Pt. 1

Observe and describe a variety of experiences where you feel particularly

immersed– in any or all of the senses we discussed today. Were you reading an

article, having a deep thought on your own, hearing or playing music, playing a

game, solving a problem? Were you passively observing or actively involved?

What aspects made these activities engaging? compelling? captivating? What

elements were involved? What techniques were in operation?

Looking back on the most immersive experiences from life, a handful immediately jump to mind. One in particular consistently has consistently stood out from all others, laying claim to the driving force of my life’s trajectory.

That would be the experience of travel; of living in a foreign land where the physical environment is completely new and sublime (in the sense that the surroundings, terrain are unlike anything seen before) and the English language is absent from the culture. The result of this is a mixture of forced integration and heightened observation—to survive, to fulfill even the most basic of needs, right down to the bottom layer of Maslow’s pyramid, it becomes essential to learn and understand language, local customs, and be able to orient and ingratiate oneself in a strange, spellbinding land and peoples.

In these environments—be it living in the thick of a frenetic urban city (São Paulo, Kuala Lumpur, Bogotá, Dar es Salaam) or a slow-paced, tightly knit rural community a world apart from civilization and the spoils of modern society (Quilotoa, Ecuador, Colombia’s Montes de Maria, the thatched hut subsistence life in Aldeia de Hippie, far north of the last bus stop out of Salvador)—one immediately becomes an active participant in these environments while simultaneously becoming a constant, keen observer.

Entering such places for extended periods of time—be it for several weeks, several months, or several years— is intoxicating. To experience and forge a life in a foreign culture without the aid of one’s native language as a means of communication, the companionship of any friends or family, and oftentimes, the absence of electricity (let alone an internet connection) is to become immersed in a life, a culture, a mixture of previously unknown customs and ideologies, more fully than any other means presented by the physical world. Once this experience is had, it is impossible to set roots anywhere for any extended period of time—life is simply too short to feel content at any one place for a spell of more than a year or two, knowing the vastness and variety of lives elsewhere to be lived.

Pt. 2

Life is a continual exercise in analysis—arguably, it is impossible to function in a society or institution on a daily basis without becoming adept at analyzing and interpreting the world which one inhabits and the rules that accompany it.

Today began like most any other, taking stock of what time I woke up; whether I had gotten enough sleep to function productively given the obligations and tasks that lay ahead; creating an agenda of priorities; and proceeding to get to work.

I’ve learned to prioritize physical and mental health and as the well-being of others above all else—this has been a learned habit, one requiring the conscious decision to do so. Humans are unique with regards to what things in life they prioritize—depending on internal and external circumstances at a given point in time, priorities differ from person-person, a consequence of this being that others approach tasks and problems using a wide variety of methods. Whether a particular approach to analyzing or solving a problem is effective is relatively simple, and can be answered through asking a series of questions:

1. What is the goal and desired outcome?
2. Is my chosen method of achieving this outcome the most efficient of all known, possible ways? (This applies to time, efficiency, quality of work, and future implications from achieving/failing to achieve desired outcome)
3. Are there other potential ways of approaching this task? Analyzing approach, priority, and outcome in a different light?
4. What resources are present for most efficiently solving this task, achieving desired goal? How should they be utilized?
5. Taking into consideration all the above, will the result be a net positive one?