

ACT FOUR

PASSION AND THE CREATIVE FORCE

I believe there is a purpose to life, and it is really quite simple – it is to become our best possible selves. And to become our best selves I believe we need to discover our purpose – a purpose or **THE** purpose that ignites our passion, gives us meaning, and drives us through life.

I have two versions of my life purpose statement. The softer version fits my gentler persona who most people are familiar with: “I am orange as dazzling warm. I am the radiant sun who reveals the beautiful and glorious you.” Helping you discover, accept, and become your radiant glorious ‘self’, in my worldview, is akin to helping you find the meaning of your existence. The more assertive version of my life purpose fits my more radical persona, the tough love truth teller who strikes directly: “I am the Big Bang. I will blast your singularity into universal significance.” I pursue my purpose in two ways. As a Certified Professional Coactive Coach, or ‘Life Purpose Coach’, I help people discover and pursue their life purpose through coaching and through inspirational workshops. As a writer, I pursue my purpose by thinking deeply about confusing yet ‘purposeful’ things and then I write down my thoughts and insights hoping they might make their way into someone else’s universumschauung (view of the universe).

I believe that self-actualization, the discovery of passion, the discovery of purpose, the discovery of self and the discovery of ‘god’, are in fact synonymous. They all lead to the discovery of the meaning for your existence. When we discover and pursue our purpose a seemingly limitless passion is ignited. It is a passion that originates from the core of our soul. It is a force whose purpose is to express itself, and its expression is as unique and creative as each and every human on this planet.

Some believe we are born with certain gifts and talents. Other than certain physical advantages (tall people can be better at basketball), and differences in intelligence (memory and the capacity to connect information), I don’t necessarily believe this is so. Wayne Gretzky, the

greatest hockey player of all time, for instance, was not born a hockey player. He was born in a land obsessed with hockey. He didn't have any particular physical advantages – in fact, most thought he was too small to succeed in the National Hockey League. What he did have, however, was passion – he was driven to be the best. He wasn't necessarily born with this specific passion – it was ignited – likely with much help from his family and community. Immersed in a highly competitive environment that provided significant reward for success, and with this incredible passion, Gretzky was able to become the greatest hockey player of all time – through dedication, time and sweat. Passion, I believe, is the primary ingredient for the acquisition and/or development of talent – and the creative process.

Professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi acknowledges that “a genuinely creative accomplishment” usually “comes after years of hard work” (p. 1). People succeed because they love what they do. Weisberg states that “There is a possibility that more talented individuals are motivated to spend more time practicing and therefore are more likely to become expert” (p. 190). I think a person focusses their interest first, and then based on inherent skills will pursue that interest if they are successful, and then they become talented at it. To me it is simple: Motivation that ignites our passion leads to creative success. As Weisberg surmised, “there might be no differences in ability between talented and non-talented individuals, just differences in the appeal of the domain” (p. 198). Passionate purpose matters.

According to Professor of Cognitive Psychology Allen Newell and colleagues, creative problem solving “requires high motivation and persistence, taking place over a considerable span of time, or at a high intensity” (Weisberg, p. 181). Csikszentmihalyi says “contributions that require a lifetime of struggle are impossible without curiosity and love for the subject” (p. 53). He notes that “creative individuals have a great deal of physical energy” and “they work long hours, with great concentration” (p. 58). He surmises that “the energy of these people is internally generated and is due more to their focussed minds than to the superiority of their

genes” (p. 58). “The important thing” for Csikszentmihalyi, “is that the energy is under their control”, and “when necessary they can focus it like a laser beam” (p. 58).

I believe that when you discover and pursue your passion you maximize the creative energy that you need to create.

Historian Natalie Davis, in Csikszentmihalyi, admits that she doesn’t know why she invests “so much energy and eros into some projects [...] other than my curiosity and my delight” (p. 54). One of the central questions that Csikszentmihalyi explores is the joy that a creative person finds in a creative life (p. 5). He says that a primary reason why “creativity is so fascinating is that when we are involved in it we feel that we are living more fully than during the rest of life” (p.2). I would take this further. The pursuit of my passion keeps me alive, and when I am most alive, I am the most connected. As does love and desire, creative writing makes me high.

Csikszentmihalyi labels this ‘optimal experience’, the joy we feel when we are creating, as **FLOW** - “an almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focussed state of consciousness” (p. 110). Jason Silva, in his video *Find Your Creative Flow State* (2013), provides an extremely uplifting perspective on flow. He describes “people who go into this creative zone” as “virtuosos of the imagination”. This zone, he exclaims, “is a place where dreams are born.”

Csikszentmihalyi noted nine common elements describing how it feels when a ‘creative’ experience is enjoyable (p. 110 – 113). In my own words:

1. We are focussed. While in the state of flow, we seem to always know what needs to be done – we are focused on clear goals.
2. We know how well we are doing.
3. We are sufficiently challenged – our skills are stretched, but the challenge is not impossible.
4. Our concentration is focussed on what we do.
5. We exclude distractions from our conscious awareness.

6. We do not worry about failure.
7. Our self-consciousness disappears. Some of us feel that “we have stepped out of the boundaries of the ego and have become part, at least temporarily, of a larger entity”. It seems as if, “Paradoxically, the self expands through acts of self-forgetfulness”.
8. Our sense of time becomes distorted. We forget time. Hours collapse into seconds, or seconds expand into hours, relatively speaking.
9. We engage in the creative process for its own sake – it feels good, so we do it. It becomes autotelic.

Csikszentmihalyi’s use of the term **FLOW** is interesting, and perhaps deliberate. Although he is using the term to describe the creative process as something that seems to be effortless, the term **FLOW** is most commonly used to describe the movement of something, like water or electricity. If something is flowing, it is moving effortlessly. So, what exactly is flowing in the creative process? I believe it is creative energy – or in a much larger, more universal sense – it is the **creative force**.

Although I acknowledge and discuss many of the prevailing theories of ‘creativity’, it is my privilege as the writer of this narrative and as a believer in relativity in all senses of the word to share my current weltanschauung, or more aptly my universumschauung.

We are the product of the creative force and we are extensions of it. Our connection to it could be much like an umbilical cord. Creators have a passion that drives them beyond boundaries, over mountain tops, across rivers – they move on when most others would not. They persist. They take that next step or the next corner, and sometimes they are rewarded. You can see the passion in their eyes. You can feel it. It is palatable. When someone finds their creative purpose – their passion – they are plugged in. It is as if a conduit is created through which energy *flows* and feeds the creative process.

Finding our creative purpose, I believe, is our purpose.

I believe the creative force is an innate constituent of the universe. It is possible that this belief is consistent with *Biocentrism*, which hinges on the theory that life (or more precisely the ‘awareness’ of consciousness) creates the universe. In biocentrism, the creative force could be synonymous with life force, which is catalyzed by ‘awareness’. However, I do not necessarily believe that life and the ‘creative force’ and consciousness are the same thing. One may be a subset of the other. Or all three could be subsets of something else. I do believe that everything exists because of this ‘creative force’. I often speculated that the universe might be alive, and I often wondered if the creative force was synonymous with life force. But, I have recently diverged from this. I now believe life is simply one product of the creative force. The creative force is life and death, light and dark, matter and energy, nothing and something, inside and outside, outer-space and inner-space. It is a system, or a web, that includes all of these dichotomies that do not exist without their alternate-opposite.

My first step toward this ‘universumschauung’ came to me in the rocky mountains of Alberta one crisp fall night while I was gazing up at the expanse of the Milky Way – “It’s alive”, I said to myself “Can’t anybody else feel this?” Around that time I had also ventured on a four day wilderness canoe trip up and down the Churchill River in northern Saskatchewan. That was the first time I ‘felt’ a connection with ‘nature’. The fundamentalist Christian that I was at the time soon decided that nature, the universe, and ‘god’ had something in common. I subscribed to Astronomy magazine and bought a canoe. It was also at around this time that I acquired an almost compulsive reverence for life; a completely unpredictable personality change for someone raised on a farm who as a teenage boy killed hundreds of birds and goffers as a hobby.

Over the years I expanded my list of things that were somehow connected to ‘god’ to include nature, the universe, passion, purpose, intuition, inspiration, and life. It took me a while, but once I changed my definition of ‘god’, and also moved away from a focus on ‘life force’, my ‘aha’ moment had finally arrived. Nature, the universe, passion, purpose, intuition, inspiration, and life are all an expression of the creative force.

The Creative Force and Entropy

The purpose of the creative force is innate to its name – its purpose is to create. I believe it is the defense against entropy. Or, as death is the engine of life and love, entropy may be the engine of creativity. I mean this in an internal and external sense. Yin and Yang of Taoism “describes how seemingly opposite or contrary forces may actually be complementary, interconnected, and interdependent in the natural world, and how they may give rise to each other as they interrelate to one another. Many tangible dualities (such as light and dark, fire and water, expanding and contracting) are thought of as physical manifestations of the duality symbolized by yin and yang” (Wikipedia).

To Buddhist like Psychoanalyst Jacques Laçan, the ‘void’ into which we are thrown and from which we emerge and begin building our ‘selves’ is entropic. Through a desire for that which we can never attain, and fear of the ‘nothing’, we are compelled to create our ‘selves’ – our identity is created in response to the threat of entropy. Real communication to Laçan was only possible through the gap, or void, between words. He forced his readers to think from outside the structures (language) that bound them. For Laçan, entropy has the capacity to wake us up. An empty mind is a scary thing. Forcing yourself into this emptiness without shielding yourself with identity is a very difficult thing to do - although with a life-time of practice, a few of our greatest teachers have managed to do so.

I could posit the possibility that creativity is the alternate-opposite to entropy which wants to make everything into nothing. Like ‘the nothing’ in the ‘Never Ending Story’, a story about a universe that exists simply because a boy is reading a book about it, and a universe that will only continue to exist if the boy BELIEVES that this universe exists. From the perspective of this story, creative imagination creates worlds and it is the defense against entropy. It makes sense that something that has become something (has been created) would not want to become nothing. Why become something in the first place? Unless becoming nothing here is becoming

something somewhere else? Or, like life and death, and light and dark, the creative force and entropy cannot exist without each other. This idea seems to resonate with the emerging theory that dark energy (an attempt to explain the missing 75% of the energy of our universe) is the force behind entropy. Entropy and energy are similarly related, in an internal sense, by Laçan. He surmised that entropy, or the void, resulted from the loss of *jouissance* (Hmolpedia, 2018). The loss of *jouissance*, or the creative juice from the *REAL*, creates an entropic void and also a desire for that which was lost, thereby igniting a defensive creative process that creates identity.

Csikszentmihalyi believes that entropy is opposed by an ‘urge to create’. This followed from the discovery that “novelty stimulates the pleasure centers in the brain” (p. 109). This ‘urge’, I believe, is innate to all humans and all life. The joy that a one week old calf expresses when it smells its first flower is obvious – humans do not have a monopoly on curiosity and the joy of discovery. When the universe became aware, and thereby observed and created itself, it must have felt great pleasure. Entropy, which opposes the ‘urge to create’, according to Csikszentmihalyi, is ‘the urge to be lazy’, which he believes is more powerful than the urge to create. “We are generally torn between two opposite sets of instructions programmed into the brain: the least-effort imperative on one side, and the claims of creativity on the other” (p. 110). Nonetheless, I believe the urge to create is a response to entropy, an important nuance.

Although my definition of the creative force may appear to be ‘spiritual’, I believe it is as real as the forces of gravity and entropy (forces which we ‘know’ are there because we can measure their effects). Physics has taught us that energy can neither be created nor destroyed – it can only be transformed or dispersed. The forces that gave birth to our universe, from an infinitesimal singularity with almost infinite density, to stars and planets, and to black holes, nebula and galaxies, and their eternal evolution, are in fact, transformational and dispersive. Entropy is the term coined by physicists to represent the spontaneous evolution of energy towards thermodynamic equilibrium. Entropy is the force that disperses energy (and mass). Astrophysicists discovered a few decades ago that the universe is expanding, and that it will

likely continue to expand and dissipate forever – due to entropy. On the other hand, there are creative forces within our universe that resist entropy by combining and merging energy (and mass) at a local level. The Milky Way Galaxy, for example, is part of a much larger set of galaxies that are glued together by the force of gravity. This supercluster has been named Laniakea. These galaxies will stay glued together and they will merge over the span of billions and billions of years. All the heating and cooling, and churning and grinding and exploding and merging and mingling is most certainly creative, and new ‘things’ will most certainly continue to emerge. Meanwhile, while Andromeda and the Milky Way unite and become what they will, the rest of the universe will expand beyond infinity – out of sight and out of mind.

A major problem astrophysicists face, however, is that to explain the fact that our universe is expanding at an accelerating rate, they needed to presume the existence of an invisible energy that comprises 75% of our universe. Some physicists are currently wrestling with the idea that this ‘dark’ energy may in fact be the force that drives entropy.

At the universal level, the drive to conserve energy is a response to entropy. Bringing this down to the individual level, I believe therefore, that the drive to conserve energy, to be lazy, is natural. On the other hand, however, we need to expend energy in order to live (to acquire food and shelter). Our creativity is therefore driven by a natural force that drives us to find new, more efficient and effective ways to maximize the conservation of energy. Our creativity is therefore a response to entropy. Life, in its broader sense, could simply be a creative means of conserving energy, and transforming it, with the hope that one day it might find a permanent solution to the dissipating force of entropy. This is a very big idea that I am hoping science fiction writers might contemplate in the near future, so I will leave it here and move on.

There are therefore two purposes for ‘creativity’: it is a universal defense against entropy, and through diversification, it is life’s defense against chaos. Or stated another way, the purpose of the creative force is to conserve and diversify energy.

The urge to create is innate – we are born with it. It is an expression of our drive to ‘become’ and to survive – in response to entropy. Otto Rank, in Progoff (1956/1973) labelled our drive to survive the ‘urge to immortality’. I call it the ‘will to create’. Rank defines this ‘urge’ as “...man’s inexorable drive to feel *connected to life* in terms of his individual will with a sense of inner assurance that that connection will not be broken or pass away” (p. 211). Creative works, building a bridge to our ancestors, creating descendants, connecting to nature, and creating religion are all means of providing us with a sense of continuity and with a hope or feeling that despite our physical end we are part of a much larger story. In Progoff’s words, this is a desire to “live in the light of eternity”. We are born with the will to create. And this will, drive, desire, or urge, is an expression of the ‘creative force’.

Author Julia Cameron (1992) says “there is an underlying, in-dwelling creative force infusing all life—including ourselves” (p. 3). She believes “Creativity is the natural order of life. Life is energy: pure creative energy” (p.3). We all have access to the creative force, which she also calls ‘spiritual electricity’. How to unblock the flow of creative energy and/or connect to it is the subject of her workbook, *The Artist’s Way*. Teaching us how to establish “a workable connection with the flow of good orderly direction” (p. xii) is her purpose.