Dear Dr. Fraley and Luyao,

Might I suggest some M83 after you read through this and while you’re thinking about these words and ideas (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dX3k\_QDnzHE):

This Paper is written in place of project 3 and the extra credit assignment and is also intended as a replacement for Max Anderson’s project 3 as well, as we have discussed the ideas herein thoroughly. Firstly, our lack of a project was not his fault. I emailed my participants too close to the deadline for participation and didn’t get the proper emails back. This, however, is not my only reason for writing this paper, as I could have fairly easily fabricated data for my project, whose design alone is worthy of at least a good paper or two,

I plan to study whether the effects of taking a very undemanding self-report personality survey in the morning (similar to a facebook quiz) and writing a small 140 character self-report of one's day at the end of the day (similar to a tweet) increase the negative personality traits of a person (based on self-report and testing tweets for negatively coded words) and whether this effect is strong enough to say that a person's personality is changed (for the better or worse) by taking these simple personality tests that are not so different from most people's typical behavior. There will be rotations of two types of weeks: A. The participant will take the self-report quiz and write the self-report tweet every night. B. The participant will take the self-report quiz and write the self-report tweet every Monday, Wednesday, or Friday to see during which frequency the effects are greatest.

Really powerful stuff with regards to validity and internal effects of personality studies. I was really proud of it and looking forward to getting a bit of data on the topic, but it didn’t work out. What is interesting, however, is that all semester, in every spare moment (I carry around my moleskine notebooks everywhere I go), I have been creating theories of modeling, among other related concepts, the phenomenon known personality at the level of its most basic fundamental structures. Many people with power say this problem is impossible, but this giving-up attitude is the real problem-- and it is perpetuated by a class like this, innocently called “Personality Psychology,” while only teaching one very tiny aspect of this study and where this ever-changing study is going in the future. The real irony of it is that you stress learning computer science in your class, empowering young minds with this tool, but not allowing them to explore anything outside of this very narrow realm of surveys and questionnaires. A lab course like this has such potential to develop young minds.

It is not the final product that is important for all, as you described project 3 in your lecture one day, something we could send to people indicating our skills in this area. Some of us, don’t want anyone to know about this aspect of our education, from a class from which we could have gotten so much more if we had discussed the depths of this concept called personality. The painful narrowness of this class called Personality Psych Lab, while working on another, much less explored aspect of personality was just about unbearable; especially when I’m sitting on some of the answers to some of the biggest problems regarding personality and the creation of the self-motivated machine.

I know why we have been churning our wheels in the mud for 70+ years with regards to this problem of modeling the self-motivated machine (the foundations of personality, in my opinion) on a computer. It has to do with our (modern societies connected by the internet) nearly ubiquitous verbal model of the basis for animal motivation, the ‘Pleasure-seeking Pain-avoiding’ model. Its danger lies in the fact that it just rolls off the tongue, not only of psychology-trained minds, but also those in engineering and computer science. So what’s the big problem? It makes perfect intuitive sense, right? Nearly, except for the fact that if we are to attempt to quantize of this primary animal motivator called “pain,” we must use the materials at hand, the materials that feel the forces of entropy first hand, cells. When we take this little guys into account, which die somewhere on the order of 10^ 1 1 every day, in the average adult, it becomes clear that everything resulting in feelings associated with pleasure literally has a pain prerequisite; thus rendering pleasure not as the opposite of pain, but as a function of pain and rendering this classical verbal model of motivation a false dichotomy (thanks Freud). And so Every one of our attempts at creating the self-motivated machine, a low level model of life have failed at local minima/local maxima problems with respect to this fundamental problem of life: trying to maximize staying on potential in an entropic environment (energy is falling as a factor of time). It is because our computer scientists and engineers are trying to solve an impossible problem.

After discovering this, I set out to make my own model of low-level animal motivation with the help of a computer science professor, Dr. Lawrence Angrave, in whose class I created the first iteration of my robot, “Hambot” (Pictures included at the end). I was also invited into Dr. Stephen Levinson’s Robotics lab around this time because I had the kind of crazy ideas his lab needed (they actually needed way more). It was in this lab that I realized how deeply ingrained in the minds of the people this paradoxical concept is. I was just being able to put it into words at this point and wasn’t all that much help with their newly acquired 400,000 Euro robot called icub, partially because I couldn’t get over the fact that they were trying to teach this robot how to walk without knowing how to crawl. These were my general feelings toward their painfully top-down approach to this fundamental problem of creating the self-motivated machine, but this experience helped me out tremendously with regards to understanding the state of this problem and how to start making steps to correct the issues that were holding us back.

This class, Personality Psych Lab can be a pivotal course in incorporating these ideas into the university setting, empowering our next generation of inquisitive psychology minded students to explore this problem, deeply applicable to everyone and find a real answer to the meaning of life, once and for all (dun dun dunn). The way you teach your class, Dr. Fraley, is fairly selfish, in my opinion. Full is data and information, of course, but in a field that needs help toward growth and modernization, at a school that needs help and restructuring and a way to attract more students, an edge in pursuit of the cutting edge. I think this is the class to start it all, but the first changes must begin with how you, personally, think about Personality psychology apart from the statistical analysis of html-created questionnaires. There is potential to learn a lot from you as a person and from this class, but in this current form, it turns off and deeply bores a wide variety of students with a fairly limited number of options for a psych lab. Please help this university integrate computer science and motivational studies into their curriculum so that more students aren’t tricked into wasting $25,000 (out of state tuition) to be bored and not get the skills they need to explore this growing field. I understand if you feel the need to fail me based on my quizzes, projects (or lack thereof), attendance, etc, but first I hope you understand how tortured a serious philosopher (with the notebooks to prove it) was in your class; and the potential you have to harness this tortured energy for the good of yourself, the university, the students, and the field of psychology in general. Not a day went by that I wasn’t working on this problem of creating the self motivated machine, the basis of personality. Should I have gotten credit for it, given that the research is directly and deeply related to personality psychology? Absolutely, but there were all these bureaucratical walls I would have overcome to do it, and I really just wanted/needed to focus on my own research. And here I am, lots of great research this semester, my supposed final semester before graduation, but I’m not sure if I’ll be able to graduate, though I worked so hard/feel so drained, mentally, physically, and financially. I want to help this university so that this doesn’t happen again to another student and I hope you at least agree that some of these changes need to take place. I’d really like to work with you to develop this, perhaps as a way to make up my failing grades, but it will take a good amount of work on both of our parts to make this possible.

If you cheat for me , raising my grade somehow to a passable level, so that I can graduate or providing a way for me to raise it, realize you are not only cheating for me, but for all the young blossoming minds who pay massive amounts of money they don’t have to be bored and enter the job market equipped with skills that differ from their ideal skills, with which they could potentially be far more productive. These changes can begin with this class.

Thank You,

David Atlas

