

ON THE BRINK OF EVERYTHING---NOTES

Prelude

Although I am one of the younger people in the group, I expect the book to have a lot to say to me. I am old enough that I have had to void the contract with my barber to “make sure you snip away all the gray ones” because now I’d have no hair. I’m still resisting---I really *should* have bifocals now and am stubbornly fighting it. But other parts of me are OK with this idea. Do I relish it? Not quite yet, but I can see a road that might lead me there.

1, he’s talking about a beautiful diminishment—and maybe not such a diminishment at that.

3, top---it got me thinking a bit. If I knew I was going to die for sure and I could pick *how*---would being pushed off the precipice of the Grand Canyon and plummeting to the bottom be a bad way? If I knew it would be painless or only a very momentary pain, I might choose that and have my last view of life be the wonder of it. I have to do some thinking on some other ways that might be good choices---being surrounded by family and friends? I don’t know about that. I would want to have said my goodbyes to all of them, yes, but surrounded? Maybe not...

4, bottom, writing. One of the things that is making me truly giddy and happy these days is dad’s involvement in a writing circle at the synagogue. It has given him the necessary impetus and structure and drive to begin writing his many, many stories of his life. I mentioned in the chat in week 2 that I am in the difficult process of composing my latest album, about the fascinating stories of her life that my close friend Mary told me on numerous up-and-back cottage trips. Mary has alzheimer’s now and will never write the memoirs she meant to. It is left to me to assay the humbling task of trying to translate all she told me. It is not easy. I am glad dad isn’t going to make me do it for him.

5, haven’t been to Santa Fe—yet. I did see sunrise in Albuquerque long ago. New Mexico is a very pretty place.

5-6, I like this idea of gravity that he’s teasing out. Listen—maybe I’m getting to the conclusion far too soon. But here goes. **Can you smile at and about the life that you’ve led?** Can you feel good about the life that you’ve led...and are leading now? Another of my innumerable sayings---I don’t live each day like it’s my last. I live each day like it’s my first---like there is something new and wonderful to discover that day.

The View from the Brink

11, use of “brink”. He’s not wrong. Look at the term brinksmanship---to incite another geopolitical entity almost into war. Myself, I prefer *my* term. Blokesmanship—the art of being a decent human being.

12, “what Maya was discovering at 16 months, I was rediscovering in my late 70s.”. Something quite similar to this statement will be a central point in my Opening.

13 well, look at that---he was affected by the Canyon too! I didn’t raft for 9 days---it was more like 3 hours---but it was unforgettable. Oh, and you *don’t* raft Class 10s. The highest anyone will take you on is a class 5

13 bottom. I think I can proffer an explanation for his statements. He is reclaiming and rediscovering something precious that most of us put aside from about age 10 onwards. Naivete. Let's remember my definition of faith---the continuing discovery of the wonder of my humanity. The hard word to latch on to there for a lot of people is "wonder".

14, bottom—to search for, to tune yourself to beauty. Ahhh, that is not such an easy thing to do these days.

15, bottom, the grace of wholeness. Hurray. He's like me. He's not a good person. He's not a bad person. He's a mixed person...which makes him human

That paragraph which starts with Fierce with reality is super.

16 top, we talked in small group about how perfectionism is a true curse. If you can never be satisfied, you can never take stock like he has here. And...you can never find *balance*. I kind of want to illustrate perfectionism in my mind as a super-fast spinning top, spinning ever faster, spinning ever brighter, tilting and tilting, till it spins itself off the table and stops moving altogether. I *never* want to spin so hard that I risk stopping moving altogether.

And he drinks coffee. Oh well, truly, nobody's perfect (grin---I only drink tea)

16 bottom. Yes indeed—God works in mysterious ways. And God weighs in with some mysterious works sometimes.

18-19, it's a lovely poem. As I said in the chat—when it's not about you, it can be the most about you. But there's also this. If I can be the smallest part of something so much bigger, I want that far more than being the biggest part of someone so much smaller. I'm honest enough to admit that I don't strive for that or think of that *all* the time. But at least it's on my mind.

I still mull over whether I disagree with him. It's hard to separate meaning from purpose from destiny. I still think that a personal Mission and Vision statement is really key to grounding yourself--the idea of encapsulating your entire life in a 6-word memoir. Mine hasn't changed. Not in 12 years now. **Lived Life. With Love. Full Cup.**

But my prime alternate is "Being different and making a difference"

One of the things I'll be interested to see if he tackles is this nebulous idea I have about whether there are times or circumstances when it is beneficial to be static, or whether we should always be looking to grow, even if that is...I don't know...growth by diminishment

"may they always be to serve rather than to show off". Our religion, in a way, takes note of that. This is a long-ago journal entry:

"Then tonight, went to a clever and delightful musical with Charlotte (actually, as a substitute hero for our friend Neil) put on by a community theatre group (Kitchener Waterloo Musical Productions) called Godspell. If you haven't seen it, it tells the parables, but in a very engaging way. I told Charlotte later that what I liked about the approach was that it gave a "heathen" the chance to get a <feel> for what the parables meant, where if I just read about them in the New

Testament, because it's not my religion, it really is just an intellectual exercise...where I <don't> feel that way about the writings of my own religion. But (as often happens when religion enters the fray), one of the bits of line bothered me. It's about God wanting his flock to keep their good deeds secret and not publicize them and there was a bit of a rant about the opposite being done in synagogues and the like. It did get me to thinking. And, were I to jump onstage and rebut (not tonight, my nephew's cold still has vicious hold upon my body), I would say that, yes, we do let the congregation know the good deeds of an individual, but I think that the point is not to recognize the individual, but to publish the doing of the good deed, in the hopes that it will foster more of the same among the other congregants. It is this sharing and <celebration> of the doing of good that I think is enriching as opposed to the hubris of recognition. Remember, I talked last time about a "Bar Mitzvah" being someone who is now of an age that he is responsible to do good deeds. The publishing of these serve as reminders to keep us on the path. If that makes sense".

19, bottom, this resonates Rohr-ly 😊

20, middle, see—here's where I do take up the challenge---because wondering about those things is what our species is about. Is **that** ego? I'm not saying we wouldn't accrue benefit by being more birdlike, but there is also benefit in thinking about meaning---at least I think so. I do see on page 21 that he does admit he might look at it differently on any given day.

20 bottom – 21. This would be a yes-but-no-but-yes answer for me. I agree with the positive value of walking in the woods or appreciating nature, for sure. But I tilt this some to say that the experience's value is in rebalancing us from the overly regimented and...OK...sterile lives that most of us lead in most parts of the everyday. Look---OUR LIVES CAN HAVE MEANING, BUT THAT SHOULD BE ENFOLDED WITHIN THE MEANING OF LIFE. Where he's saying that the meaning of our lives shouldn't be the central focus of our lives---if that's on the agenda, I can climb onboard with that.

I'm going to excerpt something from a different source this time---from my notes of our small group's book study on Homo Deus, the 2nd of the Harari trilogy (with Sapiens and 21 Lessons for the 21st Century). Sorry to track off a bit, but you'll get a laugh out of my notes!

*"234-235, life has no meaning. I could see the ACTS book study group throwing this whole *chapter* in the fire (grin). I am prepared to walk along this path with him only because he is using the term "meaning" in a particular way---that individually, the living of our lives has no impact or meaning for humanity as a whole. I violently disagree that an individual lives her life without meaning for her. Mind, that may be just my conceit...*

What is interesting is to take his views in this chapter and try to reconcile them with his emphasis on mythology and stories. Is belief, instead of our management process for what we can't control and don't understand (my definition), instead the coin with which we pay the price of the Modernity Deal?"

21, another of my recent quips: It's not hard to be a bright light when you can bask in the glow of a supernova

22, this may sound corny, but I don't care. The birthday gift I'll always treasure from someone above all others? The most precious gifts they can give---their time and their regard. Well....OK, and a new set of golf clubs!

24, I'm not sure about his self-assessment of his poem there. It seems like a pretty darned good one to me. Especially the ending.

25, "enough" is a really important word these days. It stands directly counterposed to most of societal structure, which is built on a core of an insatiable appetite, of "never enough/not enough". Do you know where I do insist on "never enough"? I can never meet enough good people or know enough good people.

26, jettisoning psychological junk. Good ideas there.

29-30. I've only been once. God---it's incredible to believe it was 40 years ago. We woke up at 4:30 to troop out to watch the sun rise and hit battleship rock and the area around it. I still remember the grandeur of that place at that moment so vividly (and do still have a picture to remind me). I felt very, very small standing on the south rim and looking at this statement of nature.

This chapter. Let me try it this way, from a much more recent journal entry:

"Why is it so important for us to be our world instead of just letting the world be? The human need to control her world seems to be genetically implanted. Anthropomorphism? The thirst for knowledge? We practice the deception that if we understand we can shape, and control. So why?"

*Maybe because it matters so much to us that we matter. The ultimate core of human hubris, even if it is for good and glory, is that we make and leave our mark. And because there are so *many* of us now... although the spectrum of diversity of mark-making is breathtaking, one can ask—does the world have enough room for this many marks. I was remarking to someone this morning that possibly the biggest challenge we face is not repairing or replenishing the world but *rebalancing* it. Our earth is so spun off its axis.*

*What we do in this way may only be a refinement of animals marking their territory, but it might be novel to let the world be our world instead of shaping the world *to* be our world.*

I do believe in meaning and purpose to life, but I am also starting to feel that it is important to release the hold on those things every once in a while so you can breathe the world and let it breathe you"