



**THE WISDOM
COLLECTION**

Ed Gibney

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<p>Short Stories of Strength 24 Character Strengths For 6 Virtues</p>	
<p>Humanity Kindness Love Social Intelligence</p>	<p>Justice Fairness Leadership Teamwork</p>
<p>Wisdom Creativity Curiosity Judgment Love of Learning Perspective</p>	<p>Temperance Forgiveness Humility Prudence Self-Regulation</p>
<p>Courage Bravery Honesty Perseverance Zest</p>	<p>Transcendence Appreciate Beauty Gratitude Hope Humor Spirituality</p>

by ED GIBNEY



E+FLG

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Creativity

Thinking of novel and productive ways to do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it. Thinking of new ways to do things is a crucial part of who you are. You are never content with doing something the conventional way if a better way is possible.

— Peterson & Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 2004

1. Preparation—preparatory work on a problem that focuses the mind and explores the problem's dimensions.

Ed sat down to write his story on creativity.

That's not exactly the most creative way to start something like this is it? But hey, creatives zag when you expect them to zig. Wouldn't an overly creative attempt at an opening line have been far worse?

Super inventive made-up sentence with adjectives from deep inside the cracks of a thesaurus that barely work to modify a set of wildly incongruous nouns, all placed in an entirely new and unique fictional location.

See? Worse. And after all, there is no such action as “to create” anyway. At least not since the Big Bang. The Ancient Greeks, Chinese, and Indians all knew this. They didn't even have a word for this concept. Twenty-seven out of twenty-eight African languages still don't.¹ In fact, our modern English idea of “creativity” is nothing more than putting two things together

¹ Mporu E et al (2006) 'African Perspectives on Creativity' in Kaufman JC and Sternberg RJ (eds) *The International Handbook of Creativity* p 465. Cambridge University Press.

that hadn't been joined before. Nothing comes from nothing. Matter and energy are never created nor destroyed in this universe.

And yet, how can I "create" something new? You know, just in the normal way that we think about creativity. How can I do that?

Divergent thinking is one process used to generate creative ideas by exploring many possible solutions. This is easily encouraged by creating lists of questions, brainstorming, free writing, trying role-playing games, or any number of other ways. Maybe if I come up with several microfiction stories first, then the right creative solution will jump out at me from that list. Since natural positive moods have been found to significantly improve performance for divergent thinking², let's play some games! (I prefer not to engage in the writer's clichéd method of chemically inducing my good moods.)

First up, let's try the "Random Entry Idea Generating Tool," which works exactly like it sounds. I'll choose some objects at random or a noun from a dictionary and then take off from there.

Lighthouse. Lighthouses are always situated on some of the most picturesque spots in the world. But we really don't need them anymore with GPS navigation systems on boats. Old man Bob sees the lighthouse he cares for as the solution to a homeless problem that his daughter Ellie is struggling to fix in their community. The press spreads their story as a new beacon of hope for a different set of lost travelers.

Cricket. Crickets have been a nutritious delicacy in Mexico for thousands of years where they are flavored with chilies and limes, just like so many other foods in that culture. While on vacation, this gives Fiona an idea. She should try introducing sea

² Vosburg, Suzanne K. (1998). "The Effects of Positive and Negative Mood on Divergent-Thinking Performance". *Creativity Research Journal*. 11 (2): 165–172.

salt and malt vinegar crickets to her local pub in Ireland! A stereotypical cast of small-town regulars in the establishment grows to love them after some quite understandable resistance.

Galliard (a sprightly Renaissance and Baroque dance). It's the XVIth Century in the Loire Valley of France. The Marquis de Fromage is preparing for the forthcoming Spring Galliard Fling, but his loyal servant Gerard just isn't as light on his toes as he once was so he is making quite a terrible dance partner. The roguish servant suggests they try much easier dances that his master could basically just watch. He practically invents the can-can, twerking, and lap dancing as he makes each of his new offerings, but monsieur Fromage shoots down each idea as impractical and not nearly seductive enough.

Okay, the juices are flowing; let's try the next tool. I've got four of them in mind³, so I'll keep trying to find three ideas per tool. Next up is the "Provocation Idea Generating Tool." I'll make a statement that we know is wrong or impossible, but then see where it leads.

Grass is purple. Colors, as we all know, don't technically exist. They are mental representations of different wavelengths of light that reflect off other surfaces. Grass is only "green" in the sense that it doesn't absorb green wavelengths. But what if it could? What if we could genetically engineer some grass to absorb almost all of the visible light, rendering them ROY G BIV violet, aka purple? A young PhD student named Chan thinks there might be a way to use this to help solve global warming, but his faculty advisor Susan wants him to consider wider ecological and ethical factors.

³ De Bono, Edward (1992). *Serious creativity: using the power of lateral thinking to create new ideas.*

Rocks are soft. A children's fable tells the story of how the water goddess Hydrophilia tries to befriend the mean old grumpy rock man Igneoso. Igneoso has sat himself down in the middle of a stream causing it to back up and flood a valley. He has turned his back on the water and wants only to stare out to the horizon. Hydrophilia pouts and lies still for ages, but then she sees the pain that Igneoso must be in. She gets the wind god to help her flow and lap gently across Igneoso's back. The soft touches she places on him—warm in the summer, cool in the winter—imperceptibly change him, molecule by molecule, melting away his gruff exterior until one day, after thousands of years, he lays back into the river and allows it to flow over him again.

The moon is made of cheese. In the 25th Century, a small colony of one hundred and fifty people are living in a space station that is sailing towards a new planet they hope to colonize. Janet, the group's psychologist, reports to the board of elders that chemical levels indicative of boredom have gone up in all of the passengers. The council wonders what could inspire the people to feel magic and awe again to help combat this. Judd, the team's storyteller, suggests they give the crew a reminder of what it is like on Earth, but in a way that also reminds them how far they have come, and how lucky they are to be there. He suggests they hang a waxing and waning moon in the central atrium made entirely of cheese, which the crew will get to eat in celebration at the end of each Earth month.

Good. That's three more story ideas. Time then for the "Challenge Idea Generating Tool." In this one, I'll just ask "Why?" in a non-threatening way: why something exists, or why something is done the way it is.

*There are 204 sovereign states in the world.*⁴ *Why?* It's the year 218 BCE and there are 51 sovereign states in the world.⁵ Two soldiers in Carthage—Hamilcar and Bomilcar—talk to one another in their local public bath about how their master Hannibal is about to send them over the Alps to reclaim the land that is now paying tribute to Rome after the losses of the first Punic War. Bomilcar is a slight lad who wears round spectacles and has recently fallen in love with a slave girl from Asia. He would prefer to stay home. He wonders aloud to Hamilcar why all this preparation for death and destruction is the best way forward. He has written a poem called “Imagine” that shows how this violent drive toward subjugation is senseless, but alas, before he can share it widely, Hamilcar kills him out of fear that Bomilcar will betray him on the battlefield. With his final breaths, Bomilcar wishes he lived in a time where violence towards individuals was less accepted and tyranny over the masses would be eliminated.

Mail is delivered to my door. Why? Janet is an intensely proud Australian woman living alone in Canberra. She spends long days at the office and goes away to Melbourne or Sydney every weekend that she can. The grounds around her house show it. Janet doesn't care what the neighbors think though—she never sees them. But she detests running into her mailman Brad and worries every day that he looks down on her and the state of her lawn and flowerbeds. At least she can pull her curtains closed so there's no chance he'll see through her windows to the messy state inside. After ruminating on one too many innocent remarks from Brad, Janet finds a solution to her problem and decides to cancel the home delivery of her mail. She signs up for a private box in her nearest post office, but after a few weeks of picking up her mail this way, Janet begins to identify the

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_sovereign_states_in_2017

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_political_entities_in_the_3rd_century_BC

members of a secret social group who all canceled their home deliveries too, just so they'd have an excuse to walk and meet up every day. Freed from her housekeeping hangups, Janet slowly integrates into this group and becomes attached to her community.

William is a common name. Why? William is a 16-year-old boy in a loving, middle-class family of black immigrants in south London. He plays football (soccer) every day in the park near his home. One day he knocks heads with another boy on the field and he is taken to hospital with a concussion. His mother and father get the news and rush to see him, but their car is struck by a lorry at an intersection along the way. Both parents die, leaving William and his three younger siblings as orphans struggling to maintain their lives. After the funeral, William discovers legal documents that show he alone was adopted from Nigeria; the other children were all born naturally after he entered the home. This causes much soul searching for William, including him wondering where his name came from. It turns out William is from the Old Norman French *Willaume*, which is derived from the Old High German *Willehelm*, a compound name composed from the elements *willeo* (will, determination) and *helm* (protection, helmet). It is the most popular name that was introduced to England by the Normans.⁶ But it is not Nigerian, a culture that William now researches in great detail, hoping to fill a void somehow. During a long run, William thinks this all over, and at the scene of his accident he invents a new bit of gear to protect youth football players from injuries. It is based on the *Aso Oke* headdresses that Nigerian men wear. These are simple cloths that look a bit like a floppy fez and they can be decorated using any number of prints: the colors of a team, a region, or just a fad of the day. And they can be sourced cheaply from Africa. They are much cooler than current safety products

⁶ Norman, T. (2003) *A World of Baby Names*.

on the market and they become quite a hit. The *determined* William has *protected* his family in more than just name alone.

Almost home now. Just one final tool to go: “Disproving.” This comes from a cynical idea that the majority of people are always wrong, so I’ll take something that is obvious or generally accepted, question it, take an opposite view, and then try to convincingly prove that view.

Running is good for you. Is it? Matthias is a 54-year-old German man trying to get by in Cologne. He was a competitive amateur runner for decades, but now he has osteoarthritis in his knees due to all the wear and tear on them. He can no longer run at all. In fact, he struggles to walk. He even had to quit his job as a waiter in a Kölsch beer hall, which required him to be on his feet all day. He manages to survive on disability benefits and the kindness of his family, but he still goes to the pub every day to see his old co-workers and regular clients. Every glass of beer, however, and every sausage or pretzel that gets delivered to his table is a bitter reminder of all that he has lost. He is such a sorry figure at the pub that Hanz, another regular, goes out of his way to invite Matthias to his regular nights playing board games with a few friends. After several months of this, Matthias finds he has a real talent for designing these games and he becomes a leading figure in the German game industry, which goes on to lead the world in this field. Matthias is finally happy, but wishes he had stopped running years ago and come to this pursuit much earlier.

Zombies aren’t real. Aren’t they? A “philosophical zombie” is the idea that an alternative type of human might exist who has no consciousness or free will. Such *p-zombies* just react mindlessly to everything around them, but they are indistinguishable from us regular humans. Sandjay is at a silent meditation retreat in the countryside near Oxford, England when he realizes that he cannot control any of his thoughts. Despite

trying very hard for days on end, he simply cannot empty his mind. New thoughts just keep appearing out of the mists of his mind. He has several conversations with David—the leader of the retreat centre—about what this all means. Sanjay worries that perhaps he is nothing more than a p-zombie himself! At first, he worries this idea will destroy him and his will to live, but he eventually grows to accept this new view of himself and even uses it to feel more compassionate thoughts about his past mistakes and the mistakes of others around him. He paradoxically realizes that this new brew of experiences has made him become mindful of his ultimate mindlessness. This both soothes many of his anxieties as well as makes him curious about the near-infinite possibilities of experiences that are still out there waiting to influence him further.

Dolphins are smart. Are they? Li Qiang is a Chinese fisherman in the South China Sea. He sails from the city of Tanmen on the island of Hainan, which is a few hours south of Hong Kong. Every day his trawler scoops up tons of fish that he then sells in local markets. But every day he catches a few bottlenose dolphins too, which he is legally not allowed to do. Li Qiang tries several ancient methods to warn off the spirits of the dolphins, but nothing seems to work. He tells his wife at home that these new dolphins must be too stupid to know what is good for them. His wife wonders if the dolphins are just using all of the intelligence that they have been given, slyly implying that some others may not be.

2. Incubation—where the problem is internalized into the unconscious mind, nothing appears to be happening externally.

Okay that's quite enough "creativity" for now. As you can see though, none of those stories just poofed into existence out of thin air. And like I said at the beginning of this story, many

cultures around the world know this. Or at least they once did. But in the West, dominated by the thinking of the Roman Catholic Church for a thousand Dark Ages, the creativity of their Lord came to dominate how people viewed the workings of inspiration. This finally shifted for good in 1509, however, when Desiderius Erasmus wrote *In Praise of Folly*. Erasmus, a Dutch Catholic priest, wrote his book as an attack on the superstitious and corrupt practices that had slowly seeped into the Holy Roman Empire during its millennia in charge of Europe's religion. For this, Erasmus came to be known as "the Prince of Humanists," and a movement developed along these lines with an intensely human-centric outlook on the world. The intellect and achievements of the individual were now highly valued. People began to view creativity not just as coming from some divine conduit, but it could come from the abilities of "great men" too.

In some sense, this illusion that men (mostly men for now) could create something new gave us the energy that lit the Enlightenment. It broke the shackles that had confined people's thoughts. Some began to believe that they too had the power of gods. But in fact, we all do.

Creativity is no divine mystery reserved only for "great men." We may have largely forgotten our understanding of how it works, but really, creativity is the product of hard labor and preparation, of knowing one's aims and one's subject, of learning from approaches taken in the past. It's a process undertaken every day. It's a habit.⁷

In his work *The Art of Thought*, published in 1926, Graham Wallas presented one of the first scientific models of the creative process. He hypothesized four steps that produce creative insights, and they fit well with countless legends, both large and small, of discoveries that have been made. *Preparation* was the first step (as we have seen above). And now, the second step of

⁷ Tharp, T. (2006) *The Creative Habit*.

incubation has received support from the modern findings of neuroscience. It turns out that several interconnected regions of the brain are active when a person is not focused on the outside world and the brain is at wakeful rest, such as during daydreaming or mind-wandering. This network activates "by default" when a person is not involved in a task, which is why it is called the *default mode network*.⁸ And researchers have found that more creative people have more activity in their default mode networks.⁹ This may explain why we often feel the need to stare out of the window and procrastinate when we are *tasked* with being *creative*. (It's not just me, right?) Our DMNs need time to fire. Our task network needs to quiet down. (And some forms of mindfulness meditation are just another quiet task, so they don't help.)

The default mode network is important in a philosophical sense as well—it seems to be involved with various aspects of our identity. It fires up when we are asked to think about ourselves, our current concerns, our dreams, and our autobiographical memory. The DMN doesn't seem to appear in infant brains though; it only consistently shows up in children between the ages of 9–12 years old.¹⁰ So, we may have to first develop a sense of our goal-directed selves, as well as our worldview, before our brains can start to work unconsciously to maintain that view of ourselves and solve problems for us when we need it. The psychologist Liane Gabora called this a *Honing theory*, which posits that creativity arises due to the self-organizing, self-mending nature of a worldview.¹¹ If this is the case, then properly developing and feeding our philosophical

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Default_mode_network

⁹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/beautiful-minds/201102/why-daydreamers-are-more-creative>

¹⁰ Broyd, Samantha J.; Demanuele, Charmaine; Debener, Stefan; Helps, Suzannah K.; James, Christopher J.; Sonuga-Barke, Edmund J. S. (2009). "Default-mode brain dysfunction in mental disorders: A systematic review". *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*. 33 (3): 279–96.

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creativity#Honing_theory

worldviews is absolutely vital. Without that, our unconscious minds will always struggle to make sense of reality and come up with truly useful creative solutions for our lives. To succeed at all of this, you need both modes to work together—your DMN has been likened to an inner butterfly that must be active and free, and your inner net (your rational task network) must be ready to drop, in order to both create and capture that "aha!" moment.¹²

Studies have also shown that when different people watch a movie,¹³ listen to a story,¹⁴ or read a story,¹⁵ their DMNs become highly correlated with each other. That means you dear reader. And since I've intentionally bored you (haven't I?) with all of these scientific facts and their detailed references in the middle of this story, that means I've created the conditions for your minds to wander too. We're likely creating something together right now. Side-by-side.

Aha!

3. Illumination—where the creative idea bursts forth from its preconscious processing into conscious awareness.

Ed sat down to write his story on creativity.

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¹² Cabane, O.F. and Pollack, J. (2017) *The Net and the Butterfly: The Art and Practice of Breakthrough Thinking*.

¹³ Hasson, Uri; Furman, Orit; Clark, Dav; Dudai, Yadin; Davachi, Lila (2008-02-07).

"Enhanced intersubject correlations during movie viewing correlate with successful episodic encoding". *Neuron*. 57 (3): 452–462.

¹⁴ Lerner, Yulia; Honey, Christopher J.; Silbert, Lauren J.; Hasson, Uri (2011-02-23).

"Topographic mapping of a hierarchy of temporal receptive windows using a narrated story". *The Journal of Neuroscience*. 31 (8): 2906–2915.

¹⁵ Regev, Mor; Honey, Christopher J.; Simony, Erez; Hasson, Uri (2013-10-02).

"Selective and invariant neural responses to spoken and written narratives". *The Journal of Neuroscience*. 33 (40): 15978–15988.

The story should take the reader through creativity itself.

4. Verification—where the idea is consciously verified, elaborated, and then applied.

Have you seen this combo before? I could have written yet another very unique and creative story. Or I could have written yet another story about someone else who lived in a particular time at a particular place who was actually being creative. Those would have conformed nicely to the old “show don’t tell” models of writing. But those have all been done before. It’s possible that someone else discovered this particular conceptual blending before, but it’s new to me. So I created it. And hopefully with a little creativity.

Curiosity

Interest. Novelty-seeking. Openness to experience. Taking an interest in all of ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering. You are curious about everything. You are always asking questions, and you find all subjects and topics fascinating. You like exploration and discovery.

-- *Character Strengths and Virtues*, Peterson & Seligman, 2004

“Well, did you get it?” Daisy asked her husband as soon as he returned home.

“I’m going to Spain,” Daniel answered, after he had set his car keys down, stood up straight, and looked her directly in the eye with finality.

“Spain?!” she cried. “But you don’t even have a passport. You’ve never had a passport.”

“Well, then I’m going to have to get one. And I’ll need to take some Spanish lessons too. Do you know where I can do that?”

“What are you talking about? What did you find?”

It was late at night, almost 10:30 pm on a Thursday, and Daisy was usually in bed now reading a magazine to help her drift off to sleep while Daniel watched some sports highlights, but Daniel sat down in the living room to tell his wife about the last discovery he had made and the next set of instructions this unearthed. They were straightforward in comparison to the fourth clue, which had proven to be the most difficult one for him to solve yet.

Glimpse the stars standing on a red carpet. A 2.5-foot mirror will help you see ones that have seen 2.5 billion.

Daniel had received this message from a pharmacist over the weekend and it took him a couple of days to figure out exactly what it was referring to. When his friend Oliver died last month, Daniel mourned the loss of his weekly lunch companion of nearly 20 years. He was grateful that the cancer diagnosis had given them a chance to say goodbye to one another, but Daniel never thought for a moment that he had earned such a prolonged and instigative interaction after Oliver's death by simply and steadfastly keeping his standing lunch date for Tuesdays at 11:45 at Arthur Bryant's Barbecue where Daniel always ordered the "Sliced Pork Sandwich with Fries" while Oliver took turns sampling the entire menu through a series of random impulses that seemed to come to him just upon the moment of his arrival at the legendary Kansas City restaurant. Daniel was quite surprised when he learned that Oliver had left him something in his will, and his perplexity only grew as the "inheritance" continued so far by simply adding to a lengthening trail of strange locations with very little, if any, tangible payoff from the discovery of its path.

"I was right. It was the Powell Observatory. The head astronomer there recognized me as soon as I walked in for his show."

"Did you know him? Have you ever seen him before?" Daisy asked.

"No. He told me Oliver had given him my picture and a sealed envelope—along with his dying gratitude—when he came to say his goodbye. But he had never heard about me before then. Nor I him."

"Just like the others."

"Yes," said Daniel. "Just like the other three. And probably like the next one too."

"So what was in this envelope?" Daisy asked, pulling the blanket off her legs in a heated rush. She had been sitting on the edge of the couch since Daniel's arrival.

Daniel continued on, lost in thought. “I can’t believe I’ve never met him before though. I can’t believe I never met any of them. The observatory is only 25 miles away and we’ve never gone.”

“But why would we? We’re not astronomers. They don’t even have a planetarium with a laser show, right? I’m surprised that really was the answer to the puzzle after all. I thought for sure it had something to do with an Indian star who was famous in China. Or vice versa, maybe.”

“I know, but it was Powell all right. Just like it said on their website, its 30” mirror that could see stars 2.5 billion light years away was right there on display as soon as I walked in. I guess I’m learning from the other puzzles—the way the wording was off with this one too, the way it said ‘*ones that have seen 2.5 billion*’ instead of ‘ones that have *been* seen by 2.5 billion’. That just told me movie stars weren’t right.”

“Too bad,” said Daisy.

“No,” Daniel corrected her, “it wasn’t. What a place this was. I wish you could have come with me.”

“I had to put the kids to bed and we weren’t sure you were right.”

“I know, I know. It was the right choice, but we have to go back another time. We can take the kids. I’m telling you, it was amazing. The view of the stars, the planets, whole other galaxies, it was...I don’t know how to explain it. But suddenly, life seemed so small.”

“Our life’s not too small,” Daisy was quick to defend.

“I didn’t mean *our* life,” Daniel said. “I just mean life in general.”

“Um, ok. But tell me, what was in the next message?”

“Here. You can read it yourself,” Daniel said, handing her a small, white, stiff envelope.

Find Jose Blanco, no fixed address, in Sacromonte. You’ll need to speak Spanish.

“Sacromonte? Where is that?” Daisy asked, calling after Daniel as he made his way to the family computer in the kitchen.

“It’s a neighborhood in Granada, Spain. I looked it up on my phone when I was at the observatory. Come here and look at this place.”

Daisy walked over to see the mosaic of images Daniel had pulled up with his quick search for Sacromonte. When she saw them, she gasped a little and put one hand on the flat spot just above her sizable chest. The small, whitewashed walls and doors that were sprinkled among a brown and dusty hillside looked like the hellish alternate version of a lush and grassy hobbit town. She had never imagined anyone in the modern world still living like this, but sure enough, as Daniel scrolled down through the pictures, there were ones showing brightly clad women inside tiny candlelit rooms who appeared to be dancing in these hovels while clad in high heels and frilly dresses.

“According to Wikipedia, it’s a neighborhood of caves carved in the hillside above the city. There are lots of tourists there, but still a few gypsies and hippie squatters too,” Daniel explained patiently, knowing what was about to come.

“And you want to go there?! You think this Jose Blanco character is hiding in one of these caves? What if he’s a terrorist? What if Oliver has just been luring you into a trap all this time? Are you sure he ever forgave you for stealing me away in college?”

“I didn’t steal you. You came after me as I recall. And besides, he wasn’t your boyfriend or anything.”

“No. But we were...close. I never dated him in high school, but he was a good friend.”

“I remember. But in all our lunches together, he only ever asked if you were well. He was happy for us. He always thought our college romance story was sweet.”

“If you say so,” Daisy replied. “But I still don’t think it looks like such a great idea to go to *this* place,” she said, tapping loudly on the computer screen with her long fingers, her tapping

doubly accented by a clacking of fingernails that ended up sounding like the castanets she was unknowingly touching. “You couldn’t drag me up there if you tried.”

“That’s ok,” Daniel said, shutting down the computer. “I don’t have to. But I’m going. I have to keep going. I have to know what Oliver wanted me to find.”

Over the next few weeks, Daniel arranged to get his first passport. He stopped by a local drug store to get his picture taken in front of its small white pull-down screen and was shocked at how fast and cheap that part of the process was. He went to the library for the first time in his adult life to get some Spanish language instruction books for his computer and smart phone. It was Oliver’s old library—the one he had worked at for the last 15 years—and it pained Daniel that he had never once stopped by for a visit. All of Oliver’s friends that he had met so far on this journey had gotten to know Oliver at the library. Every one of them had come in for something simple—a beach read for a summer trip, an instruction book on how to raise a puppy, a gardening book about tulips—but every one of them checked out with an armful of other items and a new friend for life who checked in on them and their interests whenever they stopped by. It was uncanny how each new person Daniel met had started their stories of how they knew Oliver with entirely different personal circumstances, but each story ended with Oliver knowing just what to recommend to them to fill their needs—needs sometimes that they themselves didn’t even know they had. Now though, when Daniel went to the library for his language guides, he lingered over the checkout desk waiting for a helpful tip about some travel journal or historical biography that would help put his quest in context, but when no such advice came his way, he left for home. He was excited to see what his next step would bring, but deeply saddened that he had not begun the journey a little earlier.

Daisy, for her part, enjoyed the little spurts of Spanish whispers that began to enter their recently more active bedroom.

That activity had started the night she and Daniel had redeemed the prize that lay behind the second clue.

Find a woman who can sell you a ticket to 46th State!, aisle or row.

After Daniel looked up the chronological order of statehood among the United States, the curiously-out-of-place exclamation point before the comma made the entire clue immediately clear. Oklahoma. *Oklahoma!* had been Daisy's favorite musical performance in the high school drama club that she starred in. When she played Laurey Williams, the independent young woman and love object of one Curly McLain, the proud owner of a fringed-topped surrey, the whole school had fallen in love with her—including Oliver, in the wings of the theater with the rest of his art team, and Daniel, in the audience with the rest of his basketball team. Now, some 25 years later, when she and Daniel went to see a local production of the show—which Oliver must have seen was coming together only a bit too late for him to enjoy—the couple was struck by one of the lesser known songs that they had both forgotten about. A section of lines from *Kansas City*, a song about their home of the last 20 years, were like a bolt out of the blue prairie skies, rending their daily lives apart and allowing old forgotten thoughts and feelings to shower down upon them.

*Everythin's up to date in Kansas City.
They've gone about as fer as they can go.
They went and built a skyscraper seven stories high.
About as high as a buildin' oughta grow.
Everything's like a dream in Kansas City.
It's better than a magic lantern show.
You can turn the radiator on whenever you want some heat.
With every kind of comfort, every house is all complete.
You can walk to privies in the rain and never wet your feet.*

They've gone about as fer as they can go.

(Yes sir!)

They've gone about as fer as they can go.

The lyrics hit them both with feelings of nostalgia and embarrassment. For years, all they had remembered about this particular song was the bawdy end that told of a curvy woman ‘*peelin’ off her clothes about as fer as she could go*’, but now in the less sexually shocked world of adulthood, the main refrain was what struck a chord. It made them remember that this was how they felt when they left their small town to go off to college and then move to the big city—that this was about as ‘*fer*’ as they would go. But now those big dreams—once roomy and seemingly permanently outsized—had become snug fits and looked so out of date on them. Somehow along the way they hadn’t noticed the change and they’d forgotten that their lives, just about their whole lives, had been born of these old and juvenile dreams. That’s when Daniel started to awake from his. That’s when the changes from Oliver’s game had really begun to take effect.

Despite some welcome changes in her life, Daisy still hadn’t made the psychological leap that Daniel had by the time the morning of his departure for Spain had rolled around. It was one thing to hear about such puzzles; it was another thing to get caught up in them personally after receiving them from a friend.

“What could he actually have that’s worth all this?” Daisy asked Daniel in the car on the way to the airport.

“I don’t know,” he replied, staring straight ahead at the morning traffic, “but I have to find out.”

“Didn’t he already leave everything to his family? I mean what could he possibly have given you that’s all the way over in some cave in Spain? This is costing us like \$2,000 to find out. Do you really think it’s going to be worth that?”

“Look, I don’t know. I know you keep asking me this, but the answer is still the same. I don’t know what I’m going to find

there. I do know one thing though. I never thought I'd like to cook for myself. I never thought I'd like to see a musical. I never thought I'd read a philosophy book. But here I am doing all those things now. So far, with each puzzle, I keep unlocking more and more that I didn't know I would love to know. I think he must have figured something out. I think he must have known me better than I know myself, or at least he knew something about the way the world works that I didn't know. I can't explain it honey but I have to go. I just know it's going to be worth it."

"Ok," Daisy said as she put her hand on Daniel's shoulder. "I just hope Oliver didn't have anything bad planned for you."

"I seriously doubt that. He just wasn't the type of guy that... I'm going to be fine."

Daniel stopped short and concentrated on the road for the last few minutes of navigating the airport drop-off zone. When he pulled over, got out, and got his one carry-on bag out of the back of the car, he said his goodbyes to Daisy.

"I'll give you a call as soon as I can when I get to my hotel. Good luck with the kids and don't be afraid to ask my mom for help if you need it. I've got to go, but thank you. Thank you for this. I love you."

"I love you too," she said, before wiping a tear away, giving him a hug and a peck on the lips, and then circling round the car to hop in the driver's seat for the trip back home.

Daniel wove his way through the airport departure process, taking special pride each time he handed over his uncreased, unstamped, pristine passport to be checked. *I'm going on a plane and flying half way around the world*, Daniel thought to himself with slight exaggeration. *This is amazing!*

His first three-hour flight went by in a blur. It wasn't the first time Daniel had flown—he'd been all around the Midwest for work—but the thought of his impending eight-hour overnight red-eye from JFK to Madrid loomed so large in the imagination that the length of his previous flying capacity suddenly seemed only trivially inconvenient. A third of the way across the Atlantic

Ocean, too excited to sleep, Daniel was happy to be pulled into conversation by the handsome woman sitting next to him.

“I hate to interrupt you,” she said, turning to Daniel after turning off the video screen in the seat in front of her at the end of some period drama she had been watching for the first two hours of the flight, “but that book looks very interesting. Are you by any chance a psychiatrist? I only ask because I’m on my way to a psychology conference and I wondered if you might be headed there as well.”

“Oh, no. Definitely not,” Daniel said as he laughed at the mistake. He closed his copy of *Ax Your Ambien and Ask Aristotle Instead: Using Philosophy To Drop Your Pharmacist*, and turned to explain its presence in his hands. “I’m a mechanical engineer. This was given to me by a friend of mine, well, maybe it’s better if I say *through* a friend of mine.”

“Through a friend? What do you mean by that?”

“It’s kind of a long story,” Daniel hemmed, hoping he would get the chance to tell it.

“Go on then. We’ve got a while and since I’m paid to listen all day I’m rather used to it.”

Daniel started from the beginning, explaining to the woman how his friend had died and unexpectedly left him something in his will. The first instructions were rather straightforward.

Find a man who puts shoulders, ribs, and thighs on a table, but only once a week, and right near where you work.

“Some kind of butcher?” she asked, correctly guessing the answer almost as soon as Daniel had finished relating the riddle.

“That’s right,” Daniel explained. “I found him at the farmers market that runs on Saturdays near my office. I’d never been there before, but Oliver knew I liked good meat. I’d never really cooked any before—just some burgers and sausages here and there on the old grill—but the farmer gave me some really easy

recipes and now I'm trying them out on all sorts of cuts of meat that he sells."

"How wonderful. So that was the gift your friend had given you?"

"No. Well, I guess it was one of them. But the farmer handed me another envelope, just like the one I got from the lawyers who executed Oliver's will."

Daniel told the woman his story about the trail to the theater manager who sold him tickets to *Oklahoma!* and how that had brought up lots of old memories for he and his wife.

"Extraordinary," the woman noted. "How many of these steps have there been? And when did that book come into it?"

"I got the book after the next step," Daniel said, handing over the slip of paper he had been using as a bookmark inside it. "This was the third clue that led me to the man who gave it to me. There have been five clues so far and I'm on my fifth journey right now."

The woman pulled reading glasses out of the seat pocket in front of her and studied the clue on the slip of paper.

Find a scrip reader for Element 3 at its Main discovery date minus a pool cleaner.

Daniel sympathized with the woman's reliance on artificial eyes; he had begun to lean lightly on that crutch himself in recent years. The woman appeared to be about ten years older than Daniel—though a full two generations ahead in terms of elegance—so he shouldn't have been surprised at her need for the spectacles, but the perspicacity she had been demonstrating throughout their conversation so far had tricked him into believing that she must surely see the world more clearly than he could.

"A pharmacist gave you that book?" she asked, folding her glasses neatly back into the seat pocket. "If you've found one

that's trying to put himself out of business like that, you should probably keep his card. He sounds helpful."

"How did you know it was a pharmacist so fast?" Daniel asked in amazement. "It took me hours to figure that one out."

"Oh, don't feel badly about that. I told you I'm a psychiatrist. *Scrip* is just shorthand for prescription. I know that may not be a very common word, but it's standard jargon in my profession. We write the *scrips*; the pharmacists read them. I recognized it instantly. I don't quite know what the rest of the clue means though. Can you tell me more about it?"

Daniel was happy to oblige her request for him to show off the powers of deduction he had already performed. After being confused by '*scrip reader*' for a while, thinking that it had been missing a 't', Daniel had realized that '*Element 3*' did not refer to some 'script' of a screenplay, but simply meant an actual element on the periodic table—lithium in this case—and that it had been discovered in 1817 by one Johan Arfwedson. Once he was thinking about the periodic table and element numbers, the phrase '*minus a pool cleaner*' suddenly made more sense.

"Chlorine," the woman offered.

"Yes. Element number 17. Exactly the amount needed to bring that lithium discovery date back to a nice whole round number," Daniel continued explaining. "Then all I had left was to figure out that 1800 Main was a street address since that was the only way *Main*—the way it was capitalized and phrased in the clue—made sense."

"And that's where you found the pharmacy where you received this book?"

"Yes. And when I had seen ahead of time that lithium is a commonly used element in anti-psychotic drugs, well that just cinched it and I knew I was on the right path."

"So tell me," the woman continued, pointing at the title of his book and ignoring the beaming smile on Daniel's face, "*Ax Your Ambien*, have you been having trouble sleeping?"

“I have,” Daniel replied, surprised to once again be a few steps behind the woman. “Over the last few years anyway. It’s been getting worse and worse but I don’t know how Oliver could have known that. I’m sure I never talked about that with him. I’ve never talked about that with anyone before now.”

“It’s a pretty common phenomenon, especially among people of a certain age. I mean, younger than I am,” the woman was quick to add upon noticing how Daniel reflexively put a hand to his graying temples at her remark, “but often, after the constant striving and growing and learning of youth, which the brain requires much sleep time to process, we find that sleeping troubles regularly arise after all of that gives way to a more settled existence.”

“I see,” Daniel said, suddenly feeling tired with all the new information coming at him, chief of which was the fact that he had to be up and functioning in a foreign environment in about four more hours. He finished telling the woman about the next clue he had solved and how that led him on a trip out to the observatory where he received his last instructions, which had finally put him on this very trip. After a few idle speculations about what he might find when he met Jose Blanco, the two passengers ended their conversation and wished each other a good night.

The next morning, Daniel was awoken by a rising sun that was meeting him seven hours earlier than his body expected it. Feeling cloudy-headed and pinched behind the eyes, Daniel made his way through Spanish customs interrogations where he was relieved to find perfect English spoken to him by the airport officials. Traveling in a foreign country wasn’t as scary as he thought it would be. Not yet anyway.

As he wound his way through the airport toward one final flight, the architecture and decor of the lounges and shopping centers looked just like every other airport he had been in, but the melodious sound of a beautiful romance language raining down all around him tinged the normally boring travel

experience with a surprising sense of newness and wonderment. He felt a small thrill of accomplishment every time he caught a word he understood or deciphered a new sign from its context and similarity to an American counterpart. The announcements during the last leg of his journey were mostly in Spanish now but Daniel muddled along and always found that help was offered by a fellow traveler whenever he really needed it.

Although he was exhausted, Daniel was still too excited to get more than a few minutes of rest on his last flight from Madrid to Granada. He kept practicing his most important lines over and over in his head, anticipating the search he was about to undertake.

Hola. Me llamo Daniel. ¿Conoce usted a José Blanco?

Hello. My name is Daniel. Do you know Jose Blanco?

Hola. Me llamo Daniel. ¿Conoce usted a José Blanco?

He had been taught that this was the most formal and polite way of asking around for the man he sought. Formal and polite sounded like the right tone for a lifelong Midwesterner to use, but Daniel had barely remembered from his high school studies that such a distinction in the use of the word ‘you’ was even possible. As the plane landed in Granada, the thunk of the tires on the runway triggered a deeper plunge in his stomach as suddenly it hit him that this trip was about to leave the safe cocoon of the familiar airport-to-airport transportation system.

Walking outside to the taxi stand, Daniel stared up into the bright Mediterranean sunshine. He had read that this would help him get over his jet lag, but the cool crisp air of the late morning at 2,400 feet of elevation did more to revive him.

“*Sacromonte, por favor,*” Daniel instructed his taxi driver. A flurry of questions came back at him, to which Daniel could only shrug helplessly, forgetting entirely how to use his words to respond with a simple *no comprendo*.

“What. Hotel. You. Want?” the driver asked his tourist patiently.

Daniel began to set his backpack down so he could fish out his itinerary with the hotel name and address, but stopped short and simply told the driver, “No hotel. Take me to the center of Sacromonte.”

In 15 minutes, they were exiting off a main road and heading into the heart of Granada. The narrow and dusty alleys surrounded by tightly packed four-story stucco buildings with red tile roofs were nothing like the broad boulevards and concrete high-rises or vinyl clad houses of the Midwest that Daniel had known his whole life. He looked out the windows in amazement all around him as they passed through the streets. Off to the right, he saw signs pointing towards the Alhambra and made a note to himself to try and find that famous attraction later. As the taxi wound its way uphill and back out the other side of town, the familiar sight of whitewashed caves carved into the brown hillsides appeared through the front window. The scene looked just like the online images he had seen, yet it was somehow both smaller and larger than he had imagined—smaller and off in the distance without a zoom lens to bring the highlights closer, but larger and more alive in general surrounded by bustling life and greater context.

“Ees thees ok?” the driver asked him at a convenient location.

“*Si, si,*” Daniel said, trying to recover his use of the language lessons. “*Aqui está bien.*”

Daniel paid the driver, exited the taxi, and looked around to get his bearings. He had read that higher up in the Sacromonte district hippies often squatted in abandoned caves. This seemed the most likely location for the ‘*Jose Blanco, no fixed address*’ whom he was seeking, so he unfurled the handle on his rolling suitcase and began to slowly drag it noisily uphill. As he made his way up stairs and cobblestone streets, rounding switchbacks, and passing low whitewashed buildings carved into the side of

the hill, local touts popped out of their businesses offering him the choice of ‘*hotel, señor*’ or ‘*restaurant, señor*’. Each time, Daniel waved them off, but inquired if they knew Jose Blanco. *¿Conoce usted a José Blanco?* All of the doormen shook their heads and turned away from Daniel when he asked them this question so he continued up the hill, not really sure where he was going or when he might stop and give up. Soon after the sixth or seventh person rebuffed Daniel, a small thin man with stained and dirty fingers who was wearing sweatpants and a threadbare t-shirt came up to him from behind after having followed Daniel for the previous two minutes.

“*Disculpe. Jose Blanco?*” the man inquired, touching Daniel lightly on the back of his arm.

“*Si, si, Jose Blanco,*” Daniel said, turning around with some excitement at finally hearing out loud the name that had been lodged deep in his imagination. “*¿Conoce usted a José Blanco?*”

“*Si, si. Eh, come with me,*” the man said in broken English as he pointed up the hill.

Daniel looked around feeling a bit uncertain as to whether this man really knew who he was looking for or whether he was just trying to take him to a cousin’s out of the way hotel or restaurant. Or somewhere worse.

“*Si señor, come with me. Jose Blanco. I take you,*” the man insisted.

Daniel decided to follow the man off the main road and up a narrowing alleyway. The man kept turning to reassure the foreigner that his guide did know the way, but each reassurance only made Daniel begin to question his decision more and more. The seeds of worry that his wife had planted began to grow wildly in the fertile imagination this surreal environment allowed. Daniel began to slow his steps and let the man pull ahead ever so slightly. After several more twists and turns, Daniel had almost lost sight of his leader and was just about to give up on him and try to find his way back to the main road as quickly as possible when he heard the little man give a shout.

“*¡Jose Blanco! ¡Yo tengo gringo para ti!*”

Daniel rounded the corner and saw a man about his age whose face looked almost like a cousin of his, but whose skin was tanned and leathery, whose gray ponytail was long and greasy, and whose body was round and taut to bursting. He had been sitting in a ratty camping chair, sunning himself outside a cave with no doors, but now he bounced up to speak to the little man who had been guiding Daniel.

“A gringo?” this new man chastised. “That’s no way to welcome a guest. *Vaya, nos llevará unas cervezas.*” The little man scampered away inside the cave as the guru on the mountaintop turned to face the new arrival in town. “You must be Daniel. I’m Joe. Pleased to meet you.”

“You’re Jose Blanco?” Daniel asked, dazed by the man’s pure American English.

“Joe Potapenko actually. But I’m the only white guy who’s lived in Sacromonte this long so I’m Jose Blanco around here. Here, have a seat,” he said, yanking over an upside down bucket as casually as if he always offered this bucket to American strangers who traveled around the world to find him. “So tell me, how did you know old Oliver?”

“We were high school friends,” Daniel said, taking a seat in a state of bewilderment, focusing on the question in front of him rather than the hundreds of others that were swirling all around him. The little man returned from inside the cave with three beers in hand and offered one to Daniel who gladly took it to both calm his nerves and quench his dry mouth. “I didn’t know him all that well in school—he was more friendly with my wife back then—but he and I had lunch together for years after we each found jobs in Kansas City after college. How did you know him?”

“We went to college together. I’m from St. Joseph, Missouri originally, but after school I did the whole backpacking thing through Europe and I just never left. You know how that goes. Oliver had been over here a few times since then and he always

managed to come find me. He never told you? He came again three months ago when he got that cancer diagnosis. I assume he's gone now, then. He said he would be if you came over."

"Yes, unfortunately. He died about a month ago now. But no, I'd never heard about you, or anything about this place. It turns out there was a lot about Oliver's life that I never knew anything about. There was a lot I never even could have *thought* to ask about." Daniel looked down at the foreign dirt beneath his feet as he felt the edges of the bucket dig in to his tired seat bones and he tasted the sweet, light, cool, beer gurgle down his throat and evaporate out of his mouth, taking the unbrushed feeling off his teeth a little at a time with each new sip, swish, and swallow of the drink. "I wish he was here now. There are so many things I'd like to ask him. He's led me on such a journey I can't even explain it. I don't know where else I'm headed, but I can't wait to find out. Do you know what's next?"

"*No se,*" Joe said. "I don't know what you're talking about. He just told me to give you this."

Joe reached in through the doorway of his home and retrieved a small stiff envelope from a shelf inside and handed it to Daniel. This one wasn't white anymore, but it was clear to Daniel that it was the same kind that he had already opened five other times.

Find a man who puts shoulders, ribs, and thighs on a table, but only once a week, and right near where you work.

Find a woman who can sell you a ticket to 46th State!, aisle or row.

Find a scrip writer for Element 3 at its Main discovery date minus a pool cleaner.

Glimpse the stars standing on a red carpet. A 2.5-foot mirror will help you see ones that have seen 2.5 billion.

Find Jose Blanco, no fixed address, in Sacromonte. You'll need to speak Spanish.

His hands were shaking as he pulled the final slip of paper out of the envelope. He turned around to face the entrance to the cave and let the light hit the written message, making it easier to read.

Now, you've got it.

Daniel read the short line three times over to make sure he hadn't missed anything in it, but then he simply smiled and slipped it into his back pocket. He turned around to look out across the Spanish city he'd never heard of one month ago and he nodded his head lightly as he surveyed the scene below.

"So, Joe," Daniel finally said, "do you know a good place to hear some flamenco?"

"*¡Cómo no!* But not for another twelve hours. Why don't you come inside and have another drink with me."

"*¿Por qué no?*" Daniel said. "Why not?"

Judgment

Open-mindedness. Critical thinking. Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; weighing all evidence fairly. You do not jump to conclusions, and you rely only on solid evidence to make your decisions. You are able to change your mind.

— Peterson & Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 2004

“A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence.”

— David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 1784

How am I going to write this story? Just look at that title. Judgment. Sitting up there in the center of the page in a big bold font looking down on all this puny, insignificant-in-comparison text. How can a story grow and stretch out under that kind of pressure? It’s like setting a forty-five pound steel plate on top of a crinkly little plastic flowerpot.

And you. You’ve been primed to judge me now too, so you’re only adding to the weight. Like all readers, you may say you want to find something you can fall in love with, but secretly you’re just waiting for me to trip up and say something false, something that will give you an excuse to move on, something that will let you off the hook for having to remember this, something that will let you file this away in the discard pile of your already-clamoring brain. Lord knows it’s scary to find something you love, something you want to share. It’s risky to say, “my opinion of this is that it is good,” when much more often than not it will never make it through the gauntlet of social evaluation to reach any wider acclaim. Everyone else’s favorite prose is either too obviously pandering to the lowest common denominator or it’s straining too hard for its undeserved status as a unique snowflake. Nobody else’s opinion is *juuuust* right. It’s

better not to find something you really like. It's just easier that way.

Well, I've already given you what you wanted then. For the professional readers taught by professional teachers, I've breached the conventions of writing, broken the fourth wall, spoken to the audience, dissolved the spell you all supposedly want to remain under so you can avoid judging your fiction-reading experience until it is over. As if *that* were possible. And for the amateur readers who don't care about such rules, I've bored them already with yet another self-referential diatribe railing against a hierarchy of rules they don't even know has been built above them. What's a writer to do for you readers anymore? Whenever an artist knows what they are doing, and whenever a reader knows anything about how that art is done, it is impossible to avoid an infinite loop of meta-analysis during any observed act. You know what I am thinking, I know that you know what I am thinking, and you know that I know that you know. It is impossible to avoid judgment of judgment of judgment.

And that's exactly what we have on our hands now. We live in a world where everyone knows how to do everything, where all the best practices and top tips for every imaginable task have been cunningly distilled into watered-down listicles dangling as click-bait off the social media docks of a connected, and therefore infectable, virtual world. Everything *must* be viral, since anything non-sharable quickly disappears into cultural extinction. The original, complex, barely shareable idea of the meme may have come from Richard Dawkins in a 1976 book on evolutionary biology, but within thirty years that mentally lumbering conjectured form of life was able to adapt and spread after it was cut up and whittled away until it became the sleekest possible injectable virus. These memes have become so infectious now that even the idea of their carrying capacity has spread to those who've been effectively vaccinated against the truth of the science from whence these memes came. So now

everyone's an expert. The convenient facts are Googleable, and the chosen logic can be made presentable. Everyone can sit in judgment. Everyone is right. Which means no one else is either.

It was easier when I was eleven. I lived in the country then, and the kids within walking distance were the kids that I played with. The woods in between us, with the one stream that flowed there, was our well-trodden playground. We saw one type of deer, one type of squirrel, a few groundhogs, fewer chipmunks, and about eight interesting species of birds: robins, geese, crows, pheasants, redwing blackbirds, turkey vultures, hawks, and the mallards that were always floating in that one pond we passed during our bus rides to school. One winter, one of the ducks got stuck there when a sudden overnight freeze caught his webbed feet unawares under the ice. We had five channels on TV, plus two others if you got up to turn the antenna, although no one ever did. Everyone I knew was a Catholic: at school, at church, and at our big family gatherings. A few people told me I should be a priest—I guess shyness can look holy when compared to boisterous boys—but such speculation about my future was one of the few open questions in my life. Everything else was known. I was objectively certain of all the facts in my world.

Now, everything's up for grabs. Want to see what I mean? Just look at my Facebook feed. There's Deb from Houston posting her photos from a truly righteous march for LGBT rights. She said the beauty of the day made her think that tolerance for everyone could bring peace to the world. Steve commented that that sounded pretty intolerant of intolerance. Ben from Salem shared an op-ed piece on the frightening size of the budget deficit. He said our next president *has* to get our house in order. Paulina commented that he should stop saying that taxes are too high then. Jill pointed out that the high taxes were killing the economy. Ben responded by posting a fifty-six-page report from the American Enterprise Institute that backed him up. And then he told Paulina to suck it. Meanwhile, Helen got two hundred and thirty-seven likes for the adorable photo of

her third baby girl, so Matthew quietly shared a link about habitat destruction pushing mountain lions to extinction. I saw what he did there. And Masha shared another heartbreaking story of the authoritarian government in Russia that's making lives miserable there. Her stories are always so alien to my American friends though; I never bother to share them anymore.

But the most alien stories always come from Franz, posting from who knows which city anymore as he treks around the globe. Today he's trying to tell us how the philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel called all of this "the dialectic." Now I happen to know that Hegel never used these exact words, but Franz says all this noise is just Hegel's "thesis" spawning its "antithesis," which together makes a "synthesis" that is the unitary whole of the universe. In Hegel's treatment of logic, thinking doesn't seek to understand the world; it merely dwells on itself. Hegel says this gives us a picture of reality in totality, which provides a complete and harmonic vision of the universe. Isn't it all so beautiful?

The problem with this, I tell Franz, is that it isn't. This "treatment" of logic is a shunning of logic, for it makes one a passive observer in a world requiring action. We do need to look at all sides of an issue all together, but then we need to go further and pluck out a choice from it all. Hegel's view isn't as complete as it pretends to be because it doesn't offer a means for the plucking. His view is lacking exactly the title of this story. Judgment.

This is understandable. To choose is to do violence. Opting *for* creates conflict with the non-chosen one. It would be much nicer if we could follow Willa Cather in *My Antonia* whose narrator says, "That is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great." This is a seductive view. Billions pursue such peaceful melting. As E.O. Wilson noted about these seekers, "they want to find the godhead, or enter the wholeness of nature, or otherwise grasp and hold on to something ineffable, beautiful, and eternal." Religions, cults, political parties, the

tribes that follow sports teams, academic ideologies, new age woo groups—all of these are sustained by this desire to find a home where people can give up the difficult work of judgment and just belong. Judge not lest ye be judged? Sounds great. Sign me up. Who wouldn't want full and easy acceptance from their peers? And who doesn't want a complete set of rules to do their judging for them? The problem, of course, is that something is only complete once it is finished, once it is static. This universe and our lives within it are not that. We are dynamic. Ever changing. Ever growing. Ever discovering new things.

When I was eleven though, my life was complete. I was dissolved in weekly church services that hadn't changed since the Second Vatican Council. I know now that decree from the Catholic Church had taken place only two of my young lifetimes earlier, but the Latin masses of the 1950's might as well have been from the Middle Ages as far as I knew. My own experience with history was much more settled. My grandfather had helped to build the staid little country church I had known for years. Its cinder block walls and wooden roof beams were simply larger versions of the ones in my own family home. My father grew up in that church and then assisted in the ministry there as an adult. He read readings, he led the singing of hymns, and he distributed the body of Christ to the parishioners. All of who were our neighbors. As one of the altar boy establishment, I had set up, handled, and then put away all of the sacred items of pageantry there. I'd lit and extinguished the white waxy candles, with snuffers and wicks on long golden handles. When Father John, or later Father Paul, said, "The Lord be with you," I auto-replied, "And also with you." Whenever he told us to "Lift up your hearts," I affirmed, like the others, that "We lift them up to the Lord." And when he asked us to share our gratitude, saying, "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God," I fell in with them all, intoning, "It is right to give Him thanks and praise." All of these rhythms of my childhood were rhymed every Sunday along with

sonorous sermons from thin wooden lecterns and processional hymns played on synthesized organs.

Then, on a cold Tuesday evening in March, just before the thaw of spring would have let me spend my evenings outdoors, my parents told me we were going to try something new. There was going to be a service at the church organized by a group of Charismatic Catholics who had come to town. A few of our neighbors—I don't know how they had managed it—had seen these people before and recommended that we all give their way of worship a try. This internal sect from our own ancient religion *pa-raised* the power of the Holy Spirit. A few lucky people who attended their gatherings sometimes discovered they had the gift of glossolalia—the divine speaking of Tongues. And there was even the opportunity to be *healed* by the power of faith at such Renewals. (And note, they weren't called Revivals, because no one's faith needed to be brought back from the dead at these assemblages.)

Right from the start, the evening was disorienting to me. No one I knew was there to greet us at the entrance to the church. Rather than going to the changing room to don the special robes of a helpful altar boy assistant, I made my way with my family to a regular pew, several rows back and to the left from the center. I was just another face in the crowd, sitting in the middle of a drying-out wooden pew, noticing the tiny cracks opening up in its bottom-worn surface. I also saw that no one had slid any of the three-inch by five-inch plastic number cards into the display board in the corner of the room, which normally indicated what songs we'd be singing. The board was still empty from when I'd removed the program from Sunday's mass after it was over.

As we soon found out, the songs for this night wouldn't have any lyrics that needed to be read from the *Book of Hymns*. A simple "band" of two fast-strumming guitarists accompanied by one jangling tambourine player led us in repetitive chants that we quickly caught on to, exclaiming glories and hallelujahs to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. During these long loud songs, some of the

people that were scattered throughout the room—people I had never seen in this building before—would lift up their hands and shout out incomprehensible streams of oddly consonant-vowelled syllables. Of course, these foreign-sounding Tongues were only incomprehensible to me because I wasn't, as I was discovering, blessed with the gift of Understanding.

The night flew by. In between the wild energetic songs, the prayer leader named Jim offered up passionate requests for God's presence to enter the room. Testimonies were called for, to serve as evidence of past providence in people's lives. Many such stories were thankfully shared and gratefully acknowledged. Eventually, towards the end of the evening, Jim offered himself as a conduit for faith healing from God. Anyone in need, need only step forward and ask. While the guitarists began picking out a more peaceful background piece, the tambourine player set down his instrument and joined another large congregant in assisting Jim with this portion of the ceremony. A line formed down the center aisle as ready participants spilled into it from each side of the church. I was encouraged to go join them. And I couldn't say no.

As I waited my turn, I alternated between observing the ritual and staring down at the green diamonds in the wool carpeting that covered the floor. Even though I was eleven, I'd already queued down the aisle like this hundreds of times before on my way to Communion, trying for some reason to avoid stepping on any of the lines in the pattern below my feet. Those journeys were always towards the simple offering of "the Body of Christ," which I answered with an "Amen" to get my holy wafer for the week. I knew that path well. Now, however, I watched as people stepped up to this Jim and closed their eyes while he hovered his open hands over their heads and quietly mumbled earnest requests for the healing of the Lord to enter their bodies. Inevitably, after a few seconds of this, each recipient tipped their head backwards, as if overpowered, and fell into the waiting arms of the tambourine player and his fellow

strongman. They were laid on the floor where they could regroup for a spell as the line snaked to a new vacant spot where a recently healed person had just returned to their seat.

Slowly, I made my way up to the front, trembling slightly in awe of what was awaiting me. I had prayed often before, thousands of times by then, but unlike most of the saints in my Sunday school stories, I'd never heard an answer. I *knew* that God existed—the idea that he might only be a possibility wasn't something that had even crossed my mind before then—but I wondered if maybe He only came out for special requests like these from these specially blessed people. Maybe I just hadn't tried hard enough before or been shown the proper way to listen for Him. But now I would. Just look at how God was reaching out to everyone in front of me!

Finally, my time had come. I stepped to the open spot in front of Jim. He bent over slightly from the step he was on to get his hands sufficiently close to me. I was the smallest person by far to approach him that night, but I stood tall with all my might. I closed my eyes and listened intently. My senses heightened. I could hear every eddy of breath passing through the tongue, teeth, and lips of the praying mouth above me. Any second now, surely I'd see some light, or feel a pressure over my whole body. It wouldn't take much. I was tiny. I was willing.

And then it came. Nothingness. In the dark little world inside my mind, I suddenly realized my head was as stable as a compass at sea in a gyroscope. I could stand there forever in my shined-up loafers, but unless someone in that church physically pushed me, I wasn't going to fall over. I knew that everyone would wait for me for a little while, but then they would all be terribly disappointed that I hadn't been *touched*. They would all wonder what was wrong with me, what I must have done to keep God away. I didn't know what to do. I had to get out from under that spotlight. So I tipped my head and fell back into the arms that lowered me onto the floor. I lay there confused, my eyes clamped shut, and my face burning red.

After an appropriate length of time, as I'd judged from observing the others on my way to the front, I opened my eyes and began the journey to climb to my feet. The line behind me of those seeking to be healed was empty now, and Jim was standing over the few of us still on the floor. He was quietly humming and swaying with the falling music. When he saw me rise, Jim asked me to come and stand next to him. He put his arm around me, and as we faced the crowd he asked me to please tell the audience what I had seen, for it was especially wondrous to see the Lord at work in our children.

I was an angelic young boy with tousled blond hair and big brown eyes, only different from painted cherubim really because of my two front teeth that had grown large much faster than the rest of me. People in the audience knew who I was too: they knew my grandfather, they knew my father, and they figured they knew where I was headed. Maybe I wouldn't lead *them*, but surely I was the kind of boy who would grow up to lead *some* church, *some* day. But that day, before I had learned any words to explain the new flood of emotions that was overwhelming me, before I had any words about what I had lost, about what I had wanted, and about what I had had to hide, I felt helpless and mute. I simply bowed my head as my eyes filled with tears that then spilled down over my cheeks.

Jim looked over at me and noticed what was happening. He wouldn't have wanted to hide this inspiring spectacle of the powers he had ushered in that night, so he kept me facing the audience and gently squeezed me with the arm that was draped over my shoulder. "Why are you crying?" he asked. "Can you tell us what it is you are feeling?"

"I don't know," I finally said. "It was just beautiful."

There were gasps in the crowd. I remember that. As well as a few amen's and some praises of Jesus. And looking back on it all now, even though he didn't know it at the time, that eleven year old me was right. The truth he had seen was beautiful.

Love of Learning

Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systematically to what one knows. You love learning new things, whether in a class or on your own. You have always loved school, reading, and museums—anywhere and everywhere there is an opportunity to learn.

— *Character Strengths and Virtues*, Peterson & Seligman, 2004

“Mom, quit worrying about me. I can tell you’re distracted. I can see it in your eyes. It’s just a college visit, you know. I’ll be back tomorrow afternoon. Now what’s the answer?”

“It’s not you I’m worried about,” Catherine replied to her daughter Julie. “It’s just...I have a lot on my mind, that’s all. Can you repeat the question? Say the answers a bit more slowly this time, please.”

Julie looked down at the test booklet on the countertop in front of her. Before she complied with her mother’s request though, she scooped a pile of scrambled eggs off her shamrock green Fiesta Ware plate and into her mouth, chewing quickly while opening her mouth in big round o’s to let the steam escape. Within seconds, she swallowed, cleared her throat, and continued. “According to the Declaration of Independence, what is the primary purpose for creating government? A) Government exists to maintain order in society; B) government exists to protect basic human rights; C) government exists to serve its citizens; or D) government exists to provide national defense.”

Catherine looked up for a moment at the white painted Shaker-style cabinets that lined her kitchen while her daughter hurriedly shoveled more breakfast into her face. “Ok I know it,” Catherine said. “Now tell me what you think the answer is.”

“Oh, c’mon mom, it’s not my exam,” Julie protested.

“I know, but it helps me to hear you talk it out. The conversation helps me remember it better.” Catherine made no mention of the fact that it pushed her daughter to think, and that it forced her to pause and eat with a bit more poise too.

“Fine. Hmmm. Ok, I remember that song from that cartoon that goes something like...” Julie paused, nodding her head to get the beat of the song before she continued. “We the people, in order to form a more perfect union, la la la, la la...”

“Establish justice,” Catherine prompted softly with a smile.

“Establish justice...insure domestic tranquillitee-ee-ee-ee,” Julie continued, more sure of herself now and stretching the words out with feeling. “Provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare...” She abruptly stopped singing and looked at the prep test in her hand more closely. “Hmm. So that’s A) maintain order in society and D) provide national defense. Those are both in that song. But since there’s no ‘all of the above’ answer, then I guess it must be C) government exists to serve its citizens.”

“That’s all true,” Catherine said, taking a sip of her coffee, elegantly pulling the delicate porcelain cup to her mouth in one smooth fluid motion, tracing a perfect arc through the air at the end of her long and slender arm. “But do you remember the rest of the verse you were singing? Keep going.”

“Mom, c’mon. You’re just stalling now. Or trying to embarrass me.”

“No I’m not. Here, I’ll sing it for you.” Catherine picked up where her daughter had left off, grinning at her daughter as she drew out the syllables of some of the words to match the beat of the song. “Provide for the common defense, promote the general welfa-a-are, secure the blessings of liberty, to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.” Catherine stopped singing and asked her daughter, “Did you hear it?”

“What? The dreams of a 7-year-old choir girl going up in smoke?”

“Hey! Now who’s embarrassing whom? No, the end of the song. That cartoon was about the Constitution. The question you asked said, ‘According to the Declaration of Independence.’ That’s a different document. The Constitution was adopted eleven full years after the Declaration, which was written by Thomas Jefferson and began...” Catherine paused here, sitting even more upright and pulling at the bottom of her shirtfront to smooth her entire appearance before continuing. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men...” She stopped, letting the last sentence hang meaningfully in the air.

Julie looked down at the prep test and scanned the question again. “So the answer is actually B? The government exists to protect basic human rights?”

“It does. According to the Declaration of Independence anyway.”

“But what the heck are rights?” Julie asked, responding with a little of the fire she felt for getting the question wrong. “And what if we don’t really believe some creator decreed them on a stone tablet or something? Do animals have rights too? We all evolved together so why not?”

“Those are tougher questions outside the current scope of this discussion,” Catherine said calmly to her daughter. “Let’s just stay focused on what this exam is asking right now. Give me another one,” she said, tapping the test prep book.

Julie flipped through and looked for a question from a different section. She paused and looked up, asking, “Mom, do you really think you can be a Foreign Service Officer after all this time? Dad thinks you’re a little nuts.”

Catherine stiffened visibly, but managed to get out a factual, if terse, answer. “Your dad doesn’t know me well enough to judge that anymore. He might have, fifteen years ago before he left, but he doesn’t anymore. What do you think?”

“I don’t know. I don’t know anyone who’s ever tried this before so I have nothing to compare it to. Dad just said it was one of the hardest tests someone can take.”

“Is that really what he said?”

“Aw, c’mon,” Julie answered, dropping her nose deeply into the prep book. “You know I don’t like to pass arguments between the two of you.”

“I know,” Catherine pressed. “I’m just trying to answer what he said directly so you can hear what I would say if he had criticized me to my face.”

“Well, he said there’s no way a stay-at-home single mother could ever do something like this.”

Catherine didn’t even flinch this time, now that she was expecting this possible line of discussion. “Well I would never place limits on anyone based on where they’ve come from. We all stay at home sometime in our lives. What matters is what we do with that time. You’ve seen that pile of books in my study, haven’t you? They are the sixty books* that are on the State Department’s recommended reading list for the Foreign Service exam. Everything from Strunk and White’s *Elements of Style* to Twomey’s *Employment Discrimination Law*. There are books about public affairs, economics, history, geography, area studies, and U.S. politics. They say the best foundation to take this exam is a solid education and a personal life-long habit of reading, learning, and expanding one’s understanding of the world. Well, I’ve done my best to follow that advice. When your father walked out on me, I was humiliated. I wanted to leave and go somewhere far, far away where no one would ever know who I was or what a failure I’d been.”

“Mom, you’re not a failure.”

“I know that now. I’m talking about what I felt like right after the divorce. I felt that this whole family structure I imagined I was building had just been torn down to the ground. But it wasn’t all gone. Even though I wanted to go off and lose myself in the world, I still had you and I knew I had to be here for you for at least the next fifteen years until you grew up and went off to college. So, rather than abandon things and run for the hills, I channeled my anger and did some math. There were sixty books I needed to read to reach my dream of escape. Each one was probably an average of 400 pages or so. If I wanted to finish them all by the time I was finally free to take off, I only needed to read 4.5 pages every day. That didn’t seem so hard. I knew I could do that. I knew that no matter how busy things got or how crazy my days were, I knew I could carve out a little time before I slept, or before you woke, or while I waited to pick you up, or when I was standing in line at the grocery store. Wherever. Every day I read at least those four-and-a-half pages. Every day I took another step towards my goal of learning what I needed to learn. And I got ready.

“There are five career tracks you can go into in the Foreign Service,” Catherine said, continuing on smoothly into a well-rehearsed line of thought. “You can work as a consular officer, economic officer, political officer, public diplomacy officer, or a management officer. Well, before you were born I had a successful career as a manager in a pharmaceutical firm. I left that behind to stay at home with you because I wanted to be there for you. At least until school started. But once your father left, well, there was just too much to do around the house and in your life for me to go back to work. Your father supported us financially, but I did all the work.”

“I know mom. You were great. Really. But—and I’m just playing devil’s advocate here, I’d like to see you show dad you can make it just as much as you would like to—but isn’t it still really hard to go from housewife in middle America to foreign diplomat in one big jump?”

Catherine left aside any comparison between how much she or her daughter wanted to show her ex-husband that she had moved on. The whole effort was really about so much more than that after all these years. Any embarrassment she once felt about the gossip of a small community prattling on behind her back about another failed marriage in twentieth century America just didn't seem to matter anymore. So many new worlds had been opened up to her from all the reading she'd done. So many fascinating things were out there waiting to be seen first hand. The best way she knew how to convey that to her daughter was to not even acknowledge the old worries. The best way to teach her daughter how to respond to one of life's failures was just to move ahead and focus on the future.

"Management officers are resourceful, creative, action-oriented, 'go-to' leaders," Catherine responded, signaling with her hands the air quotes that were inserted into the State Department's job description of the position she was intending to apply for. "They're responsible for all embassy operations from real estate to people to budget. Well I've got endless stories about times I've accomplished things under the relentless pressure of having a child in the house. I've got stories about using innovative solutions to minimize costs and get the job done right. I bought us a new home on two separate occasions. I managed projects upgrading the infrastructure in each one. I studied the psychology behind what motivates children on the way to successful adulthood. And I've got a great kid to show for it. Now does that sound like such a big leap to you to go from managing the people and budgets and real estate in a house to doing the same thing for an office?"

"I guess not. Sounds like you've got your interview questions already prepared then."

"Yes. And what about you?"

"Oh it's hardly an interview, mom. I'm just going to visit the campus and hear from some freshman what it's really like there."

“I know, but you should still know what it is you’d like to ask, and you never know when you’re being evaluated for the selection process.”

Julie made a show of looking down at the test book and loudly flipping the pages back to another section in an obvious move to change the subject and avoid thinking about the nervousness she was feeling at the prospect of spreading her own wings and flying towards her own new environment. “Let’s keep prepping for your test. Here’s a good one,” she said, putting four fingers under the question she had chosen to carefully read aloud. “During the most active years of the Atlantic slave trade, from the late fifteenth century through the middle of the nineteenth century, the region that saw the highest numbers of slaves imported was: A) British North America; B) Spanish America; C) British Caribbean; or D) Continental Europe.”

* The sixty books that are currently on the State Department’s recommended reading list for the Foreign Service Officer’s Test are listed according to the categories below. The answer to Julie’s last question is certainly in one of them.

English Usage (2): *Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers*; Strunk and White’s *The Elements of Style*.

United States (culture, foreign policy, history, politics)(11): Ambrose & Brinkley’s *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy since 1938*; Davidson et al’s *Nation of Nations: A Narrative History of the American Republic*; Feagin & Feagin’s *Racial and Ethnic Relations*; Goldstein & Pevehouse’s *International Relations*; Hirsch, Kett, & Trefil’s *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*; Jentleson’s *American Foreign Policy: The Dynamics of Choice in the 21st Century*; Morgan & Kennedy’s *American Diplomats: The Foreign Service at Work*;

Norton et al's *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States*; Paterson's *American Foreign Relations: A History*; Rosati's *The Politics of United States Foreign Policy*; Woloch's *Women and the American Experience*.

World History and Geography (7): Acemoglu, Daron, & Robinson's *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*; *Atlas of the World*; Best's *International History of the Twentieth Century and beyond*; Craig et al's *The Heritage of World Civilizations*; Diamond's *Guns, Germs and Steel*; Diamond's *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies throughout the World*; Ferguson's *Civilization: The West and the Rest*; Mishra's *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt against the West and the Remaking of Asia*.

Area Studies (13): Coll's *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*; Gelvin's *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know*; King's *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus*; Rubin's *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*; Rumer & Zhukov's *S. Central Asia: The Challenges of Independence*; Schell & Delury's *Wealth and Power: China's Long March to the Twenty-first Century*; Shambaugh's *China Goes Global: The Partial Power*; Gilbert's *A History of the Twentieth Century*; Bose, Sugata, & Jalal's *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, and Political Economy*; Gordon & Gordon's *Understanding Contemporary Africa*; Judt's *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*; Rosefielde & Hedlund's *Russia since 1980: Wrestling with Westernization*; Yergin's *The Quest: Energy, Security and the Remaking of the Modern World*.

Consular and Immigration (6): Carens' *Immigrants and the Right to Stay*; Joppke's *Citizenship and Immigration*; Kanstroom's *Deportation Nation: Outsiders in American History*; Martin &

Schuck's *Immigration Stories*; Motomura's *Americans in Waiting, The Lost Story of Immigration and Citizenship in the United States*; Takaki's *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*.

Economics and Public Policy (5): Hall & Papell's *Macroeconomics: economic growth, fluctuations, and policy*; Mankiw's *Principles of Microeconomics*; Murray, Hart, Sinnreich, & Lacey's *The Shaping of Grand Strategy: Policy, Diplomacy, and War*; Rushefsky's *Public Policy in the United States: At the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century*; Shultz & Dam's *Economic Policy Beyond the Headlines*.

Management and Human Behavior (7): Gerrig's *Psychology and Life*; Gladwell's *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*; Gleitman & Reisberg's *Psychology*; Griffin's *Fundamentals of Management: Core Concepts and Applications*; Moorhead & Griffin's *Organizational Behavior: Managing People and Organizations*; Schneider & Barsoux's *Managing Across Cultures*; Twomey's *Employment Discrimination Law: A Manager's Guide*.

Public Affairs and the Media (7): Dominick's *The Dynamics of Mass Communication: Media in the Digital Age*; Houston's *The investigative reporter's handbook: a guide to documents, databases, and techniques*; Itule & Anderson's *News Writing and Reporting for Today's Media*; Morrison & Conaway's *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands*; Osborn & Osborn's *Public Speaking*; Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel's *Intercultural Communication: A reader*; Ting-Toomey & Leeva's *Understanding Intercultural Communication*.

Computer Applications (2): Parson & Oja's *New Perspectives on Computer Concepts: Comprehensive*; Sammons' *The Longman Guide to Style and Writing on the Internet*.

Perspective

Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people. Although you may not think of yourself as wise, your friends hold this view of you. They value your perspective on matters and turn to you for advice. You have a way of looking at the world that makes sense to others and to yourself.

— Peterson & Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 2004

Introduction

In January of 20YY, the 99-year lease of the land known as Hoggs Fell will expire. The current lease was procured by the artist and activist Betty Carver who requested that her estate be used to purchase the rights to this land from the local government authority at the time of her death. She loved the shepherding way of life in the Lake District and sought to ensure that land would remain available for it despite enormous threats from outside developers. The open land in question (approximately 1,300 hectares) has since then acted as a de facto commons with grazing rights granted to a few dozen farmers, but it is not currently one of the 630 official commons registered in the county of Cumbria.

Although Ms. Carver's arrangement has resulted in nearly one hundred years of use for traditional shepherding, this is still only a small part of Hoggs Fell's long history. The current lease helped to extend a way of life that had already taken hold for several hundred years, if not perhaps for a few thousand. However, the question of how this land should continue to be used has once again been raised. Before the current lease comes to an end, the local council has commissioned the following

report to gather views from the public and make recommendations on what the next phase of use of this land should look like.

Methodology

“A wise man sees as much as he ought, not as much as he can.”

— Michel de Montaigne

“Wisdom is having sufficient awareness, in various situations and contexts, to act in ways that enhance our common humanity.”

— Caroline Bassett, founder of The Wisdom Institute

It is easy to know yourself as an individual, to know what *you* value, and argue for *your* interests in a passionate and rational manner. It is only slightly less easy for adults to see another perspective too, to have empathy for what others may want, even if you disagree with their values. What is truly difficult, however, is to see *all* perspectives. As far as that is possible, this is what is required to gain the wide awareness that was spoken of or implied in the quotes above. And gathering such awareness is the goal that guided the methods used for this report.

To begin, research was done on the possible uses of common land, and how such uses might be funded. This generated many possible courses of action, but it gives no means by which to choose any one of them. No facts about what an option *is* can tell us whether we *ought* to choose it. To find the best thing to do, we must know and consider the feelings and desires of all those who would be affected by the decision. We have to know what these stakeholders *want* in order for us to have any hope of generating consensus by satisfying their desires. As such, a wide variety of methods were undertaken to gather as many different

views as possible—online surveys, telephone interviews, in-person conversations, and reviews of both formal and informal literature. Since each response has a value that is independent of the method used to obtain it though, all of the views were converted into statements quoted from a first-person perspective in order to place them all on an equal footing. Views expressed repeatedly were also consolidated into one single quote. These transformations have the effect of expressing each view in its most forceful manner, but do not allow any single idea to shout down the others due to sheer volume. The resulting quotes are presented below in the “Perspectives” section.

Beyond the gathering of these opinions, further research was conducted on how to make wise decisions in the face of competing interests. It must be said that a definition for wisdom itself is necessary for this and that is a contentious issue for philosophers from all schools of thought. Aspects of wisdom that seemed most appropriate to the current situation were identified, however, and the findings from this research will be discussed below in the section on “Considerations.”

Finally, we would like to stress that the judgments and recommendations in our “Conclusions” section below would have been impossible to arrive at without undertaking the full journey of grappling with the variety and depth of feelings that have been expressed on this issue. Hoggs Fell in the Lake District of England is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. It has a long and vibrant history of both struggle and celebration from the humans who have lived there or visited it. Because of this, it is vital to take the time to read through *all* of the responses about the future of Hoggs Fell before attempting to settle on a proposed use for it. It is our considered opinion, after having undertaken this project, that regardless of one’s initial position on the situation, this is such a complicated issue that your feelings will certainly be swayed by

others as long as you do not try to jump straight to (this report's) conclusions.

Perspectives

This section represents the heart of the report and was the most difficult to communicate in a coherent manner. The views gathered below were not all positive, or negative, or always even sure of which side they were on. And although the views were expressed by single individuals, they were not generally concerned with individual needs alone. This array of concerns, however, is precisely the most important factor that explains the way we have chosen to present the information and thereby understand it.

In his book *The Expanding Circle: Ethics, Evolution, and Moral Progress*, the philosopher Peter Singer described how a person can logically widen their moral considerations from the self, to their family, to segments of society, and beyond. While one circle of concern is not necessarily better or more compelling than another, this concept from Singer was an inspiration for how we organized all of the perspectives we collected. They are presented below in ever widening circles, but the circles that were chosen were also influenced by a template from noted scientist E.O. Wilson, which he created for the purposes of consolidating all of the various fields of biology (i.e. the study of all life). So after starting with the immediate self, we widened our circles as far as they can possibly go, all the way to the consideration of life over evolutionarily long timeframes. Our hope is that the journey through these circles will widen any reader's views, while also allowing them to feel the importance of every view that has been expressed along the way.

Self

“I grew up here. I live here year round. And generations of family members have passed local knowledge on to me. Because of all this, I have a deep love and intimate relationship with this land that just cannot be matched by any outsiders. I don’t mean to be disrespectful, but my opinion should count for more than the vote of some tourist or recently retired pensioner who hasn’t been here for very long. And I say the land should continue to be used as it has always been used.”

“There’s a feeling I get on a warm autumn night, when I’m walking the sheep back from the fell, with my dogs acting as long-distance extensions of my own will. It’s just indescribably fulfilling. The sense of purpose I have and the confidence I get from playing my part in shaping this land is something few people will ever know. You cannot know what a loss it would be to take that away from me.”

“I personally gave up farming on this land because it was just too much work for less and less of a reward. No one wants wool or meat for the prices I would have had to charge. I felt trapped. And I saw first hand how destructive farming is to people and the environment. It’s an old-fashioned way of life that just doesn’t make sense to me anymore.”

“I moved to the Lake District after my husband died and it has brought me back to life. I walk in the hills every day and feel that there is a spirituality or magic here that ought to be preserved. The less development the better as far as I am concerned.”

Family

“A few years ago, our dog got away from us while we were walking in this area. She’d never seen sheep before and she started chasing them around, trying to get them to play. A farmer came out and shot her and then yelled at me for endangering his

livelihood. It was absolutely devastating and our whole family remains heartbroken over it to this day. A few months later, I'm sure many of those farmer's sheep were butchered and sold for meat. I would pay dearly to have my little family member back with me, but that was of no concern to the farmer. If they are allowed to keep using this land they should at least be better at sharing it. But if it were up to me, I would prefer to see them gone."

"My son is only four years old and already he hangs on the fence outside of our sheep pens and yells advice to me about what he thinks I'm doing wrong. My own father watches his grandson and chuckles at this. He says I was exactly the same at his age. How can you put a price on this kind of family bond? And what is the cost of breaking it? Please let my family keep their traditions alive."

Present Community

"I run an outdoor adventure company located here in the Lake District and we rely on having safe, beautiful, and accessible mountain areas to run our business. We are part of a tourism industry that brings in millions of pounds and provides hundreds if not thousands of jobs in the region. I really believe that we would thrive even more if the common land on Hogs Fell was returned to the wild and kept open for visitors rather than being controlled by a few old-fashioned sheep farmers who would just as soon chuck us all out if they could."

"My store in Cockermouth has been flooded three times in the last decade because the land in the watersheds above us hasn't been managed properly. The farmers who think they own this land for themselves have cleared the hillsides of almost every single tree just to make their lives a little easier. This means water runoff has increased significantly. I've read that rain

soaks into the ground 67 times more effectively under trees than on sheep pasture. That's an unbelievable difference! Those of us downstream from Hoggs Fell need to see more trees and less sheep up there."

"Modern farming is capital intensive and very variable from season to season and year to year. It could not survive without the significant technical and financial help that we in the banking industry give it. This is a partnership that we are very proud to be a part of. My own bank has made significant investments in the form of loans to farmers that take many years to pay off. If you start taking places like Hoggs Fell away from the farmers, they will not be able to repay us. Even if the government decides to pay off the few loans affected by the loss of Hoggs Fell, the fear that this type of 'rewilding' will continue to occur will cause many banks to just give up on farmers. I can see why some people may want to make small changes, but you have to understand that Hoggs Fell could be the first domino to fall that takes down an entire industry."

"As one of the 20,000 or so farmers that live and work full time in the Lake District, I'm very worried about this whole consultation process. How are we going to compete with the voices of over 20 MILLION people who visit here every year? I'm very worried that the tyranny of this majority will take my livelihood away from me, even though these people only come here for a few days or weeks. Just because they have more people and more money doesn't make them right."

"I don't have any faith that the government can step in here and make any kind of wise decision. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. Better to just let things continue as is. That's what I say."

Intergenerational Community

“My family has worked this land for centuries. It took thousands of years of trial and error for my ancestors to learn how to live in tough environments like this one. It would be foolish to throw all that knowledge away. Who knows what’s going to happen with changing climates and a reduction in fossil fuels? Future generations may need our farming skills. More than we might think. And sooner too.”

“I run a folk museum in the Highlands of Scotland, which has a very similar landscape and history to the Lake District. I love coming here to see how the old crofting ways have survived and adapted to modern times, but sometimes I can’t help but think that today’s farmers are doomed. I worry they will soon be nothing more than folklore for future museums. We should at least gather their stories while we can.”

“I know I’m just another tourist who has fallen in love with the Lake District, but I went to Norway on holiday recently and saw that they were trying to encourage people to farm in their remote valleys again. Those places in Norway are beautiful, but they’re empty. They just don’t have the magic that the Lake District has. Future tourists to England should get to see this difference too. Hold on to what you’ve got.”

“Every time I see sheep in the hills I get angry thinking about my ancestors who were kicked off their small farms by wealthy landowners during the Clearances. A lot of families suffered and died so these stupid animals could have all the grass they want and their masters could get richer. It’s time to turn the tables and clear the sheep!”

Extended Society

“With all due respect to the local farmers, I feel like we taxpayers have already bought and paid for this land. I don’t

know the figures for the Lake District, but in Wales the average farmer earns £33,000 even though they get £53,000 in subsidies. So we're not propping up struggling farmers — we're giving money to people who are losing it! That doesn't even count the millions that are spent fixing roads due to the landslides caused by overgrazing on sheep pastures."

"I'm worried this project is deeply flawed. You can't look at Hoggs Fell just on its own. The whole UK sheep industry depends on a 'stratified' system with different breeds in different locations contributing to a diversity of characteristics for the whole group. If you take one element away, the whole thing could collapse. Do you want to leave the UK with just a few massive monoculture industrial farms? No! Keep the sheep."

"I just want to leave a note to make sure that we think about all the antibiotics that farmers use. Their animals are kept in unhealthy conditions so they have to use lots of pills to make up for that. The problem is that this creates superbugs that could wipe out the rest of society. Why are we letting farmers do this just for the sake of a few more sheep on a few less acres?"

"Sheep only make up about 1% of all the calories we eat in the UK, but they take up the same amount of land as all other crops combined! That's more than twice the amount we use for the built environment. Why do they need so much? Why give them every scrap of available land? We should take some back when we can, and use it for other things."

"Tourists may talk about coming to the Lake District to 'see the landscape,' but there's a cultural landscape here too. Visitors may not know it, but the cleared hilltops like Hoggs Fell are managed by a cooperative of local farmers, which is an important example of sharing resources that the world needs to hang onto. Without us, the Lakes would turn into a fake Disney

ride. Something like 'The Wilderness Adventure Land' or even worse!"

"We all know upland grazing steals water from more productive places downhill. And then it floods those places when it rains heavily. So all in all, this sheep farming probably destroys more food than it creates. It's not the farmers' fault though. The EU subsidy rules require them to keep their land in 'agricultural condition' or they won't get paid. Something needs to change."

"I come from a family of coal miners who were devastated when that industry was shut down, but there's something I finally got my head around after all that. Just because a thing has been done one way for a long time doesn't automatically make it right. Farming is dependent on fossil fuels and government subsidies, just like the miners were. But we shouldn't use fossil fuels anymore. I don't want my tax dollars or my lungs to pay for these out-of-date activities any more. The government didn't help my family then, and that was wrong, but they need to figure out how to help these farmers make a change now."

"It makes me sick to think that the 'common' land on Hogs Fell could be taken away from us simply because it's managed by 'common' people who have no political power. Every other nice bit of land in this country has been bought up and enclosed by wealthy lords or their modern day equivalents. The local farmers here have worked this land for centuries and have therefore earned it as our share of the commonwealth of England. Just because it's beautiful doesn't mean outsiders should get to come in and kick us off. I don't go to London and demand that the Thames should flow wild."

"I have fallen in love with the Lake District. My direct ancestors may not have gotten here first, but that shouldn't mean I have no say in what goes on there. Those farmers' families didn't build

up the Royal Navy, explore the world, dig coal, develop financial markets, invent the steam locomotive, or any of the other millions of things—good and bad—that have made our country what it is today. We all live here now and benefit from a rich and complicated history, so we all have an obligation to share the riches that have accrued here.”

Ecology / Animal Welfare

“Here’s a fact for your study. There are 36 million sheep in the UK and just about half of them are lambs under one year of age. People think that ‘grass-fed, free-range sheep’ are all living these happy lives on beautiful hills, but we’re killing 17 million baby sheep every year. That’s not right.”

“The herdwick sheep we keep on Hogs Fell are a unique and ancient breed. Did you know that when we sell them, there’s a tradition of ‘redding’ their fleeces, even though no one knows why we do that anymore? One theory is that Celtic peoples over a thousand years ago worshiped their flocks in some sort of animism ritual, and that’s why they painted their sheep. This is a perfect example of just how sacred these animals are to us. You have to respect that.”

“Tourists will tell you that this landscape is ‘romantic’, but anyone who works here knows its not. Let me tell you some real stories of what goes on here. Cute lambs get their legs broken by panicking mothers and I have to put simple splints on them because there’s no time or money to do anything more. When lambs are stillborn, I skin their bodies and put them on other orphaned lambs like new coats so that the mothers who lost their own babies will adopt them as their own. Anyone who wants to eat a lamb chop or walk in a grassy pasture has to face up to this. We farmers need to be here to remind city folk of what’s real. Life in the countryside isn’t all poetry and paintings.”

“I grew up here, but I’ve come to realize that there’s something wrong with the men in this valley. Every spring, when I was a child, my brothers would go out with my dad and the other farmers and just shoot every black bird they could find. Ravens, rooks, magpies, jackdaws, ... you name it, they killed it. They said they were just trying to protect their sheep from birds that might peck an eye out or eat a dead lamb, but I think they just wanted to kill things for fun. I think they get a taste for it because of all the sheep they have to kill. It really worries me.”

“Hoggs Fell should not only be kept for sheep farming, but tourists should be banned from the area as well. Too many times, people come here from their sheltered city lives and they let their dogs loose who then terrorize our sheep. I’ve seen a dog tear the jawbone off one of my sheep before happily running back to its owner. And my 10-year-old daughter had to watch two dogs playing tug of war with another of our sheep. Both times our animals had to be put down and my family members have been traumatized.”

“I know you can only interview people for this decision about Hoggs Fell, but someone needs to speak up for the other animals too. I’m a wildlife biologist so let me give you some facts that tell the story of our nonhuman animal relatives. 97% of bee habitat in the UK has been destroyed since WWII. Because of sheep, grouse, and deer farming, there are hardly any trees in the UK above 200 meters in elevation. The average forest cover across Europe is 37%, but in Britain it is only 13%. After thousands of years of stripping this upland of its nutrients, it’s so infertile that it only takes 5 or 10 sheep per square kilometer to make sure no trees will ever grow there. You’ll see more birds and other species of animals in a suburban garden than you will in five miles of walking across our Lake District hills. It may seem like the Lakes has been this way forever and could just continue to go on that way, but highly managed and simplified systems are

often susceptible to profound disruption from invasive species or climate change. Diverse systems where ecological niches are fully occupied are much stronger. British activists are happy to campaign against the cutting, grazing, and burning of natural habitats in other parts of the world, but they shy away from doing so here. Our national parks produce brochures, display boards, and websites that give the impression these areas harbor thriving ecosystems, but these wastelands are in fact little more than sheep ranches. They are a disgrace and a shame upon the nation.”

Evolutionary Biology

“Since I’m a shepherd and I make changes to the bloodlines of my sheep, I’ve been reading a lot about evolution lately. One of the things that stuck with me is that evolution creates robustness in nature by conducting small-scale experiments that aren’t linked to one another. (Mother Nature does this blindly of course.) Well the Lake District is an excellent example of this. We’re one of the last experiments left in communal mountain shepherding so we ought to be left to do our thing. The world will be a better, more diverse, and more robust place because of it.”

“I always laugh (and then cry) when I read about farmers putting in ‘all this work’ for breeding ten to twenty generations of sheep. What about the work that nature has put in for MILLIONS of generations for all the insects, birds, and mammals that have been wiped out for the sake of these sheep? Don’t forget about them when you are making the decision of what to do with Hoggs Fell.”

“Not only should the sheep be taken off Hoggs Fell, but we should ‘rewild’ the whole area too. National parks like the Lake District shouldn’t be managed towards some arbitrary

ecosystem fixed in time. That's always a losing battle, and it's done for no good reason. We need to help bring back some of the key elements of the mountain forests that we removed — like trees, beavers, lynx, bears, and wolves — and then get out of the way to let evolution run its course. That's the best way to get back to truly sustainable practices.”

Considerations

The brute facts of the preceding sections have done very little to create a clear solution to the problem of what to do with Hogg's Fell. Moral urges often behave like gravity — stronger forces are felt from bigger objects nearby than those that come from abstract ideas at a distance. And in the case at hand, we have encountered a large variety of moral urges from individuals who are focused on different objects that loom large to them. This has resulted in conflicts within and between every circle of concern, and larger circles do not necessarily imply larger importance. Therefore, there cannot logically be one single answer that will give every individual person what he or she currently wants. The following four ideas, however, compiled from a variety of sources on wisdom, may help the wider community modify their desires in order to reach a carefully deliberated consensus.

1. As a general principle, wisdom seeks the following changes:
 - from self-interest to empathy
 - from greed to compassion
 - from fear to well-being for all
 - from hate to the good of the whole
 - from expediency to concern for the future
2. As a general process, wise decision-making uses four steps:
 - Thinking—striving to be objective by seeking to understand patterns and relationships.

- Feeling—asking whose point of view is being taken and how someone else understands reality.
 - Acting—asking what values guide our actions and what ends we are seeking.
 - Reflecting—seeing interdependence with others and knowing what you are a part of, then making sure values can be shared and everyone can live with the actions.
3. Competing interests always have different goals in mind. They are focused on different areas of concern and/or different time horizons. As a simple example, someone may have a goal of carrying their groceries home in a cheap and easy manner, so they want a plastic carrier bag. Others, however, recognize that plastic carrier bags hurt the environment so they want to get rid of them. In this case, in many communities, the needs of the environment have been found to be *higher* than those of a small personal convenience, so plastic carrier bags have been banned. The difficulty in deciding what to do with Hoggs Fell is finding which, if any, of the many interests described above is higher or more fundamental than all of the others. Which goals that seem paramount to some people are actually only proximate goals in service of another ultimate goal? Does a single highest goal even exist? This is something that philosophers call the *summum bonum*, and they have searched for it for millennia.
4. The ethical position of evolutionary philosophy offers one candidate for the *summum bonum* that emerges from data uncovered by the biological sciences. It is this: the long-term survival of life in general is a goal that is objectively necessary as well as sufficiently all encompassing in order to be considered the greatest natural good. Extensive literature can be read about this, but it can be grasped from the following brief argument. There are no moral goods for

inanimate objects like rocks, moons, water, or stars. They just exist. So before there was life, there was no *summum bonum*. If life were to go extinct, there would once again be no *summum bonum*. Additionally, all life on Earth is related and highly interdependent, so no one form of life gets to own the *summum bonum*. We all share it. We all must strive for the continued existence of life in general, and we want to achieve that in the most robust manner possible. Anything short of that is selfish in some way and could lead to the collapse of life in the long term. This does not mean that all choices are now obvious ones, but the final goal is clear, and many principles (e.g. adaptability, biodiversity, wide cooperation, constrained competition, progress, redundancy, and limited trial and error) have been derived to help guide the way.

Conclusions

At the beginning of this process, the issue of what to do with Hogs Fell was a thorny problem with a bewildering array of preferences expressed by various individuals. This report carefully gathered testimonies from all of the stakeholders, organized them into a structure that was designed to give us the biggest picture possible, and then considered research on wise decision-making. From this process, patterns and context have hopefully emerged that feel as real and as strong to readers of this report as the individual examples did to the people that were immersed in one narrow perspective or another. Bending to wider abstractions may seem unimaginable to those who are unable or unwilling to see them, but that is what is required in order to rise above and adjudicate between competing interests. Having done so, we are now prepared to render some judgments, make a few recommendations, and conclude with a brief analysis of these suggestions.

Judgments

1. Due to the collapse of the worldwide wool market, the sheep industry has shrunk to a tiny minority portion of the agricultural economy. Further shrinkage would greatly impact a few participants in this market, but its impact on wider society would be small.
2. As wilderness has shrunk around the globe, wild areas are being used by greater and greater portions of society that seek these places out. In other words, more sharing and cooperation is required for the use of these precious landscapes.
3. Rural ways of life are important components of human history, and the knowledge and skills developed in these communities are worth preserving and supporting. While farmers are the primary actors on Hoggs Fell, they do not exist here alone. Farmers are part of a community that must be healthy and supportive. They cannot be the lone local workers in a sea of tourists and temporary visitors.
4. Because they sell commodities, farmers have traditionally been paid very little above subsistence wages. However, society needs farmers to produce food, preserve their knowledge, and protect the considerable part of the environment that they manage. A market failure exists here because society pays farmers a small amount for their goods, but ecosystems cannot pay anyone for their own maintenance. Society must agree to collectively bear the costs for healthy and supportive ecosystems.

Recommendations

1. Hoggs Fell ought to be reapportioned to create some wild spaces that allow unmanaged forests to return to the landscape. Some portion may remain for shepherding.
2. The subsidy system ought to be reformed to make up for any loss of income-generating land for farmers, while also providing them with incentives to help manage the land for the benefit of all life.
3. Housing market rules ought to be reformed to enable more local residents to remain and support the local community. Those who earn a living elsewhere should be limited in their abilities to purchase land in such economically unproductive rural environments.
4. Progressive taxes ought to be levied on tourists who come to the Lake District in order to help support this new subsidy system for the local residents who maintain the landscape. The planning permission department must ensure that a mix of differently priced tourist options be maintained in order to enable equal access to this common land of beauty.
5. The specific details for these recommendations will have to be worked out by representatives of the various stakeholders once agreement has been reached about the final goals and principles.

Analysis

These judgments and recommendations will not please everyone by meeting all of their current concerns. That, however, is impossible. Every circle of concern would feel gains and losses compared to the present situation if these recommendations are implemented. But this just shows that tradeoffs are required and have indeed been suggested.

In closing, the authors of this report would like to thank everyone who shared their thoughts and feelings about the precious resource of Hoggs Fell. We found it invaluable to hear from each and every one of you, and we hope you will find it just as valuable to hear from one other