

## Way Too Much Thinking

Tuesday, July 10, 2007 at 3:01am

Everyone has interests, hobbies and passions. A short list of the possibilities could be: camping, pottery, painting, music, God, woodwork, sailing, computing and all of its sub-categories, sports, collecting, mountain biking, NASCAR, crafting and selling glass jewelery... I'm talking about the hardcore here. What makes someone decide they enjoy woodwork so much? Why does the mountaineer from Banff say he lives only for the mountains and glaciers?

Why do we dedicate ourselves to things? I'm going to take a stab at why I think we are passionate about certain items or activities.

Everyone loves the thought of being good at something. Hell, I'm a very inexperienced pilot, but in a crowd of regular non-fliers, I'd feel like the King of the World if the topic of aviation came up. Which brings up my first point of three:

### 1. We seek identity

We all want to be in a club of some sort, no matter what. We don't care who it is at first, as long as we can identify ourselves with others, giving yourself confidence that "who you are" is something other people would desire to be. Even if you have to go through completely stupid things to do so, ie: Initiations. We can even be a part of a "club" we barely enjoy and still be boastful about it.

I understand gang mentality. I understand the feeling of community people feel at a church. It's comforting. It also makes us uncomfortably predictable at times.

### 2. Our scope of passions are relative to those in our environment (how we perceive ourselves)

So a loser kid is in gym class one day, and finally there's an evaluated sport where he actually beats out the athletic dude. I'd say that may be a catalyst for Little Jim to make Ping Pong his favorite sport. Maybe even he'll play the rest of his life. Now grown up, he's at the top of the mountain in *his* world, yet any 8 year old in China could whoop him blindfolded. Does it matter? No. Because it's *relative*.

More often will passion and interests be *relative* than *absolute*, unless you are striving to be a global leader in whatever you choose to pursue. (Take my being a novice pilot for example)

3. We love what we *want to* : What influences us?

I still stick to my belief that people are the product of their environments and the sum of their interactions. Think about how it would be for a newborn girl: not knowing anything. Everything she would learn would be from a figure in which it trusts; in most cases the parents. So to the child, everything "the parents" tell her is gospel. But we all know there is no such thing as the perfect parent. Who can be right all the time? Unfortunately most people make up their minds about values and biases **before** they learn how to frikin' think about it.

Take religion - most atheists you'll encounter would easily ignore any religious person trying to discuss their faith. What would happen would be the equivalent of him/her covering his/her ears and screaming LALALALALA... I think believers in any religion are more guilty of this however. Instead of trying to shoot one down point by point, try to see past these initial biases that have been planted in you, these things **that you want to believe so dearly**, and have an open mind and be critical.

I realized that my learning to knit just might be something I did to get people to perceive me in a different way. All along I thought it was because my mother and sister got me interested in it as a kid...that may still be the case I guess.

Anyway, I just find it funny to see people in their own Zen states of hobbies or even passion. One would strive his whole life to achieve greatness in a trade perhaps, or to know that they are loved and appreciated. But isn't it all in our heads? You, in essence, are the one who chooses what makes you happy.



[Alana Chuchmuch](#) at 3:44am July 10

Wow -- I really like how you think... if you were a Christian, you would make a good pastor haha! but since you aren't, either way you make a good speaker. You are well spoken, well in this case written. I admire you alot Andrew -- miss you lots!!



[Ysabelle Vautour](#) at 4:02am July 10

Ok so your saying that passions are not usually chosen consciously  
That you can make anything interesting  
That are passions are self serving  
we see something that we think will make us better so we try it

ok in your 2nd point i see your talking about being a big fish in a small pond but what do you think about the world leader or someone bringing their activity to the Olympic level?

why do you think its funny to see people engrossed in an activity?

there are short lived passions and ones that last a life time

do you think a passion or being too passionate makes someone too hyper focused or narcissistic?

what do you think of someone went out of there way of like an activity that was not easily accessible to them or that they hated or they where not good at?



[Sarah Burke](#) at 8:53am July 10

Well thought out, Andrew. I ususally don't have the opportunity, or maybe it's don't take the opportunity, to read your notes. This one, however, hit home. I wonder what you think of those who haven't yet chosen what makes them 'them'. Or what they are passionate about.

What about those individuals who are ok to good at a lot, but great at nothing - even in their own little 'relative' world ?



[Valerie Arseneau](#) at 4:21pm July 10

you can knit! Make me mittens! lol.



[Stephanie Kokonas](#) at 1:11pm July 11

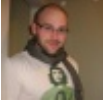
ok Andrew -- I am not sure if I completely agree with you but you've made me think :) i agree that people seek to be part of a group because it is comfortable to be part of something bigger than yourself - to have people around you who share the same interest in whatever. I also think that is why a lot of religious people find it so difficult to be open minded about their religious beliefs : if you have built this comfort zone around yourself it can be a very scary thing to have it's sanctity threatened. On another level - by trying to get that person to "think outside the box" you may be threatening the very system which has come to define who they are because it represents everything they have come to know (from their parents ect..)



[Stephanie Kokonas](#) at 1:12pm July 11

I do think that it is dangerous to imply that you think that all believers are like this though, I know a lot of very open minded "religious people" and by classing them all in the same group you run the risk of doing the very thing that you are writing about. that stereotype might close your mind to any open conversation that these close minded religious people might want to have with you .

you are right though - it is interesting to watch people involved in whatever they are passionate about - I actually think that it is a beautiful thing to be able to watch someone be able to be passionate about something; to have the opportunity to develop that passion.



[Andrew Manderson](#) at 8:49pm July 11

Whateverman comments on my MSN Space Blog:

Interesting!

I like the idea of identity - makes complete sense.

I'll admit that I'm struggling with the relativity bit, though. Someone who grew up loving ping pong and finds himself getting beaten by 8 year old Chinese kids is definitely going to be pissed. I think what you're looking for is "Power". People like things they're good at, because it gives them a sense of competence. No matter how cruel the rest of the world gets, they can always fall back on Ping Pong to give themselves a little peace.

As for the "we like what we want to" bit, I think I agree, but it seems a little redundant with the identity thing. As an example, I wasn't too much of a loser in highschool/college (tho I wasn't close to being a stud either). For a while, I really got into The Rocky Horror Picture show, which was (and still is) completely out of character for me...



[Andrew Manderson](#) at 8:49pm July 11

...Saw the stupid movie 37 times I think. The reason: it was a form of rebellion. Cool rebellious kids went to see it, and it gave me the chance to do something a little crazy. In the end, I was seeking to create an identity for myself.

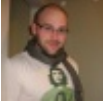
The religion bit was right on, but this, too, I think is identity/power. When the whole world appears to be falling apart, it's a bit rebellious to strongly identify with religion; having other people who feel the same way sort of reinforces this desire to be religious.



[Andrew Manderson](#) at 8:49pm July 11

Why do I like what I like? Power (stuff I'm good at), something which feels like identity (ie. I like kewl stuff). However, I also like things which require understanding before you uncover anything really fascinating. I'm really drawn to sculpture, but it's hard to describe why. I've tried it myself, and I suck; I don't read or know enough about it to be able to call myself "knowledgable". I'm too old to be able to wear it like a badge and call it part of my identity.

I think there's another category you're missing here. Good stuff tho! Made me stop working (and almost got me into trouble ya wanker!)



[Andrew Manderson](#) at 8:50pm July 11

Damnit, one more: you even mentioned the knitting thing as an example of this other category. Yes, it was partly identity (ie. I'm not the dude you think I am), but you were drawn to it to some extent. If it was simply power or identity, you'd continue knitting. But assuming you've sort of slowed down (or stopped), it's going to be one of those things you might remember fondly as "Hey, I tried it. It was cool...", or that makes you look at a well made rug/sweater with more appreciation.

Was it simply "exploration"? Trying something new? If so, why choose "knitting" to be the thing you're going to try? Why not home brewing (infinitely cooler) or calligraphy? There's another category buried in there, somewhere...

Andrew:

Thanks to everyone for your comments!