

[Thoughts, Et cetera: A Long Rant to Get My Mind In Order](#)

Monday, June 30, 2008 at 3:17pm

Books, shared experiences, conversations and new ideas have fuelled the fire in my mind. I've gone back to think mode on a lot of things, I just want to jot some it down to get my ideas in order.

I've been adding to my to-do-before-I-die list:

- Get my SCUBA certification
- Learn Arabic
- Travel around after I graduate, in order to explore my career options
- Whitewater canoeing, rock climbing

I'm learning first hand why stereotypes and labelling can be the opposite of time-saving, and leads to misunderstanding. I'm the only geek here, and when I rant and rave about physics, nature and my perception of reality, I'm a minority. I don't mind that - it's the fact that some of the other people on project have placed false labels on me, and I know some of their opinions of me are false and off base. But because of the fact that it would take much time for them to understand my own (real) perspective, it will probably remain that way for now. Don't get me wrong, I love them all, and I happen to find a lot of common ground with most of the volunteers here. I just find it interesting. => It's teaching me the value of COMMUNICATION. And that is part of the reason why I appreciate more than ever the study in this field (the other reason being the evidence of the lack of understanding/communication being the root of many problems).

I'm re-debating my thoughts on atheism. Now, I want to say something along the lines of: "I don't know for sure, but **I believe** that there is no (higher power)". I acknowledge that this is faith-based. However, this is conflicting with my newfound admiration for humility. I keep realizing that I know absolutely nothing about the workings of reality, and I can make myself think otherwise as much as I want. I would argue that belief in anything at all is rather naïve. I believe in this concept so much, that I am certain that this is what I would want a tattoo to represent. I'm taking suggestions as to what symbols would cover that, and locations. I have a while to think that over.

Really, this humility trip has occupied my mind for a better part of this trip. Since I've completed Brian Greene's [The Fabric Of The Cosmos](#), it has only grown exponentially. I now have a better understanding of [entropy](#), different theories pertaining to the beginning of the universe, [Einstein's theory of relativity](#), [quantum mechanics](#) (therefore a better understanding of [the uncertainty principle](#) (hence the suspension of the debate of free will vs. destiny)), understanding the possible shapes and sizes of the universe, an introduction to the concepts of extra spacial dimensions, a debate on the existence and direction of

time and where current research stands on all the above.

Suffice to say that all this, plus my completing [Carl Sagan's Pale Blue Dot](#), has brought me down to realize that our realities, perceptions of reality, the sum of our experiences...are absolutely **nothing** to everything else that's out there. Greene put it quite well when he said:

We can certainly go further than cats, but why should it be that our brains are somehow so suited to the universe that our brains will be able to understand the deepest workings?

To top it all off, I finished Aldous Huxley's [Brave New World](#) this morning. I found it interesting, but I know I'm missing some of the author's messages. Worse, I'm confused because I happen to find certain elements of what the author is trying to convey as wrong, to not be that bad at all. Take the conditioning of the masses to be content in what would otherwise be misery. I see this even today, with all of our drug intake, the rise of depression, not to mention subscriptions to Second Life and World of Warcraft. I still question what the longterm goals of humanity should be, and how it should be achieved. I don't know why I think about it so much - I guess I just want to direct my life in what I would deem to be the most successful way as possible. I know my volunteering experience in Costa Rica has done wonders to broaden my perception...

Whew, I think I've put enough out there for now. Cheers!



[Valerie Arseneau](#) at 6:20pm July 1

I plan on taking my Scuba certification too :). My way to overcome my discomfort/fear of water. That and I could scuba with dady!!

I've heard of the book pale blue dot... come to think of it I think you are the one who mentionned it. haha!



[Valerie Arseneau](#) at 6:21pm July 1

p.s. Happy Canada D'eh!



[Simon Landry](#) at 11:48pm July 2

Man, sounds like you've got some interesting thoughts there. I'm going to start writing some stuff that you'll know doubt be able to relate/comment on soon. For the tattoo, I'm a big fan of the ouroboros. Look it up, see if you like the symbol and its symbolism.

I don't know how far in on the theory of everything books, but Michio Kaku is the Man. His book Hyperspace blew my mind when I read it. I would recommend it.

Also, two phenomenal books I've read recently; On the Road and Ender's Game. If you

are thinking about reading them, do.
Keep the thinking going man, it's always a good read.



[Andrew Manderson](#) at 4:15pm July 5

Thanks for the comments guys, as usual. I just wanted to add what a good friend of mine had to say on my MSN Space:

Whateverman:

You've given me wai 2 much to comment on - here goes nothing:

I couldn't agree more with you about the communication thing. It is the cause of (and the way to resolve) 99% of humanity's problems. I'll say that my general approach in any conversation about controversial topics involves trying to steer my way through the mine-field of innuendo, misunderstanding, and misperception - long before I consider just saying what's on my mind. Any politician or philosopher will tell you the way you say things is more important than what you're trying to say.

Humility and theism. I think you've touched on one of the reasons why I'll never be an atheist (or devoutly faithful, for that matter): unless I come across incontrovertible proof either way, I'll likely never know whether God(s) exist(s) or not.



[Andrew Manderson](#) at 4:15pm July 5

If God exists, it's silly to imagine that I'm going to know enough about him to be able to say "He wants <X>". The huge variety of cultures and belief systems and philosophies is enough to keep me wondering for the rest of my life whether I really understand the possibilities enough to take a guess - let alone believe strongly.

One followup: is humility a good thing to have in a politician? It seems to me people are drawn to those who express their beliefs with confidence.

As for how to best address humanity's issues - good luck on that one mate :) I agree that the Western world is awash in things which only pacify and distract us : tv, video games, alcohol and drugs, (religion??), chatting on the internet, etc. Most of it is completely without meaning or merit.



[Andrew Manderson](#) at 4:16pm July 5

You wrote your questions in a way that really reminded me of myself. We're different people, obviously, so I don't mean to suggest this will/should work for you: eventually, you just have to choose something and give it a try. Be a politician if you think it could work. Own your own business. Be a father. Set up & run some kind of community

support organization. Write a book. Teach.

If you sit down and really try to puzzle out what the *best* approach is, a smart person will get lost in all of the possible choices. So many factors to consider, so many different world views that lead you in one direction and not another, so many unknowns. The older you get and the more you know, the more difficult it becomes.



[Andrew Manderson](#) at 4:16pm July 5

Again, though - the stuff you've said above really makes me think you're in danger of precluding yourself from public office. Wisdom and humility and detailed analysis seem to *not* be common qualities in the politician. Inspirational leadership involves taking a firm stand on an issue - it's almost as if they're supposed to demonstrate their faith in their own abilities.

Any way, ciao - great blog entry...



[Andrew Manderson](#) at 4:17pm July 5

One last thing that's been on my mind since I read the above entry, regarding atheism. In particular, this passage:

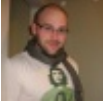
"I don't know for sure, but I believe that there is no (higher power)". I acknowledge that this is faith-based. However, this is conflicting with my newfound admiration for humility. I keep realizing that I know absolutely nothing about the workings of reality, and I can make myself think otherwise as much as I want. I would argue that belief in anything at all is rather naïve.



[Andrew Manderson](#) at 4:17pm July 5

I keep talking about the time I spent debating in alt.atheism. Although those people probably weren't the best examples of rational, level-headed thinkers, they definitely exposed me the entire spectrum of the arguments in favor of atheism. One of the best summed it up as follows: "All the specific ideas about God (from different religions, philosophies, cultures, etc) seem to be horribly flawed or unreliable. Given this, why is the general idea worth considering at all?"

Similar to your thoughts about humility, I drew a distinction between discarding with the vast majority of the ideas I've heard (which is what I have done), and having faith that none of the ideas have ever or ever would have value (which is something I argue against). To me, humility means admitting that I simply can't know everything there is to know about the subject. And while that isn't reason enough to think that god might exist, it does prevent me from having faith in the opposite.



[Andrew Manderson](#) at 4:19pm July 5

Simply put: just because the vast majority of ideas I've heard make little sense, I really don't know. Maybe there's something to it, and maybe not. I don't know either way.

Belief in anything at all does seem to be naive - but do I have enough experience in this lifetime to logically discard every idea (regardless of whether I've heard it or not)?

I'm not trying to convince you of anything, seriously. It's just that occasionally your thoughts on the subject are eerily close to mine, and yet different too. It makes me wanna talk about it.



[Mathieu Boudreau](#) at 8:00pm July 5

Just a thought : Do you ever forget which day it is out there without technology reminding you? If so, I'm jealous. haha.

Take 'er easy and when you get back there will be eggs'n'bacon on the stove waiting for ya.

Sal00t