Contents

Welcome 12-13

Theme Bridges

Ovi Focus Bridge 14-15

World Bridge Union
Thanos Raftopoulos 17

Future to Europe
Anis H. Bajrektarevic 18-24

A Bridge between Two Cultures
for the Renewal of
Western Civilization
Dr. Emanuel L. Paparella 26-45

Bridges
A poem
Edna Nelson 46-47

Toward a New Humanism
Dr. Ernesto Paolozzi 52-56

A bridge too far
Murray Hunter 58-65

Selected Ovi articles 71-95
“Fear builds walls instead of bridges. I want a life of bridges, not walls.”
— Lisa Wingate, The Prayer Box
“Between death and hell a bridge shining silver wings offers his soul hope.”
—Aberjhani,
The River of Winged Dreams
“A girl without braids is like a city without bridges.”
— Roman Payne, The Wanderess
“The fate of the bridges is to be lonely; because bridges are to cross not to stay!”
— Mehmet Murat ildan
My first reaction to a theme titled “bridges” was absolutely positive and my response was partly to my personal situation. An immigrant. An immigrant for most of my life who always tried to build or cross bridges, all kind of bridges. Cultural, linguistic, religious, national, colour; everything you can imagine.

But while crossing and building bridges I also found out that others were building bridges aiming conquer, to take over. Actually the more I was thinking about it the more I was concluding that bridges were made to defeat whatever there is on the other side. The question here is what’s on the other side.

Living as an immigrant I realized that bridges form the other side meant assimilation. Surrender national, cultural and historic identity to a host nation that deals with you till the day you are fully assimilated as a second category citizen where stereotypes influence even official state services. All the bridges built under these circumstances are well made to manipulate you in a path with limited choices. You going the way they want or you are isolated and excluded by the system that helps you to survive.

And bridges became an obsession. I see bridges everywhere around me. There are the architectural bridges and there are the sentimental bridges. There are generational bridges and geographic bridges. Even bridges between life and death, war and peace. And then there are old bridges and new bridges. Modern bridges and classic bridges. People suicide form bridges.

Suddenly it was about not only place, time and ideology. There was another very dark side I wasn’t sure if I wanted to see. Bridges over dead land and bridges built for no reason at all.

While trying to understand the rules that run this one way bridge there are more bridges built around or on top you need to cross. The linguistic bridge which can also become a critical barrier. But learning a language trying to cross the bridge of communication is not that easy. Or at least it would have been much easier if you were sixteen and that was your only problem.

And then there are the cultural bridges that have to do with the simplest everyday things to the most complicated issues. For example a simple thing that I had to cross living in the north was the lunch hour. Northerners have early lunch compared to the southerners. It might sound simple and naïve example but having lunch everyday at 11 in the morning is not the same with having lunch at 3 in the afternoon. Still you have to build a bridge even for that.

I think this is one of these issues that perhaps we should have filled it with pictures of bridges and let the readers find their connection and what represent for each one of them.

Thanos Kalamidas
A bridge is a structure built to span physical obstacles such as a body of water, valley, or road, for the purpose of providing passage over the obstacle. There are many different designs that all serve unique purposes and apply to different situations. Designs of bridges vary depending on the function of the bridge, the nature of the terrain where the bridge is constructed and anchored, the material used to make it, and the funds available to build it.

The first bridges were made by nature itself—as simple as a log fallen across a stream or stones in the river. The first bridges made by humans were probably spans of cut wooden logs or planks and eventually stones, using a simple support and crossbeam arrangement. Some early Americans used trees or bamboo poles to cross small coves or wells to get from one place to another. A common form of lashing sticks, logs, and deciduous branches together involved the use of long reeds or other harvested fibers woven together to form a connective rope capable of binding and holding together the materials used in early bridges.

The Arkadiko Bridge is one of four Mycenaean corbel arch bridges part of a former network of roads, designed to accommodate chariots, between Tiryns to Epidaurus in the Peloponnese, in Greece. Dating to the Greek Bronze Age (13th century BC), it is one of the oldest arch bridges still in existence and use. Several intact arched stone bridges from the Hellenistic era can be found in the Peloponnese in southern Greece.

The greatest bridge builders of antiquity were the ancient Romans. The Romans built arch bridges and aqueducts that could stand in conditions that would damage or destroy earlier designs. Some stand today. An example is the Alcántara Bridge, built over the river Tagus, in Spain. The Romans also used cement, which reduced the variation of strength found in natural stone. Brick and mortar were used by the Incas civilization in the Andes mountains of South America, just prior to European colonization in the 16th century.

During the 18th century there were many innovations in the design of timber bridges by Hans Ulrich, Johannes Grubenmann, and others. The first book on bridge engineering was written by Hubert Gautier in 1716. A major breakthrough in bridge technology came with the erection of the Iron Bridge in Coalbrookdale, England in 1779. It used cast iron for the first time as arches to cross the river Severn.

With the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, truss systems of wrought iron were developed for larger bridges, but iron did not have the tensile strength to support large loads. With the advent of steel, which has a high tensile strength, much larger bridges were built, many using the ideas of Gustave Eiffel.

In 1927 welding pioneer Stefan Bryła designed the first welded road bridge in the world, the Maurzyce Bridge which was later built across the river Shudwia at Maurzyce near Łowicz, Poland in 1929. In 1995, the American Welding Society presented the Historic Welded Structure Award for the bridge to Poland.

The bridge also fell under the care of the Yavana Tushaspa, and the Satrap Rudra Daman. The use of stronger bridges using plated bamboo and iron chain was visible in India by about the 4th century. A number of bridges, both for military and commercial purposes, were constructed by the Mughal administration in India.

Although large Chinese bridges of wooden construction existed at the time of the Warring States, the oldest surviving stone bridge in China is the Zhaozhou Bridge, built from 595 to 605 AD during the Sui Dynasty. This bridge is also historically significant as it is the world’s oldest open-spandrel stone segmental arch bridge. European segmental arch bridges date back to at least the Alconétar Bridge (approximately 2nd century AD), while the enormous Roman era Trajan’s Bridge (105 AD) featured open-spandrel segmental arches in wooden construction.

Rope bridges, a simple type of suspension bridge, were used by the Incas civilization in the Andes mountains of South America, just prior to European colonization in the 16th century.

During the 18th century there were many innovations in the design of timber bridges by Hans Ulrich, Johannes Grubenmann, and others. The first book on bridge engineering was written by Hubert Gautier in 1716. A major breakthrough in bridge technology came with the erection of the Iron Bridge in Coalbrookdale, England in 1779. It used cast iron for the first time as arches to cross the river Severn.

With the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, truss systems of wrought iron were developed for larger bridges, but iron did not have the tensile strength to support large loads. With the advent of steel, which has a high tensile strength, much larger bridges were built, many using the ideas of Gustave Eiffel.

In 1927 welding pioneer Stefan Bryła designed the first welded road bridge in the world, the Maurzyce Bridge which was later built across the river Shudwia at Maurzyce near Łowicz, Poland in 1929. In 1995, the American Welding Society presented the Historic Welded Structure Award for the bridge to Poland.

Contract Bridge

Contract Bridge was invented in the 1920’s and in the following decades it was popularised especially in the USA by Ely Culbertson. Bridge currently occupies a position of great prestige, and is more comprehensively organised than any other card game. There are clubs, tournaments and championships throughout the world.

Rubber Bridge is the basic form of Contract Bridge, played by four players. Informal social bridge games are often played this way, and rubber bridge is also played in clubs for money.

Duplicate Bridge is the game normally played in clubs, tournaments and matches. The game is basically the same but the luck element is reduced by having the same deals replayed by different sets of players. At least eight players are required for this. There are some significant differences in the scoring.

Chicago is a version of Bridge played by four people over four deals.

Contract Bridge developed in the 1920’s from Auction Bridge, which is different mainly in the scoring. In Auction Bridge, overtricks count towards making game, so it is only necessary to bid high enough to win the contract - there is no incentive to bid all the tricks you can make.

Before Auction Bridge there was Bridge-Whist or Straight Bridge (at the time this game was just called Bridge). Here is a link to the earliest published rules of Bridge, which appeared in 1886 under the name Britich or Russian Whist. In Bridge-Whist there is no bidding at all - the dealer either names a trump suit or passes, in which case the dealer’s partner must choose trumps. In either case the dealer’s partner is dummy. Either opponent may double before the lead to the first trick, and if doubled, the dealer’s side may redouble. In the earliest form of the game, after any redouble, the other side can redouble again, and this can continue indefinitely.

The duplicate format, in which the same cards are played at more than one table, has been in use since the 19th century for competitions in Auction Bridge, Straight Bridge, their ancestor Whist, and several other four-player card games, as well as for Contract Bridge from its invention to the present day.

http://www.pagat.com/boston/bridge.html

Tooth Bridge

A bridge may be recommended if you’re missing one or more teeth. Gaps left by missing teeth eventually cause the remaining teeth to rotate or shift into the empty spaces, resulting in a bad bite. The imbalance caused by missing teeth can also lead to gum disease and temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders.

Bridges are commonly used to replace one or more missing teeth. They span the space where the teeth are missing. Bridges are cemented to the natural teeth or implants surrounding the empty space. These teeth, called abutments, serve as anchors for the bridge. A replacement tooth, called a pontic, is attached to the crowns that cover the abutments. As with crowns, you have a choice of materials for bridges. Your dentist can help you decide which to use, based on the location of the missing tooth (or teeth), its function, aesthetic considerations and cost. Porcelain or ceramic bridges can be matched to the color of your natural teeth.

http://www.colgate.com/
Daddy, loves Mummy.
He kicks her, punches her, shouts nasty words and makes her cry.
And Daddy loves me.
He burns me, slaps me, locks me in a cupboard and calls me a failure.
I hate love.

STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NOW!
The EU of social welfare or of generational warfare, the continent of debt-bound economies or of knowledge-based community? Is the predatory generation in power? Why the only organized counter-narrative comes as a lukewarm Mouse Mickey – between Anonymous and Pirate party, from the Wiki-bleaky to Snowden-picky. Europe’s redemption lies in the re-affirmation of the Lisbon Strategy of 2000 (and of Göteborg 2001), a ten-year development plan that focused on innovation, mobility and education, social, economic and environmental renewal. Otherwise a generational warfare will join class and ethnic conflicts as a major dividing line of the EU society in decline.

Back in the good old days of the Lisbon Strategy (when the Union was proclaimed to be the most competitive, knowledge-based economy of the world), the Prodi and Barroso Commissions have been both repeatedly stressing that: “at present, some of our world trading partners compete with primary resources, which we in the EU/Europe do not have. Some compete with cheap labor, which we do not want. Some compete on the back of their environment, which we cannot accept…”

What has happened in the meantime?

The over-financialization and hyper-deregulations of the global(-ized) markets has brought the low-waged Chinese (peasant converted into a) worker into the spotlight of European considerations. Thus, in the last two decades, the EU economic edifice has gradually but steadily departed from its traditional labor-centered base, to the overseas investment-centered construct. This mega event, as we see now with the Euro-zone dithyramb, has multiple consequences on both the inner-European cultural, socio-economic and political balance as well as on China’s (overheated) growth. That sparse, rarefied and compressed labor, which still resides in the aging Union is either bitterly competing with or is heavily leaning on the guest workers who are per definition underrepresented or silenced by the ‘rightist’ movements and otherwise disadvantaged and hindered in their elementary socio-political rights. That’s how the world’s last cosmopolitan – Europe departed from the world of work, and that’s why the Continent today cannot orient itself (both critically needed to identify a challenge, as well as to calibrate and jointly redefine the EU path). To orient, one need to center itself: Without left and right, there is no center, right?!

To orient, one need to center itself, at first

Contemporary Union has helplessly lost its political ‘left’. The grand historical achievement of Europe – after the centuries–long and bloody class struggle – was the final, lasting reconciliatory compromise between capital and labor. (E.g. tightening the ‘financial screws’ while unemployment kept its sharp rise, was a big mantra of the French, British, German and Italian political center-right in late 1920s and early 1930s.) It resulted in a consolidation of economically entrepreneurial and vibrant but at the same time socially just and beneficial state. This colossal civilizational accomplishment is what brought about the international recognition, admiration, model attraction and its competitiveness as well as inner continuity, prosperity and stability to the post WWII Europe.
In the country of origin of the very word dēmokratía, the President of the Socialist International (and the Nation’s PM) has recently introduced to his own citizenry the most drastic cuts that any European social welfare system had experienced in the last 80 years. The rest of official Europe (and the rest of ‘unofficial us’) still chews the so-called Greek debt tirade as if it is not about the very life of 12 million souls, but a mere technical item studied at secondary schools’ crash-course on macro economy.

The present-day Union, aged but not rested, is (in) a shadow of the grand taboo that the EU can produce everything but its own life. The Old Continent is demographically sinking, while economically contracting, yet only keeps afloat. Even the EU Commission, back in 2005, fairly diagnosed in its Green Paper Confronting demographic change – a new solidarity between generations that: “...Never in history has there been economic growth without population growth.”

The numbers of unemployed, underemployed or underpaid/working-poor are constantly growing. (Simply, the unemployed is not a free person, but an excluded and insecure, obedient and backward-minded, aggressive and brutal individual.) The average age of the first labor market entry is already over 30 in many MS – not only of Europe’s south. The middle-class is pauperized and a cross-generational social contract is silently abandoned, as one of its main operative instruments – the Lisbon strategy – has been eroded, and finally lost its coherence.

To worsen the hardship, nearly all European states have responded wrongly to the crisis by hammering down their respective education and science/R&D budgets. It is not a policy move, but an anti-visionary panicking that delivers only cuts on the future (generations).

(E.g. the EU investments in renewables have been decreasing ever since 2008. Still, today, the EU budget allocation to agriculture subsides is 10 times bigger than to R&D.) No wonder that our cities at present – instead of blossoming with the new technologies – are full of pauperized urban farmers: a middle class citizenry which desperately turns to mini agriculture as the only way to meet their nutritional needs.

Silenced Youth with Bluetooth

Is the subtle, unnoticed generational warfare, instead of the social welfare already going on??

Recent generational accounting figures illuminate a highly disturbing future prospect for the EU youth. Decades of here-us-now disheartened consumerism corroded the EU’s community fabrics so much that, cross-generationally speaking, the present is the most socioeconomically egotistic European society of all times.

Elaborating on the known ‘ageing argument’ of Fukuyama, I earlier stated that: “…political, social and economic changes including very important technological breakthroughs, primarily occurred at generational intervals…Presently, with demographically collapsing European societies, of three or more generations active and working at the same time, the young cohort (of go-getters) will never constitute more than a tiny minority. Hence, neither generational change nor technological breakthrough (which usually comes along) in future will ever be that of our past: full and decisive.” (Our Common Futures: EURO-MED Human Capital beyond 2020, Crans Montana Forum, Monaco, 2005).

Conclusively, many of the Third World countries are known by having predatory elites in power that continuously hinder the society at large and hijack their progress to its narrow ends. The EU might easily end up with the predatory generation in power.

On the other hand, Europe has never witnessed its own youth so apolitical, apathetic and disengaged in last 250 years – as their larger front of realities has contracted into the sporadic and self-disfranchising protests over the alleged, but isolated cyber freedoms or over decontextualized gay-rights à la Lady Gaga, only. No wonder that the idea of taxing the next generation at twice the current rates seems – unchecked and unnoticed – gaining the full ground.

Interestingly enough, in the times of a tacit generational warfare, any consolidated fight for a social and generational cause is completely absent. The only organized revolt of European youth comes as a lukewarm demand for a few more freedoms to download internet contents (Anonymous, Pirate party, Wiki- leaky, Snowden-picky, etc.) or through colorful sporadic campaigns for de-contextualized gay and other behavioral rights. Despite their worsened conditions, the young Europeans didn’t come even close to the core of representative democracy – e.g. to request 20% seat-allocation for the below-30 age cohort in the European and national parliaments – as one of the effective means to improve their future prospects.

Demographically, socio-economically and politically marginalized, European youngsters are chronically underrepresented since exceptionally few MPs and MEPs are below age of 30. Or as Fukuyama noted in his recent essay: “Something strange is going on in the world today. The global financial crisis that began in 2008 and the ongoing crisis of the euro are both products of the model of lightly regulated financial capitalism that emerged over the past three decades… most dynamic recent populist movement to date has been the right-wing… where the left is anemic and right-wing populist parties are on the move… This absence of a plausible progressive counternarrative is unhealthy, because competition is good for intellectual debate just as it is for economic activity. And serious intellectual debate is urgently needed, since the current form of globalized capitalism is eroding the middle-class social base on which liberal democracy rests. (Fukuyama, F. (2012) ‘The Future of History’ Foreign Affairs Magazine 91(1) 2012).
The troll of control: No prosperity via austerity

What is the additional pervasive effect of (any) crisis on democracy? 9/11 is just one in series of confirmations (e.g. from the ‘Nixon shock’ to the ongoing Greek/Euro debt saga) that any particular crisis may turn beneficial to those seeking the nontransparent power concentration.

Once a real democracy starts compromising its vital contents, it corrodes degenerates and turns formal. Many contemporary examples show us that for a formal democracy, it is not far from ending up as an oppressive autocratic dictatorship with either police or military or both residing outside a strict civil and democratic control. A real democracy will keep its financial establishment (as much as its armed organs, and other alienation-potent segments) under a strict popular democratic scrutiny and civil control through the clearly defined mechanisms of checks and balances. That is the quintessence of democracy.

(E.g. Without any electoral dependence on EU governments or EU voters, thus, with unconstrained authority and means – the ECB quickly produced over € 1,000 billion to refinance the banks. It seems as if the European integration does not rest on social welfare, public services, job creation and labor protection, enveloped in a democratic, transparent atmosphere of full accountability and universal, especially cross-generational, participation.)

“...laments the FRIDE Institute Director, Richard Youngs in his luminary book: Europe’s Decline and Fall. Indeed, is there any rating agency for ethical bankruptcy, for a deep moral crisis affecting all societal segments around us? The ability to comprehend our common destiny, to show our cross-EU empathy and solidarity is also hitting its record low. The southern/peripheral member states are already pejoratively nicknamed as PIGS by the bank analysts and bond traders (an ill-made, but increasingly circulating acronym referring to Portugal, Italy/Ireland, Greece and Spain).

Currently, the end game of the so-called Euro-crises seems to reveal that the financial institutions are neither under democratic control nor within the national sovereignty domain. (E.g. 20 years ago, the value of overall global financial transactions was 12 times the entire world’s gross annual product. By the end of 2012, it was nearly 70 times as big.) How else to explain that the EU –so far– prefers the unselective punitive action of collective punishment on the entire population/s (e.g. of Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Ireland, etc.) – meaning: to control, then it is keen on a thorough, energetic investigation of responsible individuals – meaning to: resolve? So far, Iceland remains the only country that indicted and sentenced its Prime Minister in relation to the financial crisis.

From the democratic, transparent, just, visionary and all-participatory, a holiday from history- model of the European Community, the EU should not downgrade itself to a lame copy of the Federation of Theocracies – the late Ottoman Empire.

This authoritarian monarchy is remembered as a highly oppressive and undemocratic although to a degree liberal and minority-right tolerant feudal state. The Ottoman Federation of Theocracies was of a simple functioning system: with the Sultan’s handpicked Grand Porta (verticalized/homogeneous monetary space of the EMU and ECB, moderately restrained by the Council of the EU) that was unquestionably serviced by the religious communities from all over the waste Oriental Empire (horizontalized/heterogeneous fiscal space of the EMU, in which every state freely exercises its sovereignty in collecting taxes and spending), unless otherwise prescribed off-hand by the Sultan and his Porta (ECB and IMF).

Ergo, negotiating on the coined “Euro-zone debt crisis” (debt bound economies) without restaging the forgotten Lisbon strategy (knowledge-based Community), while keeping a heavy tax on labor but constantly pardoning financial capital, is simply a lame talk about form without any substance. Clearly, it is a grand bargain of a tight circle behind the closed doors about control via austerity, not a cross-generationally wide-open debate about vision of prosperity.

Tomorrow never (D)Lies

Despite a constant media bombardment with cataclysmic headlines, the issue is not what will happen with the EURO or any other socio-economic and political instrument. The right question is what will happen with us – as means are always changeable and many, but the aim remains only one: the self-realization of society at large.

Indeed, the difference between a dialectic and cyclical history is a distance between success and fall: the later Lisbon (Treaty) should not replace but complement the previous Lisbon (Strategy). It is both a predictive and prescriptive wording: either a status quo of egoism, consumerism and escapism or a concept of social dynamism resting on a broad all-participatory base. To meet the need is/was always at our reach, but to feed the greed no wealth will ever be enough. Restaging the Lisbon Strategy and reintroducing all of its contents is not just Europe’s only strategic opportunity, but its grand generational/historic responsibility as well. Or as Monnet once explained this logic of necessity: “Crisis are the great unifier!”

The troll of control: No prosperity via austerity

What is the additional pervasive effect of (any) crisis on democracy? 9/11 is just one in series of confirmations (e.g. from the ‘Nixon shock’ to the ongoing Greek/Euro debt saga) that any particular crisis may turn beneficial to those seeking the nontransparent power concentration.

Once a real democracy starts compromising its vital contents, it corrodes degenerates and turns formal. Many contemporary examples show us that for a formal democracy, it is not far from ending up as an oppressive autocratic dictatorship with either police or military or both residing outside a strict civil and democratic control. A real democracy will keep its financial establishment (as much as its armed organs, and other alienation-potent segments) under a strict popular democratic scrutiny and civil control through the clearly defined mechanisms of checks and balances. That is the quintessence of democracy.

(E.g. Without any electoral dependence on EU governments or EU voters, thus, with unconstrained authority and means – the ECB quickly produced over € 1,000 billion to refinance the banks. It seems as if the European integration does not rest on social welfare, public services, job creation and labor protection, enveloped in a democratic, transparent atmosphere of full accountability and universal, especially cross-generational, participation.)

“There has been little willingness to strengthen civic watchdogs of international financial institutions, which might provide a more accurate service than the commercially driven credit-rating agencies that performed so disastrously in the financial crisis....” laments the FRIDE Institute Director, Richard Youngs in his luminary book: Europe’s Decline and Fall. Indeed, is there any rating agency for ethical bankruptcy, for a deep moral crisis affecting all societal segments around us? The ability to comprehend our common destiny, to show our cross-EU empathy and solidarity is also hitting its record low. The southern/peripheral member states are already pejoratively nicknamed as PIGS by the bank analysts and bond traders (an ill-made, but increasingly circulating acronym referring to Portugal, Italy/Ireland, Greece and Spain).

Currently, the end game of the so-called Euro-crises seems to reveal that the financial institutions are neither under democratic control nor within the national sovereignty domain. (E.g. 20 years ago, the value of overall global financial transactions was 12 times the entire world’s gross annual product. By the end of 2012, it was nearly 70 times as big.) How else to explain that the EU –so far– prefers the unselective punitive action of collective punishment on the entire population/s (e.g. of Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Ireland, etc.) – meaning: to control, then it is keen on a thorough, energetic investigation of responsible individuals – meaning to: resolve? So far, Iceland remains the only country that indicted and sentenced its Prime Minister in relation to the financial crisis.

From the democratic, transparent, just, visionary and all-participatory, a holiday from history- model of the European Community, the EU should not downgrade itself to a lame copy of the Federation of Theocracies – the late Ottoman Empire.

This authoritarian monarchy is remembered as a highly oppressive and undemocratic although to a degree liberal and minority-right tolerant feudal state. The Ottoman Federation of Theocracies was of a simple functioning system: with the Sultan’s handpicked Grand Porta (verticalized/homogeneous monetary space of the EMU and ECB, moderately restrained by the Council of the EU) that was unquestionably serviced by the religious communities from all over the waste Oriental Empire (horizontalized/heterogeneous fiscal space of the EMU, in which every state freely exercises its sovereignty in collecting taxes and spending), unless otherwise prescribed off-hand by the Sultan and his Porta (ECB and IMF).

Ergo, negotiating on the coined “Euro-zone debt crisis” (debt bound economies) without restaging the forgotten Lisbon strategy (knowledge-based Community), while keeping a heavy tax on labor but constantly pardoning financial capital, is simply a lame talk about form without any substance. Clearly, it is a grand bargain of a tight circle behind the closed doors about control via austerity, not a cross-generationally wide-open debate about vision of prosperity.

Tomorrow never (D)Lies

Despite a constant media bombardment with cataclysmic headlines, the issue is not what will happen with the EURO or any other socio-economic and political instrument. The right question is what will happen with us – as means are always changeable and many, but the aim remains only one: the self-realization of society at large.

Indeed, the difference between a dialectic and cyclical history is a distance between success and fall: the later Lisbon (Treaty) should not replace but complement the previous Lisbon (Strategy). It is both a predictive and prescriptive wording: either a status quo of egoism, consumerism and escapism or a concept of social dynamism resting on a broad all-participatory base. To meet the need is/was always at our reach, but to feed the greed no wealth will ever be enough. Restaging the Lisbon Strategy and reintroducing all of its contents is not just Europe’s only strategic opportunity, but its grand generational/historic responsibility as well. Or as Monnet once explained this logic of necessity: “Crisis are the great unifier!”
This article is an extended version of the keynote address at the 4th Turkey – Europe Forum, (Session VI ‘Future of the EU: Steps of Economic and Political Union’), an international conference held in Istanbul, Turkey, 20–23 November 2013.

References:
1. Lisbon European Council (2000), Employment, Economic Reforms and Social Cohesion: Towards a Europe based on Innovation and Knowledge, Brussels COM 5256/00 + ADD1 COR 1 (en)
11. Bajrektarevic, A. (2005), Green/Policy Paper Submitted to the closing plenary of the Ministerial (and the statement of the Slovenian Chairmanship summarizing the recommendations and conclusions of the OSCE Ministerial Summit Prague 2005), OSCE Documents/EEA 2005/05/14857/En
Preamble: When the editor of Ovi magazine Thanos Kalamidas announced this year’s thematic PDF issue, a theme that focuses on the idea of “bridges”, it occurred to me that I had already contributed an article on such a theme, the concept of the bridging of cultures, for the eleventh Ovi symposium session which perfectly dovetails it. I am therefore resubmitting it for the benefit of those readers who while they may not have seen it in the symposium. Visually, the idea is perhaps best portrayed by the famous “bridge to everywhere” which sprang from the fertile mind of Leonardo Da Vinci (see above picture). It was never built during Leonardo’s life but has been realized in Norway in our modern times.
It is not a question of annihilating science, but of controlling it. Science is totally dependent upon philosophical opinions for all of its goals and methods, though it easily forgets it.

--Friedrich Nietzsche

If one reads the history of philosophy in the West, it will not take very long before one realizes that there is from its beginnings an irrationalism that regularly manifests itself in anti-scientific biases of one sort or another. Certain varieties of 19th century romanticism fit here. One discerns it immediately in the writings of Nietzsche, perhaps the best known philosopher to first point out the dichotomy of the Dionysian and the Apollonian in ancient Greek culture.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

There is nowadays a widespread suspicion of the achievements of science coming close to an outright rejection of the idea of factual truth. This applies to academic circles too; to radical movements and “theories” such as cultural constructivism, deconstruction, radical feminism, and various other politically correct anti-empirical ists and isms. Paul R. Gross and Norman Levitt have already ably analyzed this thorny issue in their book in *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science*, the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. They show that this new hostility to science is part of a more general hostility to Western values and institutions, an anti-Enlightenment hostility that “mocks the idea that … a civilization is capable of progressing from ignorance to insight.”

And then of course there is *The Two Worlds of C.P. Snow*. Few literary phrases have had as enduring an afterlife as “the two cultures,” (1959) coined by C. P. Snow to describe what he saw as a dangerous schism between science and literary life. More than 50 years ago Snow, an English physicist, civil servant and novelist, delivered a lecture at Cambridge called “The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution,” which was later published in book form. Snow’s famous lament was that “the intellectual life of the whole of Western society is increasingly being split into two polar groups,” consisting of scientists on the one hand and literary scholars on the other. Snow largely blamed literary types for this “gulf of mutual incomprehension.” These intellectuals, Snow asserted, were shamefully unembarrassed about not grasping, say, the second law of thermodynamics — even though asking if someone knows it, he writes, “is about the scientific equivalent of: Have you read a work of Shakespeare’s?”

The deeper point of “The Two Cultures” is not that we have two cultures, that is quite obvious. It is that science, above all, will keep us prosperous and secure; culture is merely frosting on the cake. Scientists, he argues, are morally “the soundest group of intellectuals we have,” while literary ethics remain suspect. Literary culture has “temporary periods” of moral failure, he argues, quoting a scientist friend who mentions the fascist proclivities of Pound and Yeats and Wyndham Lewis, and asks, “Didn’t the influence of all they represent bring Auschwitz that much nearer?” Obviously, the table is being turned around here.
The Two Cultures was originally published in 1959

C. P. Snow (1905-1980) straddling the two cultures

Snow’s essay provoked an ad hominem response from the Cambridge critic F. R. Leavis — who called Snow “intellectually as undistinguished as it is possible to be” — and a more measured one from Lionel Trilling, who nonetheless thought Snow had produced “a book which is mistaken in a very large way indeed.” Snow’s cultural tribalism, Trilling argued, impaired the “ possibility of rational discourse.”

Snow’s essay got an additional boost in 1962 when the critic F. R. Leavis published his attack on The Two Cultures in The Spectator. Leavis derided what he considered the “embarrassing vulgarity of style,” his “complete ignorance” of history, literature, the history of civilization, and the human significance of the Industrial Revolution. He can’t be said to know what a novel is, so continues Leavis, he is “utterly without a glimmer of what creative literature is, or why it matters.”

The extreme reaction was partly a response to Snow’s own extremity. But the questions raised by The Two Cultures — and by Leavis’s criticism remain. There is little doubt that since Galileo and beyond the gulf between scientists and literary intellectuals has grown wider as science has become ever more specialized and complex and seems unbridgeable. The more pressing issue concerns the fate of culture in a world increasingly determined by science and technology. Leavis described C. P. Snow as a “portent” revealing modern society’s tendency to trivialize culture by reducing it to a form of diversion or entertainment. For him, it was not surprising that the extreme reaction was partly a response to Snow’s own extremity. But the questions raised by The Two Cultures — and by Leavis’s criticism remain. There is little doubt that since Galileo and beyond the gulf between scientists and literary intellectuals has grown wider as science has become ever more specialized and complex and seems unbridgeable. The more pressing issue concerns the fate of culture in a world increasingly determined by science and technology. Leavis described C. P. Snow as a “portent” revealing modern society’s tendency to trivialize culture by reducing it to a form of diversion or entertainment. For him, it was not surprising that The Two Cultures so captured the public imagination: it did so precisely because it pandered to the debased notion of culture championed by such a problem? Because, he argues in the latter half of his essay, it leads many capable minds to ignore science as a vocation, which prevents us from solving the world’s “main issue,” the wealth gap caused by industrialization, which threatens global stability.

Some of this sounds familiar; for decades we have regarded science as crucial to global competitiveness, an idea invoked as recently as in Barack Obama’s second presidential campaign. But in other ways “The Two Cultures” remains irrevocably a cold war document. This is, I think, why Snow’s diagnosis remains popular while his remedy is ignored. We have spent recent decades convincing ourselves that technological progress occurs in unpredictable entrepreneurial floods, allowing us to surf the waves of creative destruction. Yet “The Two Cultures” actually embodies one of the deepest tensions in our ideas about progress. Snow, too, wants to believe the sheer force of science cannot be restrained, that it will change the world — for the better, and it will happen naturally, without human guiding hand. The Industrial Revolution, he writes, occurred “without anyone,” including intellectuals, “noticing what was happening.” But at the same time, he argues that 20th-century progress was being stymied by the indifference of poets and novelists. That’s why he wrote “The Two Cultures.”

This question is the aspect of “The Two Cultures” that speaks most directly to us today. Your answer — and many different ones are possible — probably determines how widely and deeply you think we need to spread scientific knowledge. Do we need to produce more scientists and engineers to fight climate change? How should they be deployed? Do we need broader public understanding of the issue to support governmental action? Or do we need something else? “The Two Cultures” initially asserts the moral distinctiveness of scientists, but ends with a plea for enlisting science to halt the spread of Communism. In this sense it is a Cold War document. Nevertheless, some scholars have pointed out that contrasting scientific and humanistic knowledge is a repetition of the Methodenstreit of 1890 German universities. In the social sciences it is also commonly proposed as the quarrel of positivism versus interpretivism. Snow takes the philosophical position of scientism in conflating the complex fields of knowledge of the humanities.

As soon as it appeared, the brief work became a sensation on both sides of the Atlantic. By 1961, the book was already in its seventh printing. I personally read it while I was in college in 1965. Its fame got an additional boost in 1962 when the critic F. R. Leavis published his attack on The Two Cultures in The Spectator. Leavis derided what he considered the “embarrassing vulgarity of style,” his “complete ignorance” of history, literature, the history of civilization, and the human significance of the Industrial Revolution. Leavis described C. P. Snow as a “portent” revealing modern society’s tendency to trivialize culture by reducing it to a form of diversion or entertainment. For him, it was not surprising that The Two Cultures so captured the public imagination: it did so precisely because it pandered to the debased notion of culture championed by established taste. As we look around it is hard not to notice a civilization and its culture bent on cultural suicide: the triumph of pop culture, the glorification of mindless sensationalism, the attack on the very idea of permanent cultural achievement — in the West. All this in tandem with unprecedented material wealth and profound cultural and intellectual degradation. C. P. Snow may be the canary in the mine. He is a symptom of something deeply troubling.
The tone of *The Two Cultures* is intriguing in itself. It swings between the anecdotal and the argument that literary intellectuals (“the traditional culture”) “wish the future did not exist,” Snow he writes, “then the traditional culture responds by wishing the future did not exist.” To clinch his This is a formulation that Snow likes enough to repeat: “If the scientists have the future in their bones,”

The tone of *The Two Cultures* is intriguing in itself. It swings between the anecdotal and the apocalyptic. In some “afterthoughts” on the two-cultures controversy that he published in *Encounter* in 1960, Snow refers to his lecture as a “call to action.” But what is the problem? And what actions does Snow recommend given the gulf of mutual incomprehension of which he talks? On one page the problem is reforming the schools so that “English and American children get a reasonable education.” A bit later the problem is mobilizing Western resources to industrialize India, Africa and Southeast Asia, and Latin America, and the Middle East, in order to forestall widespread starvation, revolution, and anarchy. The Soviet Union, as far as Snow is concerned. It all appears as a terrible muddle. It would be nice if “literary intellectuals” knew more science, the gulf as described by Snow seems unbreakable, Snow uses “literary intellectual” interchangeably with “traditional culture.” This fusion yields the observation that there is “an unscientific,” even an “anti-scientific” flavor to “the whole ‘traditional culture’.” What can this mean? Aristotle, Galileo, Copernicus, Descartes, Boyle, Newton, Locke, Kant: are there any more “traditional” representatives of “the whole ‘traditional culture’”?

At the beginning of his lecture, Snow affects a generous even-handedness in his attitude toward scientists and literary intellectuals. There’s a bit of criticism for both. But this show of even-handedness soon evaporates. The “culture” of science, Snow tells us, “contains a great deal of argument, usually much more rigorous, and almost always at a higher conceptual level, than the literary persons’ arguments.” Literary intellectuals are “natural Luddites”; scientists “have the future in their bones.” This is a formulation that Snow likes enough to repeat: “If the scientists have the future in their bones,” he writes, “then the traditional culture responds by wishing the future did not exist.” To clinch his argument that literary intellectuals (“the traditional culture”) “wish the future did not exist,” Snow

Snow is especially impatient with the politics of “the traditional culture.” He indicts “nine-tenths” of the great literary figures of the early twentieth century (1914–1950) as politically suspect. Scientists, too, appreciate the tragic nature of human life—that each of us “dies alone.” But they are wise enough to distinguish between the “individual condition and the social condition” of man. As Leavis notes, the second law of thermodynamics is a piece of specialized knowledge, useful or irrelevant depending on the job to be done; the works of Shakespeare provide a window into the soul of humanity: to read them is tantamount to acquiring self-knowledge. Snow seems oblivious to this distinction as are most professors selling capitalism and entrepreneurship nowadays. A similar confusion is at work in Snow’s effort to neutralize individuality by assimilating it to the project of “social hope.” But what is the “social hope” that transcends, cancels or makes indifferent the inescapable tragic existential condition, the angst of choosing one’s destiny of each individual as pointed out by a Kierkegaard? Where, if not in individuals, is what is hoped for … to be located? This is for Leavis the central philosophism and, the deeply anti-cultural bias, of Snow’s position. For him, a society’s material standard of living provides the ultimate, really the only, criterion of “the good life”; science is the means of raising the standard of living, ergo science is the final arbiter of value. Culture—literary, artistic culture—is merely frosting on the cake. It provides us with no moral challenge or insight, because the only serious questions are how to keep increasing and effectively distributing the world’s wealth, and these are not questions culture is competent to address. “The upshot” of Snow’s argument, Leavis writes, “is that if you insist on the need for any other kind of concern, entailing forethought, action and provision, about the human future—any other kind of misgiving—than that which talks in terms of productivity, material standards of living, hygienic and technological progress, then you are a Luddite.”

The progress of science may be inexorable but Leavis is not prepared to accept that science represents a moral resource or that there is such a thing as a culture of science. Science may tell us how best to do things we have already decided to do, not why we should do them. Its province is the province of means not ends. That is its glory and its limitation. In this sense the statement by Albert Einstein makes perfect sense: our age is characterized by perfection of means and scarcity of goals.

One word that is missing from Snow’s essay the editors of The Spectator note in an unsigned editorial, is “philosophy”—“that effort to impart moral direction that was found in the best nineteenth-century English writers.” Chief among them Matthew Arnold whose Rede lecture delivered in 1882—the same as Snow’s lecture, and titled “Literature and Science”—was itself a kind of “two cultures” argument. But his point was essentially the opposite of Snow’s. Written in response to T. H. Huxley’s insistence that literature should and inevitably would be supplanted by science, Arnold argued that, “so long as human nature is what it is,” culture would continue to provide mankind with its fulcrum of moral understanding.

The Poet Matthew Arnold (1822-1888): Champion of the Liberal Arts
Of course there is a more crucial question which is the one posed by Heidegger in his Being and Time as stated above: “Why is there something rather than nothing?” but scientists who seem more interested in the how we keep the game going, do not show the same enthusiasm for the why the universe exists in the first place.

But to continue with Asimov’s story, after mankind has disappeared, the sum mental potential of its mental processes lives on in AC, a supercomputer which continues to “think” while the stars crumble, planets cool, and space and time simply cease to exist. Eons have passed, and AC has finally discovered how to reverse the direction of entropy. But there is nobody to tell, mankind and the universe being long dead. No matter. “Let there be light!” AC says, “And there was light.” This is quite a story to reflect upon. What is Asimov trying to tell us as a scientist as he ponders on the future of the universe?

Arnold, like Leavis is concerned with “the cultural consequences of the technological revolution.” He too argues passionately against the trivialization of culture, against “a superficial humanism” that is “mainly decorative.” And both looked to culture to provide a way of relating the “results of modern science” to “our need for conduct, our need for beauty.” This is the crux: that culture is in some deep sense inseparable from conduct—from that unscientific but ineluctable question, “How should I live my life?” Leavis’s point was the same. It is exactly the upheavals precipitated by the march of science and technology that has rendered culture—the arts and humanities—both more precarious and more precious. So the preservation of culture as a guide to “conduct” is now more crucial than ever. For Arnold, if mankind was to confront the moral challenges of modern science “in full intelligent possession of its humanity” and maintain “a basic living deference towards that to which, opening as it does into the unknown and itself unmeasurable, we know we belong,” then the realm of culture had to be protected from the reductive forces of a crude scientific rationalism.

The temptation to reduce culture to a reservoir of titillating pastimes is all but irresistible nowadays. Rock music, “performance art,” television, video games (not to mention drugs, violence, and mindless sex): since Descartes we are everywhere encouraged to think of ourselves as complicated machines for consuming sensations—the more, and more exotic, the better. Culture is no longer an invitation to confront our humanity but a series of opportunities to impoverish it through diversion. We are, as Eliot put it in Four Quartets, “distracted from distraction by distraction.” C. P. Snow and his entrepreneurial cohorts represents the smiling, jovial face of this predicament. Critics like Arnold and Leavis offer us the beginnings of an alternative. Let those who have ears, let them hear.

In November 1956, a month after C. P. Snow published his essay on The Two Cultures (already considered in a previous article), the American novelist and professor of biochemistry Isaac Asimov completed his short story “The Last Question” which centers on the pressing reality of universal entropy: endgame of the Second Law of Thermodynamic which can easily be interpreted to mean that the universe is doomed and is journeying toward its own final demise. In this story we are treated to this intriguing scenario: as humanity merges with the technology it has itself created and idolizes it, each generation asks this crucial question “How can the net amount of entropy of the universe be massively decreased?” only to receive the scientific answer, “There is as yet insufficient data for a meaningful answer.”

I think that the real message of the story is not that there are deterministic laws at work in the universe, nor that man is an insignificant late comer to the cosmic drama. No, the real message is that when scientists attempt to give final meaningful answers such as the meaning of the universe, they invariably prove that they are still in Plato’s famous cave, and what they allege to be light or the sun is really is a secondary man-made light, the fire in the cave, or science which supposedly has all the answers that philosophy has failed to deliver. What is most shocking in the Asimov story is that at the end AC begins to hubristically think of itself as a god of sorts and thinks that he can reinvent the wheel of creation. This is Nietzsche’s eternal return in a nihilistic universe without meaning and purpose.

It is an exercise in self-deception to think that one can escape the box of scientism and logical positivism by using science and logical positivism as a research tool. One will remain stuck in that box, just at the chained slaves in Plato’s cave remain stuck in the cave looking at appearances and shadows projected on the wall by the light of fire (a secondary light) and assuming them to be reality, as long as they are unable to cut their chains and leave the cave and see the true light of the sun.

I suppose another way to stage the problematic is this question: does human kind have an Archimedean lever by which to escape the constraints of time and space and determine where the universe came from and where it may ultimately be headed? Do those spiritual books, such as the Bible, that ask the right questions and hint at a plausible answer, to be deemed mere myths and fables, a crude unscientific uncivilized attempt to explain imaginatively what one cannot explain rationally and scientifically? I surmise that most atheists would answer with a yes without being able to satisfactorily explain how order can come out of chaos and how the universe can make and then destroy itself, never mind the why which remains a more important question than how in man’s search for meaning.

Isaac Asimov (1920-1992) who wrote the short story The Last Question

T.H. Huxley (1825-1895), friend of Charles Darwin whose scientific concerns were Physiology, Paleontology, Geology, and Natural History
On a more practical level, there are a plethora of long and impressive scientific papers, complete with hundreds of academic footnotes and bibliographical information which presume to give the “scientific” answer to certain political social problems. We have seen some of those in Ovi magazine, but I suppose we can go all the way back to Karl Marx’s Das Kapital in this regard.

These treatises encourage a rather skeptical attitude on just about any social phenomenon, especially religion considered retrograde and obscurantist, except for one: it own positivistic assumptions and methodology. Those are never challenged or looked at. To the question “What exactly does your science consists of?” the forthcoming answer is usually logical positivism, contemptuous of intuition, mythology, the poetical, the visionary, the interpretative (especially of history) and concerned with how to make human life materially more prosperous and comfortable; for in a materialistic universe by bread alone does man live. This shabby cultural phenomenon which has trivialized everything that a used to be called culture and has reduced us to consuming automatons, can be observed everywhere in and out of academia. We are indeed back to the two cultures of C.P. Snow and the warnings of Matthew Arnold.

Recall if you will that Snow attempts to narrate the decadence of Britain as due to the fact that scientists and philosophers do not talk to each other. In his famous essay he compares Britain with Venice in its decadence: “Like us, the Venetians had once been fabulously lucky. They had become rich, as we did, by accident… They knew, just as clearly as we know, that the current of history had begun to flow against them. Many of them gave their minds to working out ways to keep going. It would have meant breaking the pattern into which they had crystallized. They were fond of the pattern, just as we are fond of ours. They never found the will to break it.” And here Snow while having a valid insight fails to properly formulate it, as Vico does with the history of the Romans. The insight is this: one cannot get out of the box of positivism by using positivism which is what he was doing as a scientist, albeit he also fancied himself a novelist which he was not; at best he was a mediocre novelist.

What Snow needed to do but fails to do is to challenge the basic positivist scientific assumption he utilized in analyzing the two cultures. So, predictably he ends up with the wrong-headed solution which is fairly Baconian: knowledge is power and power controls the world and now let us proceed to identify who the villains who control the world might be. That is a world apart from the Socratic Aristotelian “knowledge is virtue.” It is however quite close to the social Darwinism of an Ayn Rand and her “virtue of selfishness.”

There is another work worth mentioning here which attempts to analyze the roots causes of so much inequality and injustice in the world. It is The Money Masters – a 1996 documentary film produced by attorney Patrick S. J. Carmack and directed and narrated by William T. Still. It discusses the concepts of money, debt and taxes, and describes their development from biblical times onward. It covers the history of fractional-reserve banking, central banking, monetary policy, the bond market, and the Federal Reserve System in the United States. The film, which is widely available online, was followed by The Secret of Oz in 2009. These documentaries, not unlike C.P. Snow’s inquiry into the two cultures need to be viewed and pondered carefully since it too may lead to some fruitful dialogues and insights into the birth and decay of advanced powerful cultures which go astray and end up losing their very soul.

They would have had to go beyond the mere proposal of reforms, as if everything else is otherwise ok with the global village in which we now live. They would have had to propose a dream and a vision within spiritual realities now considered retrograde and passé, beyond materialistic national xenophobic narratives; they would have had to propose what Silone calls “the conspiracy of hope” beyond mere ideologies. They would have had to challenge first and foremost the basic fallacious tenet that “economic growth” based on social Darwinism and ceaseless consumerism, or what we call savage capitalism, is always desirable and leads to individual and social happiness (understood in a materialistic sordid way rather than the Aristotelian eudemonia), always preferable to socialism or other forms of governance. So their works begin to sound as mere anti-communist propaganda for capitalism and entrepreneurship.

Moreover, what they should have pursued up on is the catastrophe of having two cultures replete with very intelligent people who have not found a creative positive way to talk to each other. We have witnessed the phenomenon in the very pages of this magazine. There is indeed a moral in such a tale which may well apply to all those who are out to reform the world and perhaps even change it, but then obtusely refuse to examine their supposedly “enlightened” assumptions which support their critique. Be that as it may, hope springs eternal and one may continue hoping for Silone’s conspiracy of hope. What did Socrates say? “The unexamined life is not worth living.”

In the third segment of this essay I’d like to focus briefly, on the desirability within modernity of envisioning a third culture: a cultural bridge, or a sort of theoretical ideal synthesis of the two estranged cultures leading to a new humanism. The origins of the term “science” go back to William Whewell, a philosopher and historian of science who used ‘science’ in his Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences of 1840, and is credited with establishing the term. I suppose one can even go further back to Francis Bacon, the father of the scientific method.
Leonardo Da Vinci’s Bridge to Everywhere in Norway

However, the term was not recorded as an idea till the early 1830s at the Association for the Advanced Science when it was proposed as an analogy to the term “artist.” Leonardo Da Vinci would have approved, given that he conceived of himself holistically as both an artist and a scientist and perceived no dichotomy between the two. And yet, the two cultures simply ignore and exclude what was originally the analogy to science-art. And there is the root cause of the divide identified in the 18th century by Giambattista Vico in his *New Science* as “the barbarism of the intellect,” something I have already discussed at length in the pages of Ovi magazine.

It is significant to point out here that in the second edition of *The Two Cultures*, in 1963, Snow added a new essay titled “The Two Cultures: A Second Look.” In that essay he predicted that a new “Third Culture” would emerge and close the gap between literary intellectuals and scientists. Also important to take notice that he originally named his lecture “The Rich and the Poor” In his last public statement he makes clear that the larger global and economic issues remain central and urgent: “Peace. Food. No more people than the Earth can take. That is the cause.” As I have already pointed out in my previous articles one must wonder what Snow’s real agenda was after all. In point of fact he produced precious little in the way of a theoretical philosophical scheme with which to synthesize his two cultural worlds and bring about a third culture.

So the question persists: is it desirable that artists working with computers and inspired by the exciting innovations and discoveries taking place in science, be also keenly interested in what the cultural critics and commentators from the humanities have to say on the meaning and impact these discoveries and innovations have on culture and society? Can the use of the computer be a point of reference, a sort of center, and if so can the center hold? Because our work and tools are in constant flux, we are forced to articulate the reasoning and meaning informing the art produced, which has traditionally been the role of art critics and historians. Thus, I would suggest, creates room for an active dialogue with both humanists and scientists. Thus we are placed in between these “Two Cultures,” which creates a triangle and promises to an emergence of a Third Culture. This may be a privileged but also a dangerous position, at least in this transitional stage. Therefore it is important to take a hard close look at the background and current status of the so called Two Cultures.

But before we delve into the issue perhaps we should first answer the question: are there still today, the era of post-modern art and philosophy, individuals who resemble Da Vinci in the sense of not conceiving themselves within the dichotomy art/science? Actually there are such individuals, one that comes to mind is Paul Feyerabend who wrote an influential book titled *Against Method* (1975) which was translated into sixteen languages. In that book he argued that philosophy cannot provide a methodology and rationale for science since there is no rationale to begin with and to explain. Particularly irritating to scientists was his famous “anything goes” assertion which went like this: “All Methodologies have their limitations and the only ‘rule’ that survives is ‘anything goes.’” He also suggested in that book that assuming that science and art share a problem solving attitude, then the only significant difference between them would disappear and then we could speak of styles and preferences for the former, and progress for the latter. Indeed, much of epistemic relativism in philosophy is understood by the scientific community as violent attacks on science. And that is too bad.

What I find most fascinating and Da Vinci-like about Feyerabend is his complete embrace of paradox. Like Da Vinci he is another complex persona who as a teenager studied opera and astronomy simultaneously and envisioned himself working in both fields. Later he kept going back and forth between majoring in physics and philosophy, eventually settling on the latter. Feyerabend studied under Popper at the London School of Economics. He then moved to Berkeley, where he befriended Kuhn and strongly rejected science as being superior to other modes of knowledge and as a result he ended up being labeled an anti-scientist.

Important to point out that one of the enterprises of Leonardo was that of the building complex bridges. It appears that in the Renaissance it was rather common for scientist-artists to also be architects and engineers. Michelangelo was both a sculptor and an architect, a painter and a poet. So unconsciously, if you will, the scientist-artists of the Renaissance were already busy building the triangular bridge of art, science and technology.
Paul Feyerabend

But I am afraid that there is still much work to be done in building this proposed bridge between the humanities and the sciences. Much cynicism and skepticism has to be overcome. For instance, John Brockman, editor of a book of essays entitled The Third Culture, negates Snow’s optimistic prediction that a day will come when literary intellectuals will communicate effectively with scientists. Instead he makes the claim that the contemporary scientists are the third culture and alludes that there is no need for trying to establish communication between scientists and literary intellectuals, who he calls the “middlemen.” Although the choice of people in his book is significant, the mere fact that it is comprised almost completely of Western white men, with the exception of Lynn Margolis with her essay “Gaia is a tough Bitch” makes it impossible to take his proposition seriously. But it does point to the continuing gap between the humanities and sciences and clearly shows that the bridge being constructed is still very fragile.

Leonardo Da Vinci who did not discern a duality between science and art

Perhaps the source of the communication problem can be traced to the fact that most of the philosophers under attack in the scientific community do not work closely with scientists and that scientists are equally isolated from the movements of philosophical thought and contemporary artistic expression. As long as the work does not have a reason to be located in a few disciplines simultaneously, room for misunderstandings will be ample. The work of artists working with technology demands interaction with scholars from a wide variety of disciplines such as computer science, social studies, philosophy, cultural studies.

Let me repeat once again the wise comment of the philosopher Daniel C. Dennet on the dichotomy science/humanities which remains to be bridged by a third humanistic culture in between the two antagonistic ones of science on one side and that of the liberal arts on the other still opposing each other: I have already mentioned in a previous symposium meeting but it bears reiteration: “It’s a two way-street. When scientists decide to ‘settle’ the hard questions of ethics and meaning, for instance, they usually manage to make fools of themselves, for a simple reason: They are smart but ignorant. The reason philosophers spend so much of their time and energy raking over the history of the field is that the history of philosophy consists, in large measure, of very tempting mistakes, and the only way to avoid making them again and again is to study how the great thinkers of the past got snared by them. Scientists who think their up-to-date scientific knowledge renders them immune to the illusions that lured Aristotle and Hume and Kant and the others into such difficulties are in for a rude awakening.”

The Third Culture by John Brockman (1996)

Lynn Margolis

John Brockman (1941- ) A cultural impresario who runs the world’s smartest website bridging the two cultures and advocating both science and the arts
The book argues for a scientific analysis of in order to predict the future of such a phenomenon. The envisioned bridge is triangulated and made into a more stable structure with the work of artists who are utilizing new technologies and are in active dialogue with both sides. Artists using technology are uniquely positioned in the middle of the scientific and literary/philosophical communities, and we are allowed “poetic license,” which gives us the freedom to reinforce the delicate bridge and contribute to the creation of a new mutant third culture. By utilizing tools familiar to scientists and collaborating with the scientific community, we may be getting closer to an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual respect.

This road, however, is not without dangers. It is a delicate mission to be in between disciplines that are themselves in a tenuous relationship. I experienced that existentially when, at Yale University, I decided to write an interdisciplinary Ph.D. dissertation encompassing philosophy and literature within Humanism and requiring the participation of two different academic departments. It was not an easy road. Perhaps the greatest danger is for artists to look to the literary, philosophical, and theoretical circles for interpretations of scientific data and then further reinterpret their versions without checking back with the scientists. Much postmodern writing borders on linguistic play with mathematics and scientific terminology that serves to alienate the scientific community, which has used precise methods to arrive at those theories. This is not to say that one should blindly accept all products of the scientific community, but simply to suggest that any working relationship needs to be based on mutual respect and dialogue.

The other danger that faces those ‘in between’ working on creating ‘something else’ is the general attitude of theory being above practice, prevalent in both humanities and sciences. At this stage, it is in the practice of art that the freedom lies to make assertions that are beyond the rational and beyond necessary methodology of proving a thesis. Practice informed by theory, utilizing a methodology which makes it accessible to both worlds, is the key. Or, conversely, theory informed by practice. Here the pragmatism of a pierce or a William James could prove most useful. Currently, much of this bridge-building work takes place in universities in any case. Academia allows artists contact with scholars from many disciplines. In order to function and communicate effectively in this context, one is forced to learn the etiquette and language of various disciplines, as difficult as that may prove to be. The challenge, then, is to do this without losing the intuitive practice that taps into the silent, the unknown, the mysterious, the sublime and the poetical.

One of the most important scientists who has commented on the similarities between artists’ and scientists’ creative process is physicist Werner Heisenberg (1958). He believed artists’ creativity arose out of the interplay between the spirit of the time and the individual. For McLuhan, artistic inspiration is the process of subliminally sniffing out environmental change: “It’s always been the artist who perceives that alterations in man caused by a new medium, who recognizes that the future is the present, and uses his work to prepare ground for it. Back to the future.
The work of philosophers trying to create the synthesis of a third culture is vitally dependent on an active dialogue with scientists and humanists while performing an important function of being bridge builders. And as any engineer knows, we have to know the territory on both sides and be very precise in how we negotiate the space ‘in between.’ Negotiating the gap between the canon of rationality and the fluid poetic is ultimately the goal of artists who work with communication technologies.

Gell-Mann is the founder of the Santa Fe Institute where Kauffmann, Bak, Penrose, and others have worked on the possibility that there might be a still-undiscovered law of nature that explains why the universe has generated so much order in spite of the supposedly universal drift towards disorder decreed by the second law of thermodynamics. Are we getting closer to Asimov “final question” on thermodynamics? This something else as Gell-Mann refers to it would be located beyond the horizon of current science—something that can explain better the mystery of life and of human consciousness and of existence itself. To Gell-Mann this indicated a certain tendency towards obscurantism and mystification.

One of the most profound goals of chaoplexity pursued by Kauffman, Per Bak, John Holland, and others is the elucidation of a new law, or set of principles, or unified theory, or something that will make it possible to predict the behavior of a variety of dissimilar complex systems. A closely related proposal is that the universe harbors a complexity-generating force that counteracts the second law of thermodynamics and creates galaxies, life, and even life intelligent enough to contemplate itself. How could one not then summon the ancient texts of the Vedas, Buddhism, and much of eastern mysticism? Although Gell-Mann was playing when he referred to the eightfold way and to Finnegan’s Wake, he did touch on that something else many disciplines are struggling to define.

The discussion of whether we are reaching the ‘end of art’ is not limited to the field of art. Apparently this is an ongoing and lively discussion in the world of science as well. John Horgan, who spent years profiling major names in the world of science for Scientific American, asks this question in The End of Science: Facing the Limits of Knowledge in the Twilight of the Scientific Age (1996). He lists a number of disciplines and questions major personalities in their fields about whether they are reaching their limits: philosophy, physics, cosmology, evolutionary biology, scientific theology, and machine science. One could easily compile a list of disciplines in the humanities asking this same question, but the simple point Horgan misses is that every end constitutes a new beginning, and by stating a doubt that there will be anymore Einsteins or Bohrs in the future, he does not take into account the possible emergence of a group genius and endless mutations of disciplines that truly do result in something radically new.

Reaching limits in science or any other discipline for that matter really means being on the threshold of the inevitable something else. Ultimately, bridging and synthesizing many worlds while composing “something else” becomes the art. Leonardo Da Vinci would have no problem with that process, for he possessed a mind that was always envisioning and carrying out the solution to problems considered impossible to solve, and conceiving new origins and new births.”Rinascimento” [Renaissance], after all, literally means “re-birth.” Another such re-birth is urgently needed. It will only begin when the Enlightenment begins to enlighten itself.

Here below for the benefit of the inquisitive reader are two books challenging taken for granted assumptions and suggesting in greater detail various ways and means on how best to envision the above discussed bridging of the liberal arts and scientific cultures for the renewal and re-birth of Western Civilization, beyond the euro, power-politics, and economic concerns. One of those books is an Ovi e-book and can be downloaded for free:
Currently living in the Helsinki Metro area, native New Yorker and half-Finn Edna Nelson has been learning Finnish, filling note books, adjusting to the culture and producing her comic series “I <3 Me”. After living in Florida for a year and a half she realized that she wasn’t ready to act in that 2 car garage production just yet and opted out. Packed her bags, flew to Finland and committed to the hope of living her dreams.

1. Queen of Ice

I rule the snow
tempered by living
in the frost
schooled
by loving
in the cold

I plow
cold hearted
and secure

waking on ice
elephant tusk
piercing
aurora borealis

free

2. When you lose everything

Small losses become huge
An endless scramble
To put everything back into place.
Where small cracks
Feed into a big break

The abyss

Occasionally swallows you whole
Only to spit you out
Hurt ing
Only to be asked
What you’re looking for.

3. what’s rough polishes
what’s soft tears
what’s close
suffers
first

4. you can be my ball and chain

sink me to the bottom
show me
our underworld

unchained
I rise
learned

you wallow
ignoring iridescence

I bask in the sun
with wet fins

5. People look the same.

Getting lost in the mirage of self
Battling meanness to reclaim connection
and more. Trusting, under strife. Finding words.

Shivering

under the glare of recollection.
Avoiding the reality of past manifestations.
Acquiescing to what is.
Damp, dirty, disheveled,
drunk.

6. It is what you make it.

Defiant,
daring, dreamy, deep

No joy soars
high crying like the
silent smile
one keeps
after triumph
“The hardest thing in life is to know which bridge to cross and which to burn”
- David Russell
“Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishments”
- Jim Rohn
It is not easy nowadays to render a definition of our era, even a tentative one. We live within it and attempt a modification, when in fact each of us is actually contributing to it. Which means that the judgment we arrive at is always a judgment with action in mind, to make something happen. Logically speaking a judgment on the past is always a judgment which modifies the past and therefore the present and the future which are generated by the past, or better by the judgment that we assign to them. In fact, we know nothing of our history than the judgments that we have rendered of it which are always “partisan” judgments, referential to what we want and what we must do. However, if from a logical standpoint, the nature of judgment is always the same, psychologically the maxim which suggests that it is good to distance oneself from the object of one’s judgment, is still valid. On the other hand this maxim cannot and should not be an alibi for not submitting to the difficult task of judging our own time.

Our times seem to be characterized by an absence of thinking, a fall from moral tension. In the last fifty years or so, probably for the first time in man’s history, we have been witness to a historic change in man’s mind set. The farmer’s civilization has practically disappeared, the civilization of the earth which at one time dominated the millennial history of human kind. The industrial revolution of the 19th and 20th century has no doubt turned upside down the economy, the politics, the customs and ways of doing things, but it did not uproot the collective sense of life, of the world, the collective conscience which is still tied to the civilization of the earth. Today this is no longer so. Today the generation that was young or was born during World War II, is the last one that lived the farmers’ civilization. Many now have a mere historic reminiscence, a literary recollection. There is abroad a deep melancholy, a great nostalgia which pervades with a sad coloring our times.

Children’s fairy tales, stories and dreams of children, are still those of farmers’ civilization: the values, the environment, the landscape, the climate, the smells, the tastes, the materials, are those of the earth.
Schools of thought, homogeneous cultural movements, have vanished, so have the “isms” which characterized the 19th century and especially the 20th. Philosophy has refused to take a position, there have been dialogues without assuming a stand on anything. We have preferred to state the problem rather than attempt a solution, till we have begun to understand that such a problem filled atmosphere was a sterile atmosphere, a mere fun game of reason. In the last eighty years or so cultural production has been irrelevant if not non-existent. Scholars of different persuasions seem to concur that our era has not been a particularly creative one. It would appear that after Husserl, Bergson, Croce, Heidegger and Dewey, knowledge has not grown in genuine quality, only in quantity. Various formulas more or less successful have been coined to classify and unify, in a last ditch effort at coordination of reality, the sense of our times; there has been talk of a post-modern condition, to characterize the total condition of contemporary man, of weak thought to indicate the anti-metaphysical, anti-definition, secularizing path on which philosophy has been placed. Man even if his formulas have, not so much as what they intended to assert in the way of content, was then denied in the very method of their formulation: a weak thought cannot be defined as such without automatically becoming strong thought. The post-modern cannot be characterized as a definition of a condition, even of a critical condition of the auto-affirmation of technology as mere utility.

All this does not mean, as some superficially believe, that we ought to place the burden of responsibility for the present condition to the sudden disappearance of critical intelligence. To the contrary, the critical acumen has increased; the instruments for its operations are no doubt better. It looks in fact as if the various positions taken by scholars are more the effect than the cause of the epoch. Those who write and ask themselves questions feel that they cannot go beyond a certain limit. He becomes conscious of the inconsistency of himself and the world, he lives and expressed a condition more than a position. He is a man in the world of utility, not confronting the world, aware of living in an absolute alienation, afraid of laughter and irony even more than confrontation and even of perspecution.

The world of science as mere utility only produced myths which are within its system, it is intolerant of myths which are outside its mechanisms. The same glamour which was raised some years ago from the advent of computer sciences producing the society of computer users, hailed as technology’s and communication’s high achievement, found its rationale less in the reality of things as they are, but in the fear of man originating from the farmers’ culture vis a vis the enlightenment of progress. The farmer in Paris or the lonely fisherman arriving in Naples, falls in love but also fears the big city; he lauds it but also points it out sarcastically to his fellow villagers as an example of progress, or he points it out as the devil itself, the distillation of evil destroying the values of his ancient tradition. Thus have intellectuals embrace the importance of the computer sciences. But if one gives this situation a hard look, one realizes that everything that has happened and the society of computer sciences has been nothing more than the technical over-structure of the society of intellectual and moral sterility. Now that even children play with computers the intellectual is no longer in dialogue with cybernetics.

Nothing is amassed therefore in the interpretation of the historical destiny in which we all move and have our being. In the last few decades, and never as today, art seems to have disappeared from the world, at least from the public world if not exactly from individual consciences. What dominates contemporary man’s behavior is a certain shyness in showing what is intimate in oneself and in nature. The more art has industrialized itself and spread, the more it has distanced itself from men; the more it has shown its nakedness by programmatically presenting itself as a sort of liberator, the more servile and conformist it has become and the more it has shown to conceal the recondite corners of conscience, of the soul; the more it has gone backward toward mere exteriority; the more it has presented itself as protest and scandal, the more it has shown itself as an instrument of Power.

Our time has flown the flag of sincerity as a vessel of our new-found freedom, as the unmasking of conscience via mystical-scientific practices invented by psycho-analysis, as the unmasking of the relations between the classes via the study of political economy, as the unmasking of false moral customs, of “bourgeoisie” respectability, of the pharsaisical hypocrisy of the conformists.

The artistic avant-guards of the beginning of the 20th century and the new avant-guards of the 60s crashed into the world of art to create scandal, pour épater les bourgeoises, to desecrate but, above all for unveiling the most hidden secrets of the human soul. But we look carefully we will find a common thread in all those various positions of artistic schools, literary groups, or the poetic of the individual writers: the organizing of the search for sincerity, the will to proclaim, as
if in a political manifesto in certain cases, or even as if in a scientific program, the new belief in the new credo. Every poet, every artist (or group of artists) has felt (or has strived to appear) as he who broke with the lack of sincerity of past forms, with the ancient rhetoric, with the false sentimentalism of the fathers. The realists assumed that they could narrate the truth about the human spirit, of his actions, such as it really is, pausing to narrate facts and things, as they really are as objective and situations and conditions. The modern poet has not been able to narrate anything else but artifice. In reality our epoch is the epoch of absolute insincerity, in music as well as in painting, in literature and in philosophy. Technology and philology appeared as the last remedy, the last anchoring to reality and sincerity; an objective sincerity, which proclaimed itself (without in effect proclaiming anything) as the liberator of the puny modern man, as pronouncing some kind of artistic or philosophical truth.

On the other hand we need to mention the positive elements which characterize our times: material prosperity, which may be a less than noble kind of prosperity but has never radically damaged anyone: the actual increase in political freedom in Western countries, the real consistent democratic participation of men and women (of the masses, as was once said) to public life, which is to say to the real liberal democracy. Nobody would like to imitate Leopardi and be a pedant to the point of being struck with horror at the very thought of progress, thus submitting to that intellectual myth adopted by those who constitute the world of liberal arts. The pessimism of the intellectual of which we have talked about in the above comments goes with the territory, unless it becomes an instrument of real criticism and therefore of an effective thrust toward a progress which is also moral and civil.

Within the world of utility, the man of culture feels deprived of a listening public. His preoccupations, his suffering seem to fall on deaf ears in sheer neglect and, without even confessing it to himself, he begins to wish that his suffering be extended to everybody, that everybody may share the solitude of the noble soul in front of the neglectful and stupid world. And so the few despairing individuals become a multitude and the prophet of doom becomes a myth, almost a demi-god. This is the intellectual that has had success, that has finally conquered the world, and then notices that it is a false kind of conquest. His followers, now fans, inflicting pain on themselves and others, reduce to mere trend the desperation of the human condition. It is hard to find more arrogant and self-complacent than those who sustain the evil of life. Pessimism, first elevated to a method, then to a system, and finally to life-style is one of the most common and irritating attitudes of our times.

All of this ought not to make us forget the real condition of human kind, in so many ways, in as much as can be determined, better than that of preceding eras. Ancient man was never in better material and moral conditions. Despite it all, contemporary man remains the most free of men within the span of history. We need not exemplify this, it would be superfluous.

Now, if the philosopher and the man of culture do not wish to abdicate their role, and wish to be Husserlian-like, a functionary of humanity, he must be able to indicate a path, and even travel on it beforehand as a man of praxis, of an ethical-political commitment.

If in our civilization of prosperity one finds out that not everything is welfare, if one notices the consumption of value as value, one then has to measure the reality that one describes or perceives. There is no logical opposition between the two cultures, i.e., the humanistic and the scientific. Rationality and irrationality belong to the world of reality, the world of man. A new humanism is possible if one acts within the ethico-political realm which, in its concrete activity, resolves the apparent contradictions between the world of mere utility and the world of classical values, of morality, of art, of culture.

To be able to return to a dialogue on values and of values, one needs first return to the study of art, of aesthetics. That is the crucible. In Kantian terms, art expresses values in its most intimate expressive ability, in its disinterested attitude which remains however useful and operative within human events. The false opposition between utility and morality is resolvable in this sense, within art as a moral and useful act, even if it remains in itself neither ethics nor utility.

Art cannot redeem the world, just as philosophy cannot either, nor science. In that sense, Heidegger and Hegel and Comte represent unilateral positions. Within the realm of the will one can resolve, albeit never in a definitive way, the contradiction of our epoch as indeed all epochs. Aesthetics can be useful exactly because it deals with what is not immediately useful without opposing what is useful, what is and must remain useful.

******************************************************************************

Note: this essay by Ernesto Paolozzi has been published in Italian in his book Vicende dell’Estetica and has been translated by Emanuel L. Paparella.
Having run well in the Khon Kaen Half Marathon last month and anticipating a hard run in the upcoming Sikh 20k Charity Run in Bangkok next week, I have been zig zaging around Thailand looking for a few minor runs to help me get into shape for the task.

One of the beauties about Thailand (and Malaysia for that matter), is that if you are willing to travel, there is almost always a run somewhere every weekend. It’s also a great way to see the country.

Last weekend we travelled from Hat Yai in Southern Thailand to Nakkon Si Thammarat, 3 hours away to participate in the 10th Rajaphat University Mini Marathon, where they had a 10.5k run, a 3.5k fun run, and a mountain bike race. There was a very small turnout of just over a thousand people, as there was another run just over an hour away in one of the beautiful national parks in Trang. However the trophies, medals, and t-shirts were well worth the trip, as well as participating in the well organized run. We all got our run in, made a number of new friends, and had the chance of seeing some of the 1200 year old Srivijaya temples, that Nakkon is famous for.

The start of the Rajaphat Mini Marathon in Nakkon Si Thammarat a few weeks ago.

The point to this little story is that doing the minor runs in Thailand has immense value. It’s a way to keep running, motivation up, improve, make friends, and see Thailand.

For the non-Thai speaker this can be a bit of a challenge, as finding a place where a run is to be held, and getting accommodation, definitely requires, not only help from a Thai speaker, but someone with inside info about where we want to go. Some of these runs takes a while to find, but also gives the opportunity to learn about the town you are going to. Some venues however are in some scenic places of Thailand, like mountain parks, or dams, and travelling there without a car is often difficult.
Planning is essential in pursuing some of these smaller runs.

This weekend we decided to go to the Surathani Cancer Hospital Charity Run, and on my morning run, I literally ran into a fellow runner Nipon, who ended up accompanying us to the run. Nipon’s help in finding the venue was invaluable. Without him, we would never have found the place. Even in Bangkok, some of these runs for the non-Bangkokite, even at places like Suan Luang Rama IX Park where the Siamyth 10k was held a few weeks ago, aren’t that easy to get to, for those not familiar with the city.

My experience has shown that there are basically two types of runs. The first are runs that are poorly organized perhaps because the organizers themselves don’t really care much about what they are doing. Avoid these runs, unless you are absolutely desperate for a run. These runs usually have grossly inaccurate courses, inadequate refreshment stations, and are not planned for the enjoyment of the runner.

What amazed me about a run, the Larian Bomba, down in Kuala Lumpur last year, was where the organizers had a large feast for the so-called VIPs, while the runners themselves were given nothing. Procedures were so strict that it took away from the running experience.

The second type of run are those organized by experienced race directors. These race directors know what runners want and provide the necessities. They usually have fair websites, and offer online registration. For example, the Hat Yai Nature Run, organized by Prince of Songkhla University is runner friendly offering both a challenging 10.5k and half marathon, where generally everything is organized in a way to add to runner experience. It’s been so successful, that may be it shouldn’t be classified as a minor run anymore.
Some examples of smaller runs in Thailand that are worth the trip for Malaysian runners this year would include:

The Hat Yai Nature Run in August of each year, attracting over 3,000 runners. This is not a half marathon for the faint hearted as it offers some challenging little hills. The “nature” along the way is slowly being replaced by housing, so the traffic over the last couple of years along the course has been increasing. But if you can complete the mini-marathon or half marathon in good time, rest assured you are in good condition. For those living in Malaysia and Southern Thailand, this is a run not to miss.

Legendary Tan Wah Sing, Malaysia’s barefoot guru at the Hat Yai Nature Run 10k runs in Phuket Town. Although when most foreigners think of Phuket running they think of the Laguna Phuket International Marathon. However, there are a number of interesting runs each year conducted within the quaint old Phuket Town itself, organized by various schools and charity groups. These events within Phuket Town which offer the opportunity to run through some of the old and established streets of the town. For those interested in “the early 20th century era” architecture, running a 10k run though this background offers something special. If you are in the region when one of these runs are organized, it may well be worth the effort to front up.

If you want to run through the streets of a major city like Bangkok without the large numbers that say, the Bangkok Marathon has, 50,000 last year, go for the Thai Sikh Run, which is usually held early December. This year it’s been held in February and will trace a 20KM route though the old part of Bangkok. The race is well run, being in its 20th year and course very accurate with race chips used.

For something really adventurous, go to the Tarutao Retrace Mini-Marathon, now in its 11th year. Tarutao is the Island next to Langkawi, only on the Thai side, accessible through the Pak Bara ferry terminal. The run is all within the backdrop of the Tarutao National Park, with its spectacular scenery, with registration available on the pier where you arrive on the island. The actual 10KM run goes across the island through some beautiful forest to turn around and return to the start. There is plenty of inexpensive accommodation on the island, and camping may even be a great idea. This run is becoming more popular among Malaysians, where a large contingent are expected this March.

Each of the above has a special characteristic that adds something unique to the running experience.

Trophies plentiful at Thai runs.

These are just a few examples of the large growing number of runs available in the Southern parts of Thailand. Look around the areas of Trang, Nakkon Si Thammarat, and Patthalung Provinces for runs outside the towns. These runs like the Pa Bon Marathon in Phathhalung with its beautiful scenery, Koh Samui Midnight run (when it is held), with its atmosphere, and the Leam Talumpuk Mini-Half Marathon in Nakkon Si Thammarat along the beautiful coast line are not to be missed races. For the brave and adventurous you may even consider the Yala Half marathon.


When selecting a run, look for atmosphere, accessibility, standard of marshalling, and accuracy of distance (however if you have a GPS watch that measures distance, this is not so important).
The author with some new friends

The morning of the run had a really festive atmosphere to it. People went out of their way to make themselves known to me, so we posed for many photos. The start was rather congested as we headed out to the dreaded bridge to make the climb, but people made it up on the adrenaline of excitement, bowling down the other into the rest of the run. The run was rather well marshaled and the return run up the bridge not as hard as anticipated. Running through the finish line returned each runner to the festival that was going on, and everyone just seemed to enjoy the lavish breakfast supplied and got to know each other while the prizes were given out.

What makes Thai distance running special is not just the range of courses, scenery, and food, but the “die hard” body of runners from all walks of life, who make these events larger than life.

Musicians often play along the routes of some Thai runs.

We conquered on mass this bridge too far and just for the atmosphere alone, it’s well worth the trip. Rest assure, our little growing group of mini-marathon junkies will continue to seek out bridges too far for the fun of seeing Thailand through their runners hospitality.

By the way, our new friend Nipon Sukwan came 11th overall and turned out to be one of Thailand’s best triathlon athletes. While we are exploring Thailand, he is heading off to the Lake Kenyir, Terengganu International Triathlon in March.

Nipon holding the T-shirt with his daughter at early registration in Surat Thani
“A scary bridge is better than a precipice without bridge!”
— Mehmet Murat ildan
Cross it? I’m making plans to destroy the bridge from orbit.
- Colonel Ceeta & Captain Tagon
— Howard Tayler,
Under New Management
How can I play hide & seek when 21 children die every minute?

Who'll play football with me when 21 friends die every minute?

If I close my eyes and count to a 100. 35 children are dead.
Kittirat Yothangrong

Kittirat, or Akoi as she is known, is one of the very few people who have been a Buddhist nun for 20 years and a runner up in the Miss Southern Thailand Beauty Quest as a "mature" contestant. She is a ‘practical’ vegetarian who believes in herbs, healthy living, and meditation. An avid yoga fanatic, Kittirat is also an organic farmer. She regularly speaks to community groups in Malaysia and Thailand on empowerment, health through herbs, and spirituality.

In our life we have to connect with many things. This includes interactions with people, doing tasks, and coming into contact with inert things. What is important is that we come into contact with all these things in the right way, so we don’t unnecessarily suffer in our life.

Handling things in life, i.e., in dealing with others, and undertaking mundane tasks all evoke feelings and emotions. Some of these emotions are related to inflated egos, while other emotions may be anger, frustration, envy, and even hate. More important than being clever or creative in winning in life is doing all these tasks and having daily interactions without evoking emotions and feelings that have negative consequences in our lives.

For example, we can win a race, be the most successful salesperson in the company, or don’t get our way with the family. Winning is about not been affected by the emotions that come out of these daily interactions. Being an egotistical race winner, arrogant salesperson, or angry at home with the family do nothing to help our personality. They detract from our quality of life. The winner handles all these tasks in their stride with humility and decorum.

So we make so many connections everyday with both people and things, this could be a friend, spouse, parent, nephew, work colleague, or boss. The key is doing this without causing ourselves to suffer un-needlessly.

This is extremely important as nobody is an island and contact with the outside world is something that is continuous throughout all our lives.

The key is feeling safe, secure, respectful, trustful, compassionate, with a deep sense of humility within ourselves. In this way we can develop a sense of enjoyment about what is happening at any moment during the day.

Winners are people who don’t get dragged in by the excitement of the moment and allow their egos and arrogance to come through. Winners are people who don’t allow negative emotions such as disappointment, anger, frustration, and envy rule over their personalities. Winners are people on an even keel who are able to enjoy each moment as it comes free of the roller coaster of their emotions.

You will find that if you can take this approach that in your dealings with others, you will be able to easily generate a sense of trust and respect from those who you deal with.

This is a true winner in life.
Leah Sellers is a resident Texas who has enjoyed three varied careers within her lifetime as a Secondary Education teacher in the fields of English, History, Journalism and Special Education, a professional singer/songwriter, and a visual artist and poet. She has had the great good fortune, while performing and travelling the U.S. with her sisters, to open for such folks as Willie Nelson, Johnny Rodriguez and Tins Lopez, and to sing during the gospel hour at the Grand "Ole Opry in Nashville, Tennessee.

The InFidelities of InFidels

“Please, oh please, oh please, don’t shoot me dead, Mr. Bully Boy, Thug-a-Lug. I’m just a little ‘ole recently, and prematurely released Schizophrenic.”

“What? No, Mr. Bully Boy, Thug-a-Lug. I’m not making Fun of you or me. I’m just trying to let you know that I’m not worth Mug-a-Lugging, Robbing, or Shooting……”

“Uh oh! Wait a minute. I feel an Aura coming on…… Uh, oh !”

“Hello. No, no, who did he say he was. Forget what that InFidel said. I’m a young School Girl from Nigeria. I am but One of 287 School Girls kidnapped to sell in the Slave Markets, and held Captive, and for Ransom by the Boko Haram-Ho-Hum.”

“You, Mr. Bully Boy, Thug-a-Lug would feel an immediate kinship with the Boko Haram-Ho-Hum Terrorists. You have much in Common.”

“Why are they holding young Nigerian School Girls hostage? Well, Mr. Bully Boy, Thug-a-Lug, they came in the night and kidnapped all of us Girl from our School. They do not Believe that Girls should be Educated. Especially not with Western Ideas. The Boko Haram-Ho-Hum Terrorist Thug-a-Lugs say they want to do away with Christianity, and have the whole World convert to the Muslim Religion and Traditions.”

“So, the Boko Haram-Ho-Hum Terrorist Thug-a-Lugs kidnapped us to sell and to hold for Ransom. They made a video of us to show around the World, because they want other imprisoned Terrorists to be released by the Nigerian Government for our release, because EveryOne in the Whole World is watching, and upset by what has happened to us.”

“In this video, they had many of the School girls sitting in Muslim dress and wearing the hajibs over their heads, as Obedient Muslim Women do. They had the School Girls reciting Prayers from the Koran, and denouncing Christianity. They had the School Girls Forcefully Seceding from their Previous Beliefs, Dreams, Ambitions and Lives”

“Well, Mr. Bully Boy, Thug-a-Lug, some of the School Girls may really be Muslims, but some are saying what they have been Told to Say by the Boko Haram-Ho-Hum because they are afraid of Torture - afraid of Rape - afraid of being Sold into Slavery - afraid of being Murdered. Fear for One’s Life is a Powerful Tool of Persuasion and Conversion.”

“Oh no, Mr. Bully Boy, Thug-a-Lug, what I am telling you is the Truth. I escaped to Tell the Tale of the InFidelity of InFidels.”
“What is an InFidel? It is SomeOne who is UnFaithful or DisLoyal to a Moral/Ethical Obligation or a Religion. A DisBeliever.”

“How are the Boko Haram-Ho-Hum InFidels? They are making a mockery of the greatness of the Moral/Ethical Teachings of the Koran. Muslims are not to move through Life as Murdering, Raping, Stealing, Burning Everything to the Ground Terrorists. Muslims are not to be Destroyers of Peace, Stability and Civilizations, but the Creators of Peace, Stability, and Productive Civilizations.”

“The Boko Haram-Ho-Hum are drenching themselves in the Blood and draining Darkness of their continual Acts of Infidelity. They are the InFidels!”

“Uh-oh….Oh no, I feel an Aura coming on…..Oh No !”

“Hello. No, no. I’m a young Man from East Ukraine. Are you a Putinite ?”

“You know, a Putinite. One of the Masked Russian Special Ops or Pro-Russian Marauders sent to Terrorize, DeStabilize and OverRun Ukraine for the sake of Ancient History and the Territorial and Energetic Usurpation of Land and Wealth for Mother Russia’s Glory and Benefit ?”

“Oh no, Mr. Bully Boy, Thug-a-Lug. Masked Marauder, you have me all wrong. I see that fully loaded Gun you have pointed at my head. That Gun tells me everything I Need to know, if I Hope to go on Breathing and Living.”

“This East Ukranian young Man is very much aware of your proclivity to Torture those who dis-agree with you, Shoot, Bomb and Burn Buildings to the Ground at a quiet, stealthy nod of ascent/descent from Russia - from Putin and the other Oligarchs.”

“So, Mr. Bully Boy, Thug-a-Lug Masked Marauder, out of Fear, and the Need for Self Preservation at any cost, I will Say and Do what you want me to Do. I will even Say that I am One of you, and Act as though that I am One of You. I will participate in your Forced Referendum. I will Vote as my Fear for my Life would have me Vote, because all of your Masked Marauding Eyes are Watching me, and everyone else. I will Secede from whatever you tell me to Secede from. You have our Borders surrounded. We are your Hostages.”

“Do you know anyone in the Boko Haram-Ho-Hum ?”

“No, no, Mr. Bully Boy, Thug-a-Lug Masked Marauder. I am not being Dis-respectful. Not me. Never. It’s just that all of you Terrorists are sooo much alike. I mean your Tactics and Strategies of inciting Fear and Trepidation in EveryOne through Physical and Psychic Violence and Pain in order to get your way. And if anyone does not bend and bow to your Wills or Whims you Torture, Rape and Murder them mercilessly. You Rule through the Destructive Forces of Violence and Fear. I’m just saying…”

“Uh-oh….Not again….I feel an Aura coming on……Oh no…..”

“Hello. Oh my God ! You’re still here ?! And holding that Gun in my Face. I told you, Mr. Bully Boy, Thug-a-Lug. I’m just a little ‘ole Schizophrenic. I don’t have anything worth your Terrorizing me over.”


“I know how to BeCome a Terrorist just like you, Mr. Bully Boy, Thug-a-Lug. I just Need to hide my Ignorance, my Fears, my Hatreds, my Bigotries and Prejudices behind the Violent Masks and Veils of Radicalized Religion and Nationalism. And Focus on all of that, and only that. I can Do that!”

“I can Do all of that Violence and Mayhem in the Name of God - in the Name of whatever Town or State or Country you want me to. You want to Secede from myself ? I can Do that !”

“You see, all of you Mr. Bully Boy/Girl, Thug-a-Lug Terrorists are basically the same. Your Tactics and Strategies of Terror are the same. By any other Name you’re all the Same. I can Do you.”

“Just give me a chance. Tell me what you want me to Say and Do. With that Gun to my Head, heck, I’ll become All of You. I mean it. I’ll Become All of you Terrorists. I can Be the InFidelity and the InFidel. I’m a Schizophrenic. I can Do ‘em All Simultaneously. Anything ! Just don’t Shoot me Dead !”
Pain, the lines of beauty on the face of a lonely girl and her kindly cell, that furious secret place of depression, frustration, suicidal illness, having otherworldly beauty was not enough for her, mouthing foggy love poems, progeny at her hip, North American prairies and beaches, Paris, her younger brother Warren the Exeter and Harvard man, New York, obsessively-written sonnets and short stories, Otto, Otto, Otto, the Nazi-lover, all the beekeeping villagers have been ripped from memory. The perfect love of parties, the tumbling into and of cocktail parties has gone too. Oh ghost, oh ghosts she was much too nice this empress, much too honest and dignified, she was much too pure, and where was the justice for this scholar, this thinker, this intellectual? How will she be remembered? Oh, just in dozens of books written by other starry-eyed scholars, thinkers and intellectuals and of course her poetry. She warned me, she warned me, she warned me with her words, with the force of her intellect, with her vocabulary, her mind’s eye’s perspective. No witch, atheist, pagan was she just a beautiful memory stuffed with a diary, notebooks, letters home filled with sadness. Did she pray, did she meditate when she was soaking up the sun on the beach?

And then she was thirty in a flat in London with two small children and composing Ariel, her masterpiece. Where was Ted Hughes? What was her last memory of Edward Hughes? In whose arms was he when she was looking for linen and sheets? Who was he sleeping with? What was the measure of the man? Was he extraordinarily gifted? Yes. Was he brilliant? Yes but did he know how to love, wasn’t he impulsive, wasn’t he a creative genius, wasn’t he a cheat? Didn’t he kill people, push and engulf women in sweetness or was it the woman who said kill me Ted, take me to bed? So he wasn’t a murderer, he was a poet, a broken man who suffered, what did he give up?

Men are cruel. Beautiful men are cruel. Intelligent men are cruel. And if girls reject them how on earth will they become transformed into women, transplanted into queens with kisses, how will they see the inside of a church in a wedding dress or a kitchen wearing an apron, perfect roast in the oven. How will they get that ring on their finger if they do not fall in love?

It is monstrous when bipolar leaves you numb, broken. There was always a quickness to it. How it enveloped her, how it enshrouded me. How did bipolar depression leave Sylvia Plath numb, clutching at straws, it left her with avocados in a suitcase in the The Bell Jar? There’s nothing dignified about it and the end of love. It is not just the end of fireworks but also that romance is an eternal curve. What’s love anyway when you can write, when you can write poetry? Sylvia in a hospital bed. Sylvia and Anne. Anne Sexton. Sylvia receiving therapy. Sylvia writing. Writing poetry.
Speak. Speak. Speak. The pain felt sharp. It burned. And I felt burdened. The pain felt like a knife. Pain is poison, a silent feast for some, for the vampires camping out in the woods, a winter guest writing a poem.

Ashtrays and cigarettes fill his house, papers, verses, correspondence. His mother is dying in Yorkshire. He has brought his lover with him. His father won't sit at the kitchen table with her. He takes his meals in his bedroom. This is domestic bliss, golden living matter. The sex is medieval. His hands smell like a butcher’s. He is Satan. He destroyed her and she destroyed him, the dreamer in him, the father in him, and the husband in him. He had knowledge of lovemaking, taught her everything he knew with his frozen skill, his soul’s map, his wide-eyed country of transformations, his white picket fence.

They are swimming in this dark room together, soft dolls with delicate cores surfing over their wounds, touching the surface tension of the interior, wrapped up in the knowledge of the grace of the physical, the mental glare is no longer there. No more anguish. No more Sylvia.

Look at them. We are glimmering, gulping, our flesh and blood is dwelling, shining, illuminating the world around us.

He anointed her. The physical body sinks into another physical body, gnaws at it, its eaten magic, and its sum, its language as they exchange fluids and there is nothing and everything logical about it. There is a story here. Is it love? Does it need to be told? She is here to stay. She needs belief. The exotic, alluring Assia Wevill. She is a killer. A convicted murderous, Ted Hughes’s housekeeper, Sylvia Plath’s rival, a lover, a wife, and a mother too. Will she be another German Jew survivor?

‘Assia, my beautiful wren.’ He says, his hands on her shoulders, the nape of her neck, brushing away strands of her beautiful dark hair. ‘So exotic, so alluring. There is so much I want to say. This space is a proverb, this shape just here beneath your collar bone I like it best. You burn so bright. Writing is my little addiction. It is the life and death of me. So what do you think of my work.’

‘Admirable. Intelligent. Impressive. What do you think of my work?’


‘Why are women always clever and men intelligent, fierce beasts, admired? I don’t think it’s an accident we met. It was simply meant to happen. Am I a good mother Ted?’

‘Yes. What a strange question?’

‘I want to be a good mother, a good wife, a good life-partner for you. I think we’re perfect together. Don’t you? I was a beautiful child and then I grew up and I wanted to see the world. And of course men saw my looks first but it always made me feel self-conscious, the interloper. Making love. I was always good at doing that. Falling out of love, falling in love, getting married. Let’s get married.

Do, let’s. I love you. You’re the man for me. Think of all the adventures we’d have together, the places we’d go. You love me. We’ll have this picture-perfect family. Beautiful children.’

‘Wrists so fragile. Thighs and breasts so pale. Grey eyes. Wrap your legs around me. Are you warm? I want to feel you beneath me. Your breath is like vapour. What was it like on that train when you were a child? Were there really SS Officers walking up and down.’

‘It was cold, that’s all I remember. I was leaving the only home I had ever known. I don’t want to talk about it.’

‘Come here. Then we won’t talk about it. We’ll think pleasant, happy thoughts. Nothing will ever scar you ever again. I will diminish your fears, all the difficulties that you have, and erase them. I will unlock the gates to that nest that you call your brain. I will love you come rain or shine, come the madhouse of the heightened sky, I am rowing towards the sea in your eyes, swallowing all the hurt and humiliation that you have ever felt in this world.’

‘Ted Hughes I think you are the most profound man I’ve ever met. All of this will become history, craft, and ritual. Past is past is it not? Hell is behind us, that terrifying hammer and whatever has tormented me.’

‘There’s a self-portrait there Assia. Well, there’s really one in everything.’

‘You see poetry in everything. I need you Ted. I need you. Can’t you see that? I will give up everything for you.’

‘Don’t talk now. Hush. Pleasant, happy thoughts remember. Try and get some sleep now. If you’re not tired yet read a book, write something or read something that I’ve written. I’m too tired to talk now, to have this conversation.’

‘We can raise the children together. We can build a family, a real family-life away from the prying eyes of London, of your London friends, of your family. I know what they think of me, that I’m to blame for everything, for what happened to Sylvia, that I live in her house, sleep in her bed, and have stolen her husband and children, Sylvia Plath’s family. I am not responsible. I am not the traitor that everyone is making me out to be. Ted, I can’t go on living in that ghost house. I don’t care what people think. I tell you I don’t care what people think anymore of me. I don’t care what they think of me, that I’m to blame for everything, for what happened to Sylvia, that I live in her house, sleep in her bed, and have stolen her husband and children, Sylvia Plath’s family. I am not responsible. I am not the traitor that everyone is making me out to be. Ted, I can’t go on living in that ghost house. I don’t care what people think. I tell you I don’t care what people think anymore of me, of you. Us. It’s done nothing to your reputation as a poet. People talk. People will always talk. Idle gossip. All lies. You are still you. You are still Ted Hughes.’

‘Assia, enough. I’m tired.’

‘I’m sorry. I just get so worked up sometimes. I’m trying Ted. Can’t you see that? Maybe I’m just insecure but I’m in love with you. I’ve never felt this way before. I’ve been married three times and I’ve never felt this way before for anyone else in my life until you came along. I’m trying for us. I had the abortion for us. I know now we can have other children. I’ve always been maternal, had that instinct within me. I live in her house for us. I take care of the children for us. I’m
just excited about our new life together. You’re the best man I’ve ever met. The best lover I’ve ever had.’

‘Beautiful Assia Wevill. I will never, never hurt you.’ And then he kissed her forehead damp with perspiration, kissed her neck, stroked the arch of her back and caressed her arms. ‘Have men hurt you before? Made promises to you before that they didn’t keep?’

‘I don’t know. I don’t want to remember those times, the person that I was then, I’m different now, I don’t want to remember the past, and there were so many men. I told you this before. I was a pretty child who grew up to become a beautiful adult, but an insecure woman but do you promise Ted? Do you promise Ted Hughes that one day I will be your wife?’

‘Yes, yes, yes. I promise.’ Edward Hughes cradled Assia Wevill in his arms that night like he had never cradled another woman in his arms before. He held her until he felt her fall asleep in his arms and he knew her dream would never be. It had come to an end whatever ‘it’ had been. Allure she had, she could put men in a trance, attract them, hold them down in bed, reject them, make them go kaput but did she know how to love? She was a sex object.

And now we come to me. Clothed, unclothed, shamed, and unashamed for now you are mine.

Sylvia Plath, Assia Wevill, the daughter Shura, Edward Hughes are six feet under, pushing up daisies, dead to the world but not to the world’s imagination. There is a knot of silence pulled tight in my throat, and I am pushed to naming home. Love for me is not home. It will never be home, mean home to me. I wither, men wither, and stories wither.

It is a mystery to me why he did not, could not love me. There was no tenderness there, no constant craving. I could not understand my infertility. The knowing of pain comes after sleeping, after waking from his touch.

I cannot remember lust. I remain unmarked by it. I hurt. You have hurt me. Energy has left me. Humility is like a cloud in the sky with a silver lining. I will not behave. I will not sit still and behave. I will fidget like a lunatic until you say that you love me, until you say that you will not leave me, leave me for her. I am in the garden of fire, of the dead and the living. I am dumb. What do I know about love? I know this. I want to feel your skin, read your bones with my fingertips, bath in your bath as you stroke my back, turn your world upside down, and harvest your moon. I am a mess but I am not your mess. If I was your mess you would stroke my face and ask me gently why I am crying. And I would say please stay with me, don’t go. Tell me that you like me.

Suicides have no glory when they die, they do not go to the last resting place up in the sky. They are driftwood.

The women have no sun, cure, dress, heels, pot of rouge, no furniture to move around, no laughter to speak of, and their family is ghost protocol.

There is a gun, a piece of rope, a fur coat, a car left running, and a bridge, a running leap.

Smile or you’re dead. And then there was nothing. There was silence in the kitchen, children sleeping in the bedroom, milk and bread untouched and gas. There is no longer any breath, any oxygen in her throat. She is deader than most.
It all started in the Library stairway where I met this Greek-American thug yelling into his cell phone. I was eating peanut butter sandwich underneath a “don’t eat, don’t drink”. He popped an ecstasy pill, his evasive green eyes turning to me for a chat and next thing I know, I find myself letting into my place someone who would upset my social life and had me starring in my own “survival of the fitted” episode.

I let this long hair homeboy stay with me at my place until he figures out his marital problems. His Brazilian wife and him were killing each other. Not that he could leave her, for she was capable of sexual positions he never thought possible. Some Argentinian, Venezuelan tourists staying with me warned me against this new acquaintance but I put it down as prejudice because of his rapper-thuggish look. Looking back, I know mine friends animosity came from hearing their nationality and color of skin strip from them as he talked. Homeboy complained not finding Afro-Caribbean bros and sis in his online searches about Latin American events videos. “The Spanish conquerors were European” the tourists friends snapped back. I had to tell them that it wasn’t this guy fault that, a 1970 census, the media and East coast interest groups made this labeling a requirement for people speaking Spanish to apply and qualify for anything in this country. “We come in beautiful black, beautiful white, indigenous brown and the mix-up of all” a black skin Puerto Rican born guy put in, his massive hand fanning around the room. I remember homeboy confusion as the Mediterranean-looking Argentinian, the blond Venezuelan and the Indigenous-looking Ecuadorian pulled out a rainbow color chart, playing a game of looking for a color called Hispanic while singing a salsa music song that calls out the name of the countries in the whole America continent, musing that there was no one country called Hispania. Homeboy whispered he never heard all these info from the Puerto Rican he grew up with. “You mean New York Rican and some Americanized foreigners; by the way these People FROM LATIN AMERICA were just educating you, no hate in that” I added, imploring my friends to stop being shady with his ass with my best Mother Teresa of Calcutta stare.

From my part I was flattered with the attention this poor soul gave me. Homeboy was very excited with me and would mimic everything I did. The two New York Rican lesbians from the apartment next door said they believed homeboy was “in the closet and has a crush on you.” After they break down what “in the closet” meant, I voiced my doubt for I noticed some local folks misinterpret male bounding with the Down low behavior is well known among the thugs “Cock tease him and you will see him getting aroused” the manly of the lesbian suggested. They bet me two bags of their own homegrown weed or twenty dollars.
One day, with the lesbians hiding in the closet (no pun intended), I had this punk and me dressed up with the Brazilian flag speedos for Ju-jitsu my wife at that time had sent me and we hit the floor wrestling. Our café late contrasting body glimmering with sweat, I then blow the fume of a make-believe magic hot tea into his mouth, which ended in a casual kiss. I looked down to his crotch; though his manhood seemed bigger than my nine inches he barely got aroused. Soon after that, homeboy left high as kite to see his bitch after popping an ecstasy. I called out the neighbors and staffed my twenty dollars in my speedos for he was no gay.

This dude was no match for this street-savvy illegal immigrant-chick who was getting the green card plus a full time sex-slave in one shot. (You got to love immigrants’ survival skills.) So into his woman he was, that not long after he came back threatening me. That chick, no liking the influence I was having in her sex-toy-boy, got into his head that we were doing shit on his back. After a loud argument he disappeared from my life.

He contacted me couple of years afterward, he “wanted to chill in the city, and who else to do so than with my free spirit nigga,” his e-mail claimed. Problem is, when I see danger I don’t run away from it, I let it get to me. “The rappers-thugs should worry almost no one.” I would explain to clean-cut professionals who met with me in my favorite Albanian cafe on Arthur Ave. I would argue that it was the nerdy looking folks, who tend to be potential psychos, whom we should watch out for. Well, I should have practiced my own advice when I let this shadowy creature into my place to spend the night.

When I got up from my bed where I sleep naked, he was standing around stabbing himself with a toy arrowhead until I could see red dots. I grew up with Ascetics Catholics putting pain on themselves to discipline the flesh, you think Mr. Eminem here was gonna impress me? I saw his eye’s change, using the typical psycho intimidation techniques he expected me to run in fear!

What did I do instead? I stood up into an elegant pose, took an empty bottle, uncapped it, and began to urinate inside. This enraged him enough to prevent him from acting in cold blood like a good psycho. Turning red he completely lost control and jumped on me, with one hand grabbing the bottle. Like a good third world man, I swung back and forth splashing the contents of the bottle all over the two of us. His straight hair absorbed most of the urine. His hands went around my neck, and I kept swinging using my body weight to drag him over to the kitchen, screaming, “That’s all you can do?” through his choking grip. I grabbed for the doorknob to open and then everything went dark.

When my vision clears up again I am on the house porch, a bucket in my hand, looking sideways to an astonished neighbor two houses to my left. I look toward the house’s door glass panel and see the wacko impassive face peering out. The survival instinct made me shout for him that the cops would be dropping in anytime. He burst out of the door; passing by me and like Frankenstein and is gone. The cops come of course when all the fun is over.

The ambulance came for me, and took me to the hospital. After a few hours I leave the hospital. I let go of the haunting memories from my moments of near death. But, “where am I?” my inquiring eyes ask in silence. I fall into a walking rhythm while stretching my neck and arms, taking in my environment. There are Mexican Indigenous, Albanian, Slavic and Dominican women pushing baby strollers while shopping. I keep finding Black American teen and adults standing around corners eyeing with curiosity as Dominican guys make flirt with girls passing by, while making fun of each other one minute and embracing the next in the male bounding that some North American guys feel insecure to display. I see throngs of students spilling out of Fordham College walking in all directions. I hear and brush past a rich mix of cultures. I keep on walking. Wherever these throngs are going I find my feet going, for I am tired of running alone.
Two years ago, I arrived at the realization that the absolute truth is God. Since just realizing the absolute truth is God is not enough to understand God or build a solid relation with Him, I took some steps toward uncovering the details of the truth. At this time I was heavily attached to my yoga practice and started exploring the Orthodox version of Hinduism through the Hare Krishna Movement. For the first year of my Krishna studies, I was captivated by the “aura” of Krishna, by the mystical stories, by the recurring colorful, lively festivals. However, it seemed like I could not fully grasp the human form of God as a little blue man with a flute. I realized that the most important advancement of the spiritual journey would involve viewing and valuing God as a person. Viewing him in a human form will help a seeker to gain a personalized, more comprehensible relationship with Him and will elevate this relationship to a higher level. As I did not connect to the human form of God as presented by the Krishna Movement, I immediately knew that I would suffer from spiritual stagnation. In addition, I also felt that it was too difficult to attain or earn a guru, which is necessary for spiritual advancement. Since the Hare Krishna religion requires the devotee to chant for 2 hours on beads, and to follow strict regulated principles, I knew I would not make it with this methodology and process. I knew it would take me five years to earn a guru and I became frustrated with this pressure. I asked myself this question: “What is the purpose of God sending Jesus and the sacrifice of His son to save the world from the burden of sin if we are still required to do all this spiritual work to return back to God?” My answer was clear: It was unnecessary and perhaps only necessary for the realization that Jesus Christ as veritas, in the history of humankind and the history of God in human form, is above all other realizations. When I was tired of hearing mystical stories that did not seem to lead to one defining moment of epiphany, I quickly followed the advice of my beloved spiritual friend, who was also experiencing the same stagnation and scheduled an appointment to meet with a Catholic priest.

The Krishnas did help me gain a better grasp of the eternity of the soul. However, after two years of practicing this religion, I still felt I was going in circles. To tell my readers the truth, one part of my brain was going in one direction, another corner of my brain was being pulled toward another direction. My brain felt heavy and divided. It was interesting to hear mystical stories but I wondered, what is the point of all the stories? There was something about these mythologies that did not jive with my logic. Why do I still feel scatter-brained and my brain cannot focus on one single point? Like the mysticism of the Bible’s Old Testament, I was drawn to Hindu mysticism but I finally realized something was missing: a punch-line, the One and Only, a Messiah. What is unifying all these stories, I asked myself. Do these stories lead up to the coming of a Messiah? When I was at the Krishna temple, I felt the devotees were still waiting around for their Messiah. As a
Roman Catholic, in my mind, I had already accepted that the Messiah came to earth and this Messiah was Jesus. I than began to question if the energy I was channeling at the temple was a demigod energy and if I was practicing paganism. I also thought of history’s timeline: The appearance of Lord Krishna happened before Jesus graced the world with his humility and mercy. Jesus Christ did make it easier and quicker for humans to return to God. Jesus was not about being dogmatic or following strict rules. He even told his critics, the Pharisees, that simply conforming to rules will not guarantee the conformist a position in heaven.

Jesus Christ gave his followers the gift of the holy spirit to avoid following rules like a parrot and enduring unnecessary darkness. The holy spirit is very powerful; if pure, one can just trust to follow it without using logic as a filter. It is the inner voice that serves as a resource of wisdom when logic is faulty, when heart is foggy, and the mind is polluted. I inquired about the state of my holy spirit: A holy spirit which I had perhaps undermined and neglected over the years. With the mission of salvaging my spirit, I had two meetings with the Catholic priest, who confirmed that my holy spirit had been depleted by sin. I had not confessed my sins since I was in elementary school. The priest suggested that I should repent all my sins formally before accepting the Holy Eucharist at mass. In the period of this recent month, I have confessed three times to this priest and I feel my holy spirit has resurfaced. In fact, I feel that a big weight has been lifted from my shoulders and that the holy spirit is guiding me throughout my days.

The sins that were incurred over time had caused a big burden and I was weighed down by the heavy load of these impurities. Each time the priest pardoned me, I felt lighter and I felt a stabilized joy. I did not feel that extreme, exaggerated euphoria that I was formally used to feeling, that lasts a few moments and that is then followed by a deep sadness. It was a true joy of an eternal nature. It is a long-lasting happiness that is the state that one ought to attain. After being liberated from my sins by the priest, I now realize when I may be committing sins. As one begins to purify, one becomes more aware of defilement, of the deep trenches of darkness that sin can lead one into. Committing sins depletes the purity of the holy spirit, which is one’s connection to God. If the holy spirit is tainted with sin, a person will be less connected to God and will begin to suffer in darkness, a hell on earth. The person tainted with sin will also start making bad decisions with his or her life and will fall under the traps and temptations of defiled society.

Having this knowledge and direct experience with darkness and light, the believer, if wise and not a masochistic, will choose to go toward the light. The priest also said that it is important to view God as only light. God has no darkness. Darkness comes when humans begin to make their own rules and sin against His words to please their egos. God did not create this darkness. Humans willingly do because they want to rebel against God. I asked the priest a million-dollar question: “Priest,” I said, “Jesus says to avoid paganism and priests say to avoid the new age also. The million-dollar question is: Is yoga a new age practice?” The priest immediately answered with certitude: “Certainly, one is taught to open the chakras to a new age concept ‘the universe’, but is not taught to close themselves off to negative energies. Through yoga, one becomes an open door so that everything, good and bad, could enter through it!” He said perhaps the true yogins in India knew how to close themselves off to these negative entities, but the Westerners don’t teach this to the students. I admitted to him that I utilize the yoga discipline simply as a gymnastic exercise to ensure that I am not messing around with unwanted energy or invoking a demon of the mythical past. “No!” he says, “There is a severe danger even in doing this! Mythologies of Hinduism involving demigods are embedded in the yoga poses. You do not want to be serving the demigods!” The priest said that Jesus was sent to eliminate the system of demigods and that His followers must serve one God.

New age, since the 1960s, is found everywhere. Tarot card reading, self-help psychology, astrology, etc. cannot help an ailing spirit, according to the priest. The person must accept Jesus and take the steps to follow this spiritual master. The priest also recommended choosing one religion and going all the way with it. He said new age spirituality takes little bits and pieces of each religion and meshes it together so it reads like a glossy and patchy interpretation of God. But God is not glossy or patchy. God requires one to realize truth through His cohesive Words. The priest suggested not to take bits and pieces from different religions, such that these bits and pieces would favor the ego just so that a person avoids committing to “the heavy stuff” of one religion. I asked the priest if it is important to go to church if one decides to be a follower of Christ. His response was “Absolutely, a crucial part of a Catholic’s spiritual evolution is to attend mass and confess to a priest before accepting communion regularly.” I mentioned that many so-called Catholics do not attend church and claim that praying from home is sufficient. God hears one’s prayers from anywhere, right? However, he pointed out, when one becomes friends with an interesting person and wishes to develop the friendship, the friendship will usually involve visiting the friend in his or her personal space/home. In the same way one usually wishes to see how his friend lives or wishes to hang out with his friend in a personal environment, the follower of Jesus will think along the same vein. If one is fond of Jesus, one will want to visit his Lord in the Lord’s own homes.

I usually never connected to priests in the past. In fact, I did not have a high opinion of them at all. I thought they were rather inaccessible, cold, and close-minded. No priest had ever taken the time to answer my questions or had given me suggestions to move forward spiritually. Perhaps one earns this special association with a talented priest through a consistent sequence of actions demonstrating faith and trust in God. When one stagnates spiritually, one should not accept the stagnation and stay on a plateau. Rather, one should persist and endeavour to reach the highest levels of truth until the spirit is fulfilled.
In this mellow day,
In this yellow day;
The breeze gently
Caressed the
Trees.

The maracas shook,
And the cicadas clicked
Their serenade, as the
Babble of the crowd rose
Amongst the eucalyptus
Trees, celebrating the
Sun, as they salsa danced
Near the sand, under the
Luminescent leaves;
In this mellow,
Yellow day.

The soft
Diffusing light
Mingling with the
Delicious, mellifluous
Sounds that super DJ
Played; wafting
Over the Crowd near
The pool like an aroma,
Amongst the whirring
Flashing blue, red
And Yellow laser
Lights.

Licking our ears;
Flicking our fears,
Trickling down our
Spines; sending the
Crowd into a
Rapturous smile;
In this mellow,
Yellow day.

While the sounds of
The music mingled
With that of the smoke
Machine; with that of the laughter,
With that of the joy;
Amongst the splashing
Foaming pool, as
The surrounding
Trees all bowed in
Reverence, for they had
Witnessed a miracle.

That man can
Again return
To the embrace of
Mother earth
Like a child;
In this mellow day,
In this yellow day.
by Tony Zuvela

Tony was born way back in the crazy, far out, groovy sixties; '62 in fact... That's him over to the left. He currently lives with the four people inside his head, somewhere in Australia. His Hobbies are Arthritis and Medication. Was once in the Television Industry as a Cameraman/Editor for 24 years. Cartooning and Drawing is something Tony’s been doing naturally on-and-off ever since he could walk, but nothing professional, just doodles for Family and Friends; that is, until in 2004 he decided to give Cartooning a full-time red-hot go (the silly fool!), and he’s never looked back, partly due to the Arthritis in his neck.

BERSERK ALERT!

WIDE AWAKE

THE BEAUTIFUL FLORIDA KEYS
“Golden bridge, silver bridge or diamond bridge; it doesn’t matter! As long as the bridge takes you across the other side, it is a good bridge!”
— Mehmet Murat ildan.
“Cherie, keep walking. Shut your eyes. We are headed for the bridge. We are going to cross it.”

— Joyce Carol Oates
Murray Hunter
Dependent Origination as a Natural Governing Law
An essay that explains the concept of dependent origination and its place in Buddhist Dharma (teaching). Dependent origination is then described as a heuristic and discussed in relation to James Lovelock’s GAIA hypothesis, the solar system, the economic system, the social environment, event phenomena and entrepreneurial opportunity, consciousness and self concept, and the ethical standpoint.

Tony Zuvela
Berserk Alert
Berserk Alert is a collection of published in Ovi magazine cartoons from Tony Zuvela; including some unpublished. Over a hundred pages of alarmingly berserk humour.

Prof. Ernesto Paolozzi
Benedetto Croce: The Philosophy of History and the Duty of Freedom
Professor Ernesto Paolozzi’s book on Benedetto Croce, his ideas and his thoughts.
Translation from Italian from Dr. Massimo Verdicchio

Dr. Emanuel Paparella
Aesthetic Theories of Great Western Philosophers
Professor Emanuel L. Paparella’s new book. In twenty chapters, twenty philosophers and their studies on art and aesthetics.

Thanos K & Asa B
Ovi in Finnish means doors
The Book of Doors

http://www.ovimagazine.com/cat/56