

My starting point is that ideas can be built to be useful. My intent is to take an engineering approach to the creation of stable thought structures. Such structure will need resilience in the face of change, the capacity to adapt as needed, and the ability to retain essential elements through all possible permutations.

In effect, I believe that our philosophical difficulties with respect to meaning, language, and the ubiquity of difference—problems that preoccupy all serious students of most disciplines in the Humanities—can be managed better than today, and that that management can become progressively better over sustained periods of time. Progress is both possible and necessary.

For me, the logical starting point is to ask what the goal is. In my view, the goal ought properly to be human happiness that is sustainable, and as widely dispersed as possible. This is on the surface a utilitarian approach, but I believe the utilitarians missed some important distinctions which I will discuss.

Morality, to me, is a means to an end. Even if one posits that endless misery in this world is necessary for endless bliss in another world, the goal remains the same. All that changes is the time and perceptual domain (we can't see the next world). If we can engineer a thought system that leads to widespread social harmony, and personal felicity in this world—while not violating the tenets of those focusing their attention on the next world—this is an optimal solution.

In assessing the situation, a fundamental premise organizing my thought, and which I will explicate further shortly, is that all human activity is best understood systemically. Specifically, I believe that there is not necessarily a linear relationship between one's intention, and the eventual outcome. For this reason, one must look at what ideas actually work to generate the benefit, and not treat any of them as hermetically sealed in an “ontological” way. Movement must be built into any system which is to prove sustainable.

In this, I echo the distinction the Austrian philosopher and economist Friedrich Hayek made between “Action to”, and “Action for”. “Action to” is the effect a given system is actually generating. “Action for” is what it is *intended* to generate. One can with the best of intentions work to help someone, and actually make things worse. One can work to achieve personal happiness, and instead achieve misery.

Formally, I view all forms of human cultural and emotional life—from the intrapsychic life of an individual up to the entirety of global cultural interactions—as chaotic systems. Within Chaos Theory (the home of the so-called Butterfly Effect), apparently random systems can actually be largely understood as existing within definable parameters governed by certain dominant principles.

The task is to determine what principles will act consistently on all levels of human social life to foster sustainable, generalized happiness. A key part of Hayek's thinking was that

general principles, executed locally through what he called “distributed knowledge”, work in general to achieve discernable patterns, or what he called the Extended Order.

Hayek himself argued, for example, that the precise value of tomatoes--which is a function of the local need of one vendor to sell them, and of another consumer to buy them—will never be set more accurately than when the decision making process is distributed as widely as possible.

Likewise, no moral system will ever better fit a given population than when meaning is distributed according to local knowledge, and sculpted to fit local needs and local personalities. This would likewise make any given “religion” a constantly changing Extended Order, based around foundational practices, texts, or beliefs. This thought process creates a means for both making general heuristic observations--formatted symbolically--and retaining the understanding that limitless local permutations are not only possible, but inevitable.

Generalizing to the project of improving human cultural life, properly chosen principles ought to work to foster an order which facilitates our aim of sustainable felicity, embedded within existing social structures.

To describe such an order, I have coined the term “Telearchy”, by which I intend to connote an order based upon self organizing social systems oriented around common principles, and the common aim of happiness. It allows for wide variations in specific local practices and ideas, and is thus fully compatible with a true multicultural ethos.

This is the goal. The process is to develop skill in progressively more accurate cultural deconstruction. I differentiate between benign deconstruction, and malignant deconstruction. The former I define as “the supplementation of a narrative with a clarifying and generalizable narrative”, and the latter as “the consumption of one narrative by another narrative”.

In order to balance the manifest need for simplicity—in effect, the ability to represent complex realities symbolically--while avoiding the methodological pitfall of “essentializing” narratives, I have developed the term “tubaforms” to describe overtly and explicitly contingent narratives.

In physics, wave forms can be deconstructed mathematically in any way the physicist might desire. I based the term on an example Nick Herbert used in his book Quantum Reality, that the noise of automobiles on a crowded street could be represented mathematically as a symphony of tubas. You can make any narrative do anything you want, provided you are willing to ignore sufficient contextual information.

Freudians, economists, atheists, orthodox Jews, and Marxists are all able to develop means by which “reality” meets their expectations. This basic epistemological problem is well represented in Korszybski’s axiom that the “map is not the territory”. The sum of

events is always more complex than any given narrative—any set of words--can ever incorporate.

At the same time, maps are useful. Even if they are sometimes wrong, they create patterns for movement, and represent templates that can be amended as needed on an on-going basis. The use, then, of tubaforms is essential for progress. “Progress”, itself, is a tubaform.

In this process, my intent is to recover to the extent possible our Enlightenment heritage of benign liberalism based on rational thinking. It becomes possible--once we both recognize the contingency of our stories, and submit them to the systemic perspective, which examines effects, and not intents—to form chains of logic once again.

In my own thinking, I was greatly impressed by the audacity of Spinoza’s Ethics. My aim is to recreate something like what he created, but with the difference that the postulates admit variation and change which can course through the whole system without affecting its underlying structure. I envision a sort of ideational funnel, or system of rivers and tributaries that admit varying degrees of water, and varying types of water, but which in the process of channeling that water retain its shape, and which in turn shape the waters of human life.

My foundational tubaform is that all form is created through motion. All sense of self, all communal identity, all ideas are generated through motion. A man who never reads, never speaks, never moves, and never does anything, will never develop a sense of self, and of course his physical body will deteriorate. It is the ceaseless interactions of life which create—in the process of bumping into external (and internal) objects of all sorts—a reactive covering, which is our emotional and intellectual form.

Both pain and joy create motion, but of the two, pain is initially the most important. Pain compels motion. Hunger, thirst, loneliness, confusion: all of these compel motion, and by acting as negative constraints on what you can and can’t do, they act negentropically to organize the self on all levels. Sometimes the result is desirable, sometimes less so, but decisions must be made. (Note that Darwinism might be summarized as change plus pain).

There are qualities both of joy and pain. With respect to pain, it invariably must be understood as existing within a social and ideational field/context. Hunger physically hurts. Hunger when one is surrounded by well fed people hurts twice, at least potentially. One feels both the physical aspect of it, and the resentment towards others if it is felt to be unnecessary.

On the flip side, the physical pain of hunger can be mitigated by satisfaction, if one is involved in a meaning system in which what I would term qualitative joy is associated with a practice such as fasting.

For my own analytical purposes, I differentiate four different systems as acting within the human cultural field: meaning systems, truth systems, political systems, and economic systems. Logically, the physical problem of hunger is best dealt with through science (our currently preeminent truth system), our political system, and most especially our economic systems.

How one explains the fact of hunger is a function of the truth system, which is to say what one believes. “It is the Will of Allah”, or “I must have sinned”, or “Greedy capitalists took my food”, or “incompetent socialists wrecked our economy”.

How one deals emotionally, though, with the fact of hunger happens within the Meaning system. For my purposes, I consider the meaning system as consisting in what one holds sacred. The sacred, in turn, I view as a means for the transmutation of the pain of resentment to the possibility of contentment and joy. At a minimum, it is the real reason one undergoes pain willingly. Work is sacred for some, vanity for others.

The sine qua non for such a transmutation (which in my view is well symbolized by the Philosopher’s Stone) is the rejection of self pity. Seen phenomenologically, within the current of experience and life as it is lived, there are no benefits to self pity. It is a useless emotion, if one takes as one’s aim the facilitation of happiness.

Therefore, this is my foundational principle. One could easily understand, pragmatically, all religious and cultural systems which survive as existing in part to provide means for this emotional transmutation. This is, to return to my contrasted modes of deconstruction, a supplementary narrative that would be apropos in any cultural system.

When I was at the University of Chicago Divinity School, I would deconstruct myths in terms of Freud, or Durkheim, or Rene Girard, or other such theorists. In my own terms, I would take, say, the tubaform of Freudian psychosocial development to perform a wave transformation on a narrative of a culture far distanced from my own. As I see now, this was a reductive process, which lessened both my own culture, and that which I was studying.

Taking from the perspective of benign, supplementary deconstruction, however, what is interesting about this concept is that one can analyze how other cultures perform the necessary function of the rejection of self pity, without taking anything from them, and in the process augment one’s own capacity for this necessary function.

Self pity (or sadness, or depression, or anguish) happens in moments. A deep sadness feels like it will last forever, and it is precisely this sense that leads some to take their own lives. For this reason, it stops movement, and acts therefore as a de facto rejection of form--literally, in the case of suicide.

Rejecting it, on the other hand, renews the possibility of movement. Pragmatically, it is not always possible to rid oneself of this burden, but the fact of movement can sometimes

cause it to fall away on its own. For this reason, my second foundational principle is the necessity of persistence.

Meister Eckhart commented once “There is nothing sweeter than to have suffered”. If we postulate that movement creates form, and pain compels movement, then we can posit that emotional movement accompanied by pain which is not rejected works to create increasingly intricate forms.

One can in fact view most forms of asceticism—which of course are nearly universal in humanity’s religious and cultural life, at a minimum in rites of passage—as precisely intended to free their practitioners from the much deeper pain of self pity and resentment, both of which lead ultimately to social alienation. On the surface, the coexistence of significant voluntary privation with a desire for freedom appears contradictory, but this omits the reality of emotional and mental pain.

In my own usage, quality can be defined as the presence of information, latent or overt. Form is a type of information. As one’s form—one’s self, to be clear—becomes increasingly refined, the capacity for joy increases correspondingly. This is the point of asceticism, and self restraint in all its forms more generally. It is not just the sine qua non of shared cultural life, but of happiness in general.

To continue, perseverance—if untempered by perception—need lead nowhere, and certainly not in an optimal direction. For this reason, my third and last core principle is that of the necessity of constant perceptual movement. If we orient ourselves around a foundational Telos (note that I am grounding this empirically, and not ontologically, by making it a chosen aspect of human volition, and focusing on results, not intentions), then logically one must pay careful attention to the consequences of ones actions.

For this reason, I developed a perceptual heuristic I call the Telearchic Cross. It is a cross with three axes, which I term the Continuum Axis (the x coordinate plane in Cartesian Geometry), the Qualitative Axis (the y coordinate), and the Systemic Axis (the z coordinate). The intent is explicitly to avoid perceptual paralysis, which is nearly unavoidable without some formal method of shaking loose of the limitations of mentation.

The Continuum Axis is intended to correct the tendency of human thinking to create either/or distinctions. Something is right or wrong. This person is good or evil. You are either a liberal or a conservative. In pondering this, I researched the classic white/black distinction, and came to learn that white doesn’t actually exist. I wanted to place white on one part, and black on another, and extend both ends into the realms of invisible cosmic radiation, which go to an undetermined extent in both the direction of decreasing wavelength, and increasing wavelength. This basic intention should be clear enough.

I learned that white is an emergent property, as Chaos theorists might term it, of the interaction of all the visible colors of light *on the human eye*. Black, on the other hand, is a property primarily of the body from which the light ought to be radiating. Surfaces

which are black simply absorb all the colors hitting them, so “black” per se cannot be said to exist, and most bodies which appear black to us do in fact reflect some types of radiation we simply can’t see.

Discoveries of this sort, minor as they may be in an absolute sense, become possible through the use of a formal template for thinking.

I consider an aspect of what might be termed “agile” thinking to be the quality of what Moshe Feldenkrais termed “reversibility”. In physical movement, it amounts to a sufficiently well organized neuromuscular system that rapid changes in directions or muscular tonus can be made at will. One can be walking forward, stop instantly, and walk backwards without an unseemly “bumps”. One can reverse.

Perceptually, this fits on the Continuum axis, in that one can take a given idea—say Capitalism—and change it in small ways. You anchor each end of the Continuum any way you want, say with Jeffersonian agrarianism on one end, and Statist capitalism such as the Chinese currently practice on the other, then move in one direction, then the other. How you manipulate it will depend on what you are looking for, but one thing that emerged from this for me is that this represents a formal method for creativity, with creativity, of course, being a part of perception more generally. It is seeing the unmanifest, but possible..

More generally, the Continuum axis represents form, and thus Space. If you place a human male, and a human female on the axis, what would you place beyond them on each side? You would have to turn to other animals, such as chimpanzees on one end, and perhaps aquatic mammals on the other. Again, how you set up the line depends on what you are trying to discover. One thing that becomes abundantly clear, though, is that men and women are 99.99% identical in most iterations of this exercise, and that it takes effort to create a formal dichotomy.

The Systemic dimension—the z axis—I imagine as having an infinitely sharp point in the front, and a somewhat indistinct but expanding shape on the other side of the x,y axis. This is the dimension of the Butterfly Effect, and unintended consequences. The front point is infinitely sharp because we can never really know what small things might lead to large effects. Further, as this is the Time axis, we see clearly that we cannot always assume that we understand cause and effect, merely that we can observe effects, and have to infer causes.

This is intended to serve as a reminder that no matter how good you may think your ideas are, you have to be attentive to what the actual “action to” is. It also provides a formal reason, within the scientific realm particularly, to try things without having a reason. I don’t want to stray too far on that score, but will simply comment that in my view we could be doing much better in understanding how our world actually works if this dimension were better understood by mainstream scientists.

Empirically, this is the Black Box dimension. It is where you try something, then see what happens. You may not know why Cause A leads to Effect B (it's in the "Black Box"), but if you can observe it consistently, then it exists. If it exists, it is possible, and should therefore be investigated. This seems obvious, but even a casual observer of our scientific, political, and economic worlds can plainly see that it isn't.

Finally, the y axis is the Qualitative axis. It is open ended on the top and the bottom, and expands from relatively narrow width at the top, to a quite wide bottom. If this Cross were manufactured physically, this would be the base upon which it could rest and not tip over.

This is the dimension in which abstraction and observation are reconciled. A good abstraction, such as $E=MC^2$, contains a great deal of latent information. Therefore, in my terms, it possesses quality. An equation like that enfolds a potential infinity of discrete observations of details. The top of the axis represents abstraction and increasing qualitative richness, and the bottom concrete, measurable details.

In evaluating any abstraction, this is the place where you can ask simply: "does it work?". You will note that the details, which exist at the bottom of the y axis, can be plotted on the z axis, as they evolve over time. The three dimensional nature of this construction is not accidental.

You will note, as well, that there are literally varying "levels" (y coordinates) of abstraction and detail. In what I view as the most unhelpful, overly intellectualized narratives, abstractions are actually used as details, which omits references to the external world entirely. Thus a corrective for many ideological systems is to evaluate what level of observation they are actually operating on, and see if they can go "deeper".

Both sides are open—cut off, in my envisioning of the physical structure—because there are apparently an infinity of possible details (on the bottom), and potentially the possibility of enfolding all of those infinity of details in a single, infinitely rich point (at the invisible top). This, of course, might be termed the "God Postulate".

Everything that could be, might be accessible experientially, which creates an interesting paradox. The process of observing details is a process of differentiation. I create me in the process of observing things separate from me. Abstraction creates the possibility of understanding things in general, but it is really, functionally, a means of interacting with time. If I take the abstraction of $F=MA$, then I can predict—interact with—discrete objects over the distance of time. This is the point of Science, and it is precisely the abuse of Scientism to reject the time dimension.

But there are really two things going on here. There are two means of enfolding details into qualitatively richer structures. Math does it, but so does awareness. When one is meditating, for example, the whole point according to many traditions is to erase contingent, conditional awareness in favor of more generalized, less differentiated awareness.

Thus the crowning point of the whole structure is a point I posit that it is useful to believe exists (although my thinking does not depend on it) in which the time/movement dimension is eradicated, and the space/form dimension is eradicated in a place of infinite quality/information.

Formally, the Qualitative dimension is the confluence of Space/Time with Information. For my own purposes, I actually rewrote (with no qualifications other than temerity) Einstein's equation as $E+I=MC^2+I$, where I is information. You can drop the I from both sides, but that makes it a formally materialistic narrative, and that is not working for cosmologists or particle physicists, as even a casual student of the field can plainly see.

(I will note that in my studied opinion in this regard that the work of the Germans, Russians and others on biophotons will eventually lead to the reconciliation of Darwinism--which I define as "morphogenesis through random change coupled with random benefit--and Intelligent Design.)

The process of moving from observation to abstraction and back again I term Perceptual Breathing. It is as essential for perception as physical breathing is for life. It is not enough to build beautiful, aesthetically pleasing abstractions. One must constantly reconcile one's ideas with concrete, observable realities, with particular care given to systemic interactions. This takes work and humility. For this reason, the Cross cannot be operated properly without perseverance and the rejection of self pity.

These ideas offer interesting and I think useful possibilities in fields such as theology. I can and have "built" various religious traditions from my basic building blocks. For now, though, I would like to offer some theological commentary on Christianity, and add a key distinction in the process.

For me, there are two types of power: qualitative, and quantitative. Qualitative power is the capacity to be happy with nothing. To move well emotionally, in other words, without regard to external circumstances. Specifically it is the capacity to transmute pain—and potential self pity and resentment—into joy. Every religious tradition with which I am familiar is replete with examples of this.

Quantitative power is the capacity to do what one wants to, physically, without external impediments. It could be physical strength. Certainly it is wealth, and a lack of checks on one's behavior. Rather than transmute pain, it seeks to surmount it physically. Systemically, it will always work to suppress and hurt others, and in the process in effect "outsource" the need for pain.. The purest expression of this ethos, in my view, is found in the work of the Marquis de Sade.

The Will to Qualitative Power I term Goodness. The Will to Quantitative Power I term Evil. Obviously, most people have both, and an important aspect of the pragmatic approach I am taking is to never ask more from anyone—including oneself—than they

are capable of delivering. This takes into consideration awareness, and the need for gradualism.

Famously, Christ in the desert was offered by the Devil every physical thing that could be imagined. The deal was that unlimited quantitative power would be his, were he to submit to self pity, limit his qualitative horizon, and stop suffering in his quest to grow spiritually. He refused.

On the Cross, He asked “My father, why have you abandoned me?”, which has puzzled many people over the generations. In my own view, His story is one of transmutation. He took every possible pain—including the worst pains imaginable of being abandoned by God and then death itself—and regenerated Himself, transmuted Himself, into a higher being superior to death and every suffering short of it. This is a story about resilience in the face of overwhelming difficulty.

Prior to Him, animals were ritually slaughtered to atone for sins. In my own view, the act of sacrifice (obviously literally “act of the sacred”) is a form of communal expression of quantitative power.

In the ethos He expressed, however, of “Love your neighbor as yourself”, and “turn the other cheek”, what He was offering was a means of conquering resentment, and learning to live in a harmony in which power mongering was not needed for survival, and the cultivation of qualitative power could become a general focus.

Some time ago, I thought I perceived analogies between sacrifice and serial murder. If you look at the process such criminals go through in committing their acts, you have roughly the same three stage ritual process that can be observed in religious ceremonies.

In both, in my view, a relationship is created between one entity and another of superiority and inferiority. A tribe sacrificing a goat is—every one of them—participating in some way in the act of killing that goat, and thereby cementing their own solidarity with one another. They are the superior ones. Obviously acts of war qualify as well.

A man killing another man is creating power for himself over another human being. There can be no stronger quantitative power than that of life and death.

A useful heuristic for the deconstruction of societies is to ask what is actually held sacred. All forms of the sacred in my definition provide the reasons to suffer voluntarily. Logically, both quantitative and qualitative power are involved. One can work hard to dominate a company, an industry, or a nation; or one can work hard to heal the sick, or tend to the poor.

Could we not argue, for example, that our cultural obsession with spectator sports is little other than a vicarious expression of power, accompanied by patent totemism? In their spectacles in the Coliseum, the Romans combined both the indirect expression of power

with literal sacrifice in their many public contests in which someone or something died. This is retained even now in bullfighting.

A current substantial concern of mine is the ubiquity of nihilistic horror films, which depict—as their primary purpose—the most gruesome tortures and murders. There are hundreds of them. My video store is filled with them. The murderers are often made the heroes, as in movies like “Hannibal”, or “Hostel 2”.

They appear to meet all the criteria for sacrificial acts. That they are artificial does nothing, in my view, to soften the reality of the perceived need for them on the part of seemingly a large part of our society. Absent changes in our social order, it would appear actual sacrificial acts will at some point begin appearing in the news.

This is the logical extension of a widespread dysfunction in what might be termed our “resentment transmutation mechanism”. There are in my view many reasons for this, but it seems clear to me that the lessons of the Cross are being increasingly forgotten or actively pushed aside.

My own aims in setting down these ideas are to develop a sort of template that will at some point enable momentum to be gained in a much needed moral regeneration. I have become much more conservative politically the older I have become, and the more I have learned. Yet, my own view of God’s role in this world is that of a sort of river in which we all float. You can swim up the current as long as you want, but in the end it is infinitely patient. For that reason no one is lost.

But better maps are possible.

I would like to conclude what may already be too long a summary with some observations on politics, which flow naturally from my basic matrix.

For me, Virtue/Goodness is the natural outcome of holding the rejection of self pity, perseverance, and perception sacred. It is what might be termed an emergent property of a system defined by those parameters.

America was founded, in my view, as a nation where the fundamental freedom was not to do whatever you want, in an absolute sense, but rather where you could without molestation practice your own particular form of virtue.

Where virtue is practiced locally, coercive government is not needed. Where it is absent, coercive government IS needed. For that reason, virtue is a prerequisite for freedom.

In particular, I conceive of classic liberalism as a means for managing difference. If any number of discrete cultural groups practice forms of virtue which—through whatever belief system—act to transmute resentment and foster personal responsibility, then they can be integrated easily into an Extended Order. True multiculturalism becomes possible, and has of course been practiced in America since our founding.

Where virtue is lacking, there is a gravity created which forces the locus of power into the center, into the State. If we posit that the primary “sin” is self pity, then the process of teaching people to feel sorry for themselves is not only counterproductive, but morally and politically wrong. We can deduce mathematically that wherever the notion of the “Victim of Society” is taught, the State will grow. It has to.

Yet, we can equally posit that where the State grows, virtue will decline, as the function of restraint is encoded in law, and not personal virtue. When you are told what to do, you no longer have to regularly exercise your “decision muscles”.

In this regard, though, I will note that there is nothing in my thinking that demands injustice be suffered silently. On the contrary, fighting injustice is good both for those suffering it, and for those inflicting it. However, self pity need never be a part of this process. It ceases qualitative growth.

Love is supporting the qualitative growth of others. Sometimes this means feeling compassion, sometimes indifference. Always it means awareness of what is needed, and the self restraint to do what makes sense, and not what is easiest emotionally.

Everyone has to create themselves, but that process is easier if others see us and reinforce us as our structures evolve. When others see us as we are—or believe ourselves to be—this is when we feel that emotion of attachment and completion. This is when we “fall in love”.

Ultimately, love and goodness are the same. They are not easy virtues, but the only path to meaningful, lasting happiness, and survival as a species. We need them.