nature (or by accident) are lacking in nerve sensitivity physically, and this can often result in these people seeking out activities that provide a surfeit of sensation, or a “rush”. Excitatory homeostasis is a scientific explanation to guide our understanding of the habits of these adrenaline junkies.

The comedy-prank troupe known as “Jack Ass” may have members who mutilate themselves during stunts or pranks in order to achieve a measure of physical sensation that would undoubtedly traumatize people with normal sensitization levels. There is a sense that the physical nerves of Jack Ass members, Johnny Knoxville or Steve O. are pretty dead.

There could also be psychological low sensitivity due to defects of the amygdala, basal ganglia, or limbic systems of the brain. Men seek out increased sensation through stunts, backyard wrestling, policing, firefighting, military service, or mixed-martial arts fighting – some women as well. Could strip teasing and prostitution be added to that list of risky professions that raise physical and psychological sensation to affect a homeostatic state?

The strip club and brothel are fraught with emotional and physical danger. The women who work in these environments may very well be freely choosing that line of work for the thrills that satisfy their sense of re-sensitization, both physically and psychologically.

This hypothesis should not encourage society to excuse exploitation in the sex industry, but rather, become more attuned to those who are in fact vulnerable and do need assistance.

BOOK 66: *OTHER IN SPACE*

22. On Preference

Children understand their mother and father as having separate and distinct natures. Fathers appear non-essential, through the lack of necessary physical attachment, whereas mothers are essential – we grow inside our mothers, and then we feed from their bodies. Fathers play up the role of being unattached and mothers do the same for their role of being attached to the child.

In nature, many animals develop similar relationships with their offspring as a matter of survival – males are unattached allowing their bodies to be used for defending the mother and offspring, while the male is also free to move to the next territory to ensure that there is no regressive incestuous breeding.

For human beings, the lack of inherent attachment for the male or father as well as the necessary attachment for the female or mother has resulted in a kind of “birth cult” mentality for the woman. The birth-cult mentality is based in strong feelings for the woman that having a baby qualifies as a **significant life achievement** such that other achievements aren’t necessary. Meanwhile, men develop a “death cult” mentality whereby their inherent lack of attachment is fetishized, and they pursue **significant life achievement** through death, hence, the historical war machine of the human race.

However, we still develop debates about gender inequality, yet studies show most inequality is in fact a matter of preference – men choose risky jobs that have critical elements of detachment, while women choose stable jobs that emphasize bonding. These preferences emerge in childhood during the stage of self-play, where girls play with dolls and “play house” in recognition of their nature to bond, while boys play with soldiers or cars which present death (absence) or detachment (mobility). In time, these natural preferences are fetishized and become perverse expressions of either a birth-cult mentality for females, or a death-cult mentality for males.

The disappearance of the male is built-in to male psychology from birth and although it has positive effects such as promoting ingenuity (make what is absent appear), it also compels a fascination with self-destruction (absence through death). The risky jobs that require travel or being holed-up in a lab may have paid more money historically than jobs which emphasize bonding and interpersonal relations (such as, service industry work where women have prospered), however, it has been a pyrrhic victory for men given its connection to the death-cult mentality.

BOOK 66: *OTHER IN SPACE*

23. On Religion

If one were to meet a man at the end of his life who then claimed that he had had a very satisfying sex life, you might be expected to pat him on the back and congratulate him. However, this same man then reveals to you that the **only** sexual experiences he ever had was when he was told by a porn actor graphic detail of the intimate acts. Now, you would pity that man, having realized that he didn't truly know anything about sex – he had no true sex life.

How is collectivist-based religious faith any different than the man with no sex life? The believer in collectivist-based, or “organized” religions is told by an “expert” the nature of faith, God, the afterlife, etc. At no point does the believer develop the understanding themselves through constructing their own personalized faith. The believer of collectivist-based religion witnesses the minister running to first base – then to second, third, and finally across home plate – all while the believer watches from a seat in the stands without ever going up to the batter's box and swinging their own bat. It is a balked opportunity like no other.

BOOK 66: *CHANGE THROUGH RELATIONSHIP*

24. On Society

When I was a boy, my perception of the world was that there were *black hats* (mafia, corrupt police, psychopaths, etc.), and there were *white hats* (charities, educators, civic heroes, etc.). Perhaps, this dichotomy is a common construction for children. Although, such a simple dichotomy might not affect children who have been abused at home such that they have then been forced to recognize that what was once a white hat had become a black hat.

Now, that I feel old and have some years to back that up, it seems to me that society isn't so simple, and rather, people have a "hat rack" in their social wardrobe, donning different hats for different occasions or moods. In criminology, there is a useful term I would employ for the hat rack concept – *the cycle of victimization*.

In criminology, society is understood as being organized in such a way that some people are *motivated offenders* (black hats), others are *suitable targets* (hatless), and others still are *capable guardians* (white hats). This paradigm seems sound and was canonized into criminology as Routine Activities Theory (RAT). My concept of the hat rack applies nuance to RAT to account for the inconsistency of human behaviour and the reality of the cycle of victimization.

The mafia don will callously kill a shopkeeper that doesn't pay the extortion fee (black hat action) while also throwing a wedding for his niece that the whole family appreciates and will remember forever (white hat action). Carefully consider that some people enjoyed working with Jeffrey Dahmer at the chocolate factory. We actively switch hats, and therefore roles of offender and target.

What I have noticed is that people will be victimized in the role of *suitable target* but to avoid developing an unhealthy victim psychology they will find an opportunity to become the *motivated offender* and act as a black hat against hatless ones. This hat rack phenomenon constitutes a *cycle of victimization* – ceaseless and never-ending, it would seem.

To ensure the possibility for "balancing" being victimized with future perpetration, the role of *capable guardian* (white hats) is rendered anathema by society. Mafia continue to act with impunity, child molesters are released to halfway houses despite rejecting treatment, and a waiter may spit in your lobster bisque, or worse. They've been hurt, and now you will be hurt... and no one is going to stop it. There will be psychological balance for the individual.

This is the system currently in place regardless of whether motivational personalities, such as, Oprah Winfrey or Tony Robbins, "spin" the cycle of victimization into a perverse sense of good fortune or system of altruism. To break the cycle, people must be willing to perform as capable guardians as well as finding ways to balance their victim psychology with something other than perpetration against others. A willingness to take on the person who victimized you is a good first step.

BOOK 66: *CHANGE THROUGH RELATIONSHIP*

25. On Communism

A “good” socialist would not seek to make the world a truly better place through living the life of a revolutionary agitator. Instead, a good socialist would effect change from within the hegemonic system through hard work and the power of persuasion.

Why have no powerful people ever “come out Red”? The conspicuous absence of covert agents for the Marxist cause within the hegemonic capitalist enterprise might suggest that the communist mindset is one prone to self-piteous attitudes as well as psychological and physical aversions to the pain of hard work.

Perhaps, a communist is more intent on whinging and griping than actually putting in the time to improve the system and thus the lot of the entire human race. The only barrier to gaining influence in the capitalist system is hard work, unless one would make the claim that there is a principled objection to such covert “playing along” missions of infiltration. So, the communist’s principles stop them from working within the capitalist system to make positive changes? Oh, so their individual needs are paramount. That doesn’t seem very “communist” to me.

BOOK 66: *CHANGE THROUGH RELATIONSHIP*

26. On Equity

There has been a lively debate regarding “equal pay” among the genders. In 2019, the University of Toronto determined that with all relevant factors controlled for, the female faculty were paid 1.3% less than their male counterparts. The institution proceeded to correct the oversight. After reading the report and accounting for these “relevant factors” it seemed that one critical factor had been left out – risk-taking.

When you take a risk, you also assume responsibility – an important part of being a leader and driving change. Feminists often point to the Forbes “World’s Richest People” list and highlight the low representation of women. These high-profile examples serve as justifications for pushing the hypothesis that women are underpaid, generally. However, the list of richest people is a list that occludes 90% of its set. For each Bill Gates or Jeff Bezos, there were nine extremely similar risk-takers who didn’t push quite as hard or take as many risks. Those nine “losers” don’t always become the two-hundredth richest in the world, but rather, they may have become bankrupt.

When comparing the pay of the top ten women in an industry against the top ten men, we must consider if risk-taking is a key factor. If we agree that it is, then we may discover that the top women got to the top not through risk-taking, but rather, through strategic defensive techniques that have been honed to perfection. For every top woman there too may be nine women who didn’t implement the defensive techniques to perfection, however, this may not have led to the same financial ruin that their male counterpart “losers” experienced.

I would suggest that if we compared the top women and top men in a particular industry while also accounting for the missing 90% “losers” who came up short that the total collective of women would be better paid than their male counterparts. It would be unequal pay – in favor of women. This is just an intuitive assumption on my part, but I would be happy to read the relevant reports to either confirm or debunk it my hypothesis.

BOOK 66: *CHANGE THROUGH RELATIONSHIP*

27. On Anarchy

Fundamentally, the positive aspect of the thesis on anarchy as a dominant form of social organization is that it promotes and privileges a notion of egalitarianism. When true anarchy is in place, everyone is at the same level, and that system does not permit people to move ahead in life such that they gain status, and then use that status to wield power against others.

The sociopolitical theory of anarchy is based in victim mentality.

However, the problem with achieving egalitarianism is that it implies “lowering the bar” to the lowest height imaginable because the least capable person must have a sense of achievement as well. Then, the problem with anarchy is that once this form of egalitarianism is achieved there is inequity for all those who are capable of doing better than what has been deemed the accepted level of achievement.

A new notion of egalitarianism emerges which would inevitably provoke raising the bar to allow most of society to shed their sense of relative deprivation. And then society is faced once again with the “unfairness” of the lowest achievers not having a sense of utility in society. Therefore, anarchy has no realizable positive aspects and as a political system or form of social organization, it can only function properly in the realm of conjecture and fantasy.

BOOK 66: *CHANGE THROUGH RELATIONSHIP*

28. On Hate

As postmodernism progresses toward an inevitable “post-human” transition through our reliance on automation and artificial intelligence, society is becoming more concerned with free expression. It is ironic because total reliance on automation will render individuals hermetically-sealed with their technology and free expression will vanish as a relevant social issue. In other words, no one will be talking to each other, and rather, everyone will be focused on fostering their maximally agreeable relationships with artificial intelligence.

However, in the meantime, we have a “problem” with free expression. A surfeit of free expression is now being labeled, “hate speech”. Perhaps, we need a more nuanced approach. Could it be appreciated that there is a significant difference between *hurtful speech*, *hateful speech*, and *harmful speech*?

Hurtful speech is about proposing rejecting others based on things they choose. “That sweater you are wearing is ugly”, is an example of hurtful speech. Perhaps, we can develop a thicker skin over hurtful speech as such a strategy would improve our own character and raise our self-confidence.

Hateful speech is about proposing rejecting others based on things they do not choose. “Your brown skin is ugly”, is an example of hateful speech. It seems that there isn’t room for this kind of speech, and the freedom to express hateful speech is accompanied by a compulsion to be bound for the person subjected to the hateful speech. People are bound by the racism they experience – it isn’t a sweater they can take off even if they agreed with the criticism against them and also began to see that sweater as ugly. There is a better way to express hateful speech, and it can always be converted to a fair expression of hurtful speech – provided there was a legitimate point to be made in the first place.

The kind of speech that should garner the most attention from authorities – perhaps the only kind – is harmful speech. Harmful speech is about imposing rejection of others. “People who wear ugly sweaters should be punched in the nose”, is an example of harmful speech. As a civilized society we have a duty to impose punishment on those engaged in harmful speech.

That being said, until everyone is educated on the nuances of the different kinds of poor speech, there must be some leeway granted. Someone may be feeling that the state licensing against hurtful speech is wrong (and it is!) therefore they fetishize poor speech generally and conflate the three kinds of poor speech, intent on defending any kind of speech licensed against by the unfair state or other institutions with authority and control. It will take some time to “unfuck” what we have done to ourselves through the war on free speech, but it is important to move in that direction prior to degenerating to a socialist dystopia in the vein of George Orwell’s 1984.

BOOK 66: *CHANGE THROUGH RELATIONSHIP*

29. On Interruption

In recent years, zealot feminists have introduced us to the notion of “mansplaining”, “manspreading”, and “maninterrupting” being valid concepts. This series of sexist portmanteau neologisms are far from intuitive in their meaning, but let’s break one of them down for further analysis.

Maninterrupting is claimed by some feminists as being the act of a man to use verbal interactions to dominate women – a man interrupts women as a means of dismissing her point in the conversation and thus denigrating her to a junior status. Does this mean that any time that a man interrupts a woman in conversation, this is also rude, sexist maninterrupting? Depends on who you ask, I suppose.

However, there are objective rules for good debate, and there are also established techniques for fluid conversation which facilitate those debates. A well-placed interruption can be imperative for maintaining the flow of good debate. In fluid conversation, there are many pregnant pauses which become natural junctures for someone who is not yet speaking to enter the conversation with quick corrections, or requests for clarifications. An interruption often functions to create closure for a topic or set of ideas being expressed. Using pregnant pauses appropriately does not constitute a rude interruption per se. Effective debate is only possible through fluid conversation which is partly enabled by well-placed interruptions.

Arguably, interrupting others mid-sentence is objectively rude, and we note this during political panel debates televised over major cable networks. Ironically, the politicians who we would expect to be the best orators as well as masters of rhetoric then demonstrate their poor debating skills and lazy conversation techniques.

I would like to suggest that recent allergic reactions by feminists to men interrupting may be rooted in how ideologues do not appreciate being challenged on their prejudices and beliefs. It may be the case that ideologues, such as zealot feminists, have poor self-control over their affective responses (primarily, aggression and emotion), thus an interruption disrupts their higher-faculty *thinking* and allows their lower-faculty *affect* to take over.

For such people, it may be easier to ask others to do the work for them through encouraging conversation partners to be silent via accusations of sexist maninterrupting versus actually doing the work themselves in developing mental self-control.

BOOK 66: *CHANGE THROUGH RELATIONSHIP*

30. On Anthropology

Film director, Orson Welles, once remarked that philosophy was at an end, but anthropology was just beginning as a relevant mode of inquiry for human beings. I have had reason to partake in some anthropological analysis when being faced with the issue of racism and bigotry. Through an anthropological understanding, it would seem that humans have values, and that we form communities around shared values. Values do not start as vices but can become vices when fetishized (in other words overemphasized and obsessed over).

Some early communities of human beings may have privileged the value of *agitation* or *excitation* while others valued the inverse of *comfort*. Also, some may have valued *cooperation*, while others focused on the inverse of *contemplation*. All those values can be regarded as “good” or positive values. However, if those anthropological-based values are fetishized then they can become vices.

Privileging comfort to the point of fetishization can become excusing *laziness*, while contemplation taken to the extreme becomes *isolation* and *exceptionalism*, or even *elitism*.

The anthropological values are likely the key to understanding early human migration. Those individuals or communities that privileged agitation/excitation and contemplation traveled to northern regions where wintry conditions forced a strong work ethic as well as providing a lot of open space for quiet contemplation. Once in those regions, the lack of exposure to the sun changed the pigment in the skin across many generations, and eventually, “white” people were the result.

Fetishization of the good values of excitation and contemplation can result in any kind of person becoming domineering and elitist – the bane of European history. Conversely, it is a sense of comfort that kept people in the cradle of life. Fetishization of comfort becomes laziness – the bane of African history.

When black people are constantly late for work, we think of it as laziness when perhaps we should consider that it is simply an extreme form or fetish of comfort. If we saw the productive and positive potential value in privileging comfort, then it might be easier to end racism and come together as a human race. The same goes for lambasting white people for their ambitious nature – there is an underlying positive quality of contemplation and excitation being suppressed through destructive fetish.

Understanding the anthropological roots of our vices may allow for addressing the racism born of a confusion about how those vices were once good values prior to their expression becoming imbalanced. That understanding may be key to encouraging people to exhibit greater self-control and self-awareness over how their values have become vices. Ending racism is a two-way street.

BOOK 66: *CHANGE THROUGH RELATIONSHIP*

31. On Oppression

Not that long ago I was living in the neighborhood of Verdun, in Montreal, Quebec. Verdun was a community inhabiting a peninsula in the southern part of the city, and it was primarily a francophone neighborhood where French was the language which was expected to be spoken in stores and among neighbors.

My French was rusty when I arrived, and it didn't improve enough to avoid the habit of Montreal francophones quickly switching to English in almost an allergic reaction to pigeon-French being spoken by anglophones. Their habit generated anxiety for me, and it was alienating, but manageable. While studying soft sciences at a university in Montreal, I was made aware by colleagues and professors that I was an "oppressor" – I was a hetero white male with education and a wealthy upbringing. It seemed absurd that someone could judge me to have a good life simply by looking at me. It wasn't just absurd – it was dead wrong.

The labeling process being wrong did not deter the ideologues who were hermetically-sealed in their Ivory Tower. According to them, I was the bad guy. However, as I reflected on my experiences of living in Verdun, I came to realize that oppression isn't a relevant concept, but rather, *relative deprivation* is to be considered paramount.

Relative deprivation considers how oppression is experienced locally. My being an anglophone in Canada was considered a mark of privilege by my colleagues at the university, and I was to see myself as an oppressor against francophones in Quebec. Yet, it was I who was oppressed daily because my lived experience was in a French neighborhood where anglophones were treated poorly by francophones. The relative deprivation constituted a lived experienced characterized by oppression.

Oppression cannot be held as a valuable concept when imported to a global setting because people do not have a global mindset (with the exception of foreign diplomats, international public speakers, etc.). People moving around the fish market in Lagos, Nigeria, do not feel oppressed for being black – they are merely told to feel oppressed by self-loathing Western white malcontents when those agitators inform the sub-Saharan African that their fish market is impoverished as compared with those in Chicago, San Francisco, or Rome.

The Nigerian does not have a sense of relative deprivation locally, nor do they have a global mindset (almost no one does). Thus, in a sense we are "infecting" their minds with hatred and self-loathing by imposing our Western opinion that their fish market is substandard. If the Nigerian fish market is that poor, then perhaps those lovely Western agitators would do us all a favor and move to Nigeria to innovate and improve the situation. Don't hold your breath.

BOOK 66: *CHANGE THROUGH RELATIONSHIP*

32. On Opinions

The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki taught us that the human war machine – chugging for thousands of years – had to be decommissioned. What do you do with that next generation of young men who previously found life purpose in risking death on a battlefield? – you educate them. If you educate young men, then they start to understand themselves as having greater worth than mere cannon fodder.

The university system exploded in the post-war period, and this provoked a turn to *post-structuralism in epistemology*. *Structuralism* was an approach to epistemology which dealt in absolutes and universal truths, however, once you have settled on a universal truth there isn't much more to say about it. With an influx of university students, it was required that the discourses expand, and so post-structuralism was embraced by the academy, and it was characterized by its turn to *hermeneutics*. Hermeneutics is a mode of inquiry whereby we privilege interpretation over ideals.

In post-structuralist thought, the ideal and universal quality of a sunset being beautiful is questioned, and hermeneutics dictates that the individual can interpret the sunset as paltry. Eventually, the turn to hermeneutics paved the way for the turn to *affect* – “I feel that the sunset is ugly”. There doesn't have to be any rational reason for understanding through affect. In time, every single person's opinion became a kind of grand thesis for phenomena.

What was happening in the university classroom began to influence mass culture. Being educated was the justification for believing that your feelings and the opinions that they provoked were worthy in the broader social context. Today, we are still stuck in this post-structuralist mode of petulance where personal opinion is paramount.

I would like to suggest that opinions of the mind are much like muscles of the body. The professional UFC fighter trains for hours every day, and their body and muscles reflect the work. The Sunday afternoon jogger's body and muscles also reflect the meager work they do. If we are talking about opinions of the mind, then it is graduate students and professors who are the paid professionals that train daily as compared with undergraduate amateurs who are merely average in their mental training.

We have a bad habit of encountering differing opinions and feeling it appropriate to dismiss an opinion as no more informed than any other opinion. The reality is that there are **ignorant opinions** and **informed opinions**. Two opinions are never worth the same, just as the bicep muscle of UFC champion, Rose Namajunas, is not worth the same as that of my sister. Rose works her bicep muscle every day, sometimes for hours. My sister does Pilates. The doctoral student or university professor work their opinions every day, often for hours. Rose's muscles get stronger with work, and the doctoral student or professor's opinions get more informed with work.

BOOK 66: *CHANGE THROUGH RELATIONSHIP*

33. On Directing

As a trained film scholar, I have often noted the power and influence of movie producers through the differences between their theatrical release versions of a movie and the “director’s cut”. To date, I have never preferred the director’s cut despite believing in the power of authorship. Movie producers have a great feel for the pulse of society, whereas auteur directors are often eccentric and motivated by their highly-esoteric theses on human nature.

A prime example is Milos Forman’s *Amadeus* (1984) and only seven movies have won more Oscars than *Amadeus* (at 8). There are two notable scenes in the director’s cut which I believe the producers were correct to remove for the theatrical release. The scene with Salieri and Mozart’s wife, Constanze, revealed Mozart’s competitor (and the film’s narrator) to be a sexual predator with no more than a modicum of shame. The shame wasn’t enough for me and after watching the scene I made a commitment to disengaging with Salieri’s character.

However, another scene in the director’s cut showed us Mozart struggling to overcome his arrogance so that he might make a steady paycheck through teaching music to students. Without the scene, Mozart is still juvenile, and at times, petulant, but it could be forgiven because he seemed hermetically-sealed in a world of music production crafted by his father, Leopold. The scene with Mozart griping about teaching music renders him to an unappealing character.

Well, the producers saw what I saw, and they nixed those scenes, rightfully. Yet, I spooked myself with the analysis because as a writer and creator the looming red ink of an editor, publisher, or producer provokes great anxiety in me. I often worry about what they would cut from my work and whether I would rather not have my work seen if it is going to be butchered by careless hands.

With *Amadeus* in mind, I have concluded that edits in artistic material which appease people’s virtues should be respected, but that edits which pander to people’s vices should be rejected. For example, if one of my entries in this book were deemed to “trigger” alcoholics because my ideas recommend that they exhibit greater self-control in their drinking habits, then this is an entry that should remain in the book. However, if another entry was objectionable for arguing that athletes create toxic meritocracy, then it would be appropriate to make a cut for that material. Don’t pander to alcoholism, and don’t rag on the effort people make to better themselves through fitness would guide me in the case of those proposed omissions.

For *Amadeus*, I believe that the producers did a great job with the theatrical release because the removal of the lascivious Salieri scene was appeasing an audience’s virtue to not condone sexual exploitation, while removal of the sullen Mozart scene was appeasing an audience’s virtue to not condone petulant elitism. We are expected to feel for both the Salieri and Mozart characters which isn’t possible if their worst aspects are presented to us as normative and acceptable.

BOOK 66: *CHANGE THROUGH RELATIONSHIP*

34. On God

A popular paradox in introduction to philosophy courses is the *paradox of the stone*. The paradox is generated when a person questions if an omnipotent God can create a stone so heavy that even God cannot lift it. If we admit that God can't lift the stone then God is not omnipotent, however if God can't make an unliftable stone then God isn't omnipotent either.

The obvious problem with this “paradox” is that it suffers from a *pathetic fallacy*. Pathetic fallacy occurs when we incorrectly reason by ascribing human characteristics to non-human entities. God is not human, yet we are asking whether “he” can do a physical-based human task of lifting objects. Instead, consider the following query: can God craft an unsolvable riddle that even God can't solve? Suddenly, there is no more paradox because something that is unsolvable has no solution.

God can't create a solution for the unsolvable. It would be like saying, “can you make this water ‘unwet’? A fundamental property of water is that it is wet. If water wasn't wet, then it would have transformed to something else that is not water. Therefore, the solved unsolvable riddle is no longer a riddle, and the lifted unliftable stone is no longer a stone. They are something else, hence, no paradox. The “paradox” arises from believing that a stone has the inherent property of being an object that can be lifted by a body – a inherently human situation. The conventional knowledge tells us that stones can be lifted. However, the paradox of the stone presents unconventional conditions which then change the nature of the objects we are talking about.

BOOK 66: *INTENTION THROUGH MOTIVATION*

35. On Culture

In one of my favorite episodes of the American syndication of the show *The Office*, the office boss, Michael Scott, has invited the property manager for their building, Billy, to give a little talk in the conference room to all the employees of the Dunder Mifflin Paper Company Scranton branch. Billy has his own agenda as it relates to daily business for the office Park, however, the uncouth Michael highlights the fact that Billy is paraplegic and has been confined to a wheelchair since the age of four.

Billy makes an upbeat joke about “hopping into” his chair in the morning, but the unflinchingly ignorant Michael Scott scolds his co-workers for their friendly laughter. You see, Michael sees no cause for celebration in someone being paraplegic, and in his perpetual petulance Michael believes that the disability makes Billy lesser than others.

I have had reason to consider Micheal Scott’s cringeworthy attitude in times when activists scream bloody murder regarding “cultural appropriation”. In the recent past, online stores have been boycotted for selling Pocahontas Halloween costumes, as well as individuals being hounded and harassed on the street for donning the traditional garb of Mexico’s *Dia de los Muertos* celebration.

What gives? My family fled Ireland during the Potato Famine, which killed over one million people while decimating a distinct culture, yet you don’t see me becoming irate during St. Patrick’s Day celebrations, and I certainly don’t run up to revelers aggressively while interrogating them as to whether they appreciate how the shamrock reflects historical traumas for my people. My lack of negative response is due to the fact that I recognize St. Patrick’s Day revelers as **celebrating** Irish culture.

Laughing at Billy’s joke was a friendly way to celebrate that he was living an inspired life through his unique physical condition. Pocahontas-styled costumes and Day of the Dead adornments celebrate the diversity of cultural expression. Perhaps, those who are offended are much like Michael Scott, and they see absolutely no reason to celebrate those foreign cultures just as Michael understood Billy’s culture of being in a wheelchair to be a shameful disability.

Ironically, the activists who rally against what they perceive to be problematic cultural appropriation are revealing their deep-seated prejudices regarding the status of exotic cultures and those exotic people as being disabled and lesser. Either that, or uncheerful activists are simply jealous that others know how to have fun and celebrate the diversity of life. Six of one, I suppose.

BOOK 66: *INTENTION THROUGH MOTIVATION*

36. On Preparation

The 2019 mass shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand, was terrifying to watch. The shooter had put a GoPro camera on his helmet and recorded the massacre. However, mainstream media and Western governments banned the seventeen minutes of footage from being available to the public based on the hypothesis of a “contagion effect” from exposure to this kind of disturbing footage.

The contagion effect presupposes that video footage of atrocities can act as propaganda and encourage others who watch it to mimic the criminal acts. Scientists have noted a contagion effect as real, however, the effect is short-lasting. I was able to watch the Christchurch footage through alternative news sources, and it was highly informative and educational.

In fact, I determined that this kind of footage **must** be made available to the public once the contagion effect period of time has passed (usually, days). The reason that I want everyone to watch a homicidal maniac graphically murder dozens of defenseless people follows the principle that forewarned is forearmed.

In the Christchurch footage, many of the victims inside the mosque believed that they could “play dead” to save themselves. They hid under bodies and lay through doorways hoping they wouldn’t be noticed. However, we learned from the footage that this strategy developed through a naïve imagination is of no practical use. The shooter returned and checked his victims, then finishing off those who were playing possum.

Additionally, it became obvious from the footage that the only high percentage play for success when confronted with a single shooter is to mob them. I have watched footage of several domestic terrorist shooting massacres, and I can confidently claim that mobbing shooters would reduce the victim count by 500% or more. There is no doubt in my mind that some innocents would be killed through this strategy, but many others would be saved. Mobbing armed gunmen is not an intuitive thought unless you have observed the patterns through being exposed to footage of multiple instances of mass shootings.

Governments should consider being laxer on shunning and shadowbanning alternative news sources, and officials should become more willing to serve the best interests of citizens through encouraging education and planning for worst-case scenarios. That is my only real point here.

BOOK 66: *INTENTION THROUGH MOTIVATION*

37. On Pets

Since the 2007 pet food recalls, pet owners and consumers have become increasingly aware of the nature of the pet retail business. Multinational conglomerate corporations have come under fire for the way their pet divisions have been irresponsibly sourcing and processing ingredients for dog and cat food formula. The move by pet owners toward greater conscientiousness in how they care for their pets has put a small dent in the reckless business practices of the multinationals.

However, diabetes is still one of the top killers of domestic cats and dogs (if not the number one, year to year) and it has nothing to do with the ancestral genetics of the animals. Cat and dogs are predisposed to diabetes only when they are being fed too many carbohydrates, and carbs are not part of their ancestral diet.

The pet divisions of multinationals have always privileged maximizing the conversion of by-product waste of manufacturing for human-based products to products for other markets, such as the pet market. In short, the multinational corporation's pet food is glorified garbage.

How do they get away with it? There are many methods, including, providing specially-packaged pet food to vet clinics at razor-thin margins allowing the vet clinics to stay economically-viable. In turn, the vets stand by the food. However, multinational conglomerates and veterinarians are **not** conspiring against pet owners. Pet owners are largely complicit with the sordid affair.

The following contentious claim can be debated, but I will state it as follows: cats and dogs on the multinationals junk-food pet diets become underdeveloped mentally and physically resulting in placid natures where they are then easy to control.

Furthermore, pet owners would prefer a “retarded” pet over one that has the keen mind to judge their owner and then exhibit defiant wilfulness against their owner. Dogs on prepared raw diets have high-energy and sharp minds – these types of dogs have to respect their owners as people to exhibit obedience.

Thus, I would argue that overall pet owners implicitly license multinationals and veterinarians to manufacture and distribute poor formula not just because it is economically inviting, but mostly for the result of it quasi-lobotomizing pets and rendering them highly manageable. These are contentious claims that I would stand by until proven wrong through a variety of empirical-based studies.

BOOK 66: *INTENTION THROUGH MOTIVATION*

38. On Yielding

After playing video games for over three decades, I have enjoyed the greater representation of women in games from generation to generation of video game consoles. Some of my favorite game characters of all time are female, including, Mission Vao in *Star Wars KOTOR*, Terra Branford in *Final Fantasy VI*, Kait Diaz in *Gears 5*, Diana Burnwood in the *Hitman* series, and Claire Redfield in the *Resident Evil* series. Additionally, when I am granted the opportunity to craft an original avatar for the game, sometimes I make mine a female, such as, in *Sunset Overdrive*, *Ghost Recon: Wildlands*, *Aliens: Fireteam Elite*, and the *Saints Row* series.

However, I have noticed that it is only video games with the **third-person** perspective where I craft my female avatars, and I have reasoned that I do this because I am titillated by the visual display of an attractive, powerful woman. My female avatars are pretty and feminine – but they kick ass. I believe that my discrimination for only creating female avatars when I can gaze at them through third-person perspective is related to the fact that women are not objects in real life despite it being a heterosexual male fantasy that they could become that. For the first time in my life I am “controlling” a beautiful woman, and not the other way around. It is a temptation that cannot be denied.

The representation of female through the avatar is one that yields to my commands although I remain the one yielding to the beauty itself. I’m sure that I am not the only male who feels this way and I have noted recently in the mobile game, *Street Fighter: Duel*, that player spending skyrockets any time a new attractive female character is added to the game and made available to the community through premium purchases.

The ubiquity of this yielding effect has me pondering why feminists in game studies seem so determined to push the idea that men choose to play as females in video games because they are “exploring” their gender identification. I think that this hypothesis is the farthest from the truth and could only explain motivations for a sliver of male players. Still, the beating of that activist drum persists within the field of game studies. I wish it too would yield – to reality.

BOOK 66: *INTENTION THROUGH MOTIVATION*

39. On Acronyms

The unwieldy LGBT acronym (currently, LGBTQQIP2SA, or 2SLGBTQI+) has a built-in pejorative connotation, semiotically. Firstly, the sprawling acronym is alienating to anyone who does not identify with the ideology by nature – it operates as a “GET OUT” warning sign, which is likely the opposite of what was intended. Young girls in school often develop a secret language of acronyms to keep parents, teachers, and boys “out” of their affairs and their world.

Don’t get me wrong though, because an acronym doesn’t have to have a smooth semantic reading for its interpreters. Not every acronym will form as an independent usable word, such as NATO. For example, USMC cannot be sounded out as a word unless you were a Czech poet. There are no rules on creating acronyms, and an acronym can read as a form of literal gibberish.

However, acronyms that assemble their individual symbolic letters into a usable word also foster a cultural-based recognition where people can understand the acronym holistically. The acronym, POTUS, has a sum which precedes the parts in meaning, and the sum becomes a metonym for what the parts signify when assembled as a statement – President of the United States.

The never-ending LGBT acronym denotes fragmentation – parts at odds with each other, resisting each other, and refusing each other. The parts do not neatly stand together to symbolize a whole. The parts shuffle around and alter their appearance, in short, the parts suggest untrustworthiness. The acronym is alien and references nothing else in language that is familiar.

Perhaps, the LGBT movement would be best served through adoption of a symbol in place of an acronym, much the same way that musician, Prince, substituted the modified Egyptian ankh for his name. At present, the LGBT acronym suggests that the only consolidated aspect of the movement is that it is defined through being oppositional, adversarial, and not fitting in.

We can imagine that this is all trivial and that the issue I have raised will sort itself out in time. A century from now the LGBT movement might have developed their own Esperanto-style language which sounds like gibberish to those who don’t identify with the ideology by nature – the LGBT acronym will just be another word in that new language. Still, “the movement formerly known as...” is as good as any other title, I suppose.

BOOK 66: *INTENTION THROUGH MOTIVATION*

40. On Liberalism

Politically, the world is ruled by false dichotomies. People set themselves up on linear spectra in order to define their political alignment. Although, these spectra have outliers (constituting a plane), the vast majority of people identify as either “right-wing” conservative, “left-wing” socialist, or “centrist” liberal.

The facile distribution belies the true issue that most people find that being politically enfranchised is tiresome and a bore. People want representative democracy, and they will tolerate a fair amount of corruption simply to avoid having to address political issues themselves. In fact, many Iraqis lament the end of Saddam Hussein’s totalitarian rule because the total lack of political enfranchisement for citizens also brought a certain stability that has not existed in their nation in over twenty years.

So, we can conclude that generally, people are lazy when it comes to politics – picking from three positions is sufficient in most cases. However, the liberals seek to occupy a position on the simple political spectrum that is a fulcrum for the teetering political system as a whole. Through economic or social shifts, it can become clear that there is political imbalance, and liberals shift either right or left to bring back some sense of equilibrium.

Recently, it seems that liberals have become full-fledged socialists. It feels problematic to many, but flame wars online will likely have little impact in making a necessary correction. If you are truly interested in bringing the liberal back to a central position, then it must be recognized that they shifted left politically to compensate for perceived imbalance to the right. Therefore, conservatives must change some of the radical aspects of the right-wing position to induce realignment for liberals.

One important step in the right direction is to recognize that capitalism is overall a workable system with many positive features consistent with human nature, however, **laissez-faire** capitalism privileges exploitation and sociopathy. We need the return of “trustbusters” like Teddy Roosevelt, instead of self-deprecating neurotics like Franklin D. Roosevelt who refused to put teeth back into the Sherman Anti-trust Act because he feared his political opponents, such as, Thomas Dewey, would convince Americans that FDR was an egomaniac.

The sooner we break up monopolies and duopolies, such as Disney in entertainment, or Marvel and DC in comic books and superhero movies, then the sooner we bring back balance to the political spectrum. No system can provide adequate conditions for progress when it is sundered internally. Currently, the world is a house divided politically.

BOOK 66: *INTENTION THROUGH MOTIVATION*

41. On Aliens

In 1974, the human race broadcasted the Arecibo message to the globular cluster Messier 13. The message carried a series of important information in binary code which functioned as an address stamp for planet Earth and our species. Later, in 1977, the Voyager spacecrafts carried the Voyager Golden Records which were phonograph records that contained sounds and images supposedly representative of life and culture on Earth. The intention of these kinds of interstellar messages has been varied, but one important goal has been communication with intelligent alien lifeforms.

The Voyager Golden Records included music sections by Mozart and Bach, as well as images from the written works of Isaac Newton. This strikes me as an odd way to introduce yourself to a new neighbor in the galaxy. Imagine for a moment, that the aliens picked up the message and headed toward our Sun to say hello. They might be expecting to meet a species populated with musical virtuosos and scientific geniuses.

Are we not misrepresenting ourselves? An intelligent alien species may feel that the dishonesty and vanity make it unsuitable for them to contact us and begin a cultural exchange. We kind of left out all the gritty details about Ted Bundy, Joseph Stalin, and Al Capone. We failed to warn the aliens that the human race has a major problem with rape and incest currently, and that our religious and educational institutions are riddled with sex abuse scandals. Some aliens might be quite shocked to learn the truth after discovering our flattering golden phonograph records and their aggrandizing claims on accomplishment.

Don't get me wrong, because I would love to be invited to a dinner party with Galileo, Da Vinci, and Poe, however, if the "Monster of the Andes" Pedro Lopez was also present I might have to decline the invitation. This seems to be a reasonable rejection on my part, and I could imagine an alien species feeling similarly regarding involvement with human beings.

The reality of the human race is that Mozart and Newton are pretty alien themselves, in that they are so exceptional that they have become household names for centuries and for a population of billions. Fortunately, the notoriety of a Pedro Lopez is pretty exceptional as well.

A more reasonable approach to reaching out to the stars and introducing ourselves to galactic neighbors would be to privilege honesty and then represent our achievements through what is normative. Let us send out a series of children's finger paintings, or perhaps, some love letters exchanged for an average romantic couple. Imagine that there are in fact advanced alien lifeforms available for cultural exchange, but they can't justify contacting us when we are being dishonest with them, and with ourselves?

BOOK 66: *INTENTION THROUGH MOTIVATION*

42. On Scripture

It is self-effacing that religious texts have zero association with God, unless one is willing to admit that God is a terrible personality. For example, the Ten Commandments is silent on explicitly condemning rape and sexual assault. Was God uncomfortable mentioning such things to his disciples? No, of course not, and we can clearly see that it is humans who feel shame and embarrassment around the topic of sex and sexuality.

So, did God believe that mentioning a prohibition on sex assault would embarrass humans, so he left it out of his miraculous proclamation to humans? This must be a terrible God then who would allow for ambiguity and vagueness on the issue of violating people sexually and ruining potentially the best part of life for them.

It is clear that religious scripture the world over has produced a tall tale about the nature of God, and it is one that only reflects the personal values of those who wrote those ancient texts. And what does it say about those guys if they thought it wasn't appropriate to claim that God wanted rape illicit given how rampant and horrendous a crime it has been, historically? Someone like that – I wouldn't believe a word they said about anything – clearly, they had ulterior motives.

BOOK 66: *INTENTION THROUGH MOTIVATION*

43. On Quitting

They say, “quitters never win, and winners never quit”, but is it always true? In video game culture, “rage-quitting” is highlighted as an issue just as significant as cheating. However, is the rage-quitter stigma co-opted by cheaters to stigmatize those players who will not submit to having the enjoyment of their gaming experience stripped from them by selfish opportunists?

Cheating in video games has become sophisticated, and examples of ‘dark play’ can include, IP flooding, lag-switching, glitching-out, aim-bots, modding, and hacking. Why not quit if those kinds of cheats used against you are ruining the gaming experience? Perhaps, rage-quitting isn’t a problem at all, but rather, it is a solution and holds the potential to pressure game developers to address cheating in their games and provide fixes or patches in order to stop exploitation by cheaters.

Therefore, the stigma of rage-quitter should be taken with a grain of salt, as it is likely applied by cheaters in order to discredit the quitter for exposing the cheating. To complain about quitting in the face of cheating would be equivalent to a juiced-up Mark McGuire or Barry Bonds complaining that baseball pitchers intentionally walk them. I would have enjoyed seeing pitchers refusing to pitch to McGuire and Bonds during those juiced-up years because it would have forced team owners to be more responsible when banning the use of performance-enhancing drugs in their sport.

However, the fans wanted those homerun derbies because baseball needed a facelift in the public’s imagination at that time. Can the same be said for the game industry at the moment? I would think that the game industry could afford to privilege fair play a bit more at present. Games are designed to be competitive, and play is to be equitable. Currently, many online gaming experiences are akin to chess tournaments if one of the two players was allowed two queens or could substitute rook for pawns. Arguably, the “uniqueness” of such a gaming experience does not substitute for the total lack of pleasure in playing with the opponent’s loaded dice.

I can imagine that one day the video game industry will be suffering the same issues that baseball endured in the late 1990s, and they too will need a facelift. The solution will probably come from generating more equitable play thus chasing off cheaters and fostering a community of skilled players that might even be labeled “rage-quitters” today.

BOOK 66: *INTENTION THROUGH MOTIVATION*

44. On Revision

History is written by the victors, and undoubtedly, we do not properly understand the reign of Alexander the Great, the purpose of the crusades, or the life of Galileo. We have mere glimpses of history through primary documents, yet not all textual evidence has survived. In the 20th century, our ability to distinguish historical myth from fact vastly improved and there was audiovisual evidence to ensure that tales didn't get taller in the telling.

Having perused some primary documents during my studies, I have a different impression of some major historical events. Could it be that I have read between the lines but missed the point?

In 1918, Germany had suffered greatly at their hands of their enemies as the First World War concluded and the Treaty of Versailles was drafted as retributive such that it ensured a future confrontation between the “negotiating” parties. In 1919, the communists in Germany, coming off a successful revolution in Russia, made a strong bid for a socialist coup in disillusioned Germany.

The strong work ethic of the German people did not jibe with the bar-lowering and buck-passing tendencies of Marxists. The coup was suppressed. Arguably, German people became alert to the machinations of Marxist agitators, and likely the *lumpenliberal mass* shifted significantly to the right and toward conservatism. Later, the hardships of living during a global depression accompanied by the unfair conditions of the Treaty of Versailles, German people were ripe for plucking by a radical conservative organization – the Nazi party.

Without a real anxiety about German communism, would Adolf Hitler have become Chancellor in 1933? Additionally, France had its own problems with fascism and communism. France was so divided between supporting their own radical conservative party against the other parties, that the communist party of France approached Moscow for guidance. Through permission in Moscow, the French communists were allowed to team-up with the French liberals and they formed the Popular Front. France was divided down the middle, politically.

In fact, I have to question whether the vaunted Nazi *blitzkrieg* military attack was as awesome as the history books describe it, or whether many European nations were so exhausted from their internal political strife that the radical conservatives in those nations were somewhat inviting to Nazis suppressing the Marxists wherever they stormed.

Could it be that radical conservatives in France laid down their arms and fought half-assed against German invaders in 1940? Of course, this is all simply my interpretation of primary documents – a select collection at that – and I cannot support my hypotheses without the aid of well-informed historians. Still, in the least, it is fun to consider the alternative possibilities for what official history has coded as unassailable in their veracity to expound critical events.

BOOK 66: *INTENTION THROUGH MOTIVATION*

45. On Consistency

There is a great speech by Mark Twain on the subject of consistency. He notes the ironic inconsistency in how society desires consistency from others. Twain remarks that when it comes to serving the interests of society or an institution then consistency is paramount, however, individual progress is defined as inconsistent by nature – we crawl, and then we are inconsistent in crawling because we learn to walk. Self-improvement defies consistency.

The issue of consistency has become important in recent years because of “cancel culture”. Malcontent *agent provocateurs* make a habit of dredging up old media posts so as to call-out, publicly shame, stigmatize, and ruin the lives of those they perceive to be their ideological enemies.

Disney has had a vexing relationship with director James Gunn because Gunn’s old social media posts were ferreted out by online trolls, and it was claimed that Gunn was a pedophile. As someone who has researched in the field of criminology, my analysis of the Gunn media posts indicated that he was a victim of child abuse and participating in a *victim culture* online. Nevertheless, Disney canned Gunn temporarily, and needless to say Gunn would have been going through an ordeal... again.

Yet, what do we make of Mr. Twain’s elucidation on the nature of (in)consistency? If James Gunn in 2010 was someone who made light of pedophilia (for whatever reason) then this is reprehensible, but by 2020 he had none of those old habits. He had developed his social skills online, and he had improved his character. This is commendable and he was practicing the kind of inconsistency which we all expect from each other as people grow-up. However, his past was inconsistent with present political agendas, especially those of his “woke” employer, Disney.

It seems that a society which would give credence to agitators who only seek to undermine the positive feature of inconsistency is also a society pandering to stagnation and flirting with ruin.

BOOK 66: *INFLUENCE*

46. On Woman

Perhaps, inadvertently, and unknowingly, the history of woman has been traced by film director, George Miller through his post-apocalyptic *Mad Max* series. In *Mad Max* (1979), women have no agency and no power. They are subjugated within a social context that is dominated by roving male gangs. They are rape fodder. Max's wife cannot mount a proper defense against Toe Cutter's biker gang, and she is wholly reliant on a male figure (Max) for protection. This movie encapsulates early women of hunter-gathering society.

In the direct sequel, *The Road Warrior* (1981), we are introduced to Virginia Hey's character – the Warrior Woman. She has no real name, but she contributes to the culture of work which in this case constitutes being an armed guard for a base of survivors isolated in the wastelands. The Warrior Woman cannot compete with the onslaught of male opponents from Lord Humungus's fleet, and she falls; however, she makes important contributions to her community through hard work. The Warrior Woman has agency, even if ultimately, she remains powerless. This sequel is a fair representation of how women increased their social capital during the Agrarian Revolution after communities were settled.

By the end of the trilogy, with the third installment in the series, *Mad Max 3: Beyond Thunderdome* (1985), we can see the effect that industrialization has for the status of woman. Women now have agency and power, as represented by Tina Turner's character "Aunty Entity". However, women only have power when they are corrupt, entirely self-serving, and worse behaved than men. The *Mad Max* trilogy brings us to the contemporary historical moment.

In 2015, George Miller came back to the series after a thirty-year hiatus. *Mad Max: Fury Road* presents a female protagonist (first for the series). Undoubtedly, Charlize Theron's character, "Imperator Furiosa", has power – it's in the name itself. However, she has lost her agency, and must now escape patriarch Immortan Joe's community where she had once had social capital and status. Furiosa relies on Max as a co-protector, and they reconvene with a posse of females who are forced to survive in hiding at the fringes of the colonized apocalyptic wastelands.

It seems that in the world of *Mad Max*, after women had attained some measure of agency and power, they had worn out their welcome and landed back at square one. Has George Miller accurately prognosticated on the fate of women in some sort of "cycle" of historical gender relations? Only time will tell.

BOOK 66: *INFLUENCE*

47. On Socialization

At the extremes of the concept of entertainment are the two forms of its abuse – politics and exploitation. A superhero movie might be intended to entertain us with fantastic landscapes, epic battles, and wild creatures, however, if that movie starts to **preach** the importance of cleaning your room, listening to your parents, and taking out the garbage, then the movie as a text has shifted from entertainment to politics. Conversely, if every shot in the movie fabricates a reason for the sexy superheroes to take off their shirts and fight half-naked, while taking breaks between punches to French kiss, then the movie has shifted from entertainment to exploitation.

There are other ways that the movie could shift away from entertainment. For example, if the superhero movie had only super-villains that were olive-skinned, spoke in a guttural language, and attacked through suicide bombing, then there would be an “Islamploitation” which is both exploitative and political, thematically.

In the 1970s, cinema studies got rolling on its push for “counter-cinema” which was a Marxist concept that affirmed the work of the Frankfurt School thinkers who had contentiously claimed Hollywood and national cinemas of the 1930s were geared only for exploitation. Counter-cinema promoted making all audiovisual entertainment a politically-engaged experience to avoid the possibility of exploitation through entertainment.

Counter-cinema theorists, such as, Jean-Louis Comolli, suggested that we watch movies in well-lit auditoriums because the dark theater was simply a way for movie producers to lull us into a passive state and then exploit us. The claim sounds idiotic to the average person, however, decades later, Alexander Galloway ran with that fumbled ball by suggesting “counter-gaming” – video gaming where everything is politicized, and our engagement is entirely political-based.

These glorified wet blankets who call themselves media scholars cannot understand that politics and exploitation are two sides of the same coin. They are equally bad as filtration systems for spectatorship of audiovisual entertainment media. However, the issues of bastardizing entertainment into either politics or exploitation persists, especially through social media.

Social media services such as Reddit, or whatever Twitter is calling itself this month, have been riddled with shill pundits and irate mobs motivated by their political agendas. We all know that those services lose some of their entertainment value as you find yourself confronted with unfiltered political content while surfing. Additionally, Instagram, TikTok, and other “scroll” apps have implemented algorithms for feeds that subvert free choice and thus exploit the user rendering them to a state of hyper-passivity. When I watch my nieces using popular scroll apps they appear as zombies, flicking through the posts accepting all the images as personalized, and never questioning whether they should develop new ideas for personal taste. Scary times.

BOOK 66: *INFLUENCE*

48. On Radicalism

It has been noted that young leftist ideologues receive their marching orders from university professor masters. The university does appear to be the place where socialist hatred and intolerance have free reign. However, thinking back to the development of comic books in the early 1960s, some new understandings come to light.

In 1963, Stan Lee, who had been working as an editor at a leading comic book publisher, decided to redefine the industry through his proliferation of comic book titles all focused on events in a single fictional universe – Marvel. The world was introduced to the Incredible Hulk, Spiderman, Professor X., and many other characters who have become household names. Marvel comics started with a dozen titles, and the editors attended to the process of attrition whereby popular villains, such as, Magneto, received more appearances across titles, and unpopular heroes, such as, Thunderbird, were killed off almost immediately.

By the early 1980s, Marvel comics boasted over a hundred titles. A decade earlier, comic book enthusiasts may have had a dozen new comic books to read each month, but each individual reader didn't necessarily identify with the main characters of all those comic titles. For example, the X-Men were an often-misunderstood brooding lot, whereas Spiderman was an easygoing dude who gave the benefit of the doubt, Thor was an arrogant hero most concerned with his Norse homeland, Dr. Strange was a mystical egghead battling wild cosmic creations, and The Fantastic Four were modelled off of a nuclear family. No single reader necessarily had affinity for all those characters with their disparate demeanors and varied motivations.

So, began a new attrition for Marvel comics whereby they diversified their titles according to feedback from readers. If all you wanted was Spiderman then you could now read, Amazing Spiderman, Spectacular Spiderman, Web of Spiderman, along with crossover stories in titles such as, Marvel Team-Up. If a reader had once found the saccharine Fantastic Four or sullen X-Men unappealing, now they could bury their nose in nothing but Spiderman.

This proliferation of comic titles for Marvel was an outgrowth of unfettered laissez-faire capitalism, generally. However, catering to tastes in this way for the sake of maximizing profits also had the adverse side-effect of encouraging intolerance. People went into echo chambers with their media. Cable television began creating specialty channels, and then the internet fostered fan cultures. In fact, all media followed this echo chamber model as it facilitated capital gain.

I question whether the intolerance fostered through echo chamber formation in media is not the underlying origin of what we see now with young radical Marxist agitation. Through laissez-faire capitalism, culture has developed whereby you are not required to immerse in other discourses other than your preferred ones, and you become intolerant of opposition which is literally alien to you. This two-way ostracism breeds radicalism.

BOOK 66: *INFLUENCE*

49. On Self-Satisfaction

Would action taken for the purpose of self-satisfaction also be rooted in strong principles and impressive character?

What comes to mind here is that feminists have rejected certain gendered job designations, such as, “steward/stewardess”, and they substitute the title, “flight attendant” as a gender-neutral designation. The feminization of the word “actor” to “actress” has also cause abrasions, culturally. Somehow, the title being feminized is a stigma which marginalizes the female status within the binary designation. I suppose we should be grateful for the glass ceiling which spared us the indignity of titles such as, “doctorette” or “engineeress”. Yet, we have failed to flatten the distinction of given names, and “Justine” has not become “Justin” for its female name-holders. To quote the strong female character, Regan, from *The Exorcist* – “in time”.

But when will the feminists launch their campaign against the offensive gendered designation, “garbageman”? Perhaps, “garbageperson” would be a more appropriate title, although, it sounds more like someone loitering around Burning Man. When will feminists argue on behalf of all women who are kept out of the garbage collection role and who are then maligned within that profession through the patriarchal naming convention?

My sarcasm occludes the important point related to my disdain – there is inconsistency in activism. Activists pick and choose battles to suit themselves more than they focus their time and resources on solutions for the most important and urgent social problems. Can someone be considered righteous if their campaigning is based in this kind of self-satisfaction? Should it be on your CV that you fought for “stewardess” being changed to “flight attendant”? Has this accomplishment had any impact on the breast ironing phenomenon in sub-Saharan Africa? Has it curtailed child prostitution in south-east Asia?

When it comes to activism, we should be probing the motivations for particular platforms and exposing activists who agitate for no other reason than self-satisfaction.

BOOK 66: *INFLUENCE*

50. On Evidence

The stubborn atheist will often challenge the devout person of faith on the confounding logic for the value of miracles on Earth. It would seem that all miracles that have involved supernatural acts also happened prior to the development of the technology which might have been able to record those miracles and verify them.

There were no video cameras to capture Moses parting the seas, nor did Jesus take a selfie post-resurrection. The “true” believer will claim that such evidence would ruin the point and purpose of the miracle – to develop faith without hard evidence. Ah, I guess free will is all important then and people must experience conditions where they don’t **have to** believe, but rather, they **choose to** believe.

This strikes me as odd, however, because we wouldn’t know of the miracles but for witnesses who then reported the supernatural acts. So, were those important witnesses not entitled to free will? I mean they had no choice to believe as it was staring them right in the face, presumably. It is a provocative double-standard to probe.

BOOK 66: *INFLUENCE*

51. On Dystopia

For a million years, human beings developed hunter-gathering culture. Only ten thousand years ago did we shift to agrarian lifestyles. Less than three centuries ago launched the Industrial Revolution. In the 20th century, the advent of commercial technology brought about the rise of the service industry.

The service industry has provided women with greater opportunities to gain political and economic power because for the first time in industry, the most valuable contributor could be a woman because service work is not based in physicality.

However, Western white strong women got a taste of power, and they wanted more. Their only obstacle was Western white strong men, and so they worked hard through industry and culture to demonize Western white strong men and have them demoted in the workforce, in culture, and in life.

Today, in the West, men and women are more adversarial than ever. A key to Western white strong women undermining the authority and control of Western white strong men has been to promote activism, especially activism headed by Western white **weak** men (such as, Marxists).

Here is the rub. Technological advancement is a juggernaut and we have already promoted the next phase of industry – automation. However, we must curtail that development and instead promote the next phase of industry as being the epoch of engineering. This must be achieved soon to avoid humans being rendered useless with respect to work culture. Work culture breeds rationality and sanity, and we cannot afford to lose that.

The citizens of the City of Domes in Nolan & Johnson's *Logan's Run* had stopped working and subsequently lost their rational minds. They were pathetically hopeless and had a child-like mentality even into their adult years. Engineering is inherently rational and linear-minded work whereas activism is inherently irrational and wildly discursive agitation. If engineering isn't privileged soon as the next phase of industry, then we can expect to have a future society resembling many dystopic visions that have flowed from the imagination of creative science fiction authors, like Nolan & Johnson.

BOOK 66: *INFLUENCE*

52. On Partisanship

One known characteristic of individual-based madness is the incessant rocking back and forth of the body. Rocking provides a sense of activity and equilibrium when an individual is unable to exert self-control over their thoughts in the quiet moments of their mental life. Rocking fosters a false sense of self-control through bodily oscillation referencing a physical equilibrium. This “centered” body becomes the anchor for stabilizing the mind. Rocking is a perverse form of self-help.

However, we might notice that society has a habit of “rocking” back and forth between polarized values on a great many issues, from politics to art. Does the rocking between polarized extremes – Democrat and Republican, communist or capitalist, progressive or conservative, avant-garde or traditional – not imply a deeper form of social madness as well?

BOOK 66: *INFLUENCE*

53. On Adaptation

For years my wheels spun during my doctoral studies in semiotics, and I could not settle on a topic for my dissertation. Either I was attempting to satisfy a former mentor from my previous school, or pander to the department that was supporting my current research. As Jack Torrance noted in *The Shining* – “lots of ideas... no good ones.”

Finally, I settled on a topic that held some promise – transmedia adaptation. My focus would be to examine how video game logic, or the *ludic* elements of games were successful when represented through the filmic medium.

For two decades, movie adaptations of video games were box office poison, with few exceptions. *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (2001) was an exceptional case largely due to Angelina Jolie’s cachet as Hollywood’s turn-of-the-millennium moll. That movie didn’t have to be good, but instead Jolie had to fulfill the male gamer’s sexual fantasy for Lara Croft – and she did.

In 2023, the game industry finally made a breakthrough with *The Super Mario Bros. Movie*, which is ironic given that the first lemon in movie adaptations of games was the live-action *Super Mario Bros.* (1993). So, what was the problem? Why did Hollywood struggle so much with intellectual property that had already proven itself greatly successful in another medium of entertainment?

The thesis for my doctorate was going to examine how movie adaptations of video games failed to utilize ludic elements or game logic from those games. *Super Mario Bros.* had the familiar elements of turtle-based villains, sewer pipes, and Italian plumbers, however, there was no representation of *platforming* as an element of game logic. *House of the Dead* (2003) was a meandering cabin-in-the-woods horror story with no critical moments of *first-person perspective* which characterized the game experience. *Bloodrayne* (2006) was a hackneyed melodrama without *hack-and-slash* action sequences. *Hitman* movies (2007, 2015) have lacked representations of *stealth*, and *Assassin’s Creed* (2016) spent too much time focused on the elaborate Animus “rig” which had little relationship to that simulator machine as represented in the game series.

On the other hand, movies that seemingly have no relationship with video games have done very well at the box office through importing ludic elements of games into the filmic representational model. For example, *Run Lola Run* (1998), utilizes the *respawning* aspect of game logic which almost all video games have featured. In 2020, *Boss Level* followed in suit and represented the frivolity of respawning in a fun and entertaining way. *Dredd* (2012) did an excellent job of borrowing from video game architecture and emulating the ludic elements of the *platformer*. *Hardcore Henry* (2015) went all in, and that film was shot entirely *first-person shooter* style, and there was no doubt that the movie was paying homage to the ever-popular game mode.

I have yet to start writing my dissertation, but I believe this topic is a good one at least.

BOOK 66: *INFLUENCE*

54. On Wrestling

Professional wrestling has become a billion-dollar enterprise which is a far cry from its humble origins in *fin-de-siecle* vaudeville entertainment. “Sports entertainer” tycoon, Vince K. McMahon inherited the family business from his father, who had inherited from his father. McMahon’s grandfather had been a boxing promoter who had then faced social pressure by organizations, such as, the Legion of Decency. Subsequently, he threw in the towel on boxing and reimagined vaudeville wrestling acts for a new era of sports entertainment.

McMahon’s father pioneered the WWE brand (originally, WWWF, and then WWF). In the 1960s and 70s, pro-wrestling endured strict zoning regulations for independent wrestling promotions. At first, there was no opportunity to grow an empire, even if one promotion had clever innovations or boasted the brightest stars. Laissez-faire capitalism ensured that things would change, and eventually, McMahon took over the WWF and began the process of monopolizing the industry.

The history of pro-wrestling is incredibly interesting and would make for a very entertaining movie, however, an element that has always fascinated me in that entertainment form is the role of the *valet*. In the 1980s and 90s, the valet was a precious commodity ringside, and only the superstar wrestlers were accompanied to the “squared-circle” by a demure beauty valet. Miss Elizabeth was the valet par excellence, and she was recognized as Macho Man Randy Savage’s “real-life” wife, although, later when working for Ted Turner’s WCW promotion, Miss Elizabeth was also a valet for the “Nature Boy” Ric Flair, and later, “Hollywood” Hulk Hogan.

Miss Elizabeth was passed around, but incredibly remained chaste in the eyes of the fans. Miss Elizabeth was seen, and not heard. The fans projected onto her. Just as soap operas are a cathartic release for a certain type of woman (or any woman in a particular mood), so too is pro-wrestling a cathartic release for males. Soap operas allow for indulgence in a world of emotions without reason, and conversely, pro-wrestling fans indulge in a world of aggression without reason.

Miss Elizabeth (and other demure valets, such as Woman, Rena Mero, or Kimberly Page) allowed wrestling fans to project their need for aggression onto a female persona who presented as fragile but able. This caused the wrestling fan to look inward and examine the importance of maintaining self-control over aggressive tendencies. The valet was a subtle mechanism to that effect, and this proposed effect can be argued. Undoubtedly, “smarks” (smart marks) will rally against my claims – gatekeeping is what they have been engineered for as it facilitates the industry’s maintenance of the “kayfabe” system of pro-wrestling fantasy.

Today, the demure valet has all but vanished and she has been superseded by the pro-wrestling “Diva”. The Diva is all about aggression, and she does not represent a foil for the cathartic release of anger and pent-up rage brewing inside fans. The Diva is a regression in the affective expression associated with pro-wrestling spectatorship.

BOOK 66: *INFLUENCE*

55. On Sports

Ice hockey is different. This statement has many applications. Ice hockey is a very different sport from all other major team sports – it is played on a sheet of ice, players are fitted with equipment head-to-toe, and a puck is fought over as opposed to a ball. Ice hockey appears ironically esoteric in its expression as a popular sport; however, the basic logic of the sport is as intuitive as soccer: offensively move past the defense and put the playing piece into the opponent’s net.

Ice hockey has changed and most major sports struggle with that. In recent decades, baseball has been accused of being “boring” and “slow”. Baseball was a sport that entertained people a hundred years ago when life was not fast-paced. Baseball hasn’t changed many of its rule to keep up with the times. American Football is now under scrutiny but not for lack of excitement, but rather, for excessive action. The NFL risks being put in the poorhouse through class action lawsuits if it cannot reimagine the sport in such a way that players live safer and healthier lives on the gridiron.

Prior to the 1980s, ice hockey had the same issues that the NFL faces today, except, no one cared back then. The famous expression when scoffing at the sport was that “you went to see a fight, and a hockey match broke out”. Ice hockey in the 1970s was pure aggression, and the “Broad Street Bully” goon players of the Philadelphia Flyers were as well-recognized as any skilled superstar in the league. But thankfully, things changed for ice hockey.

In the 1980s, “The Great One” Wayne Gretzky heralded a new era of skill-based ice hockey focused on playmaking and goal scoring. Players were required to wear helmets. Goaltenders were sieves at first, but later, Patrick Roy pioneered “butterfly” style goaltending, and Martin Brodeur and Dominik Hasek perfected that sound style. The NHL of the 1990s was characterized by a melange of aggressive play at the end boards and in front of the goal crease, with fast-break offensive sniping, and neutral zone chokes. The sport had become overly complex.

Gretzky had been an ambassador for the NHL, spreading interest in the sport into California, and the southwestern states. The league expanded and the fanbase grew. Dilettante and neophyte fans were not necessarily keen on the sport’s origins in “rock’em-sock’em” quasi-pugilistic medieval-knights-on-ice-style contests. Commissioner, Gary Bettman, and the NHL were agreeable to change.

The new millennium has transformed NHL ice hockey. The game is now “wide open” and focused on skilled play. Players have agreed to stop goading each other, and referees do their best to keep their whistles out of their mouths. No-touch icing and two-line pass infractions have been phased out resulting in higher goal scoring. Overtime has a 3-on-3 format which almost guarantees a goal. If overtime leaves the teams deadlocked, then a shootout decides the match.

Imagine, FIFA was as willing and able to revise the structure and rules of soccer, and then change.

BOOK 66: *CONSEQUENCE*

56. On Cheating

Why do people cheat? Countless reasons, I suppose. However, one might agree that a strong impulse to cheat is based in attaining success as direct compensation for a previous related critical failure. Olympic sprinter, Ben Johnson, had lost to Carl Lewis in the past and this critical failure provoked him to consider cheating, which he then did, and was caught.

To admit to cheating would defeat the purpose of claiming success. The false success would be exposed as disgrace. So, people keep their cheating hush-hush. This secrecy is problematic because the cheater will only trust and bond with other cheaters. The cheater subculture will become more degenerate over time.

This effect has been noted in prisons with respect to how sex offenders are “rehabilitated”. The therapy sessions which other prisoners want to have nothing to do with end up hermitically-sealed echo chambers for the mentally-ill sex criminals. This “cheaters circle” is a place where poor values based in fear and trauma are reinforced, retooled, and propagated.

A healthy society should not foster inbred subcultures of cheaters of any kind. We already know not to put all the poorest math students in the same class and have them teach each other. Instead, those who need a leg-up in mathematics are encouraged to work with tutors or other students who have an aptitude in math. Cheaters need tutors and mentors – and I’m not exactly sure what that would entail but it seems like the kind of plan that requires more attention from society.

BOOK 66: *CONSEQUENCE*

57. On Pedophilia

It has always disturbed me that pedophiles provide a **justification** for their behavior prior to being caught that is contradictory to the **excuse** they offer once caught and processed through the criminal justice system. Let us examine quickly: the primary justification for pedophiles is stated as “mentorship” where they claim that a sexually active adult should take a child and “show them the ropes” because children have a “natural curiosity”.

The Dutch government took many years to outlaw the Vereniging Martijn organization of shameless pedophile who purported this aforementioned justification with pride and assembled in public to celebrate their twisted values.

“Natural curiosity” is an interesting choice of words by pedophiles given that children are naturally curious about almost anything, and children would show interest in cracking eggs on their head while hopping on one foot if adults told them that it would keep children safe and help them fit in. Children are helpless and vulnerable. Any exploitation of a child’s “curiosity” should be met with the strictest justice.

Have you ever noticed that children rarely turn down a sip of alcohol from an adult’s glass. They are naturally curious about adult activities. Would a child be doing really well in life and developing in a healthy way if we let them get drunk every night? Additionally, children usually grimace when they taste alcohol, but they enjoy the security they feel when they fit in and gain social capital by taking those precious sips. That feeling of security cannot be exploited by adults.

Yet, the pedophiles who claim they were engaging in a natural and progressive education program with children when exposing them to sex, will then hide behind the excuse that they are former victims of pedophilia, when caught by the state or other responsible citizens. Well, would that excuse not imply that they knew full well what they were doing was wrong and exploitation? They claim “sickness” as an excuse when caught, but it is “healthy” activity when they are operating under the radar. Pedophiles are perniciously hypocritical and should not be granted an inch in our justice systems lest they take more – which is a certainty for them.

BOOK 66: *CONSEQUENCE*

58. On Cults

I met a Satanist one day and they pointed me in the direction of the tenets of satanism. This statute can be viewed online at a variety of websites that support satanism. I was taken aback by the tenets expounded in the constitution of the subaltern “cult” movement. These are some primary values of satanists: do not volunteer opinions but wait until you are asked to share something with others; and never hurt or exploit children and the vulnerable. Those satanists were really onto something.

This certainly isn’t the impression of satanism that I grew up with through hegemonic Christian discourse, or Hollywood support for that hegemony. My impression of satanism was that it was a cult for worshipping the evils one might expect to experience in Hell. I believed that satanists were those who were sycophants to Satan in hopes that they might avoid torture in Hell. In sum, satanists were immoral cowards.

Reading the online principles of the Satanic Temple and Church of Satan changed my mind on all of that, although I recognize that there may be true cult leaders that have co-opted the biblical figure of Satan to justify their malignant and wicked sociopathic interests. However, I am no apologist for satanists nor am I one of their members in any organization. I don’t keep up with their news or follow their developments.

Although, I don’t know much about this offshoot of Christianity, I have made some initial conclusions – satanists are a denomination of victims of Christianity. I believe that those who are most attracted to satanism are individuals who have been victimized, or merely feel victimized, by their previous interpellation by the mainstream Christian church.

The Christian church is built on sexual repression. Sex is the wildest discourse and when people are engaged in wild thought and feelings, they become difficult to control. Monotheistic religions have licensed against sexuality in order to exhibit a measure of social control over their flock by keeping their followers away from wild, unbounded discourse.

However, the sexual repression then attracts the most vulnerable to positions of power – those who are desperate to express wild sexuality but are afraid to do so based in the wrath of God purported through scripture. These weak-willed individuals finagle themselves into positions of authority in the church where they are then able to express their wild sexuality and at the same time feel that it can be justified through the recognition by others of their authority within the church.

Children are the victims of these weak-willed, low self-controlled individuals. Those children may grow up to reject the church and embrace an ideology which the mainstream church fears – in this case, satanism. I believe that the Church of Scientology recruits its members, essentially, in the same way and that most of its congregation are victims of sex abuse who understand Christian sexual repression as the direct cause of their grief and trauma.

BOOK 66: *CONSEQUENCE*

59. On Gratification

How terrifying to imagine that in the near future advancement in artificial intelligence and robotics will result in the proliferation of “pleasure” model androids. With half of all pages indexed on the internet today being pornographic in nature we might imagine that it is just a matter of time before people have pleasure androids as sex toys at home.

Furthermore, we can expect that whatever government legislation is put in place to restrict pleasure androids from crying or screaming – emulating being harmed, generally – will then be modified by computer hackers. Whatever laws would prohibit an android from being raped or being represented as a child for sex will inevitably stimulate a vibrant black market to circumvent those protections. For me, this vision of the future is nightmarish.

However, a good friend reminded me that all of that time spent with android lovers would be time wasted with respect to learning successful human-to-human intimacy. Real relationships, with their need for compassion, reciprocity, and understanding will become onerous and taxing for those who have become acclimated to social interactions with eternally agreeable artificial partners.

Effectively, the least truly social members of society will become hermetically-sealed in their virtual fantasy environments, and their “weak-bonder” genes will not be propagated into the human gene pool. Thus, “rape androids” are one of the keys to positive evolution for the human race, regardless of how sick and twisted it sounds at face value.

BOOK 66: *CONSEQUENCE*

60. On Obesity

In recent years, activists have applied pressure against the tenets of the Social Contract in order to recognize “fat shaming” as a social problem and form of discrimination. Why do some people believe that being fat is abhorrent? Well, obesity lowers your lifespan by decades on average, which to some may be offensive in its capacity to be a drawn-out form of suicide and self-harm. Also, obesity reflects a sedentary lifestyle which can be interpreted as laziness. Obesity is a result of overeating which represents low self-control. Should I go on?

As children develop into young adults, the most significant social change is that the individual is asked to exhibit greater self-control and be willing to work and contribute to society. Whereas obesity is a visual cue which tells the observer that the obese individual has, ironically, not successfully grown through the life stages of child, to teen, and then onto adult. They are not “pulling their weight”. Obesity signals critical character weakness or personality shortcomings that go beyond a visual assessment of the attractiveness of the physical appearance of the overweight individual.

The medical profession has already “weighed in” on the major causes of obesity: too much sugar in the diet, filling up on high-caloric junk food, out-of-control portion sizes, lack of physical exercise, and sitting around entertaining oneself with modern technology. Those are all solvable problems and can be mediated through a modest amount of self-control and work – the kind of self-control and work that every child is expected to internalize as they grow into adults.

Essentially, those who are against people becoming morbidly obese, could let you know by telling the obese to, “grow up”, and stop “growing out”. Realistically, when factoring in medical knowledge of hereditary conditions such as hyperthyroidism or Cushing’s disease – only about five percent of the population could claim a genetic-based excuse for being obese.

This is all to say, that fat-shaming makes sense, and obesity should be viewed as a social problem even if we agree to attend to possible unfair forms of discrimination against the obese. Certainly, obesity should not be **celebrated**, much in the same way that we do not celebrate the child who refuses to grow-up through their failure to take out the garbage, do the dishes, or clean their room.

There are lots of reasonable excuses for being fat that we can all understand (trauma, for starters), but don’t ask others to understand those excuses as justifications, and then celebrate the condition of underdevelopment as if it were something to be proud of. That is the height of perversion and signals a petulant society unwilling to engage in a program aimed at self-improvement.

BOOK 66: *CONSEQUENCE*

61. On Abortion

Two women stand in front of you – both morbidly obese. One commits to developing strength of character and she proceeds to improve her appearance through good diet and fitness, while the other runs to a plastic surgeon for nips, tucks, and liposuction. For some, the latter woman in this example has poor character through her taking the easy way out. Then again, what about a third woman who never became morbidly obese in the first place?

The debate on abortion can be viewed in similar terms, but admittedly, it is **her** body. I'm not arguing the status of the human soul, nor what constitutes significant life. Instead, I am noting that women who run to the abortion clinic constantly are women of poor character. I don't believe that this is an inherent trait, therefore there are solutions. Moreover, perhaps, the real issue lies in a kind of *female potency anxiety*.

Could it be that through regular menstruation (a failure state for conception) women develop a psychological anxiety regarding their physical potency (ability to conceive)? Then, to become pregnant is to assert that being pregnant is possible – this woman is potent – and the anxiety can subside.

Before scoffing or rejecting this hypothesis consider carefully that all intact men are absolutely driven by a *male potency anxiety* which is demonstrated liberally through the regulation of masturbation as well as gawking behaviors and public displays. Men will “check out” women because it signals that their equipment is functioning, and this wards off anxiety around the idea that they would suffer impotency when called upon to perform sexually. Men don't gawk because we think we could have that woman – we aren't that stupid. Instead, it's all about keeping the engine warm.

Conversely, unwanted pregnancy may be about keeping the over warm, so to speak, because how else can women sense their physical potency? Obviously, this notion of a female potency anxiety cannot be an unconscious motivation for all women, and many women never have an abortion, with many more only having one (to err is human...). However, for women who seem reckless and who have multiple abortions in their lifetime, perhaps, the female potency anxiety hypothesis has validity.

Worth noting, is that this entry on abortion for this book has absolutely no import for discussion related to abortions of babies conceived through sexual exploitation of any kind. I wholly believe in a woman's right to abort a baby that she did not consent to conceiving. Only a cruel God would punish people in such a way and only a person of limited mental faculty could adhere to such a God.

BOOK 66: *CONSEQUENCE*

62. On Anomalies

It has occurred to me in the past that an anomaly need not be understood as an outlier, but rather, it functions as a “missing link” for a set of data. The anomaly can point to more general concerns that may have been overlooked in a study.

The history of human sexuality is important as we are all stakeholders, and we are impacted by scientific findings in animal sexuality. The presence of homosexuality in the animal kingdom is telling. There are only two mammals that have consistently demonstrated members that are exclusively homosexual – humans and sheep.

However, there are several mammals where **rare** instances of homosexuality have been noted. For example, large beasts, such as giraffes and elephants, have demonstrated bisexual male-male behavior in the past. Could it be that large beasts need to be willing to cooperate when sharing limited resources lest conflict results in battle? Two large beasts battling usually doesn't have a “winner”, and both animals are injured often to the point of the conflict having not been worth it in the first place.

Dolphins have a mating ritual whereby the males “gangbang” the estrus female, and during the frenzy some of the males will satisfy themselves using other male blowholes as sexual orifices. I can't say that this bizarre habit constitutes male intimacy per se. Of course, many ape species exhibit bisexuality, but interestingly there are not cultures of exclusive homosexuals among apes.

That being said, we know from the Toronto Zoo penguin incident, that trauma and interference can provoke homosexuality in animals that would otherwise not engage in such behavior. The penguins at the Toronto Zoo were completely isolated, and eventually, they imprinted sexual intimacy onto each other for lack of any suitable partner.

Finally, we have the pathetic koala bear who suffers from a “sponge” brain and is generally an improbable creature to have made it this far through a process of attrition driven by evolutionary forces. The koala females often prefer homosexual partnership. They also suffer an array of dysfunction, including, rampant syphilis, and partaking in a diet which is in fact poison to them (as a result, newborns are fed their mother's pap – excrement).

Researchers have discovered that roughly 10% of all male sheep are exclusively male-male homosexual. The scientific explanation for the phenomenon has been that anomalous sheep have poor neural network development as compared with non-homosexual sheep. This begs the question – does a genetic defect causing poor neural development, initiate a hormonal process to discourage procreation? Is this evolution or nature's way of phasing out defective genes related to cognitive development? These are questions that will take several decades to answer simply because the research required would be considered politically insensitive to minorities within human society.

BOOK 66: *CONSEQUENCE*

63. On Drugs

I have wondered about Hollywood elites and the conspiracy theories, such as, “Pizzagate”, which their pampered lifestyle spawns in the imagination of regular people. It is undeniable that the ultra-rich are able to make cocaine a recreational drug, that they party often and get drunk, while they also turn to charlatan therapists who rely on pharmaceutical drugs as a bail-out for actually helping their patients through petulant personal issues. At least, this is the impression many of us get of the ultra-rich, jet-set, Hollywood mogul type, along with their loyal entourage of parasitic sycophants.

But let it be known that we love as well as love to hate high-profile successful people. However, what if our prejudices are correct, and celebrities are constantly mixing cocaine, alcohol, and pharmaceutical drugs? This mixture strikes me as a “poison” concoction and one which could be expected to produce significant brain damage to the prefrontal cortex.

The strange case of Phineas Gage taught scientists of the specific kinds of deleterious effects that prefrontal cortex brain damage can have on a person. Phineas Gage suffered a construction accident whereby a metal beam was lodged in the most front part of his brain – the prefrontal cortex.

After the accident, Phineas’s family noted how he had become markedly deviant despite being much the same man from before. Phineas was twisted and derived pleasure from acting against the status quo. He still enjoyed the food, music, sports, and everything else that he always had. He could converse with others the same as he always had. However, to see a little girl fall down and cry made him feel good on the inside.

Later, neurologists recognized that the prefrontal cortex is the most newly developed part of the human brain, and it is where a sense of morality is developed by individuals. Could it be that the Hollywood lifestyle and its liberal indulgence of the poison cocktail (cocaine, alcohol, prescription medication) is causing prefrontal cortex brain damage, thus subtly rendering many celebrities deviant, and thus provoking us to notice the depravity then stimulating the development of conspiracy theories, such as, Pizzagate? It is a hypothesis which I hope will be explored further by the appropriate scientific experts.

BOOK 66: *CONSEQUENCE*

64. On Jokes

I remember watching a stand-up routine by George Carlin where one of his punchlines was related to a story about an elderly woman being raped. Carlin claimed that these kinds of ideas were fair game in public discourse when they are couched within the context of humor. Other comedians have echoed Carlin's ethos.

If you want to extract the positive meaning from this defense by comics then consider that these entertainers are telling their off-color jokes in the role of a "father-confessor" – the topic of rape, for example, is one that is traumatizing and cannot be talked about except within the congregation of the comedy venue. Those who suffer traumas, such as rape, are stuck in a state of silence not able to work through the difficult mental and emotional issues, socially. However, through humor, those who are suffering discover a forum where they can express their feelings about the trauma without it identifying them or stigmatizing them as a victim.

This was Carlin's point – humor allows us a way to talk about things that need to be talked about that otherwise wouldn't be talked about. I'm alright with his logic, however, it must be recognized that a joke is intended to make people laugh but there are multiple methods for eliciting laughter. Arguably, there are two primary types of laughter associated with jokes.

During a mock-interview with Sacha Baron Cohen's "Ali G" character, US astronaut, Buzz Aldrin, astutely noted that a joke elicits laughter through juxtaposing what is expected with what is absurd. This definition works. However, another known way to elicit laughter with a joke is through social embarrassment. It isn't difficult to get a room full of people to laugh at what they don't actually find all that funny provided the laughter has a sense of clearing the room of social embarrassment for whoever or whatever was targeted by the content of the joke.

You may watch comics on stage and wonder how they can be so damn unfunny and still get work – probably through being the masters of eliciting laughter via social embarrassment. Talking about rape, impotence, defecation, acne, flatulence, etc., need not be funny but such conversations may be met with laughter from others because they don't know what else to do regarding the awkward topics.

Therefore, a rape joke isn't just "fair game" as purported by the Carlin philosophy, and the legitimacy of the joke as free speech must be evaluated for how it intended to elicit laughter. Was there any expectation whatsoever that the joke would elicit laughter for any reason other than social embarrassment and putting people on the spot? Being put on the spot is to be rendered to a state of powerlessness, therefore, jokes designed to provoke that state in others can be understood as a form of exploitation. It isn't just bad taste – it's bad intent, and there should be some measure of culpability for that. However, until society is clear on their definitions of bad taste vs. bad intent then there must be leeway granted to bad comics, and we should tolerate their bad jokes, for now.

BOOK 66: *CONSEQUENCE*

65. On Hysteria

The Pandemic was an ordeal and it touched everyone in the Western world because our authoritarian governments, who were themselves commanded by the *lumpenliberal mass*, imposed draconian measures of social control to ensure that wealthy, elderly people felt safe in an environment with the Covid-19 “boogeybug”. The developing world was less affected by the Pandemic, although China must have been akin to Hell for those living there that were then stigmatized as unhealthy by the state.

I was disgusted at videos that surfaced in the West showing daycare workers forcing facemasks on toddlers who were bawling their eyes out and struggling to free themselves from the oppressive measure of social control. Just imagine what fun we will have working through the trauma of those toddlers once they have grown into angsty teenagers. In fact, they may react to the transition simply by becoming utterly despondent and regressing to a second state of infancy. P&G will make a killing on their Pampers line.

Another heinous intervention by the governments related to the imposition of vaccines. I got two vaccine shots, but I also thought that it was straight-up evil to “cancel” people’s lives when they refused to be vaccinated. I spent years in the university being inundated with ideological crap from irate feminists. The core of much outrage for misandrist feminists is that “penetration” is wrong and it violates autonomy. Those same self-righteous malcontents had the nerve to cancel people’s lives for not wanting to be penetrated by something foreign through the vaccination process. The double standard was offensive, to say the least.

Granted, we didn’t know what to expect from the virus and people felt a sense of panic. There wasn’t honesty. People were getting sick and covering it up because of the draconian measures by governments – that made everything worse. How do I know? The toilet paper crisis is illuminating.

At first, we didn’t know that the virus caused gastrointestinal problems in many of those who contracted it. People were embarrassed to let the world know that they had terrible diarrhea for two weeks. Pretty pathetic, nevertheless, people maintained the secrecy of that symptom for several months leading to a hysterical hoarding of toilet paper. Many households bought a decade’s worth of loo roll. People covered up the symptoms... and it is easy to believe that people covered up that they were sick in the first place.

Without the Big Brother reaction from WHO and Western governments on behalf of wealthy, elderly people then we might expect that most citizens who pretended to be healthy wouldn’t have felt it necessary to conceal their sickness. It was the concealing of being sick that spread the virus, and not those who refused to be vaccinated. You can argue with these points all you like, but just wait for my prognostication on the children affected by the pandemic to come to pass. The fallout is still a decade away, and it’s going to be a doozy.

BOOK 66: *CONSEQUENCE*

66. On Anger

Book 66: The Prolepticon is considered by me to be a huge success even if no one ends up reading it or appreciating my words. For over ten years, I vented my frustration with Western society and the university culture through writing hundreds of essays on various topics in political science, philosophy, psychology, and media.

Originally, this book was to be titled, “A Million Angry Words” because I was enormously proud of having converted those several hundred essays (in excess of a million words) to only 25,000 words of distilled, rational thoughts.

I changed the title out of self-respect for what I had achieved in altering my attitude. This book is not a reflection of anger, but rather, it is a productive conversion of anger. I have written this book without the anger and contempt that I felt when I produced the essays which these sixty-six entries were based on.

That being said, in converting essays that occasionally ran past 5000 words, these sixty-six entries have omitted a lot of good anecdotes and useful information I had researched for the topics. The caveat for engaging with *Book 66* is that you accept my knowledge and opinions as exactly that, and you understand and appreciate that I am not presenting myself as an “expert”. To that effect, I didn’t bother with citations but most of my research is easy to access and in the public domain.

I am a trained media scholar, and arguably, I am an expert film critic, however, for the most part I think of myself as a Renaissance man as well as an outsider to the status quo of society. I’m not angry, but I’m not happy either.

Book 66 presents human-based problems, but it also hints at solutions to those problems. The more those solutions are implemented, the more I will become a happy person.

For the most part *Book 66* has been written for the sake of posterity. I don’t necessarily believe that anyone living today will embrace my ideas, but I am entirely convinced that if the human race makes it two more centuries, then those people in the future will see my thoughts, ideas, and solutions as having been productive offerings.

I consider myself an individualist socialist which is to be distinguished from collectivist socialism. I have yet to meet another individualist socialist, but I have been fortunate to spend time with some keen-minded people who were capable of appreciating some of my ideas as well as caring about my outlook on the world and my concern for the fate of humanity.