

Zigzags, Tidbits, and the Comfort of the Arbitrary (Scale):  
The Certainty of the Unexpected and Stuff Happening All Around

by  
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Whenever we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe. -- John Muir

God created time so everything wouldn't happen all at once.  
-- Very prolific mathematician Nicolas Bourbaki

On my birthday (not my actual birth day but on the date annually observed) April 11, I wrote:

Nothing could be more imaginative or idealistic than the idea of an infinite line of absolutely identical numerical values. We name them. This is number one unit, this is number two unit, this is number three... *ad infinitum* and they are all absolutely identical. That meaningless redundancy, that pure consistency, is what makes the little buggers so unreal and yet useful. Actually, no two days are identical. No two moments, no two things, not even the "same" thing from one moment to the next. Identity (being identical as in this being mine across time) is one of the most interesting things humans have invented. It's not just that the amount of daylight and dark varies every day, an actual fact that clock-time ignores. It's everything. Anyway I noticed a mistake in the birth date of Michael on our official statement posted on our official website. But no sweat. It's just a little zig in this story. To travel from Tonga to Samoa by air takes about two hours but involves crossing the International Date Line so that people making the trip arrive the day before they left! Don't get up tight and lose the wiggle room that we call tolerance, that special way of constant forgiveness of the "little" things that holds our relationships together from day-to-day. Spilt milk. Angels have no memory... if I recall my Lutheran catechism correctly. Well, this is about remembering some of those diabolical details, those unique zigs and zags.

Before distance fades my memory and I, we "move on," I want to take a few pages (yes – OMG -- pages) to reflect on a man's life and my relationship with him and some random details, some "tidbits." This is about me too because relationships don't belong to just one side and writing is oh so personal. When we write we pick each word and we pile them up. Think about how we build entire books just one letter at a time according to some rules. Tiny semantic bricks stuck together with some form of logic. Magic. We must get the spell-ing correct. Curious that the more objective a paper in a journal, the more the author's haggle over ownership. Hey, I was the first to see that objective truth and so I should be the first author and owner of it, forever and ever! "I'm number one." I need one of those big foam hands with an index finger pointing up. I want the points; the credit.

I believe that what Peter says about Paul may or may not be true... it may well remain forever indeterminate, but it definitely tells me something about Peter. So I am

guilty as charged... a walking-talking limitation; perhaps fallible, invalid, infirm, not so surefooted, not so positive... an invalid; as Nietzsche put it, the great modern embarrassment of being a subject. Strain my neck as much as I can I just can't see around my own corner because I get in my own way. But without my poultry eyes, ears, and the rest, I'd have no access to the world at all. All knowledge comes through my feeble senses (except logic, I hear Descartes calling from the past) and so the more I pile up direct personal observations the more I'm piling up errors and no matter how many errors you pile up, they will never equal the truth – just maybe confidence in repetition. So I average them and come up with the average error (the prevailing opinion for today) and that's about as good as it gets. What I say about Michael is warped but maybe you'll see glimpses of him in what I say too.

Ginger read a draft of this, fact checked it for me, and approved of it. She's the only opinion I care about. She thought the stream of consciousness style was fun. I guess that's better than the dried up puddle of unconsciousness writing.

Michael's story begins before he does (is that possible... what does "he" mean?). His dad, as you all may know, flew bombing missions over Germany and his mother suffered from tuberculosis and had to live in a sanatorium for extended and repeated stays. Though a smoker himself, Michael hated the smell of cigar smoke. His dad filled wherever he was with it. For some years, Michael was raised by his grandparents. In those days, summer was met with mixed feelings because it was the polio season. Of course even the president was not spared. On the "Wednesday" Michael was born, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote in her diary: "*At 3:30 I spoke to a legislative assembly in the lovely old state Capitol*" of North Carolina. She wrote of how the American people had been able to help hundreds of thousands of Italians through the organization of American Relief for Italy. She wrote, "*In this way 128,030 men, 133,164 women, 72,352 boys, 72,768 girls and 85,422 infants were helped. The distribution was made without regard to race, nationality, religion or political belief.*" On the day Michael was born she wrote of how she enjoyed the singing of the Raleigh High School glee club, a welcome reprieve from the weekly visits to VA hospitals and the news that filled the world. Like today much of the poorer world was being fought over for the raw materials that fuel the industrial machine; rubber plantations in South East Asia, oil in Africa, copper in South America. Panama with its canal became hyper-critical. On that day, barely able, President Roosevelt appeared with Prime Minister Mackenzie King of Canada in one of, if not the last press conference he held (don't have time to be positive on this). Roosevelt died a month later (that I'm sure of). On the day Michael was born, the dying private Edward Gorinac, from Port Huron, Michigan who was captured at the Battle of the Bulge and held at Stalag IX-B., made two of his last entries in his diary: "*March 13: Fred from Lansing died today. I was moved to Barracks No. 2. The infection is getting worse. March 14: Nothing new. Still working on 2 to 10:45 shift. We were cut on our bread. Now its five men to a loaf instead of four.*" The diary was recovered two days later by a fellow American prisoner and eventually sent to Private Gorinac's family. On that day, Professor Linus Pauling (two time Nobel Prize winner) recorded in his diary that he dutifully filed his confidential pamphlet of nominations for membership to the American Philosophical Society. Maymo, Burma, to the east of Mandalay, was taken by the British 62nd Indian Brigade -- cutting the last rail line to Mandalay. Mission 42: The third of the Twentieth Air Forces' great fire raids was launched. Shortly after 2400 hours local time

274 B-29s began bombing Osaka. Because of 8/10 cloud cover, bombing was by radar; the heart of the city, an area of 8.1 square miles (21.0 square km), was wiped out during 3 hours of bombing from altitudes of 5,000 to 9,600 ft. At 9:30 a.m. across the International Date Line, on the very day Michael was born, America reported that the capture of Iwo Jima was complete. That was less than a month after Marines had reached the summit of Iwo Jima's Mt. Suribachi raising the American flag there. In Europe, hours before Michael was born, British RAF dropped the 22,000 pound "Grand Slam," the largest conventional bomb used during World War II on the Bielefeld viaduct in Germany. On the Western Front on that day, the US 12th Corps (part of US 3rd Army) launched attacks southeast over the Moselle River, near Koblenz, and US 20th Corps expanded its attacks from between Trier and Saarburg. To the north, the US 1st Army continued to expand the Remagen bridgehead, the first one captured that crossed the Rhine enabling the Allies to enter Germany. On the day Michael was born the men of K Company, 394th Infantry Regiment, 99th Infantry Division were desperately holding that one bridgehead over the Rhine. Their situation was so dire that on the night of March 14, 1945, they called in friendly artillery on their own positions in an effort to force the Germans back. "The frantic barrage succeeded in driving the Germans back into the dark woods, their dead and wounded comrades left behind. For the weary Americans, though, the respite proved to be only temporary, as daylight soon brought renewed enemy artillery and sniper fire. The GIs knew that when the sun went down again they would face another terrifying night on the line. In the late afternoon, however, the men heard a roar of gunfire, indicating that a sharp engagement was being fought on the wooded hillside below their position. When the firing finally died down, the Americans feared the worst, and the sound of men approaching only increased their apprehension. As a ragged line of soldiers began emerging from the woods, ducking under the low branches of the firs and hardwoods, the men of K Company hunkered down in their foxholes, gripping their weapons straining to get a good look. To their relief, they could soon see that the advancing men were clad in olive drab and wore American pot-like helmets. However, as the approaching troops came closer, the GIs in K Company saw that their faces were brown and seemed to merge with the mud color of their helmets. Their relief was quickly displaced by shock. What had sent such angst through the combat-weary men was something no American soldier had seen for more than 150 years. Coming to their aid were black Americans, and — even more startling — these black soldiers were there not simply to relieve them but to join them in battle. The last time blacks officially served shoulder to shoulder with whites in an American infantry unit, George Washington was in command of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War." On the Eastern Front, Soviets forces captured Zvolen in western Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, in Hungary, German Army Group South (Wohler) committed its remaining reserves along with the 6th Panzer Division to battle against the Soviet 27th Army (Trofimenko). In Holland, on March 14, 1945 Herman van Veen a Dutch writer, actor, composer was born. Following a request from Unicef and The Hague Residentie Orchestra van Veen wrote a theater piece about the courageous duck, "Alfred J. Kwak." Alfred J. Kwak became a comic strip figure and was the basis for a 52-episode animation series in Japan which rose to cult status and has been seen all over the world. On the day Michael was born, the number one radio show in the States was Bob Hope's *Pepsodent Show*. "NBC Radio management fretted about Bob Hope's radio monologs, which were always topical and

occasionally racy.” The number two radio show was Jack Benny’s *The Jell-O Show* which had run by then for 25 years and was a mainstay of American culture. The Colmans made their first “appearance” on the show as Benny’s neighbors in 1945. Frank Sinatra was a staple on *Your Hit Parade* sponsored by Lucky Strike cigarettes. In 1945 Doris Day co-starred with Sinatra on the show. The jingle all Americans knew was, “This is your lucky day.” Television was on the verge of luring all the talent out of radio leaving many stations to abandon their network affiliations and going bankrupt. FM and rock n roll had not yet arrived to save them. Move over *American Idol*. Another hit radio show when Michael was born was *The Original Amateur Hour* hosted by Major Bowes which transitioned to TV with Ted Mack and which ran until 1970. It was launched on radio in 1934. On March 14, 1945 in the Pacific the aircraft carrier *Enterprise* left Ulithi Atoll lagoon steaming full speed to sortie at 0610 with *Yorktown CV-10* and *Intrepid CV-13*, forming Task Group 58.4 on route to the invasion of Okinawa. On the day Michael was born, in France, Pax Christi, an international Catholic peace organization of individuals who “spoke out, prayed and worked for reconciliation at the end of the Second World War” was founded. On March 14, 1945, (stateside) the 20 year old major league baseball player Bill Walsh, a private first class with Company C of the 260th Infantry Regiment, 65th Infantry Division was killed by sniper fire while crossing Joseph Goebbels Avenue in Saarlautern, Germany. He had signed with the New York Giants out of high school but never got a chance to play a game before he was drafted. The number one song in America was “Rum and Coca-Cola” by The Andrews Sisters. The number one song for the year was “My Dreams Are Getting Better All the Time” by Les Brown. Today it is “Boom Boom Pow” by The Black Eyed Peas and the Hannah Montana movie soundtrack. The top movie on March 14, 1945 was *The Bells of St. Mary’s* starring Bing Crosby and Ingrid Bergman. *The Lost Weekend* directed by Billy Wilder and starring Ray Milland and Jane Wyman won the Oscar that year. On March 12, 2009 the top movie in America was *Watchmen*. On March 12, 2009 Forbes list of richest people came out. Bill Gates was no doubt profoundly relieved to see that he was still number one (got that foam hand handy?). And on that day one of, if not the biggest thief in history, Bernard Madoff announced he would plead guilty to stealing at least 170 BILLION dollars (somehow chanting “I’m number one” isn’t so much fun now).

Discontinuities mark our lives. And perspectivism is a law... I think. When you read the newspaper (the few left who do), you read the “first draft of history.” It has all the details of the day. Your neighbor’s fight over curbside recycling, what time the sun rose and the temperature at noon and five, your brother-in-law’s DUI, some student winning an award, the point spread in a high school football game (points always the points), the Mayor and beauty queen opening a new mall, and that all important horoscope (I’ve wondered what kind of lenses are used in it?). It’s local. As time goes on, we condense and condense, pick and choose. As the view includes wider and wider vistas and time expands our local shrinks. Things can be forgotten and utterly vanish -- unless we take a narrow interest.

Around 100 A.D. Ptolemy invented “map projection” using grid lines. And about 1400 years later, while hauling ourselves out of the “Dark Ages,” the Renaissance artist Brunelleschi invented a wooden frame with a grid of strings through which he would look at a scene and then “capture” it on a panel that had a corresponding set of grid lines. Ratio (the root of rational) was reborn. Michael, for all his rationality, often admitted to

me that he was out of proportion, “unbalanced.” I think he meant that his private life and joys were his work and he felt that maybe that was not optimal. The fellow in the picture below could be sitting at a computer surfing popular websites. He sure is focused. Such dedication. I think she’s asleep. Isn’t it always like that?



Then Brunelleschi added a hole in the panel to mark the vanishing point and voilà, one form of perspective was reinstated. About the same time Van Eyck was using a similar tool, an epidiascope, and later Kepler invented the camera lucida thus re-realizing that we cannot avoid framing and we have the power to reframe stuff changing the meaning of things and ourselves for ourselves (Roland Barthes wrote a book called *La Chambre claire* (translated as *Camera Lucida*) which was about photography and acted as a eulogy for his mother... strange what people say in eulogies). The meaning of every text is based on its context. We create one as soon as we create the other with our subjective choices. I randomly opened a collection of Frost poems and read “downy flake.” That needs its context to be nice. Michael claimed his work was without context. That, to me, would make it meaningless. I’m pretty sure that’s not what he meant, but that’s what he said. Often what we say is not what we mean and somehow we understand that, sometimes. When we first met he seemed disappointed when I said to him, “So you do the same sorts of things McGuire did back in the 60’s” (I’d read a lot of persuasion stuff for my dissertation on cigarette advertising). Michael often groused that he was writing too late, that many of the good ideas had already been published by the time he came on the scene. Forget McGuire, Aristotle wrote something that sounds a lot like basic inoculation half a millennium before Jesus. Auh the good old days when you could run studies with Thracian slaves and sharp sticks with no IRB in sight. But neither McGuire nor Aristotle had structural equation modeling. I sat in on that one summer. I try to stay “relevant.” Never did understand the rationale behind the various weighting of variables. This one’s a +1. That one’s a -2. I understood the plan but not the why. Hmmm. Limits.

We break our purview down into things like discrete sections, variables, components – atomization, it’s called. We “focus.” Making the case for the relationship between the rehabilitation of Ptolemaic classical ideas and the Renaissance “invention,”

of perspective, Samuel Edgerton tells us, “In the Florentine mind’s eye, all was becoming a matter of scale. Today the painting—and tomorrow the world” (1975, p. 90). Measurement I think makes us feel empowered, in control, getting things under control; under-stand-able. That’s one reason we Moderns like to do it to everything. It is our way of making it ours. As Nietzsche said, knowing is another way to say I am familiar with a thing. Our scales reveal who we are, our interests and how we see the world. Karl Sagan used to lament that many religions are relatively bankrupt because their scales are just not nearly as awesome as those of modern cosmology. The 20th century universe became far more majestic than the Bible ever suggested (more about that in a minute). Michael loved to watch Nova and other shows that blow our minds with the latest cosmological discoveries.

Zigzags involve, but are not restricted to, rediscovering and/or (that’s a potential zag) rehabilitating ways once forgotten, abandoned. The rehabilitation of past personalities for contemporary hero-worship are a sure sign of current needs and values. The Renaissance was looking for a way forward and they reached back and pulled Aristotle out of the dustbin where the Church had tossed him, cleaned him up and put his radical visage on their banner and his bust in their newly emerging universities. Aristotle hadn’t changed. The times had changed. Scholars needed someone to inspire and who could not be eliminated by being burned at the stake. People like Albertus Magnus and Petrarch deftly zigged reintroducing humanism. The thing about heroes though is that they can achieve a power that can be very malicious. They can control by merely threatening to withdraw their approval. Erich Fromm calls it a threat to not love someone if they do not do as one wants. It can be a very powerful tool of manipulation but it works only in proportion to how much you revere the judging person. Long before I got to college, my dad taught me that. I think it’s true.

Since the 1920’s filmmakers have referred to “the world in a frame.” Heidegger argued that *Gestell* (translated as “enframing” even though most dictionaries translate it as just plain old framing) is the law of perception, the fundamental fact of perspectivism as stated by Nietzsche in the 1880’s. When we do it on purpose, with a purpose, it is fundamental to human technological power. What we know, is a narrow bandwidth sort of like groping along at the bottom of a vast ocean with but one flashlight. We get snippets of tidbits. Empirically, I’ve seen very little, and my eyesight is fading. Most of what I “know” comes from hearsay. Hence the chemist Michael Polyani’s observation that trust is essential for what we call the “body of knowledge.” The rhetorician George Campbell beat him to it though few remember George.

Direct empirical observation is always personal and I’m not about to personally replicate every scientific experiment and observation. Direct personal experience (the only kind I have access to) also does not require that I try to put it into some symbolic form and share it with others... like watching a humming bird preen itself and thinking, this is a wonderful experience, I can’t share this with anyone else but I wish I could but then this experience will pass too fast and so, alas, I’ll drop that regret and just enjoy. A picture, if I’m lucky and have a good lens, will have to suffice but it’s a poor substitute for, as Chance Gardner would say, “being there.”



Sometimes, if we can't share it, it's like it never happened. So I'll try again.



I was putting together some pictures for Michael that I thought might take his mind off things but time "ran out."

So we hang in overlapping social networks sustained by systems of symbols and community standards of truth but so much is never said... never shared. Nevertheless our efforts to share are important. Communication is essential (meaning that it's a necessary condition for human social reality to exist). Sharing "personal things" may seem like "little" things, but yet somehow when they are shared become "big" (special). Such sharing takes extra effort, trust, and time like the story Michael told us about hiding

in the bushes as a child while skipping school because he got whacked for not knowing how to multiple fractions or something. He was sick the day they covered the technique. I'm not writing here of secrets but of the usually unshared.

Michael died during the celebrations marking the bicentennial of Darwin's birth and just as the Swine Flu was taking off. WHO has since pin-pointed "patient zero," a little Mexican boy named Edgar Hernandez from a village near where I used to live in Xalapa. I make the claim that as time goes on, the details get lost. Some say we have tried to forget the 1918 pandemic because it is too frightening, a sort of mass self-imposed amnesia. But trying to forget is like trying to fall asleep. The same happens with expanding space. There's a reason the existential "crisis" happened just as the microscope and telescope and the "Age of Exploration" were revealing new realities. Existentialism hit its real stride with the first "world" wars, the first "super weapons," and just about the time Edwin Hubble realized that those fuzzy spots so resistant to being resolved into nice sharply defined points on his photographic plates were things he called galaxies unbelievably far away in an inconceivable enormity. That happened not too long after William Smith (the father of modern geology) codified the law of superposition, the basic cannon of stratigraphy which demonstrates that time extends much much farther back than the 4000 years posited by the Bible; back *way* before Adam and Eve! In the last hundred or so years we lost our privileged center stage position in the increasingly grander scheme of things. Time and space rapidly expanded "off scale" which makes us very anxious. On an infinite or eternal line, every point is identical. We need ends to have a position. We relativity to have identity. We lost the ends so we lost ourselves. But we still have means searching for purpose.

What happened to us during the last 150 years? Imagine sitting on a chair in your living room and then sitting on the same chair down in the middle of the field in an empty Super Dome or better yet, on the same chair suspended over the middle of the Grand Canyon. It would feel quite different I think. The word "small" comes to mind. "Lonely" too; insignificant – the lowest N possible except for "zero," whom, however being just one, in the context of a potential pandemic, has gotten airtime. The word that strikes me is "sublime." Someday, we'll all be forgotten. But for now we have the power to remember.

Being an Ohio boy and an admirer, a few years ago I wanted my sons to meet Neil Armstrong, before it's too late (at this writing he's 78). As you probably know he's from a village called Wapakoneta, Ohio. As I started to research so I could tell my youngins the story... "gather round and hear..." who he was and why they should care, something strange came to light. After being the first of our kind or any form of life so far as we know to plant his foot on the moon he came back and vanished. Offers poured in, from presidencies of universities to offers to run for political office to joining the boards of corporations. But he had none of that. Where'd he go? You don't see him on TV. No talk shows, no news shows, no Shamwow commercials. He's not in People magazine between Paris Hilton and Beyoncé. He came back and all he wanted to do was get home. All the way back home. And that's what he did. He bought a humble little farm not far from his boyhood place and tried to "process" what had happened. After some time he requested, quite humbly, if he could teach engineering at..... MIT? Harvard? Stanford? Princeton?... It was the U. of Cincinnati. They managed to find a class or two for him. He said that while standing on the moon he suddenly felt very

small. He'd gone too far. It was beautiful and scary. He used that old rhetoric term "sublime." And this from a guy who other astronauts believed had ice water in his veins. Only two others (his shipmates) had ventured so far from the womb and it was overwhelming. Space is big. Really big. When he got back, all he wanted was to get back home. Teaching and farming were his ways to get re-grounded. He quit NASA and went under the radar. After about a decade he resurfaced to speak for causes he believed in. Sometimes I think we forget what a privilege it is to have kids put their faith in us and how fun it can be to help young people learn something new.

The new certainty, the new truth, the new story of the infinite yet expanding universe has made us uneasy. It's awesomely overwhelming. The bigger space and time gets, the smaller we feel, and our egos compress into individualism; points, positions, perspectives we defend with an intensity that increases proportional to our perceived shrinking...onto the vanishing point... and then, what was so important suddenly ain't. Maybe our intense defensiveness is a clue that we are scared little critters... feeling vulnerable to forces beyond our control... threatened.

"I resolve..." means on guard you loser over there on the *other side*. There's a shift in what we call respect. People who live in extended tribal families do not argue as a sport with winners and losers and trophies and rankings. Disputes unnerve everyone in the Neolithic hamlet and so they stress harmony over personal winning. Arguing for fun is a luxury that Neolithic and Paleolithic folks could not afford. Competition is good in our world. Everything has become extreme from strutting dudes and dudettes with enhanced hypertrophic muscles and breasts to hypertrophic egos that are famous for their own sake. Here and now we urge our kids to get all dressed up and go forth to do verbal combat. They prepare for days and days. It's hard to find people playing games "just for fun." The eminently modern metaphor "resolve" tells us so much about our times and who we are. It's visual, simple, declarative, sharp, resistant to complexity/interpretation; an invitation to "bring it on." "Let's fight." Intelligence testing took off just about the time modern individualism bloomed. After being disappointed, Benet warned us that the test fails to predict educational or vocational success, but what did he know?<sup>1</sup> It was a backhanded vote of confidence for the rest of us who make it on sweat equity (with one percentage "point" of inspiration thrown in).

Time and details. What do we read about ancient Egypt? About a few big shots who funded the scribes and historians of their times (it's a law of probability that power and significance are somehow related and it all used to be blood-based. It's still pretty tribal). There's nothing in the books about Joe Hopjot the stone cutter's drunken brawl down at Nefer's beer stand in 2,922 B.C. Being B.C. and without the benefit of A.D. he didn't know he was B.C. nor that it was a "Thursday" night, or that some Jew in a thousand years would be said to save him, or that microbrewers would one day, three thousand years hence try to replicate Nefer's so-so (and overpriced!) beer. In Kramer's law of hermeneutics: details fall away in ratio to the temporal and spatial distance from events... unless we choose and try to remember. Choices are operationalized value judgments. They are the essence of what we call freedom. Distance makes things fuzzy. Facts just pile up too fast for our increasingly diminutive memories to keep them discretely in focus (resolved, separated, and defined) so we average them. Definition means the ability to discern two adjacent objects as discrete -- different. We seek to be

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<sup>1</sup> How to spell his name.

resolute – certain -- positive. We fight back with attempts to be precise. Which details endure into legend? We don't want to be forgotten.

Sometimes, for a time, things seem “regular” then bang, a big change “happens.” We don't see it coming. We want to think causally. Probability makes sense because we presume the absolutes of zero and one hundred on the probability scale. Remember, without ends, nothing in the “middle” has any relative meaning. But at the same time, science insists on this thing call randomness. It's disconcerting (even to Einstein), which means to mess up that which was previously thought to be concerted – regular, resolved - - predictable. I think things are predictable because they are not random. Maybe the only randomness in the universe is our attempt at sampling? For a time Michael didn't even know what the heck was wrong with him. In December he was frustrated. “They've run every test...” Once I asked a big scholar, if it is true that anxiety is caused by uncertainty, a truth for which he had famously taken credit for discovering (although I found a little business book published some 80 years ago about risk and investing and it was all about seeking information to allay the anxiety caused by the uncertainty of buying stocks), then why do we worry so much about the two certainties of death and taxes? I was typically being only half fact-itious. He didn't answer me. We all know what Prometheus did for humanity but we forget (fittingly) what his brother Epimetheus did for us. Zeus, that jerk, gave humans perfect foresight and then gleefully watched as we all became depressed and slowly withered. Knowing, with certainty how and when you will die sort of takes the wind out of your sails. Knowing all future heart-breaks and calamities is a bummer and so as you try to avoid them you start to whisper that prayer of prayers *utinam vates falsus sim* (that I were a false prophet).

The most powerful efforts to predict the future have been done by a consortium of universities led by MIT. They dump all the data we have into their “world models” such as population growth, compounding pollution, food depletion, climate change, et cetera, et cetera and, no matter how they tweak the variables, the results are bleak. So they take those results to world leaders and say, please prove this wrong by changing current trends. They want to be wrong. That's the cool thing about cybernetics. Unlike hydrogen atoms or blue whales, humans can run trends in fast-forward and choose to change course based on our value judgments and predictions, thus making them false. Humans read their own social science journals. In the middle of a world dying of profound depression, Epimetheus swept in and took away our power of perfect foresight so that we would not know what tomorrow will bring thus rejuvenating our senses of curiosity and hope. Sometimes certainty is a real bummer. Shannon and Weaver say redundancy is meaningless. I guess. Minimally clairvoyance makes the future redundant; not worth watching the rerun. The point of that great American classic [sic] *Groundhog Day* was to try to see if tomorrow could be changed; if we can change ourselves (because that's where the real hope lies – Isocrates called it education... the ability to improve oneself and escape the immutable caste systems that dominated the world the Greeks inhabited). Once I asked Michael if he could do anything different what would it be. I forget what he said.

I suggested to the expert on uncertainty that he read Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling Unto Death* (1843). The original Danish title is *Frygt og Bæven*. One of my old phil profs translated it so I *had* to read it. Somehow the Danish sounds scarier to me. Anyway, I could tell the self-proclaimed first person to ever realize the relationship

between the unknown and anxiety didn't like philosophy, and philosophers even less so. For that reason I couldn't resist: didn't the Bible, way back when, say something about not cursing the darkness but lighting a candle or lamp, flick your Bic or something? Apparently parents didn't understand that children are afraid of the dark until 1973 (or was it 75?). Oh well... philosopher-types only invented science. I wonder what great new way of seeing the world science will invent that is fundamentally different and beyond itself?

This is a zigzaggy discontinuous essay, if you had not figured that out by now, to mark the passing, the stroll by, the frenetic hurrying past, of a man of his times; a wanderer with a goal which was to keep making goals (for a goal once achieved spells the end of progress) and his shadow. I guess I should have said that up front but tidbits are scattered things. We live in an oxymoronic time where progress must be eternal – we can never arrive, we can never rest.

For several years Michael and I had lunch together every weekday. That's about 4 or 5 hours of one-on-one per week for years. He was, minimally, a challenging conversationalist. I think I managed to give as good as I took. We'd sneak a beer in at noon. How Bohemian (in both ways). Just joking. For me, this is my last lunch talk with him. Sort of. Despite the old com model of sender and receiver, sometimes someone sends a message and we don't really receive it for years because reception is not merely a physical action. Once I was sitting at a stoplight thinking about one of my sons when suddenly something my 7<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher had said finally got through. Pearls before swine... I wasn't ready until then. Unfortunately, while there are things in here I'm certain Michael would rise to contest (even if he didn't really disagree... but just to see how I'd react). But alas he cannot. I sit at a chess board awaiting the responding move that will now, never come. Sometimes we just slumped; tired and sipped our drinks silently.

He and I shared many details about our private lives. I'll never forget him pulling out his wallet to show me old pictures of Ginger and the kids, but most importantly how he looked at them before putting them back. So much going through that head of his. Photos freeze time. We talked a few times about death and dying... in the abstract of course as we were positive it was a distant proposition. Neither of us held the prospects of being diminished by old age American style in high regard; trapped among strangers, non-academics in some nursing home somewhere. Elitist? Guilty as charged. As Nietzsche said, being boring is the greatest sin one person can perpetrate upon another. Both of us love and loved the academy. We loved the exchange and Michael, the consummate debater, could go at it with gusto and at the end not take it too personally. He loved to take on prevailing truths and dominant theories, turning his substantial intellectual firepower upon their flanks. A physicist I know positively revels in being an experimentalist because they get to "smash theorists." That's the dialectic of science. Stress makes things grow. The hotter the kitchen the better the soup – unless you burn it of course. Some sauces are very delicate. Sometimes others at the nearby bar would look at us with concern... two hot peppers. We almost always sat at the same tall table tucked away in the front left corner of the Library, next to the bar. We were intellectuals bantering. If we came in and someone was already there, Michael would grumble. That was *our* spot, how dare they.

We were also, as you might have guessed by now, hopeless addicts, closet aficionados of Calvin and Hobbes discussing various strips from memory. Now that's a published author (Watterson I mean -- but alas, nothing in a peer reviewed journal... only 2400 newspapers daily). In our dyad Michael was the Calvinist (the philosopher of salvation through labor) while I was not exactly the unmanageable opportunist, but a playful follower of Diogenes, not quite convinced of the glories of reputation and regimentation. Every day when Michael would come to fetch me for lunch, he would shudder at the visage of my office. My retort was, I know where everything is and if you ever see the insides of an artist's studio or of the shop where they make Lamborghini's you know that the work space is not as pretty as the final product. He'd grudgingly admit I knew where stuff was. But sometimes he'd test me. "Do you have that memo on..." I'd reach in a stack and hand it to him. That baffled him. He accused me of running my own shadow department because of the quantity of grad students I chair. It's just that I lost some in the stacks. And, to shatter my own attempt at witty repartee, I admit that neither Mona Lisas nor Lamborghini's roll out of my office (more like Pintos).

Michael enjoyed reading my "stuff." But he always demanded more. I write mostly about time and communication; its history, its cultural basis, its practicality, its arbitrariness. It is the purest form of operationalization. It is nothing but an operation. It is sustained as a cultural artifact, for nothing is so human as operationalizing ideas as we invent and innovate rather than just conform to what already is the case. We change the environment rather than just adapt to it and thus we have colonized every habitat on Earth and beyond. Dam that river, flatten that mountain, canal that isthmus. But I'm old school. For me to operationalize means to conceive of and draw a car never before seen and then make it, so I can actually cruise down the highway listening to the Eagles. It's the transition from the virtual to the actual -- from the imagination to the physical that constitutes the act of operationalization. I know. Mathematicians would protest. But that's how philosophers talk about operators in logic and in the physical world. My limitation. Point is, it's more than just measuring something already there. It's inventive. It's a cultural act. It's creative and manipulative.

Clock-time is pure operation because there's nothing there before we have the scale. Time is not the same as the emic experience of duration by the way or simple movement. If that were so, then as we cool things to close to absolute zero, time for that object should stop, but nope. It falls under the power of the timer used in the lab just like everything else. As an external socio-cultural force time is the objective measure that I do not own. It prods me, often against my druthers, to hurry or wait. We socially sanction not so much those who are late, but those who keep me waiting. We humans have invented many kinds of times. We can even pinpoint (a really narrow, precise point) when a certain kind of time was invented and write its history. Time as a social construct is a cultural artifact. Unlike instinct, it is fragile. It is sustained through symbol systems handed down (communicated) from one generation to the next and never as quite the same. We have to teach our kids how to "tell" time just like we have to teach them other cultural forms like how to think scientifically and the canons of mathematics. We teach them how to be anxious about this stuff too.

A point is one-dimensional. Point is one of those words that can't make up its mind. It's both a noun and a verb and when it's a verb that signifies two and three-dimensions because it gestures beyond itself. Despite our best efforts to not wobble or

waiver, to stay on “point,” to get to the “point,” to be straight, we zigzag through our life time. Although Michael wanted those he cared about to be successful and efficient about it, his own journey took many twists and turns. That’s not hypocrisy. As the great ethicist Max Scheler once said to a student about his own shortcomings, a road sign need not go to the city toward which it points to be correct. And each zig and each zag made Michael who he was. Ginger told me that one of the more consequential turns of fortune was when Augustana took a chance and hired Michael, the high school debate coach, even though he only had a Masters. Someone there saw something. And coincidences also happen. She noted how he had just made his last payment on his beloved ’05 Z car... We were glad he had time to play with it.

Masters or no Masters degree, Michael was always striving to get beyond himself, to get bigger and better, to score more points. And don’t we all? He was full of confidence/certainty. In his eulogy for Larry Wieder,<sup>2</sup> Michael said that Larry had sacrificed his scholarly productivity for time spent on and with students. Hmmm. One thing for sure, I never saw anyone read dissertations with as much attention as Larry. Every page was marked up and he had his tabs all over them. He copyedited dissertations for students, and he taught undergraduates to the end. What did Michael sacrifice for his mountain of scholarly productivity? I wouldn’t say even if I thought I knew. But, I am speaking pretty much as a positivist when I say there’s only 24 hours in a day. We all have to make choices. As Sartre said, we are “condemned” to freedom. The sum of our choices is a big part of who we are. In their different ways, both Larry and Michael are hard acts to follow.

Michael loved to pick my brain about my “time studies.” Of all the ways of measuring, the clock scale has become the most widespread scale on Earth, the most assimilated cultural artifact around the globe, synchronizing us all on a single simple ruler. There’s a million kinds of currency and even shoe sizes vary from place to place but clocks are all the same everywhere except some people care about and make it a “point” to maintain them “better” than others. Hours, minutes, seconds... Our computers are clocks, our cell phones are clocks, church steeples make the cross share space with clocks, microwaves have clocks, cars have clocks, clocks bind community calling it to work and worship; it’s the only machine we wear. Clocks have clocks. Have you seen the analog watches that also have a little window with a digital version? Old incense and water clocks were just much too inconsistent. Because it offers absolutism, machine clock-time enables relativity. To be consistently, relatively late has become an indicator of a pernicious character flaw, a moral failing demonstrable by means of the indifferent objectivity of the gizmo’s say. Its global conquest makes it the paragon of that dreaded process called “cultural imperialism.” Proponents of the metric and the

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<sup>2</sup> For those who don’t know, Larry was in our department for over 20 years. He passed in Dec. 2006. In the article “Larry Wieder’s Radical Ethno-Inquires” (*Human Studies*, 2008, 31: 251-257), Kenneth Lieberman writes: “D. Lawrence Wieder was a member of the first cohort of Harold Garfinkel’s graduate students and participated in many of the initial discoveries that led these early phenomenological sociologists to conceive of a radical ethnomethodology, discoveries that concerned the accountability of social action, the reflexivity of those accounts, the documentary method of interpretation, and the collaborative nature of local orderlinesses.”

English scales may fight it out but share the same machine on their wrists and schedule their debates according to the god Kronos. We punch timeclocks for labor and timers when we play games. Though a very “objective” measure and so widely used, clock-time is a powerful vehicle for drama. The circularity of the traditional scale is a synecdoche of the cyclicity of days (the procession of the sun and stars rising and setting) and the passing of seasons experienced by the Europeans from temperate climes who invented it.

Originally the face had no numbers and just one hand. Numbers, according to the Medieval church, are evil. Nevertheless, though spoken of as an essential quality, what “counts” as evil is a fickle thing. Though some might not see me as quantitative, I’ve made a study of number(s) and the fact that many see them as lucky or evil was a major reason it took so long to rebuild the Imperial Roman postal system during the Renaissance, because assigning numbers to “address” domiciles was forbidden. But urbanizing mass society and precision had their own needs. Not being precise enough for some people’s desires (ironically a Pope no less), one by one numbers were added to the face of time and then more hands to “point” at them with varying consistency. Tolerances tightened up. Consistency is the essence of measures. An inch should always be “the same” as we move down the ruler, that hobgoblin dictator of modern knowing (says Emerson). It’s all in the details and we know who dwells among those harassing and confounding little things. As we collectively dissociated, tending toward minimalism, we dumped the face and hands altogether as wastes leaving nothing but those niggling digits. Now we have LED numbers inciting us with their unrelenting glare to hurry along. Evaluated. You’re late... again... 12 minutes and 13 seconds late. I timed you! Just when people retire and don’t need to worry about appointments anymore, we give them a watch.

Time can be a verb too of course. It does things to us. It measures us. Our vigilance determines our identity as responsible people. Everything is becoming digitized today. The Greeks had no god for space. No one does so far as I know. But time has a transcendental throne while at the same time being the most worldly of gods (the necessary condition for mortality even). We in the modern West tend to immediately ask how old someone was when they died. That’s a simple answer. But it is also worth asking how they lived, what they did with the time they “had,” or, in a less egocentric way, which had them. What were their times like? That answer is different than a number or even a long long series of numbers.

Michael did much with the time that had him, tacking back and forth through the opportunities and obstacles of his life; moments we like to call decisions. Wittgenstein says, “Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death. If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present.” One of my favorites (Jean Gebser) explored the “ever-present origin” of being as an inescapable now, a constant emergence that Ilya Prigogine (another favorite of mine who often appears in my writing, called the dissipative quality of reality. According to this Nobel Prize winning systems theorist, “In those branches of mathematics called dynamical systems and ergodic theory, the concept of a wandering set formalizes a certain idea of movement and mixing in such systems. When a dynamical system has a wandering set of non-zero measure, then the system is a dissipative system. This is very much the opposite of a conservative system, for which the ideas of the Poincaré recurrence theorem apply. Intuitively, the connection between wandering sets

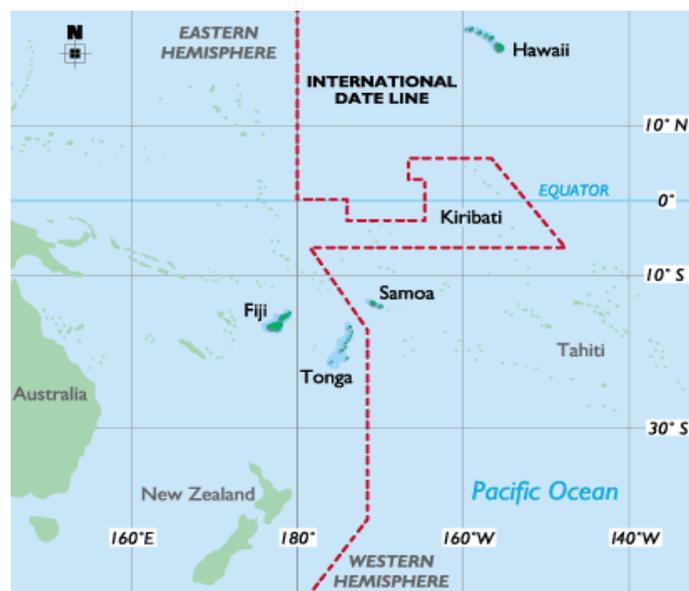
and dissipation is easily understood: if a portion of the phase space ‘wanders away’ during normal time-evolution of the system, and is never visited again, then the system is dissipative.” What could be more self-evident than the now, that momentous and inescapable “point?” Or of staying on track? Well, stuff and people wander around, seemingly without reason. Even the now is just not so firm as we might have once thought.

Intercultural experts like Extra Terrestrial Hall and Robert Levine say that cultures are most different in terms of their overall tempo. I guess. It seems to me that reality is countless events streaming in parallel intertwining, cross-connecting, arbitrary, accidental, necessary, causal, ways (as we name them); a world of shifting patterns and randomness, simultaneous happenings, correlated, unconnected but all part of a giant bricolage (patterned according to our perspective) with so many unseen vectors and the tiny few we are aware of. Sometimes we “flow.” Sometimes we’re “stuck.” Try as we might, we control very little in this pinball game. Stephen Hawking sure had bad luck. And he says it was random “luck.” “Even if we do discover a complete unified theory, it would not mean that we would be able to predict events in general, for two reasons. The first is the limitation that the uncertainty principle sets on our powers of prediction. There is nothing we can do to get around that. In practice, however, this first limitation is less restrictive than the second one. It arises from the fact that we could not solve the equations of the theory exactly, except in very simple situations. We cannot even solve exactly for the motion of three bodies in Newton’s theory of gravity, and the difficulty increases with the number of bodies and the complexity of the theory and... realistic situations” (Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, pp. 168-69). I hate bowling and golf was invented by the devil. But who knows? Maybe we will insist on knowing the future so... insistently, and despite Epimetheus’ help, that someone will genetically engineer what Philip K. Dick called “precogs.” Michael did not anticipate his illness. I think his project was cut short in an “un-timely” manner but we can’t really be untimely. What we call “luck” as in being lucky to be born in the US in the Twentieth Century, has to do with all sorts of culturally specific values and desires. Maybe, given the incredible complexity involved in the animation of matter, we’re lucky to be born at all... bits of the universe that achieve sentience; bits that can look back upon that cosmos from which they arose. I think we should not waste any days not marveling at this.

We say, “he was a man of his times.” If there is a higher purpose, a “point” for why a person is born when and where, or even what constitutes progress, I leave that to the experts of intelligent design, for to progress one must already have postulated a final goal, an ultimate value judgment; utopia (which means nowhere). We try to make sense no matter what, to straighten out the zigs and zags, to trace straight “back” along the great chain of causation to Aquinas’ first cause, and, in the “other direction,” progress straight to our goals. But Hawking insists that Laplace’s determinism cannot be realized (p. 172). It also has moral implications. Determinism makes us effects of all previous causes including ones we fight “for.” Randomness, the unpredictable is related to freedom, choice, and responsibility. These are hard to factor. The zigs and zags are hard to chart or “plot” on the old X and Y axis the Bishop of Oresme invented around 1330. The French were reading way too much Aristotle. But despite all our plotting, some of the biggest things that happen to us are just... unexpected... a sudden zag that, as Michael said to me of his illness, “come out of nowhere.” Don’t we all. Doesn’t everything come

out of nowhere? We don't know the hour of our creation, when we will be born, and often we don't know when we will die. In curved space (the only kind there is except in our minds), we arbitrarily make timelines and date-lines but "in reality" even they confound us.

With but one step I can be in yesterday or tomorrow. There is a historical "reason" why the International Date Line is, and "reasons" why it, of all lines, zigzags. But reasons are often less than logical. Interests lurk. Time zones became necessary only when we started moving fast. There used to be over 300 official time zones in the US. Every little burg had its official time with the clock on top of the courthouse (not only churches support Kronos), that is until the railroad industry got sick of being unable to make schedules where you could leave one town and arrive at another before you left. Because I'm too lazy I'll just quote a very prolific author named Wikipedia to illustrate my "point" that even the now (like logic as Kurt Gödel proved because there is no self-consistent axiomatic system) is fuzzy; kind of like Hobbes the tiger (being both actual and virtual at the same time -- fuzzy). "For part of its length, the International Date Line follows the meridian of 180° longitude, roughly down the middle of the Pacific Ocean. In order to keep from crossing nations internally, however, the line deviates to pass around the far east of Russia and various island groups in the Pacific. In the north the date line swings to the east through the Bering Strait and then west past the Aleutian Islands in order to keep Alaska (part of the United States) and Russia, which are due north and south of each other in that region, on opposite sides of the line and in agreement with the date of the rest of those countries. The date line passes equidistantly between the two Diomedede Islands—Little Diomedede Island (US) and Big Diomedede Island (Russia)—at a distance of 1.5 km (1 mi) from each island. The date line circumvents the territory of Kiribati by swinging far to the east, almost reaching the 150° meridian. In the South Pacific the date line swings east such that Wallis and Futuna, Fiji, Tonga, and New Zealand's Kermadec Islands have the same date but Samoa is one day earlier." Here's a little bit of the line; the gerrymandering of time.



Right after Michael's passing we discovered that someone messed up and put "the" "four corners" spot where Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah come together in the wrong place. Proof beyond doubt that math skills in the US need to improve. We hope it's positively correct now. I don't want to waste more pictures proving that "I was being there" when I wasn't. I don't know but I hear Fiji's pretty nice, probably because it's so laid back compared to Samoa, which gets to tomorrow a day quicker (day after day after...).

Someone, the English actually, thanks to their imperial power/significance, along with the help of the French, imposed a ruler on the globe, a matrix... It's good to be the king. That's global "mean time." Though you can't see it, this all powerful line runs right smack down through the middle of the Royal Observatory at Greenwich in that little impoverished country. Imagine such an important imaginary basis for measurement running through our speech lab! Did I say you can't see it? Take a look at the sheer glee this fellow has with his empirical discovery of the line. The gravitas of his eureka moment warped the poor fellow. We love to take pictures of ourselves with imaginary things and friends. And our best and brightest build such things. So Hobbes is cool.



The existence of the Prime Meridian through Greenwich has been empirically proven with this photographic evidence. But there's a problem. It's not very consistent. It wobbles.

"Noon Greenwich Mean Time is not necessarily the moment when the noon sun actually crosses the Greenwich meridian (and reaches its highest "point" in the sky in Greenwich) because of Earth's uneven speed in its elliptic orbit and its axial tilt. This event may be up to 16 minutes away from noon GMT (this discrepancy is known as the equation of time). The fictitious mean sun is the annual average of this non-uniform motion of the true Sun, necessitating the inclusion of *mean* in Greenwich Mean Time."



“Fictitious” did this hack say? The mean is fictitious compared to direct (personal) observation! Well, according to Calvin, Hobbes’ love is as real as real gets. Damn the conspiracy of the “uneven” Earth and the “true” Sun. Things just are so uncooperative! So trying our best to be nice and tidy we still end up with an extra day, usually, BUT NOT ALWAYS, every 4 “years.” Why? “Because seasons and astronomical events do not repeat in a whole number of days, a calendar that had the same number of days in each year would, over time, drift with respect to the event it was supposed to track.” What’s a day anyway but a fantastic ego-centric projection by narcissistic Earthlings who just happen to have 10 fingers. By occasionally inserting (or *intercalating*) an additional day or month into the year, the drift can be “corrected.” Thank heavens infallible February lets us fix that huge cosmic mistake.

Semioticians “like me,” claim that naming has a sort of magical quality and that it tells me as much or more about the namer as it does the named. I used to joke with Michael that in this culture of ours that loves measuring everything so much (and I confess I do... I have a Walleye on my wall which I proudly proclaim to have been, before she was stuffed, 12.8 pounds), one has not really virtually arrived until a unit of measure is named after him or her. Just a few examples to make my “point” include; volt after Alessandro Volta, the joule after James Prescott Joule, the amp after André-Marie Ampère, the Boltzmann constant ( $k$  or  $k_B$ ), the Avogadro constant, the ohm after Georg Simon Ohm, the watt after James “Scooter” Watt (just kidding), and so forth... Poor old James Clerk Maxwell had a car named after him. They went out of business. Anyway, these are supposed to be precise, eternally uniform units that enable us to measure with certainty and therefore compare things with robust confidence. Our cultural predilection for fragmentation is the necessary condition for what we call precision. The smaller we atomize things the more precisely we “know” them and the better we can price them. Native Americans had real estate values all screwed up until the Europeans introduced surveying. Hours cut up into minutes, which in turn cut up into seconds... Kronos, the heavenly geometer, was a god who, during the great cosmic war with the Titans, used a scythe to cut up his father Sky who was much too seamless to be of any use. His mother, Gaia, was a holistic hippy-type too. Kronos got them in line by first making lines in

them. So time is a consequence of the Oedipus Complex and the first nasty generation gap. Gaps have proliferated ever since. But without fragmentation we can't be precise measurers. In measuring, bigger is not better. The smaller the unit, the more precise the measure. Because precision is "good" I'm irritated by the fact that the 2006 CODATA simply "recommends" the value of Boltzmann's constant to be:  $N_a = 6.022\ 141\ 79(30) \times 10^{23} \text{ mol}^{-1}$ . What kind of "constant" is that!! And who the heck is CODATA? The secret society of ultimate values? If I told you, I'd have to operationalize you.

I used to tease Michael by suggesting the **Pfau** as a new unit of measure. What for? he'd inquire from time to time. He'd ask if I had that part figured out. I don't know the answer yet. But I've got the important part, the name. Hmmm, did I say tease Michael. Indeed. Once I told him that Oklahoma is the consequence of applying the mean to the Rocky Mountains. No more valleys or peaks. It's even better in West Texas where Dan is from. But more fundamentally, I suspect that some grad student named Al in the basement of the building at Yale where they endlessly and actually do run the random number generators used to compile the tables that appear at the back of all stat books we use to determine "significance," got high one night in 1968, while listening to "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida," and goofed around with them messing up the world. It was a random accident. His bong fell over onto the computer. That explains why things sometimes fall down. It's the butterfly effect. And all these years I thought people were saying Al's rhythm. Groans... groans. You say, "I could predict that coming." Yeah I know. If you can predict it, it ain't worth nothin.

Every day is so full of an infinitude of events. Line one of *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung* (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus – the founding bible of logical positivism) says that the world is the sum of all facts. Later, in his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein changed his mind throwing his fans into a tizzy. Zag! Do I hear Homer saying "D'oh!" Things are so darn inconsistent... even random. We are even told that something as constant in our lives as *The Simpsons*, "uses a floating timeline in which the characters do not physically age, and as such the show is generally assumed to be set in the current year. In several episodes, events have been linked to specific time periods, although this timeline has been contradicted in subsequent episodes." Darn lack of proper order.

But we can agree on a few things as we wander along. Michael was a scholar. After a lifetime of countless seemingly random moments what can anyone say of another human being that is true and certain? As a child he lived through years of familial boom and bust. He couldn't believe his father tried to open a meat packing business literally in the shadow of an industry giant only, inevitably, to fail. He was a pretty good baseball player. For a time he went to high school in Oklahoma City and came to OU games with his dad... so he sort of came home here except that he moved a lot as a kid. His lung collapsed at an awkward moment while being lectured about marriage by Ginger's pastor. By sheer dint of bureaucratic accident, he escaped being sent to Viet Nam. He claimed that when Ginger was teaching, his kids liked his cooking better than hers (sorry Ginger). I love this one -- Because of sentimental value, he wore a watch that didn't work. He never carried a cell phone (did you notice)? We were the last in the department I think to shun those gizmos. We remembered with awe the Tobin Bridge over the Mystic River in Boston. I'd lived in Maynard, Mass and he in New Hampshire. One of his favorite academic experiences was having the opportunity to attend some

lectures by a phenomenologist he profoundly admired, Heidegger's girlfriend, Hannah Arendt. He would not only give quarter but reach out to those who he saw as weak and whose feelings his biting assessments may have hurt.

I say all of this...but...fact is I knew little of him. That curious word "tidbits" comes to mind. Random tidbits? I know he desperately wanted to make a difference; to have a legacy. He did. He does. I know but do not know that there was much more there that I don't know. Michael was a man of many words. He had a power everyone intuitively recognizes, especially in radio, but few (since Quintilian) other than the belletristic scholars have explicitly studied, that is -- he had an enchanting sounding voice. It was at times magical in its power. In one of the memorial eulogies delivered for Michael in the Twin Cities, Ginger's brother said that Ginger fell in love with his voice on the phone before she ever met him. We both had our flirts with radio early on. I used to watch him with an ethnographer's eye, observing, sometimes marveling at how masterfully he could shift into a performance mode leading our faculty in various directions during meetings and gatherings. He knew how as Dale Carnegie put it back in 1936, to win friends and influence people. He could gin up the pipes, and concentrate at the level of a great actor. He was a master rhetor. But in his absence other voices feel more confident. With his intensity, he could dis-courage. He loved to evaluate.

He worked exceptionally hard to achieve what he wanted, constantly weighing options for how to accomplish his goals. Once we were chatting about how many academics toward the ends of their careers drop off on their dedication and productivity. I asked him why he thought that was and he paused and finally said, "I suppose they don't care." Personally, I think it's declining hormones. But what do I know?

Michael never lost the faith. He never let up. He was more motivated than ever and the tragedy here is that his project ended much too soon. It may be timely in absolute terms but in our world it was untimely. These may seem like simple and obvious things to say but they are words that "point" beyond themselves to a complexity we cannot fully represent, realities that remain undefined. Despite his oft stated rhetoric (which he full-well knew was as much a rhetorical prod for the sluggish as a truism), Michael proved to me that we are much more than our vitas and because of his intellect and sophisticated training in speech performance he proved that philosophy is vital. I think, maybe, I taught him that philosophy is not a theory but an activity. To quote Wittgenstein, "Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language." But, philosophy, like all disciplines, exists only so long as we can express ourselves.

We enact our philosophies. Nothing is more practical. Michael led by example, and as Ginger reminded me, we all have feet of clay. How true. What we call knowledge is inter-subjective agreement. It is a provisional community belief system sustained through critical conversation. The books that most quickly go out-of-date are science textbooks. The truth keeps getting truer. Michael kept striving. He kept the trust. He believed in what we do. He believed that teaching students how to spot and defend themselves and their communities against what Plato called "false rhetoric" was important. He believed that one perspective, though limited, could correct another. He knew how to use language, how as J. L. Austin wrote, "to do things with words," how to construct an argument; a reality. He liked that I argued that we humans more than any other animal, do not adapt to the world but change it to fit our wants and needs. Our

refusal to surrender to the fatalism of the given is what makes us so human, so resilient, innovative, inventive, enduring. We *make* history. For better or worse, we don't passively conform to the way things are, we change them. As Nelson Goodman put it, we are world-makers. Hegel understood the constant tension between what we are and what we might become and the uniquely human trait of projecting an ideal toward which to strive. We are the eagerest of beavers and Michael was a relentless laborer among us. He was never satisfied.

Some work in wood. Some in stone. He, we teachers work in ideas, with people. What Michael and I shared was a belief that the world is beyond our personal wills but yet, maybe paradoxically, we can and do project our limited perspectives sculpting the world into what it is. We are not inert. We act. That's where the rhetorical struggle for which perspective shall prevail, for how to make the world each moment is joined. And therefore, we are all unavoidably moral beings. Which world will we make?

Michael was confident and good at getting his way, at willing his agenda into being and that included how to make our department as "good" as possible. Right "now" we are in the choppy wake of a substantial prow that has passed. Wake also means to be stirred, roused. We need to keep that faith. We will disagree at times on exactly what is the "best" way, but nonetheless, we need to keep *building*.