03/05/2021

Naivete and ignorance are sometimes our best friends.

Clueless

Naievely confident

Discouragingly Realistic

Mastery Achieved

The Dunning-Kruger effect

Looking back on the beginning of my voyage I feel like such a fool. It’s like if someone were to tell you, you know I thin I really want to become a carpenter. This said without the least bit of understanding of the toolset involved, both what it does exactly or how to use it.

12/20/2021

We spoke the other night. You have settled into new home pretty quickly in a blur of activity and settling , etc. You are opening up board rooms and trying to get actors and directors together. Making a thing.

Conference videos

* Laughing at the same thing.
* Identifying unifying concerns and opportunities
* Acknowledging strengths and weaknesses

I am an iterative learner. Good tests allow me to program with confidence, intuitively, I don’t want to say sloppily, but good texts do allow you to take risks, take stabs at things. RED- GREEN- REFACTOR… is a coding principle, but it is also kind of a way of life.

9/04/2021

You texted me the other day that your job was being moved to Indiana and so you and the family had decided to move to Indiana. This is sad to me. I kind of idealize your situation up in the UP. Close to your parents. A super cute house close to the water in a vibrant community with hills. With the college delivering a lot in the way of arts and educational opportunities. Just the whole exercise and outdoor vibe of Marquette is truly inspiring. This coming from a guy who as lived in cities for most of the past two decades.

I am kind of tired of it. One of the absolute bonuses of getting deep into IT and software development would be to truly be a digital nomad. This has always appealed to me and it is a fate I always figured would be approached by holding on to the tail of the literary comet. I just had to keep experiencing things and keep writing and eventually I would write something that would be commercial enough to support me and my family. This only half articulated vocational ideal has proved to not be the case, though at 42 I have my literary estate in much better order these days. I think if I can take the pressure cooker down a little bit and truly embrace the principles of slow writing and slow stretching then I will begin to achieve my goal of having writing become a nourishing and supporting interface between me and the world around me.

It is going to take continued discipline and continued intention, but it is the direction that I am moving in.

And if all of this is just ineffectual madness, then that is another fate we must consider. This fate is also mitigated by the more stable employ that my TECH shift will provide. I need to buckle up and really get my resources routed towards this effort of completing the transition. I am a butterfly in his chrysalis, attempting to enter the world with a self-consciously, unself-conscious comportment.

As far as typos go it was a pretty good one.

He tells me the Corporate Seagull joke

Its pretty funny. My friend now looks like a fat corporate guy whose fleshy smile belies some deeper level conflict and life dissatisfaction. The elite practitioners of his favorite sport ultra marathoning all look like concentration camp victims. He looks like he really could do with missing a whoe sequence of meals. Esme tells him her European Joke. I am impressed with her delivery and remember back to my preschool/kindergarten days of regailing everyone with my God sends the flood joke.

Coffee. Suit. Phone. Other phone. Lunch. Coat. Umbrella. Down three flights. 3 blocks to the train. Up three flights. Stand on train 5 stops. Cross plateform to other train. Stand for 3 stops. ¾ mile walk from train to store. Hustling. Up and down 3 flights of stairs off and on all day. Back home in reverse. Hustling. Moving. Burning calories. Talking through calories like an auction MC on speed. Slinging watches. Feeding babies. The gears of capitalism grind on.

Emphasizing how active I used to be and how relatively inactive I am now.

Philote, connection, sci-fi, *Hitchhiker’s Guide to The Galaxy*, 42 being the answer to everything. The settling process of falling into web development and then writing and balancing family and future concerns. Getting beyond that. Eating fewer carbs. Exiting America. Putting the Super Bowl on. I had a sense that you really didn’t give a shit, but I felt obligated. I have gone to some very distant, unfashionable, unshareable place. Like some sort of socially inept computerscience student… holy shit this is working! I am becoming a geek!

I hate to make the questions and uncertainly to be a big part of the narrative, but it doesn’t have to dominate it. You can kind of construct it. Give it a form and a place in the narrative. A tone or a symbol. A force a presence. Something looming. This sense that *“Everything is not in its right place*” ,“*I really don’t know where here is*”, relishing the desperation rationalization that no one ever really knows where here is and you should be grateful of your hard fought insight and relish it. The razor’s edge existence— the tipping point intensity as you swing and sway between heading toward a bright new future, or what, what else? What is in the other direction? Something unclear, something inchoate, failure? Generic writ large failure? Can we be more specific? Financial failure, well probably not completely, probably having to push off buying a house for a few more years, which honestly until I really get a career going with reasonable working/living work life/balance conditions I don’t really relish owning a home. Is it death that I fear then? I suppose it is stress. Human death. Being forced into situations where you must repress your interests and talents and subjugate them in the interest of making money for someone else to the end of supporting your life(your family, personal responsibilities etc). Oh, boy, he finally understands how life works. Well, isn’t that something. I have been somewhat naievely and self-defeatedly been pursuing the end of supporting my family while also trying to develop the skills that do interest me (Chinese and writing and now coding) to the end that they would some day assist me in bridging the gap between my personal pursuits and my professional pursuits.

My writing has stalled because I have not given it enough time, now in my two decades of lowkey trying to crack the code on it, been unable to pull together an effective systematic development of my writing projects or even the process of writing. This has changed this year to great affect and it feels truly like a turning point in my existence. This pronouncement is perhaps a little THC fuled at the moment, but the proof is in the pudding as within the last 7-8 months I have written more coherent prose and poetry than ever before. Of course I have to thank my current status of being unemployed for having time and wherewithal to get my thoughts scribbled down or hacked onto a computer screen, but it is also largely due to the inspiration I have been able to find in computer programming as both a symbiotic skill set and disciplining challenge engagement with which has radically changed the way I wholistically think about writing and the process of writing. The projects/pieces/topics that I am tracking has exploded from a handful to well over 50. The process has been abstracted and to some extent the pieces and the letters are writing themselves. They are the overflow of thought or emotion directed through a voice or a tone or in a certain spirit of peppered with a specific set of shared history and mutually understood or misunderstood semiotic mise-en-scene and the wonder of all of this can really break down under scrutiny, under the scapel of intent and comparison. But the intent is always so much more than any given line, and sentiment, any point. One of my evolving intents. Intentions that I have named and followed forward as one would a hypothesis, like, huh, I wonder what this is for, perhaps it is for, blank, and off we go, applying, cutting, pasting, the joy of collaging is that the process seems effortless. It is all judgement and combination. It is all editorial. What is that difference between the editorial and the creative mind. One intent I have attempted in carrying forward is just this idea that you can write free and energetically and engaged and creatively and life-affirmingly and curiously without being didactic or cynical. Or you can be somewhat didactic but knowing of it, conscious of your human limitation in an appealing way. An invitation to consider that brings us closer together rather than pushes us apart. There are a lot of questions and not a lot of answers. So yes, let us celebrate the questions, not weaponize them. Is this an editorial decision? Celebrate the questions. Nurture the questions. Reframe them. Approach them in different ways. Look at them historically. Internationally. Within a certain context, through a certain lens, from a certain perspective, conservatively, progressively, obsessively, distractedly, up close, from afar. The heretical many mouthed god who blesses all conclusions and whose cistern of sacrificial blood has been pumping robustly for ages now.

Good guy, nice guy. Boring. I am boring. The night is boring. Stone and imagining that I need to write pop songs and I do…My guitar playing has been feeling terrific! Which is not to say that it is terrific, but the process of playing guitar, the action, the engagement has been super rewarding and engaging. I think my sense of concentration is coming back. I am slowly fighting my way back to openness towards other things, these creative things and it may just be because I have been consuming so much THC and alcohol. The alcohol is too much! I just want to drink as much as I can. My propensity to binge drink is not going to go away. And the fact that it happens infrequently doesn’t sooth the fact or erase the fact that it happens. My biggest gripe against alcohol should be that it is aping me of energy. Both in the evening and in the morning. I should not be falling asleep on the couch. I should not be feeling groggy in the morning justifying a morning toke. I am getting tired of having habits be a big topic of conversation. We are more than these, though they often do seem to be a bottleneck though. I am drinking too quickly. Are you drinking too quickly? Or are you savoring?

You didn’t ask about my tech work. You didn’t ask about my writing, This sade realization that I am alone in many ways. But I am getting better and better at being alone and I am finding ways to transcend it aand not take it sko personal.

Stretching. The equipment of middle age- foam roller, stretch band,

You seem depressed and life seems depressing and hard. You want to get back on the road again. You wan to get away. Sen Jaime to Maine for a while. You lack of satisfaction with your life makes me uncomfortable.

You said the food was not exquisite. You implied that we ordered the wrong thing. You didn’t seem to dig it.

Then a couple of years later you remember it and vocalize how good it was. I lament that I haven’t been their since, the down side of being married to a vegetarian (while thinking, the upside being that I lost 25 lbs over Covid eating her delicious.

How can I be me? I am being me.

Your boss is who you would jump on to a grenade for now. Its him you’re looking forward to knocking back 5 otr 6 beers with and catching up on the past year. This guy has the infrastructure in place to get you and where you are coming from and have the tag lines all straight for your stories and can anticipate thr throughlines of your stories that make them magical.

I feel like I shared very little ultimately, but IO was also not asked which is a bit disappointing, but I can’t get all shitty about this. I have chosen this obfuscated path and if I remain on it wit will yield a life and it is yielding a lif and no I don’t need to be deeply embedded in the specifics of his EPA industrial mining world. But that is his world. Talking about Jaime and home life sounds fraught. Didn’t ramble on about what they have been getting into successfully.

He and Jaime have had a hard time. No one wants to open up to mee. I am not Nic Carraway. I am a wall flowere and a brooder and a note taker and a back stairs wit. A glacial manuevroer. Wandering through dreams while I calculate my back taxes.

The economic engine of your life necessarily owns you.

We have grown in different directions.

We are good in our ways and bad in our ways.

I wish you flow. I wish you success.

I wish you union with your wife…

Photography

Chinese: character writing, currently reading *A Moveable Feast* in Mandarin and English, character writing, New York Times bilingual articles. Using bilingual texts to cut out need for dictionaries, focusing on “whole meaning” and building confidence to skim and cruise character articles. Teaching Esme. Speaking only Chinese to her during play time when I am not in the mood to play her persribed game for the umpteeth time, do all kids savor repetition as much as this child does. It’s a little insufferable sometimes…though it is also probably the same drive that underpiners her wonderful learners mind (tested into regional gifted program- accepted 18 out of 400 + applicants, which is just fun to share and also emphasize how grateful we were to despite all the weirdness and challenge of this year, she found herself in a small group of kids that all had supportive parents and solid capabilities. Between work in this cohort, reading at home and her many Literary Godmothers: Grandma Birkey- who has gift us a treasure trove of children’s literature a collection compiled from decades of elementary school teaching by both her and her sister, Bari Zaki- a friend of ours who is a bookmaker and runs a studio/paper shop just down the street from us, she has sold betsy’s folded books out of her shop and has taken a great liking to Esme who loves to “Go see Bari” at her shop where Esme has often been the recipient of lovely Japanese paper wrapped pencils or other stationary type gifts, she always makes sure to write Bari a thank you note and they have felt a sporadic correspondence over the past few years, then there is Ellen who is Esme’s great friend and former pre-school teacher. Ellen is a poet and has both inspired Esme to write her poems and stories and word focused activity books. Throughout the pandemic Esme and Ellen met up virtually for meet ups to catch up on books and outtings and cookings and thinkings and plantings and such, then just downstairs is our neighbor Anna who is a thoughtful theater director with a talent for garden cultivating. She and Esme had garden reading meetups throughout the pandemic— often rereading books that betsy and I or betsy’s mom had already read to her. That repetition that she seems to crave and all kids seems to crave at some point. I have tried to program repeition into my studying. Leaning into certain rout techniques— abstracting the learning process into something that is beyond my own understanding, my own ability even, because that is the whol point, no? Transcending? Going beyond your current ability. Stretching beyond your current ability. Pushing beyond your current understanding. There is certainly a lot of cleverness that we can employ to ignite this process, to enact this process.

Writing: journaling, adding to themes that have some sort of center of gravity: location, era, topic, theme, setting, form, **Expand(Develop(Contract(Consolidate(Build(Expand)))))**

Coding and reinventing my career trajectory by locking my self in an 8 by 10 by 10 cell for a year and fueling it with a new age-y prison working out machine. I am in a cycle of canceling. I am blocking things out and pushing them off to deal with on another day. I am opting out of contemporary politics in an effort to right my existential ship and achieve a certain level of material safety and security for my family while simultaneously putting myself on a professional trajectory that won’t suck out my soul and trap me in an unsustainable loop of unhealthy coping matrixes and deferred dreams.

Spanish- basically nothing these days. An openness, some counting, but nothing of substance. Have to cut something, no?

Guitar- after an initial burst through the first quarter of the year, have really tried to pull back from it to focus more on reading and coding. I have tried to make guitar more of a rhythmic and technical activity. Something for my body and my fingers and less my mind. Trying to feel the guitar more. This has led me to a new finger picking style of playing that I am really fond of and look forward to developing over the years.

Fitness and health: having found a solid combination of lower carb, lower impact exercise that my body has responded to really well I am entered moving through my forties leaner and healthier than I have been in years. Finding a better sleep rhythm and finding more contentment in healthier pursuits. I think the fallout is that I have become an even more private, self-involved individual, though for the time being as I plow my vocational efforts into building my 21st century tech skills, I can live with that, especially in as much as this “isolation” has facilitating writing—giving me time and pent up thoughts, observations, experiences to experience in a genuine overflowing of explanation. That overflowing of explanation. It just came out. With limited pre- thought it just spilled out, riding that fine vein where intellect and emotion have melded artfully and unguardedly together. Casting our our years of careful study in being careful.

Reading- having reach the nadir of hating my books, resenting their weight on my shlves and line of sight, forever stacking and collecting my daughters scattered collections of bpoks, undersiege by books, unread, or eread and heavy before my eyes and my eyes heavy at the end of day, drowsy in the half light of our apartment heavy with the presence of children at last asleep. And the offer to send me two volumes of Ginsburg’s journals, presumably relatively unedited, god bless you for publishing that and I am very glad that you are, and I am so grateful for the bounteous publishing world that we move through. For any book on the planet almost available just on the other side of a touch screen. I have ridden the bouty of books flowing in from living room sales, arriving unbidden in packages from siblings, happened upon in free boxes that look like bird houses close to the ground, ordered off linje new or used, shuffled at home, opened, closed, indexes read, first chapters read, quotes written out, ideas thought about. I am gotten so much mileage thinking about the coupkle of chapters that I read by John McPhee back in the late summer early September. 4th Draft has been a bit on a mantra to me this year. Catalyzing my writing and my reading. Freeing me to collect and explore and EXPAND, CONSOLIDATE, BALANCE, BUILD finding my way forward by managing my fragmentation by embracing it. Leveraging it. Finding ways in which to collect and channel and funnel the fragmentation. Finding AGILE systems and projects to receive the input and expression and analysis. In the process developing the very skills that I have always wished to have, but felt somehow separated from. Overcoming my perspective of seeing everything as a ZERO SUM game. Getting comfortable with my unknowing. My limitation. My eventual spectacular failure. The only thing that will save you from spectacular failure is good faith ORGANIZATION and other people’s kindness. Good faith organization is my phrasing of having your shit together without being neurotic about it. Having your things in order. Having your affairs in order. Mitigated your risks. Attempted to limit the fallout of your failures on other people. Finding inspiration and grounding in this process. Finding confidence and strength and flexibility in this process. Finding a source of WIND and WATER and EARTH and FIRE- full of life and nourishment and balance and activity; inspiration, optimism, perspective, effort; energy, uplift, support, passion;

***WIND*: life, inspiration, energy**

***WATER*: nourishment, optimism, uplift**

***EARTH*: balance, perspective, support**

***FIRE*: effort, passion, activity**

Spending time with my wife

Spending time with family

Correspondence

Socializing

The “el” rumbles by, but I ain’t on it.

2/10/2021

Is Rob getting out of the properties because he is thinking about getting a divorce?

**Trump**. The word in such phrases as a *trumped up affair*, *trumpery*, etc., is the same words as *trumpet*; from Fr. *trompe*, a trumpet, whence *tromper* which, originally meaning “to play on a trumpet,” came to mean to beguile, deceive, impose upon.

**The last trump*.*** The final end of all things earthly; the Day of Judgement.

*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. – 1 Cor. Xv, 51,52.*

**To play one’s last trump.** To be reduced to one’s last expedient: a phrase from cardplaying.

**Trumpet.** *See* Trump *above*.

**To blow one’s own trumpet**. To publish one’s own praises, good deeds, etc. The allusion is to heralds, who used to announce with a flourish of trumpets the knights who entered a list. Similarly, *your trumpeter* *is dead* means that you are obliged to sound your own praised because no one will do it for you.