

# BANKING ON HAPPINESS

H.B. Falkena

The South African Financial Sector Forum

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## PREFACE

Should you read an average of two or three books a month in your leisure time, you can select about 2 000 books during an average lifespan. This compares with an annual world production of close to one million titles a year. The opportunity costs of reading this specific essay may therefore well prove too costly. To avoid wasting your time quickly do the following test:

Assume that you suddenly inherit a small fortune from an unknown uncle of yours. This news that you are elevated to the ranks of the leisure class comes to you during breakfast. More good news flows in at coffee time: your daughter's selected poems, a project she has been working on so hard for so many years, have been accepted by a publisher. Clearly your genes are at work – even in the next generation. To celebrate all this good news lunch is served with (too much) champagne. During lunch you start to speculate, in your closed circle, about the occupations of the leisure class – i.e. traditionally that of government, war, sport and devout observances. After lunch your wife rushes out to her friends to spread the rumour. At tea time the police phone, your (tipsy) wife has had an accident and burnt to death in her car. *Question.* Was this day, on balance, a success, a mixed blessing or an unmitigated disaster? If you considered the day a roaring success, you will be bored with this essay – no need to waste any more time on it. For those who feel that the day was a mixed blessing perhaps Chapter One may be of some interest. Should you feel the day was a tragedy

after all, you can push on to Chapter Three. However, should you be of the opinion that the question of happiness is completely out of order here, you may want to read till the end.

The topic at hand is happiness or contentment, and to what extent this can be promoted by additional possessions and knowledge. Chapter One deals with the most superficial needs of man such as food, shelter, health and security. Depending on your income, state of health, and social status you may be well-off in various degrees. But wellbeing guarantees no satisfaction with life, as you could be stinking rich and bored stiff at the same time.

Chapter Two addresses satisfaction with life. This in turn crucially depends on your daily activities. Does your work give you intellectual satisfaction? Are your dreams fulfilled by the work you do? Are there sufficient challenges, novelty, complexity and unpredictability in your work to strike a balance between what you want from life and what life is giving you?

The topic of love and lust is addressed in Chapter Three. Even in a big house, and with a good job, you can still be very unhappy if your love is unanswered and your lusts unconsummated. Generally, people are happy when they are able to harmonise their individual talents with their (biological) nature. As love and lust are often so irrational in nature, the feeling of being strikingly happy requires the skills of an artist, with plenty of fantasy and imagination.

The last chapter deals with the philosophical issue of whether pleasure can be enjoyed without the senses. Can pleasure that flows from the understanding of the true essence of life in both the natural and imaginative worlds be truly satisfying? Have your philosophical and spiritual ideas been fulfilled? According to Socrates no enjoyment can surpass the pleasure of understanding. This is a pleasure of the highest abstract order.

The above sequence implies that pleasures and happiness come in various stages. If you are content with life in a philosophic sense, you need no trappings of any nature. Like the Stoics your ideal life may be a very elementary one.

Anyhow, great joys are often silent. To be ecstatically happy in love or blind drunk from slaked lust does neither command wealth nor a successful career. To dedicate your life to perfection – particularly in your daily work – can give great satisfaction, but no jubilant happiness unless, of course, you are in love with your job. Right at the bottom of the pyramid of pleasures you find the world of King Midas. At this elementary level, enjoyment and pleasure is obtained from the quantity of toys you have.

Parts of this essay depended crucially on the support of friends and colleagues, and their contributions are gratefully acknowledged. In particular, I would like to thank Søren Ventegodt whose integrative theory of the quality of life forms the basis of this essay; Johan Geldenhuys for linguistic advice and his sparkling ideas for solving unexpected challenges; Jack Seale for supplying two of his tigers (*panthera tigris*) to test the theory of the tamed wild versus wild tamed animal firsthand in the comfort of my garden; and Leonora van der Westhuizen for secretarial services and her patience in dealing with the unreasonable.

The author

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PURSUIT OF WELLBEING

The moment you can satisfy your most superficial needs and impress your neighbours while doing so, you can consider yourself well-off.<sup>1</sup> However, do not expect any tears of happiness as a result. In fact, if your aim is for the really great pleasures in life, it is best to limit your materialistic desires somewhat. More does not necessarily mean better here, as possessions and status are low-quality pleasure products. Often you need large quantities at great expense to feel any meaningful impact, and the price to be paid in terms of lost freedom grows totally out of proportion. In economic terms such investment is unattractive because the input/output ratio is low. Accordingly, for those who prefer mind over matter the passions of King Midas always remain somewhat puzzling.

The dangers of a too overenthusiastic pursuit of material wellbeing, or a desire to have, are manifold. Firstly, the hot desire to heap ever more on your pile of possessions is an illness, namely the mania of covetousness or just plain greed, that requires early psychological treatment to be cured successfully. If left unattended for too long, you will notice that the more you have, the more you desire, and soon Midas' ears will pop out from under your headgear for all to see. It is plain silly to try to slake your thirst with sea water.

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1 In *Falstaff* Shakespeare symbolises the basic requirements of man. Sir John has only the following fundamental necessities: food; shelter; security; companionship; occasional sexual indulgence; and, whenever possible, a drink.

Secondly, spending too much on possessions quickly results in a cash-strapped household. The pleasure of a mansion has to be counterbalanced with the commitments and worries about mortgage repayments and the fear that the Joneses may notice there is financial stress. You are no longer the master, but rather a slave of your property.

Thirdly, all the trappings of wealth (e.g. a spouse with stupendous aspirations, duly bored children, a mansion in the right neighbourhood, sports cars, and the like) are subject to the law of diminishing returns. If you are hungry, the first slice of bread always tastes better than succeeding ones. Likewise, your first car is likely to give greater joy than parking your third Rolls in the garage. In the end there is only so much that you can take on life's journey and beyond. For the really well-off few things in life are more boring than additional possessions.

Fourthly, additional possessions result in massive opportunity costs, particularly in terms of freedom, i.e. the time to be yourself. It is amazing how much time is spent on the collection and management of possessions: e.g. deciding what to purchase, repairs, improvements, maintenance, insurance, inspections, prevention against theft, and so on. Even if you appoint specific staff for this purpose (i.e. your butler, your secretary, your chief pilot or your gamekeeper), this involves endless and unavoidable debates about banalities. Suitable staff are not always kind either – they may even envy you, and play dirty psychological tricks. To be rich, but intellectually wanting, is a tiresome blessing: the material legs simply cannot carry the immaterial burden. It seems only the poor still believe money can buy happiness.

Wealth creates stress the moment it is on too loose a rein. For

example, should you be so lucky as to obtain by inheritance controlling shareholdings in a variety of companies, you cannot avoid flattery (e.g. in such a position all your jokes are considered funny), backstabbing, fending-off of hostile take-overs, endless negotiations with labour and regulatory bodies. This task dumped into your lap requires working 24 hours a day, although you have, as the boss, the luxury of choosing exactly which 24. Ultimately the trade-off is clear: you either eat or sleep well.<sup>2</sup> Is it therefore surprising that even the Arabian princes like to leave their city palaces whenever possible and relax in their traditional desert tents surrounded only by their friends, falcons and Salukis?

The rich differ from the masses in that they understand the limitations of wealth. They carefully select only a few pickings from the large buffet table, rather than trying to taste a little of everything. In fact, a wise man prefers to leave the table of life still a little hungry.

### **Cash constraints**

By the time you leave your parents' home and start your own family, you should be aware, from a financial point of view, about what you can and cannot do. You should know your budget constraints and face the big familiar question: "To have or to have not". The eye is often bigger than the stomach and, before you know it, you are hooked by an expenditure level that guarantees only stress and misery.

Of course everybody has his own unique expenditure pattern – some like sports, others opera, as entertainment, and yet others prefer a nice garden over a deluxe hotel in which to relax.

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<sup>2</sup> And remember in this context the Shakespearean words: "uneasy lies the head that wears the crown!".

Nonetheless, your overall expenditure level is still determined by your social class and marital status.

| <b>Table 1: Economy Class: Monthly average living expenses<br/>(in 1998 constant prices, in rands)</b> |               |                |                            |                             |
|--|---------------|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Expenditure items</b>   | <b>Single</b> | <b>Married</b> | <b>Married<br/>+ 1 Kid</b> | <b>Married<br/>+ 2 Kids</b> |
| Food, clothing, medical  | 1 300         | 2 200          | 2 800                      | 3 500                       |
| Education, arts, holidays  | 400           | 700            | 1 100                      | 1 500                       |
| Transport  | 1 200         | 2 000          | 2 000                      | 2 000                       |
| Housing  | 1 800         | 2 500          | 3 000                      | 3 000                       |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>4 700</b>  | <b>7 400</b>   | <b>8 900</b>               | <b>10 000</b>               |

Not everybody can afford to fly. But should you belong to the lower, upper middle class, *economy class* is within reach. The more wealthy can upgrade to *business class* or even *first class*. The really rich, the princes of finance, fly with their own jets across the globe. In tables 1 and 2 the monthly expenditure patterns of two wealthy income classes are shown. *Economy class* (see table 1) reflects an expenditure pattern characterised by items such as a one-bathroom house, a medium-sized family car, domestic holidays of a fortnight, a working wife, a maid that runs the household, children that go to a government school, while entertainment consists of sports and movies. *First class* (see table 2) is not significantly different from economy class, but puts a little veneer on top. Here the house has more than two bathrooms, perhaps even a sauna. Three vehicles stand in the garage: a luxury sedan, a four by four, and a little car for the children. Annual holidays are spent (on a tight budget,

though) abroad. The wife, to avoid boredom, does charity work. The children have an *au pair* or their own pony. Entertainment is theatre and sports, while dining out is a routine affair.

| <b>Table 2: First Class: Monthly average living expenses<br/>(in 1998 constant prices, in rands)</b> |               |                |                            |                             |
|--|---------------|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Expenditure items</b>   | <b>Single</b> | <b>Married</b> | <b>Married +<br/>1 Kid</b> | <b>Married +<br/>2 Kids</b> |
| Food, clothing, medical  | 2 600         | 4 400          | 5 600                      | 7 000                       |
| Education, arts, holidays  | 1 600         | 2 800          | 4 400                      | 6 000                       |
| Transport  | 3 600         | 6 000          | 6 000                      | 6 000                       |
| Housing  | 7 200         | 10 000         | 12 000                     | 12 000                      |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>15 000</b> | <b>23 200</b>  | <b>28 000</b>              | <b>31 000</b>               |

By accumulating average monthly expenses in real terms over a twenty-year period (which is more or less the stage when your children will be leaving home) you can obtain a rough idea of what the various expenditure items will cost during a generation. In table 3 this summation is done for economy and first classes, while business class is an estimated middle value between these two limits.

Economy class, as a single person, will cost you roughly R3 million over a twenty-year period (i.e. in today's constant prices), while a business class lifestyle will about double this expense. To live first class, as a single person, is nearly three times more expensive than economy class, although the difference in living standards is not that dramatic. Of all your expenditure items, the spouse remains the single most expensive: namely more than half the expenses you would spend typically on yourself had you remained single.

Children will cost you anything between R1 to R3 million each before they leave the house (see table 3). Do you like status? You only need to put a shop-till-you-drop spouse in charge of your household, and give him/her a car with which to compete against those of your neighbours. Soon thereafter you will be a slave to your own living standards.

| <b>Table 3: Living expenses (total costs over a 20-year investment horizon in R-million in 1998 constant prices)</b> |                      |                       |                    |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Expenditure items</b>   | <b>Economy class</b> | <b>Business class</b> | <b>First class</b> |
| <b>Single:</b>   | <b>3,14</b>          | <b>6,58</b>           | <b>10,02</b>       |
| Food, clothing, medical  | 0,87                 | 1,30                  | 1,74               |
| Education, arts, holidays  | 0,26                 | 0,66                  | 1,06               |
| Transport  | 0,80                 | 1,60                  | 2,40               |
| Housing  | 1,20                 | 3,01                  | 4,81               |
| <b>Spouse</b>  | <b>1,80</b>          | <b>3,64</b>           | <b>5,48</b>        |
| Child  | 1,00                 | 2,10                  | 3,21               |
| <b>Children (2x)</b>   | <b>1,74</b>          | <b>3,47</b>           | <b>5,21</b>        |
| <b>Family (spouse &amp; 2 children)</b>  | <b>6,68</b>          | <b>14,52</b>          | <b>20,70</b>       |

In contrast, if you hate to be financially stretched and prefer to maintain your living standards with relative ease, you need an annual gross income of R250 000 for economy class, while for business and first class your annual gross income should be R500 000 and R750 000 respectively.<sup>3</sup> If you want to undertake anything fancy over and above

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3 These income requirements allow for tax payments and necessary savings to absorb fluctuations in the inflation rate and other unexpected expenses (e.g. serious illness).

the first class expenditure pattern (e.g. game farms, private aeroplanes, and yachts), your gross income needs to be at least R2 million p.a. Costs rise steeply exponentially here. The relation between income and standards of living is similar to that between height and weight. If you want to move through life like an elephant, remember that the bull, although a third larger than the cow, is double her weight.

Principally you can approach your budget constraints in a number of ways. Firstly, you can accept that the work you enjoy doing has a going market rate and adjust your living standards accordingly. Not too difficult, as nearly all people operate like this. Secondly, you can stretch the budget constraints, by taking on a better remunerated job. You aim to become overpaid and overworked. In fact not merely overworked, as higher pay often is a compensation for less freedom, less job security, and / or more unpleasant working conditions. If you enjoy the corporate rat race, if you have a strong desire for more corporate power, these golden handcuffs may seem attractive. However, there is the distinct possibility that you may catch “influenza”. Thirdly, you can plainly steal what you are unable to earn honestly. This illegal alternative demands a complete slave mentality, as crime does not tolerate any degree of freedom: you will live in fear of the revenge of your victims. You will fear discovery in cases of fraud, and you will fear the notorious lack of humour displayed by your colleagues in crime. Clearly no free lunch here!

King Midas tried to stretch his budget constraints in his own unique way, namely with the help of the gods, who ironically obeyed. Unsurprisingly, it took him some time to discover that the famous touch he was so hotly bent on was in effect a curse. In summary, trying to stretch budget constraints by reducing your work enjoyment and freedom always represents a costly and a painful trade-off.

### **The law of diminishing returns**

Traditionally the nobility married only to secure property (all the Habsburgers), power (Catherine the Great), a rise in social status (Mrs Onassis-Kennedy) and legal offspring (as Augustus Caesar tried to explain in vain to his daughter, and then his granddaughter, Julia). The pleasure of love was not considered part of a marriage deal and had to be obtained from outside – i.e. on your own initiative. As beauty is harshly subject to depreciation (owing to natural wear and tear), marriage always requires a few safety pins – at least if love is not at stake. Obviously, in such cases marriage is always contracted outside community of property, as divorce is unavoidable sooner or later. From a purely financial point of view a spouse has to be depreciated very much like a motor car, as money is thicker than blood. Depending on usage and expected residual value, it may be a better solution to rent occasionally and leasing may also be acceptable, provided trade-in values are worked out carefully in advance (avoid, at all costs, that the ruling market price falls below the residual value). Unless you do these calculations carefully with your private banker in advance, you will experience painfully that the emotional costs of parting are even greater than the running expenses reflected in tables 1 to 3.

Children depreciate even quicker in value than a spouse. Children are great teachers, though, in emphasising that few things bore as quickly as toys. Yesterday's toys are absolutely useless. The sole justification for giving new toys does not have to be to make the brats happy. You could also give to make the neighbours jealous. The glamour attached to your children also reflects on your own status in society.

How much needs to be said about the other two major expense items mentioned in tables 1 to 3: i.e. property and transport means?

For the nobility a family home always had few unvisited rooms left for the grandchildren to be discovered on a rainy day, while the thoroughbreds in the stable required both skill and courage to ride. In short, no competition from parvenus. Unfortunately, today's castles are no longer a man's home, but more like hotels, with the number of bathrooms determining prestige. What about your smart sports car? Any fool can drive it and after a few years it has lost all prestige value.

By properly discounting your worldly possessions, you focus on time in the appropriate way. Ultimately time is the great destroyer of all wealth. It even undermines your state of health. And therefore a million at twenty is bound to give greater pleasure than twenty million at ninety.

### **Opportunity costs**

Property has to be managed and defended and, the more you have, the more time this takes. The more the trappings, the less the freedom. Even leisure activities such as entertainment and holidays become managerial issues for the well-off. For example, at your party you cannot tolerate to become a deflated balloon left on the floor. Your aim should be to float higher and higher over the heads of the guests. Parties are public relations and networking exercises. You have to work hard there.

Also forget about going on holiday to relax. Where to go on holidays is always a debate between you and the rest of the extended family. Your spouse may have excellent ideas, and try to make a subtle suggestion by singing (Shelley, *Spirit of Delight*):

“I love snow and all forms of the radiant frost  
I love wind and rain storms, anything almost  
That is Nature's and may be  
Untouched by man's misery”

but you know better. On holidays you have to be seen by those who count (i.e. the Joneses).

So what is the optimal trade-off point between wealth and freedom? If you are poor, really poor, there is little freedom in your choice of job. At the bottom any increase in wealth is likely to result in somewhat greater freedom. At the other extreme a business executive may be very wealthy but, considering that every client claims to be his king, freedom is extremely limited at these dazzling heights. The very poor and very rich are unhappy people. In this context Nietzsche once remarked that the landscape (of life) is best seen and enjoyed not at the foot of the mountain, neither on the peak, but half way up. If you want to maximise your freedom, you will have to limit your materialistic desires sooner rather than later. You will save much time by not having to worry on how to spend it and, even more importantly, on whom to spend it.

Considering the rapid loss of freedom that comes with increasingly more wealth, you could well ask if it is all worth it. Again it is King Midas that asked the question so well: “What is best and most desirable of all things for man?” Silenus answered pointedly: “Not to be born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second best for you is – to die soon”.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PURSUIT OF SATISFACTION

Above the entrance to Amsterdam zoo the magic words “*Natura Artis Magistra*” are captioned. A quick trot through the zoo makes it clear indeed that, if you want to master the art of good living, animals can be great teachers.<sup>1</sup>

Generally speaking the smaller the brain power, the easier the animal is kept in captivity. Insects, reptiles and featherheads hardly ask for anything more than the basic requirements for wellbeing. By contrast primates and cats clearly need more than physical food alone – they also demand food for thought. The zoo management tries to comply with these demands, but a nice plate with food for thought is not so easily cooked up.

Take the tigress in Artis zoo for instance. To ensure her wellbeing is no problem for management at all. The Royal Bengal tiger is treated like royalty: quality meat is delivered like clockwork, waterproof shelter is provided against a rainy day, security is of the highest standard, procreation is ensured through artificial insemination, any newborn cubs are immediately taken care of by the zoo management, state of health is checked by a specialised vet, while the chief tiger keeper, like a butler, looks after any unattended details. However, extensive research has indicated that food served

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<sup>1</sup> The zoo is not only an educational institution. Women often come to look for “specials”, as they dream of a household where there is a mink in the closet, a jaguar in the garage, a tiger in bed and an ass to pay for it all.

on a silver plate and mineral waters of various choices made available in golden bowls were not really appreciated. The tigress supports the back-to-basics campaign – she is a born minimalist. The Royal Princess even sniffs disdainfully at a diamond-set necklace.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, no amount of pampering will further satisfy this big cat. Without an ample supply of challenges – i.e. problems that are complex, novel and unpredictable – this tigress can only feel bored stiff. To obtain satisfaction with life the tigress wants to develop her inborn talents, such as her skill in pussyfooting around and killing unexpectedly. As no zoo can provide appropriate hunting facilities for predators, these hunters can only long for the hard life of the jungle.

From a wellbeing point of view a zoo can give tigers anything they want, but it is the attraction of failure that finally seduces tigers. In the wild a tiger attack is successful only once out of twenty attempts on average. This high failure rate, combined with an empty stomach, may seem a problem, but it makes every chase an exciting event at least.

Problems are there to be overcome. What does not kill you, makes you strong. As you become stronger, you are able to meet ever more daunting challenges lying ahead. Rather than losing their grip, tigers grow as a result of their difficulties. Failure to catch and kill is not seen as a setback by tigers, but as an appropriate antidote against boredom. Anyhow, hunger is a most delicate sauce, suitable for nearly every dish of meat. Tigers understand fully that time kills even more thoroughly than they can do: better to starve free than to die slowly in captivity and never be able to put your

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<sup>2</sup> In the wild the tiger is also a minimalist; he typically thinks females are always looking their best when they come back successful and dirty from hunting.

talents to the test. As Fortuna favours the brave, the greatest pleasure is to live dangerously!<sup>3</sup>

Always to succeed in whatever you undertake kills any challenge. Without failure no free man can be truly happy.<sup>4</sup> The preference for freedom, challenges, complexity, novelty and unpredictability is of course not unique to tigers. In fact human tigers can be defined as those who minimise their expenses on food (i.e. “having”) in order to maximise their time on food for thought (i.e. “being”). Hamlet was right of course: the question of life is “to be or not to be”. If you prefer to be defined in terms of what you are, rather than in terms of what you have, satisfaction with life is within easy reach of your claws<sup>5</sup>.

### **Discovering your talents**

To discover your true talents is no easy task. Talents often remain latent, and, as in the case of a meal, you must have tasted your food first before you are able to say whether you liked it or not. Therefore it is often better to regret things you have done than to regret things you wanted to do, but never did. Have the courage to try the unknown.<sup>6</sup>

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3 “Tyger, Tyger, burning bright, / In the forests of the night:/ What immortal hand or eye, / Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?”, W. Blake, *The Tyger*.

4 Unsurprisingly, Eros was so popular among the gods, because his arrows hit in the most unexpected quarters—uncertainty, and therefore the chance of failure, was highly prized by the gods. It was the antidote to their perfect skills, perfect wisdom, perfect power and immortality.

5 When Napoleon lost his temper and characterised Talleyrand with the infamous words, “You are shit in a silk stocking”, he tried nevertheless to distill the true essence of this great courtier both in terms of what he was and what he possessed.

6 For example, Matisse at age 20 found his *métier* to become a painter totally by chance while hospitalised: “it was a tremendous attraction, a sort of Paradise Found in which I was completely free, alone at peace”. See: “Hard won”, *The Economist*, London, 13 February 1999, p. 13.

Usually what you like is where your talents are. If you like playing a specific musical instrument, chances are that you have a talent in that direction. If you have a fine ear for music, you could become a conductor, but only if you also possess the talent to tell all orchestra members what to do and not to do day in and day out . To develop a specific talent you often need supporting talents. The inquisitor is no simple brute, but also a loyal *domini canis*. He combines a soul of iron with deep devoted religious feelings. To be a good hunter you need the skills of a predator, but also a love of animals. Reading *Faust* you will notice that Méphistophélès has many attractive talents as well – quick-witted, seductive, knowledgeable, and sensitive on the violin, to mention only a few of his lesser known aptitudes.<sup>7</sup>

The greater the tensions between your talents, the more interesting your character and personality. The counterpoints, however, have to be placed well in your symphony of life. As in the arts you should try to balance extremes to ensure a golden mean. By developing your talents you develop simultaneously a tendency for perfection in the work you do. Even a humble job becomes interesting and challenging if you try to perfect it. The moment you combine all your talents in a specific task you become truly focused and the enjoyment of work well done becomes evident.

No single god has all the talents. Therefore, the two work gods Pallas Athena and Hephaestus manage the celestial and terrestrial

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<sup>7</sup> Similarly good on the violin was Reinhard Heydrich, SS-Oberverdachtsschöpfer und General der Polizei. His meteoric rise up the ranks of the SS was initially on the wings of music. Besides his talents for fighting his rivals either at sea, in the air, on the ground or even underground, Heydrich was a much sought-after violist. Music opened doors that would otherwise have remained closed to him. Coupled with this musical gift, was another talent—noted by the Führer himself—namely his ability of crossing rivers of blood without batting an eyelid. It was this extraordinary mix of talents that made him so notorious. See: Deschner, G., *Reinhard Heydrich, Statthalter der totalen Macht*, München: Heyne, 1980.

fires respectively. No need for weekends off or holy days for these two. The almighty Zeus knows his limitations as well. Although his hand cradles thunder, he does not dare to take the reins of the four winged horses of Helios. The eternal job of the sun god, namely his daily drive in his golden chariot along the sky precisely along a narrow predetermined path, ultimately seems boring. Nonetheless, Helios could hardly wait for Horae to open the gates of the universe for his racers Pyrois, Eos, Aethon and Phlegon. It was the challenge of precision driving on the one hand, and the wildness of stallions on the other, that represented the ultimate for Helios and made him such a satisfied god at the end of every day. What applies to the gods, is even more applicable to mortals: the key to a good life is to ensure that your inborn talents are used appropriately. Or to quote Cato's words: "a man's life is like iron: use it constantly and it gleams, stop using it and it rusts".

Talents often become more articulated in adverse life conditions. Suppose, for instance, you are a zoo director and on a cold, rainy day you have to ensure that the one-day flies are fully satisfied with their life. This is a challenge as, with their lives limited to one day, these flies cannot pin their hopes on improved weather conditions. They simply have to make the best of circumstances. Nonetheless, satisfaction is in reach, if these flies can work in terms of their talents – i.e. to clean up where the vultures, ravens and ants have given up. Accordingly, the zoo director has to ensure that one-day flies clean the bloody bones of life on those cold days. Flies that feel useful feel happy – also they want to leave their modest footprints on this world.

### **Investments and returns**

Your latent talents have to be developed sooner rather than later. Only then is it possible to enjoy the fruits of life at a later stage.

Many people still believe that it is possible to be satisfied with life without making any effort or investment. They confuse wellbeing with satisfaction. You will not obtain work satisfaction unless you are willing to invest in the work you like doing. Virtuosity and extensive training goes hand in hand. Rockefeller (John the Third, that is) summarised this issue as follows: “The road to happiness lies in two simple principles: find what it is that interests you and that you can do well, and when you find it, put your whole soul into it – every bit of energy and ambition and natural ability you have”.

However, your investments have to be depreciated at a high rate, as your talents are not constant. Strength, skills and creativity may weaken as the years go by, but patience, insight and knowledge may burgeon. Accordingly continuous investments have to be made to ensure a balance between what you want from life and what life is able to give you at each stage. For instance, a top banker cannot build any further on his financial skills and insights after retirement, as all ties with the practical banking world will have been severed. Instead, he has to develop other skills for those years when money is no longer an issue. Unfortunately he has to do so at the height of his career, as he has to invest in these new skills timeously – at least if he wants to avoid boredom during retirement.

No amount of money can compensate you for a job you hate doing. To be forced to invest your valuable time in work for which you are unsuited for is slavery. Anyhow, even if you succeed in making pots of money, time will simply not allow you to enjoy the money earned that way. The average person needs seven to nine hours sleep a day. Of the remaining fifteen hours about nine are spent working or at least at the work place. In addition, more than three hours have to be spent with the family. Accordingly less than three hours a day, on average, are available for leisure: far too little

time in relation to the working hours put in, and particularly so if you have sleepless nights about your job and need drugs or a quick fix to cope with the daylight hours. Only lust for power can carry you over all the obstacles that go with a job you basically hate doing. Remember though, lust falls in the realm of Dionysus: Apollo cannot help you with your irrational desires.

Although satisfaction with life flows primarily from work well done, the striving for perfection should be disciplined. Nature is not perfect and any fanatic striving to make it so is rewarded with madness. In addition, knowledge, the affirmation of reality, so often kills any motive for action. How can you try to set to rights a world that is out of joint, without feeling ridiculous or humiliated?

Realising your dreams is very much an Apollonian affair: “Know thy limitations”. The approach should be one of moderation and balance. That of all the gods the cripple Hephaestus should win as wife the goddess of beauty and love is a divine sign of what talent can do against all the odds.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

True happiness, rather than satisfaction, is only within reach if your passions for love and lust are consummated. Although these passions are often of a fleeting nature, they can be real killers of happiness if not slaked. The (rich) aged so often wonder with surprise, even jealousy, at the joy and happiness of the (poor) youth. You may be healthy and well-off, you may be very satisfied with your daily activities, but to be in want of scandalous pleasures will still make you unhappy deep down.

Your instinctive need for love and lust comes with your genes.<sup>1</sup> It is inborn, very individual, and often difficult to control. Your genes make you what you are, and particularly so in the irrational world of Dionysus – that favourite wine god of Nietzsche with his chariot drawn by swift tigers and his creative votaries such as the graces, silenoi, satyrs, maenads, and furies. Apollo may emphasise moderation, harmony and sanity.<sup>2</sup> He may even polish your cultural veneer but, as a tamed wild animal, you quickly revert to your deep pool of genetic instincts the moment you are faced with stress or fear, falling back on your true Dionysian instincts.

As in the case of wild animals, it is virtually impossible to tame a

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1 When the hormones overflow and the adrenalin is high, the pursuit of pleasure becomes more than a dominating passion.

2 His temple in Delphi had two characteristic precepts: “Know thyself” (i.e. know your human limitations) and “Nothing to excess”.

wild person during his life. Even if after some training he seems tame to the outside world, he remains basically wild, as his genes, i. e. the body's operating instructions, remain unaffected by such education. Proper taming typically requires "character cleansing" – i.e. the focused and selective breeding out of (socially unacceptable) wild genes. No results are to be expected within a few generations. Accordingly, if by nature you are a tamed wild personality – rather than a wild tamed one – you will be dominated by your instinctive passions sooner or later. The cool brain may argue against falling in love, for forgetting about any short and transient joys, against being cruel, and for being satisfied with your modest place in the social picking order, but your genes may urge you to abandon yourself to the irrational wild pursuits of sexual lust, even blood lust and, if at all possible, power lust. All these lusts are truly consummated only if you are fully intoxicated with them. Sexual lust should end in an apparent death, the lust for hunting and war should be satisfied by victorious intoxication, while the pursuit of power should leave your opponents punch drunk.<sup>3</sup> Only during these fleeting moments of delirium can you taste jubilation and happiness.

### **Erotic lust**

In love – true love that is – the pleasure lies in the pleasure of others: "Your joy is my joy!" This is the key that makes love so different from the other pleasures in life. The pleasures of satisfying your hunger for knowledge, power, food and sex, or the gleeful gratification you obtain from revenge, all these great enjoyments are different from love in that those pleasures do not result in the greater *joie de vivre* of others. In love you will give without

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<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately for the victims involved they have to live in what the Japanese call the "floating world", i.e. a sorrowful world of pain.

calculation and clearly not on the give-and-take basis<sup>4</sup> that so typically underlies economic reasoning and other mundane activities.

The pleasure obtained from giving, rather than taking, par excellence forms the bedrock of sexual partnership, as each sex depends on the other for its pleasure. This giving without expecting anything in return results in the complete intertwining of love and lust (e.g. demanding sexual gratification without love is lusty, but giving exactly that same service as a gift of pleasure is lovely). The difference between love and lust seems solely a matter of intention.

Although love leads to generosity – i.e. giving without shame, guilt or counting – some rewards are nevertheless forthcoming. Unasked for so to say, like an echo.<sup>5</sup> These rewards come in the form of intense (even scandalous) pleasures, unexpected novelty, and – for Don Juan at least – adventure.

In the pursuit of pleasure it is best to be free, your own man, and to travel lightly – i.e. without trappings, particularly those that are irreversible such as major properties and heavy responsibilities.<sup>6</sup> In love it is foremost your character and talents ( e.g. your wit, daring, honesty, repartee and cleverness) as well as your manners that will determine your success rate.<sup>7</sup> The looming danger is that your

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4 Eros' favourite play was to wound two lovers from completely different social backgrounds, but with similar characters and talents, and then to watch coolly and detached the unfolding events.

5 The love of Echo for Narcissus was doomed from the start in that Narcissus' love was completely self-centered. Without any echo or response in love, Echo could not create pleasures, only more pains.

6 Even the mighty Zeus himself preferred to love without his thunderbolts in his fist. Although, in contrast, Aphrodite often preferred to keep her slippers on.

7 Flem, L., *Casanova, or the art of happiness*, London: Allen Lane, The Penquin Press, 1998, pp. 133.

loving eye might fall on a golddigger. In that unfortunate case you – the amorous bull – will be milked dry like a cow.

Love and lust are not feelings exclusive to mankind of course. Animals also show great talent here – e.g. they love their offspring and often there is abundant erotic lust between suitable partners. Animal love is usually limited to an immediate circle of acquaintances or, even narrower, to offspring (in which case love is a type of “infant interplay” not really prevalent among adults – as symbolised in the child-god Eros). Animals, like the Olympians and the mafia, draw a very sharp line between the few insiders and many outsiders. To be part of their inner circle is a great and select honour. In this respect mankind has greater scope for love than animals, as its love may extend to complete strangers and even to abstract things, such as the arts, which also seem to touch man’s soul at times. The danger of making your love circle too wide – i.e. loving too many – is sentimentality, which is a blessing animals can do without.

Mother love is one of the great examples of love in nature, embracing both mankind and the animal kingdom. And men do not always stand back for women when it comes to loving their offspring. The male sea horse, for instance, has taken over virtually all the tasks usually performed by females. Animals are also willing to give their life without expecting anything in return. For instance, the zebra mare will defend her young against predators with utter disregard for her own safety, as will the stallion in respect of his harem.

Pleasure and adventure can be driven to a climax if love moves beyond your limits of control – i.e. love with total disregard for the norms and traditions of society. This is also the type of free love that Richard Wagner was dreaming about in all his dramatic operas, characterised by personalities such as Siegmund and Sieglinde, who

feared neither adultery nor incest. Here love laughs at authority and religion.<sup>8</sup> Few dare to enjoy this type of pleasure, and therefore it is only reserved for a flagrant few – those who do not fear and who value as their greatest treasure not wealth but freedom. However, this fearless love can so easily violate the canons of good taste. It may even undermine the social fabric, and therefore is feared, and thus hated, by society.

Ultimately it is only love that makes it possible to bear the boredom of having. What is the ultimate advantage of having if this cannot be shared?<sup>9</sup> What are the opportunity costs of love in material and emotional terms? For Wagner the answer was straightforward, as he saw love always as of infinitely great value. Accordingly in his *Tristan und Isolde* Tristan offered everything he had and more, i.e. his head, heart, honour, in fact his life, all in exchange for the enjoyment of seeing Isolde truly happy. Similarly, Brünnhilde in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* offered everything for love – even her immortality. This love effortlessly overcomes the self-centred world of equivalence (this-for-that) that dominates *Götterdämmerung*. Yes even economics as a science has reached its limits of utility in these surroundings of superlatives. Commercial reasoning – the question of equivalencies and opportunity costs – starts to sound blasé in the face of real love.

Love, but eroticism even more so, is expressed best in art, as both aim to arouse and touch your soul. Accordingly love is best understood in satirical form (Juvenal's *Satires*, particularly the

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8 Most of the Olympians' love trouble did not result so much from their numerous infidelities, but rather because they did not respect rank, gender, race or species in their sexual adventures. They believed that cross-breeding produced hybrid vigor.

9 Indeed, shared pleasure is double pleasure, while grief is halved by sharing.

famous number VI, with the ode to the female sex, which was so long forbidden in printed form), in poetry (most of Ovid's output), in opera (all of Wagner's works), or in orchestral works (e.g. the instrumental love duet in Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*). Berlioz saw music and love as the two wings of the soul. This view is in line with Platonian thought, which considers as the true pleasures of life only those that affect the soul and are completely independent of the senses.<sup>10</sup>

Usually women are better lovers than men, and not only because of their motherly feelings. First of all, for those born to create life the making of love is a far more fundamental activity than for those born seemingly to apply the *coup de grâce*<sup>11</sup>. In addition, women enjoy sex more intensely<sup>12</sup> and are less inclined to consider the opportunity costs of love. The trade-off between love and wealth – i.e. the agony of desire versus possessions – is more problematical for men. Nonetheless even for men few things are more bitter and more painful than true love slipping through their fingers. With love lost and the soul in agony, wealth no longer has much meaning. The danger of burning love is that you may want to give away more than you own or, even more extreme, that you want to abandon yourself to what fate has to offer<sup>13</sup>, by throwing yourself into love and life without any further consideration.

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10 Casanova thought, in his early years at least, differently: "Real love is the love that sometimes arises after sensual pleasure: if it does, it is immortal; the other kind inevitably goes stale, for it lies in mere fantasy". Flem, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

11 This difference may also explain why women are generally more passive in the game of love than men.

12 In fact, nine times more according to those with practical experience. Hera's blind anger blinded the poor Tiresias when he settled this old debate among the gods. Casanova had his own characteristic reason for being certain on that point: "A woman's pleasures must be greater since the feast takes place in her own house".

13 Based on Vergil's maxim: "Fate knows how to guide us".

Unfortunately to those with big hearts you can be madly in love with only a handful, as the basic law of nature remains “eat or be eaten”. Only the insiders – your immediate family, a few (animal) friends, your secret garden – can enjoy your love and friendship and thus enjoy the pleasures of your feast, because any outsiders – most of your family, most people, most animals, nearly all plants<sup>14</sup> – will feel the pains of your hunting for food. The greater the number of insiders, the greater the number of outsiders that will have to be sacrificed to feed the insiders. Truly loving all living beings in nature implies inconsistent feelings, resulting in madness. Sooner or later this will drive you insane out of pity, besides the fact that you will very quickly run out of food supplies.

In a world based on predation there is always more pain (those being eaten) than joy (those eating)<sup>15</sup> and therefore you will always make more enemies than friends. The best you can do is to respect your enemies (at least as a potential food source). Ultimately your pleasure in eating and loving has to be counterbalanced with cruelty to outsiders.

### **Blood lust**

At first glance the desire to inflict pain on others – or even yourself – seems an irrational enjoyment. Whether rational or irrational, it does not really matter to those who have developed that fine taste for *Schadenfreude* (that laughter from Hell as Schopenhauer called it), sadism (with all its refinements already documented by the Marquis de Sade in his *Justine*), torture in

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14 The sensitivity of plants should not be ignored, e.g. carnivorous plants like the Venus’s-flytrap (Nepenthes) are sensitive to even the slightest touch. Thus beware: plants have feelings too!

15 This is the philosophical basis of Schopenhauer's pessimistic view of the world. Moreover, Schopenhauer felt that men could never fully satisfy their desires, which drove him to nihilism.

general, but particularly torture of animals as they are easy prey (for Hemingway a bullring death in the afternoon was a divine spectacle)<sup>16</sup> and, of course, masochism, or even sado-masochism, where you often have to pay for the pleasure of being beaten up properly – either physically or mentally.

All lusts that flow from the letting of blood – i.e. blood rites, blood sports and bloody wars – are ultimately sacrifices on which human society and religion are built.<sup>17</sup> For example, military victory – so crucial to your security – cannot be achieved without cruelty. As Nietzsche noted pointedly: “Much blood and cruelty lie at the base of all ‘good things’”.<sup>18</sup>

In blood lusts a distinction should be drawn between the enjoyment of the “clean” kill (i.e. in essence a sacrifice) and the pleasures obtained from cruelty as such (i.e. an obsession, which can quickly develop into a fully-fledged mania as in the case of, for instance, Nero).

The basis of sacrifice is the process of giving and taking, in which harvesting simply means killing – either of plants, animals or people. In its elementary form this process of giving and taking is popularised in the famous life-boat sacrifice: the life boat is there to save lives but, if all the drowning people want to board simultaneously, all will drown. Accordingly some quick decisions have to be made. The moral choice that has to be made seems

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16 The physical strength and sexual prowess of bulls can be quite attractive to some ladies and not only during bull fights, for example, not even Europa could withstand the charms of Zeus as a bull. Likewise, the minotaur was the product of a love affair between Pasiphae and a bull.

17 Ehrenreich, B., *Blood rites, origins and history of the passions of war*, London: Virago Book, 1998.

18 Nietzsche, F., *Selected writings*; compiled, edited and translated by S. Metcalf as, “*Hammer of the gods*”, London: Creation Books, 1996, p. 190.

repulsive at first glance – a choice between two evils, i.e. the ultimate necessity of either murder or suicide, eating or being eaten. Nonetheless this choice between the lesser of two evils remains a moral necessity. Making no decision simply means a death sentence for all. Selecting a few sacrificial victims means murder, but this could be transformed into suicide if the “ultimate” sacrifice is made voluntary.

The strong men in the lifeboat are beyond debate, as no one can push them around.<sup>19</sup> Therefore the sharks will have to be fed in accordance with the old marine code: “Women and children first”. The lifeboat dilemma, the ultimate sacrifice, is easily translated into politics. For instance, Otto von Bismarck – the “blood and iron” Chancellor – saw it in the following political terms: “Hammer the Poles until they wish they were dead ... if we want to exist we have no choice but to wipe them out; wolves are only what God made them, but we shoot them all the same when we can get at them”.

When the heart kills the head, man is doomed to weep at whatever he sees. Of course, the immortals laugh at any human problems, as the alternative – eternal crying – would kill them. Being totally indifferent to the grief of others, to be perfectly hard, defines the character of a natural predator. The Olympians, in direct opposition to man, are such natural predators, modestly asking for the fumes of sacrifice.<sup>20</sup> In contrast to the Olympians, mortals have inherited hunger and hence death. Where the gods do not eat any dead substances, mortals have to kill in order to eat.

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19 Clearly brainy bankers are not easily pushed either, although they are quite safe in the water, as sharks do not eat loan sharks out of professional courtesy.

20 The altar was the slaughter place of the household. The gods agreed – with fine sarcasm – to be deceived with only the fumes of these offerings, while their servants and messengers (the priests and ravens) consumed the real meat.

Of course, no living being is accountable in the slightest for its existence, or for being constituted as it is, or the surroundings it lives in, but predators ensure that the sick, the downtrodden, the crushed, the weak – all those who undermine life and never live at the right time – have at least the hope of dying at the right time. For the predator, as well as any creator, the most noble thing is to be perfectly hard<sup>21</sup>, i.e. to hunt prey or the masses – i.e. the sum of zero, where every zero has “equal rights”, where it is virtuous to be zero. The large predators – those at the very peak of the food chain: e.g. eagles, tigers, orcas and the like – have no need for being popular; they see the desire to be loved as the highest form of arrogance. For them there is no greater pleasure than to live dangerously; to be feared and hated.<sup>22</sup>

It seems that Nietzsche’s works were dedicated to the eagle – that bird that builds its nest above the abyss and who knows how the spirit takes joy from terror. “And he who is not a bird should not make his nest above the abyss”.<sup>23</sup>

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21 Nietzsche, *op. cit.*, pp. 53, 106, 112.

22 Lions, for instance, can be quite hard on hyenas because they consider hyenas ugly, their smile irritating, their smell rotten, their table and bed manners disgusting, and their (too many) kids undisciplined. Moreover, hyenas totally lack generosity and nobility. They honour false gods and, worst of all, they have the impertinence to prey on lion corpses, i.e. to transform the great predator into ordinary prey! Any claims along the lines that hyenas have not asked to be born and therefore are innocent of their “shortcomings” fall on deaf lion ears. Their aim remains to exterminate all hyenas without pardon – at least if they have a chance. The only good hyena is a dead one. The ideal would be if the laugh of the hyena is only uttered and heard in hell.

23 Nietzsche, *op. cit.*, p. 149. Tigers operate very much like eagles in this respect. For instance, in line with ancient Greek morals tigers love “to help friends and harm enemies”. The body of a dead enemy always smells good to them. Usually tigers count their friends on the claws of one paw. In terms of loyalty, courage and affection few animals surpass the tiger as a friend, but danger stalks in unexpected corners. A tiger that feels betrayed – rightly or wrongly – reverts to its genetic killing instincts in a split second. Nothing strange here, as no man should underestimate the fury of a scorned woman. Ultimately – in terms of risk/return analysis – there is no great ... (cont.)

From a predator's point of view a blood rite is no more than a sacrifice, i.e. the give and take underlying nature's law of eating or being eaten. Therefore, if the young tiger cubs have to master their hunting skills, their prey is not killed outright. Instead it is played to death in the most informative way possible. A tiger shows no emotional stress in randomly selecting its sacrificial victim. It simply leaves the final choice to fate (i.e. destiny, which even rules the life of Zeus). No predator argues with fate.

Likewise prey animals, like mice, do not really complain to fate either, as their sacrifice is required in the greater scheme of nature. Ultimately, everybody lives in order to die. Mice are lively, beautiful and healthy, because cats take out all the weak, sick and old mice (euthanasia by way of the clean kill method). The handful of mice sacrificed to teach kittens their perfect killing techniques is therefore a small price to pay, at least considering the handsome returns mice receive in clean killings once the kittens are full-grown "mercy killers". Anyhow, without predators prey would be doomed to a population explosion that would wipe out their natural food resources and ultimately completely eliminate their species. The dynamic interaction between prey and predator cannot be changed on sentimental grounds without serious demographic side effects. Predators hate sentimentality, as they do a necessary job. They fully agree with Shakespeare (*Measure for Measure*) that the size of the prey is immaterial to the moral debate:

"The sense of death is most in apprehension,  
And the poor beetle, that we tread upon,  
In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great  
As when a giant dies".

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(cont.) ... difference between loving a woman or a tigress: watch their moods! To quote Shakespeare (*Henry VI*): "O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide!"

Also please, do not forget about all those forms of life such as viruses whose “pro life” pleas are so often disregarded with absolute contempt by the medical fraternity. This brotherhood is always keen, on purely sentimental grounds, to protect the human animal by engaging in a merciless extermination campaign against all other species.<sup>24</sup>

For a wild cat there is no need for further blood sports, as any hunt for food already is a killing joy. A domesticated cat is not so lucky, however. Because his desires for food, shelter and security are fully satisfied, his passion for hunting remains unfulfilled. Therefore a tame cat will prolong the enjoyment of the hunt to the extreme. Like a kitten, it will play with its prey for as long as possible – at least the few times it is able to catch anything alive. It is not hunger that drives the domestic cat to kill, but its inborn talents as a killing machine.<sup>25</sup> From the prey’s point of view the wild cat is to be preferred over the (“ill-bred”) tamed cat.

Accordingly, even a tamed cat may be far too cruel for some people. The weak-hearted avert this danger in their own peculiar, kind way. Unable to accept nature’s dictate of eat or be eaten, those who like to wrap themselves in a cloak of sentimentality firmly take the cat by the scruff of the neck, pull it out of the bag, declaw it carefully, put the carnivore on a meat-free diet and subject it to a soft life of domestication suited only to a lamb. Clearly the cat is bewildered and not amused.

Any predator that it is not allowed to kill from time to time will be frustrated. And the greater the time span between kills, the greater

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24 And why limit yourself in this brotherhood to “playing doctor” if you could be “playing God” as well – e.g. with principle life issues such as whether or not to wipe out, once and for all, the polio virus from planet earth.

25 It is exactly the same for domesticated dogs. Nothing is more welcome to the ears of fox hounds than the blaring sound of hunting horns and the neighing of the hunters and their mounts.

the frustration and the desire to catch up with all those lost opportunities. Instead of a quick clean kill, death now often arrives on the domesticated killing grounds far too late. To tame a wild predator is to create a potentially cruel killer. The same painful process occurs if you turn a natural prey species into an artificial predator.

In nature only man has succeeded in changing his status from prey (“man-the-hunted”) to predator (“man-the-hunter”).<sup>26</sup> However, man’s emotions, and derived morals, are still based on his prey mentality. Where a natural predator kills without any concern over the pain inflicted, for man the random selection of a sacrificial victim remains an awe-inspiring affair – as symbolised in the “sacrificial scream” of the ancient Greek rite. For many people this creates a feeling of uneasiness and even guilt, very unlike the feelings of a natural predator.<sup>27</sup>

The passion for blood – as well as related desires for power and revenge – is often a consequence of trying to overcome (imaginary) fears. You may fear your powerful enemy, your erotic lover or ultimately your own irrational, unbridled lusts. These fears could be overcome if you succeed in becoming a true predator.

If you cannot help trembling on the killing grounds, you have to talk to your body, as did Vicomte de Turenne: “You tremble, carcass? You would tremble even more if you knew where I am going to take you!” By rejecting feelings of fear you refuse to be treated like prey. Through burial or cremation you refuse to be prey even after death.

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26 This happened after the last Ice Age (or about 15 000 years ago), hand in hand with the development of man’s humanoid cranial capacity and hence his intellectual capacity for developing better means of destruction (particularly action-at-a-distance weaponry). Ehrenreich, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

27 Calasso, R., *The ruin of Kasch*, London: Vintage, 1995, pp. 134–170.

Natural predators derive no joy from inflicting cruelty as such.<sup>28</sup> Their objective is mainly to satisfy their hunger for food, love and security. In contrast to natural predators, man often seems to enjoy all the pleasures carried on the wings of pain as true insignia of his improved status as a skilled killer. During killing for food the sounds of pain quickly become associated with success. The greater the pain of your prey, the closer you are to the climax of the hunt: death. Here the circle of life has closed, as the death of one becomes the dish of another. Alternatively, in the very climax of joy there also sounds a cry of horror.

Through the consolidation of blood rituals and religion man can overcome pity, grief and heartache. He may even master the unspeakable joys of the Dionysian ecstasy, provided he can inflict cruelty with indifference. However, being no natural predator, man requires training.

Cruelty – like prostitution – is learnt best from an early age. To master predation, and to develop the skills of a hunter, blood rites have to be performed in various forms. Blood rites and blood sports steel the nerves. As a start you could begin your training by killing without emotion, like a rabbit, your own carrot plants by eating a few of them alive. Then try to cut down a few trees in your garden, and show, like an elephant, total indifference to pain inflicted on insects and bird lives. From then onwards refuse to see the stork as a deliverer of babies, but foremost as a bird of prey eating alive your favourite Mr Toady. You may even bring yourself to kill, out of mercy, the mortally wounded birds in your garden. If you can take death so kindly by the arm, it is only a small step to cull those for whom there is insufficient food and who will therefore face a

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28 Although they do enjoy causing terror—even when playing with their siblings. The proud fearless hunting spirit is part and parcel of the clean killing method.

painful famine in due course. With luck you may now bring yourself to kill for the pot, and then it is only a small jump to kill for the thrill of it. In short, cruelty is the implicit cost of transforming yourself from a worrier to a warrior.

Once upon a time Carl von Clausewitz remarked, with his fine Prussian taste for understatement, that “war is merely a continuation of policy by other means”. For warriors fighting of course means a lot more. War for the true warrior is a rough and tumble kind of hunt that satisfies his lust for blood. The true warrior needs no more justification for his fights than a wolf for his predations.

Like wolves, warriors are happiest when on the hunt.<sup>29</sup> And if it comes to hunting proper, what surpasses the hunt on men or, even better still, armed men? Any war is a holy war, and its final aim is wholesale sacrifice. Similar to ants, man depends for his external defence on warriors (guardians). But in contrast to soldier ants, human guardians quickly extended their field of expertise to what is today called “protection rackets”. They quickly started to operate as “men of honour”, oversensitive to prestige and pride. Food and social status were no longer asked for, but demanded. The terror of warriors and priests, as reflected in human sacrifice, kept their subjects in submission and constant fear. Anyone who failed to show the required respect could become a sacrificial victim.<sup>30</sup>

Over the years the means of destruction has favoured societies ruled by warriors. This in turn supported a class society, as a predator always sets himself against his prey – i.e. nobility against

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29 Depending on his mood Uncle Wolf referred to his SS troops proudly as his “wolf packs”.

30 To test out their sword blades samurai commonly used commoners along the road, particularly those who showed lack of respect, as cutting material (i.e. so-called “crossroads cutting” or *tsuji-giri*).

its subjects, oppressors against the oppressed, the leisured class against the working class. Up to modern times, society was typically divided into three classes: warriors; priests; and workers.<sup>31</sup> In this class structure the enemy knight is in essence a true soul mate of the nobility (i.e. a rival and friend, also classified as a nobleman), while its own subjects are seen as little more than cattle. Besides trying to beat the enemy in war games, it is even more important to maintain the warrior elite and its esteem in society.

Of course in the end war, like love, always finds a way.<sup>32</sup> War has at least the advantage of tempering the aggressive energy of warriors, who would otherwise tear communities apart: possible internal strife is now deflected outwards. Moreover, military power may cultivate the arts, as evidenced in the cases of Greece and Rome.

Nonetheless, warlords face two major problems: idleness and costs. Boredom and emptiness create frustrations among the warriors,<sup>33</sup> while too much expenditure on the military relative to the productive and revenue-raising capacities of the state leads to a

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31 Adam Smith divided society into the three “orders” of those living on interest, those who lived by profits and those who earned wages in exchange for their labour.

32 Aphrodite and Ares, representing life and death, are natural lovers. Once their blood is up, it is difficult to shift their hunting mood. Likewise, the interweaving of Eros and Thanatos means that the smell of slaughter is also the aura of sex.

33 As the staff requirements of the state and organised crime are very similar – e.g. loyalty to the leader, courage and a predator mentality–idleness should be short. The warrior can easily jump jobs between these two protection organisations, provided he is a man of honour. For instance, who does not know the *chanson* of Raoul de Cambrai? This knight showed a true desire for action. Raoul’s private initiative came to fore the moment he decided to raid the nunnery rather than face boredom and under-employment. His perfect hardness became notable when he decided to pitch his tent right in the chapel with his bed at the altar and to mew his falcons to the crucifix. By declaring all novices fair game he continued to practise his hunting skills, based on the ancient right of *droit du seigneur*. Before leaving, as a sacrifice on his altar of honour, he burnt all the nuns alive in response to an imagined insult.

weakening of national power over the longer term.<sup>34</sup> Should a state overextend itself strategically – by, say, the conquest of extensive territories or the waging of costly wars – it runs the risk of the potential benefits from external expansion being outweighed by the great expense of it all – a dilemma that becomes acute if the state concerned has entered a period of relative economic decline.

Without the military, the uneducated, unskilled and thus unemployed and in turn unmarried males retreat into fundamentalist masculinity – i.e. the world of gangs. The professionally incorrigible, idle and delinquent can be a major drag on the fiscus: beside the fact that they demand social assistance, breed criminals, take drugs, frequently get sick or wounded, and fill slums, they may even frighten the average citizen or simply spoil his view. Moreover, in contrast to women, men have to learn social behaviour through work and marriage rather than grasp it by instinct. The military answer to all this is to put them all in the king's tunic and under the discipline of the sword. "Our army is composed of the scum of the earth", the Duke of Wellington remarked knowledgeable in this context. The military feel they have a major role to play even in peacetime. But a trading society obviously prefers to fight the (illegal) mafia from the moral high grounds rather than subject itself to a military elite.

### **Power lust**

After having slaked your erotic and blood lust, it is time to address your desire for power. Almost all men are obsessed by the desire to prove that they are greater than they are. Power has at least two advantages here. Firstly, in contrast to the fleeting pleasure of sex,

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<sup>34</sup> Kennedy, P., *The rise and fall of the great powers: economic change and military conflict from 1500 to 2000*, London: Fontana Press, 1988.

the pleasure of power is solid. Secondly, it enables you to be superior to many, and at least equal to all.

However, power as a kind of pleasure is opposed to the pleasures of love and freedom. The greater your passion for power, the less room for freedom. To succeed in life you have to balance various pleasures carefully. A little ambition will motivate you in your work, as it is not possible to succeed in business without responsibilities and therefore power. Likewise, you require authority and therefore power to head your family, although you may exercise your seniority with the greatest constraint. But beware the spider that wanted to catch the entire world in his web! Ultimately you only have to balance a successful working career with a happy family life.

Great ambition quickly turns into megalomania, envy and jealousy. Absolute power has no room for love. A true power broker does not fully understand the lines of Belloc (*Dedicatory Ode*):

“From quiet homes and first beginning,  
Out to the undiscovered ends,  
There’s nothing worth the wear of winning,  
But laughter and the love of friends”

as he considers everything worth the price of winning.

If you have a great appetite for power, say the power lust of an emperor<sup>35</sup>, two issues are of particular importance: respect and space. Wherever the big tiger walks, he is respected and feared by

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35 The emperor rises to the top—at least if the *Zeitgeist* is conducive, i.e. frustrated national expansion in the past—in three distinct phases: 1. struggling to obtain supreme power in the state; 2. reorganising the basic structure of the state and establishing effective leadership; and 3. turning towards territorial expansion. On these criteria many a dictator fails to be an emperor such as Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte or Adolf Hitler. See Campen, S.I.P. van, *The emperor, consequences of frustrated expansion*, Alphen aan den Rijn: Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1978. p.7.

all that moves, and wherever his paws hit the ground, that patch is also his property. Clearly the imperator, rocketed from being mere prey to the deadliest predator in nature, should be given corresponding status. In case you lack the self-confidence of an imperator, there is always the possibility of satisfying your hunger for power over lesser beings: every great institution of ill-repute offers a variety of services specifically aimed to power-hungry clients with wishbones, but no backbones. If even the ladies of the night are too dangerous for your taste, you can consider, as an alternative, conquering your own fears by subjecting yourself to masochism or related techniques in cruelty.

In a power struggle territory is always an important issue. In contrast to animals, whose space requirements are based on strict functional criteria, imperators view territory as reflecting power and glory. The passion is always for more *Lebensraum*, more security, and less fear. Again the more you have, the more you desire. Soon the world is too small, and you have to aim for the entire universe. For those going for ultimate power, Mount Olympus, metaphorically speaking and without any disrespect to the gods, always felt somewhat small and too tight to live on.

In terms of equivalencies, the passion for power is a costly one – both for yourself but particularly so for others. Where the desire for love means giving, where your blood rites were on a fully equal basis (who dares to dream about giving the gods short change?), your passion for power implies taking and, if you can get away with it, taking only and giving nothing in return. Accordingly in the power game it is quite acceptable to ask for respect and show utter contempt in return. Likewise, you can take at will and finish off the original owners as a sign of acknowledgement. An imperator must have the self-confidence to walk alone. No fearful cluttering together in herds and looking for safety in numbers.

At the peak of the power pyramid you are alone. As Stalin correctly summarised: “They don't need to love me, so long as they fear me”. Going back a bit further in time, Statius, the Roman poet, remarked on this same topic: “Fear, first of all, produced gods in the world”. If your desire is to be treated like a god on earth, you have to impose fear wherever you appear. However, wherever fear appears, love and freedom disappears. Therefore in terms of opportunity costs you are faced with a hard choice, which ultimately boils down to a choice between love and power. From time immemorial man has tried to obtain both love and power but, where the gods fail, what chances do mere mortals have?

The desire to surround yourself with slaves requires a slave mentality. Master and slave are correlatives, as neither of them can exist without the other. A truly free man wants to be with equals, not slaves. Authority has no value or meaning except in the context of freedom. Accordingly, the imperators could be seen as the biggest slaves in history: slaves of their will to power, and slaves of the human masses without whom they could not realise this will to power.<sup>36</sup>

Of course, as an ambitious imperator you may have to engage in some dubious moral practices at times. Typically routine actions involve stealing (obtaining imperial bounty, as Caesar liked to call it), murdering (the human sacrifice of war, also referred to as “meat” for the gods), raping (e.g. the Sabine rape, as a state action, was fully justified, and obviously enjoyed by the victims), and of course lying (an absolutely necessary skill in espionage). Yes, even in marriage (the rubber stamp of the state required to engage in legal child production) the

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<sup>36</sup> According to Berdyaev the psychology of the dictator is essentially that of a parvenu. See: Berdyaev, N., *Slavery and freedom*, London: Centenary Press, 1944, pp. 61–63.

imperator expects his bride to dress up as a sacrificial victim.<sup>37</sup>

As a ruler you have, as a first rule, to do away with any possible feelings of sentimentality and prey mentality. Your subordinates (i. e. staff) can decide on the familiar issues of good and bad, but you, the top dog, will step in to settle any issues that involve a choice between two or more evils.<sup>38</sup> Whatever you decide, tears and / or blood will flow. You have to steel yourself and in the end may even start to fear yourself.

The power struggle is like a polar expedition where you have to slaughter your own faithful sledge dogs for food to reach your laudable goals. Fridtjof Nansen knew: “It is sad that on such a journey one must systematically kill all finer feelings, and only the hard-hearted egoist remains”.<sup>39</sup> If you cannot eat your best friends on sentimental grounds, you will never taste the sweet fruits of triumph and glory.<sup>40</sup> You must not only be ruthless, but aim for the badges to prove it. In victory you must be merciless and annihilate your opponents not only in body but also in spirit. Give no room for negotiations and no space for hope. Create no opportunities for

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37 Even Heracles was nearly fooled at Herodotus’ court, when he confused his role of hero of the feast with that of designated victim for sacrifice.

38 Greek tragedy typically contained a clash of ethical imperatives, notably between duties to state and family, i.e. a choice between two goods.

39 Huntford, R., *Nansen*, London: Duckworth, 1998, p. 264.

40 During his triumphs in Rome Caesar allowed only one slave to accompany him on the triumphal chariot. The slave’s task was a humble but important one, as he had to hold the golden wreath and constantly repeat in Caesar’s ear: “Remember you are human”. Indeed, in times of triumph you are inclined to overlook the finer details. See Meier, C., *Caesar*, London: Fontana Press, 1996, p. 443. Moreover, as Napoleon advised, the greatest danger comes at the moment of victory. Success goes to your head and you come to rely less on strategy, believing that it is your character that brings success. History is littered with the corpses of those who failed to vary their methods. See: Greene, R. and J. Elffers, *The 48 laws of power*, New York: Viking, 1998.

revenge.<sup>41</sup> Looking back on his life in 1945 Hitler came to similar conclusions: if he had to do it all over again, “no more mister nice guy” for him.

On your way to the peaks of ultimate power, leadership skills, technical skills and the like will come in handy, but to stay focused it is advisable to deepen your feelings, not so much of jealousy, but rather of envy. For instance, concentrate on the qualities others possess, particularly those you lack yourself, and with luck a feeling of envy will start to develop in your soul. Envy has the advantage of being a permanent disposition and therefore a worthwhile investment. This reflection “on others” will harden your heart and sharpen your brain. You will be capable of thought, but not of love. This is a useful and powerful potion in any power struggle.

Driven by envy, your desire will soon be to do away with the object of that envy. Your desire will be to destroy harmony – i.e. the love, virtue or beauty of others – so that you are not the victim of a comparison with them.<sup>42</sup> In the end you will want to destroy those others.

Once envy starts to rule, further action is required on your side. You have to become an artist, in fact a major actor in your own power play (i.e. like any other star seeking applause, reading from a script in the hope of persuading audiences). Of course, you will have to polish your acting talents.<sup>43</sup> You must be able to change

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41 Revenge, sweeter than honey according to Homer, is in essence an action showing one is not fearful either. For instance, tiny sparrows like to irritate the sleepy owl during day time, while swallows mob eagles in their mighty flight.

42 Bate, J., *The genius of Shakespeare*, London: Picador, 1997, p.291.

43 The greatest actor and showman of classical times was no doubt Julius Caesar. This theatrical figure entertained the Romans endlessly. The great general could read his own lines as if inscripted in marble. His successor, the man who modestly claimed to have found Rome built in stone and left it covered in marble, acted with great ... (cont.)

your personality in accordance with the persons to whom you happen to be speaking at the time, so as to deceive or bend them to your will. Accordingly, you are no longer what you thought you were.<sup>44</sup> Driven by envy, moral values are not so much good or bad, immoral or amoral, but simply irrelevant – and strictly for losers.

Like the maenads, imperators have a spontaneous desire to destroy at times, but not necessarily themselves. As the means of destruction have made it increasingly difficult to go to war without engaging in suicidal actions (in the extreme a nuclear war can involve only two competing computer operators), the tendency has developed for fighters increasingly to seek economic warfare. Business is often warfare by other means. Although the power objectives – i.e. control over people and events – are still the same, greed and plunder are now channelled into non-violent acquisitions. This may complicate strategy. For example, commercial combat, in contrast to military combat, requires justice, rational deliberation, reliability, and truthfulness.

Civilisation depends on establishing mutually supportive relationships between warriors (guardians) and traders. The guardians' traditional concerns with territorial control, and their values of obedience, tradition, hierarchy, loyalty and honour, are

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(cont.) ....theatrical skill as if he wanted to restore the Republic, when it had already come to an end. Against the memory of Caesar's sweeping presence Augustus tried to pose in a quiet and manly dignity. Just before his death he had his hair carefully combed and his sagging cheeks massaged—and then uttered his famous last words along the lines: “Applaud my friends, the farce has come to an end!” You often recognise the man by whom he marries and how he dies. See: Greene, R. and J. Elffers, *op. cit.* pp. 192–193 and Suetonius, *The twelve Caesars*, London: Penguin Classics, 1979, p. 110.

44 In Shakespeare the prototype of such a character driven by envy is Iago (*Othello*). For instance, Iago is easy and genial with Cassio, ironic with Roderigo, apparently good-humoured, respectful and humble in his devotion to Othello, brutal and threatening with Emilia, obsequious with Desdemona and Lodovico. See: Bate, *op. cit.*, pp. 292–293.

an essential foundation of the institutions that underpin a commercial civilisation.

It is never easy to change to a new way of making a living. If you were used to seizing the fruits of plunder, it is indeed quite a change to depend on trade. Luckily for the guardians not everything is up for sale in today's national states. For instance, merchants need honest courts, not ones they can buy.

Trust, cooperation and altruism are all part of human life. Warriors willingly risk their lives for their country and executives kill themselves with long hours on behalf of their firms. To progress in trade you have to seek cooperation, do deals on trust, share secrets with confidants, and get ahead by building friendships and alliances.<sup>45</sup> Regarding trust it is generally best to follow a tit-for-tat policy – e.g. to trust everyone unless you have reason not to. By proving yourself to be a trustworthy cooperator (while swiftly punishing those who exploit your trust) you can attract others of similar goodness.

You should not be naive about friendship, though. Most people wishing your friendship desire utility or pleasure, only a few goodness (i.e. those who desire the good of their friends for their friends' sake). According to Aristotle those who are quick to make friendly advances usually have opportunistic desires, as the true ground for friendship is elemental rather than circumstantial. Rather look for good enemies, as they are bound to have similar interests, talents and skills. They may even become really good friends over time.<sup>46</sup> The Medici harmonised the strategies of money and the

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45 "Biology meets the dismal science", *The Economist*, London, 7 January 1994, pp. 91–93.

46 Voltaire knew it all: "Lord, protect me from my friends; I can take care of my enemies".

sword successfully. Machiavelli improved their theories by highlighting *inter alia* Cesare Borgia's dazzling negotiation skills.<sup>47</sup> Why are you waiting for Apollo to hand you the branch of Daphne?

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<sup>47</sup> See: Mattingly, G., "Political Science or Political Satire" in De Lamar Jensen, *Machiavelli, cynic, patriot, or political scientist?*, Boston: Heath, 1965, pp. 98–108.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PURSUIT OF CONTENTMENT

Just before the Battle of Waterloo, Ludwig van Beethoven entered the last and most creative phase of his life: his so-called third period. With the advantage of having been stone deaf for nearly a decade, he had greatly sharpened his inner ear.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, his inner eye had lightened nicely.<sup>2</sup> His skin had become thicker and he was now virtually immune against any form of criticism. His nose for political intrigue had been refined and he could smell a rat at a great distance, which in turn had increased his sense of humour.<sup>3</sup> In short, his taste for life had become more refined and mature. No longer flashes of extravagant jubilation, but a tempered long-term contentment with life. From then onwards he started to appreciate more the essential qualities of life.

As you grow older, it becomes increasingly difficult to rely solely on material wellbeing, work satisfaction, and an exciting love life for your happiness, since your health, physical strength, and senses are gradually taking leave of you. Even your power base may be waning. You have entered the winter of life and start to appreciate

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1 Similarly at a later age Richard Strauss preferred to read the scores of—rather than listen to, let alone see—operas. See: Wilhelm, K., *Richard Strauss, An intimate portrait*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1984, p. 268.

2 The gods award the inner eye only selectively. Tiresias earned this gift from Zeus after Hera had robbed him of his normal sight. From then the secrets of the future were his. See: Hughes, T., *Tales from Ovid*, London: Faber and Faber, 1997, pp. 72–73.

3 For instance, in a letter to a friend he wrote drily: “I will seize fate by the throat..”

the classic qualities of elegance, harmony and simplicity. Life is becoming lonelier, accentuated by a natural tendency to become a minimalist as time goes on. You are now willing to pay for not having. How many trappings can and do you want to carry around? Do you want to give it all to the “grandchildren”?

Like the Stoics you could experience painfully that great pleasures ultimately result in great displeasures, as pleasure and displeasure are so often related. Therefore, you start aiming for the little pleasures in life, to avoid suffering the big displeasures. You probably now agree with the lines of Millicent:

“To seek is better than to gain  
The found hope dies as we attain  
Life’s fairest things are those which seem  
The best is that of which we dream”.

The happy soul that once flew on the powerful wings of *Wine, Women and Song* has left you. Nature no longer springs any big surprises on you: annual reports come and go, business cycles go up and down, the sun rises and sets, the sea ebbs and flows, and every new generation is very much like its predecessor. Eventually, as time ticks on, your outlook becomes dominated by the world of thought.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to the immortal Helios, you are finding it more difficult to rein in even your own winged mares.

An essential element of the art of living is calmness: coming to terms with the fact that you cannot have domain over everything and that you simply have to accept some things. “Happy is he who forgets that which cannot be changed” (Johann Strauss, *Die Fledermaus*).

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4 Generally, the more you know about the natural or physical world, the less you need its fruits. To avoid boredom you are inclined to spend increasingly more time in the world of ideas. In fact, knowledge of the natural world as a subject crystallises most clearly the moment it disappears as a subject or, to use Hegelian terminology: “the owl of Minerva takes wing with the coming of dusk”.

### **Der Ring des Nibelungen**

The foundation of every civilisation is rooted in myth. It is the world of thought and fantasy that ultimately changes the physical world. In fact, everybody spends his time on earth in these two different worlds. As you walk through life, you are part of the physical world and, as you think, you are an inhabitant of the thinking world.<sup>5</sup> Depending on your talents and age, you will spend most of your time in one world or the other. Little babies for instance spend most of their time in the world of thought, as their physical world is still extremely limited. Babies have a lot to think about: how to make eye contact with those that count, how to master language, how to form mental pictures of their surroundings without which no true observation would be possible, and how to fantasise properly, i.e. create new images that do not conflict with anything they already know and that have at least a social return. Of course, the world of thought also rules when you are asleep (i.e. “dead” to the physical world). A solution to a worldly problem may come to mind typically if you “sleep on it”. Creators spend most of their days in this world of thought.

Since the beginning of philosophy and science these two worlds have fascinated thinkers, as they wanted to determine *inter alia* which of the two were more “real”. For Plato the “real” world was the world of thought, while the physical world was only “apparent”: the light comes from the world of thought and only its shadows are reflected in the physical world. Plato devalues the physical universe to a shadow-play on the world. Only those who can create an imaginary world through play and curiosity can construct a “real” world in their brains.

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5 Hollingdale, R.J. in the Introduction to *Arthur Schopenhauer, Essays and aphorisms*, London: Penguin Books, 1970, pp. 11–20.

To test Plato's theory that imagination is the mind's eye you could solicit the assistance of your dog. Dogs love to see other animals. So why not buy your best friend a nice painting by a fauvist (e.g. a Matisse). Unfortunately, the chances are good that your dog will only appreciate the smell of paint and canvas rather than the artwork itself. Your dog may not see any wild animals in fauvism. Indeed, what you and your dog see is thought-determined. Like a camera, the eye forms an image of whatever lies in front of it, but it is the brain that selects the useful bits of information. The brain is not concerned with faithful representation, but with meaning: the eye first needs a mental picture from the world of thought before it can truly "see" the physical world. Your dog with its highly developed intelligence of smell may well form a "smell" picture, which could compete with your specific visual picture.

If you have a hungry intellect, are easily bored, and love to sample a feast of ideas, you should direct your nervous energy to the world of thought. This world inspires incredible dynamics. For example, this world is not limited by causality, space and therefore time.<sup>6</sup> You can think about the unthinkable. As a result the immortals are very much alive. An adult that has outgrown fairy tales is mentally deprived.

Culture ultimately depends on wealth and a sound system of patronage. But the muses remunerate indirectly. Fantasy leads to new dreams, new conceptual frameworks, new approaches to life, and ultimately to new scientific breakthroughs. *Eureka!* One great thought – brought about by the muses – can alter the future of the world. Is it surprising then that the most cultivated nations in the world are also the richest ones? Therefore the performing arts are

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<sup>6</sup> Time only seems to have meaning in a universe with a definite spatial scope.

more than just another form of entertainment: they are first and foremost a vehicle for conveying people from the physical world to the world of thought and imagination. No nation can blossom on a “sports culture”.<sup>7</sup>

If the arts were only a form of entertainment, they could never have been considered a danger to state security. However the arts clearly are. For instance, music, so pure and abstract, contains meaning even without words. Should the state promote an attractive ideological piece of “hate” music or, alternatively should it prohibit naughty rock lyrics? Opera is clearly dangerous stuff for the state, as it may so easily evoke emotions.<sup>8</sup> Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*, in which the servant fools his master, immediately stirred up the wrong feelings and was accordingly frequently censored. Wagner’s operas are dynamite depending on your philosophy of life. Verdi’s *Nabucco*, directed indirectly against the Austrians, was banned for obvious political reasons. Shostakovich’s *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District* was lambasted for undesired sexual undertones. Music powerfully excites the imagination, and has therefore been flattered by extensive state censorship over the years. In literature it is not much different. For instance, the *Arabian Nights* was initially considered too spicy in the West. The thousand and one adventures of Scheherazade, in which the strong female character willingly participates in whatever excitements may be on offer, and in the end always succeeds in assuming her most favourite position, were clearly not considered fairy tales suitable for the nursery.

Man cannot bear much reality. So the worlds of fantasy generally

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7 “You can make art that talks to the masses only when you have nothing to say to them”, A. Malraux, *L’Espoir*.

8 Plato, Calvin and Descartes (as cultural policemen) feared specific types of music. See: “Hold that tune”, *The Economist*, London, 28 November 1998, p. 110.

and eroticism specifically remain a safe haven for many. Of course the world of imagination is open to anybody willing to think and to discover. Imagination means letting the birds in your head out of their cages and watching them fly up in the air. The world of thought and fantasy is a rich and extremely dynamic world that ultimately ensures scientific progress. What makes science so attractive is its playful essence: it is simply a discovery play at heart.<sup>9</sup>

To be creative requires talent and motivation. Talent is a natural gift. Indeed, no amount of flapping your arms will make you fly like a bird. Or to use Kipling's words:

“And they asked me how I did it,  
and I gave them the prescriptive text,  
‘you keep your light so shining  
just a little in front of the next’.  
And they copied all they could follow,  
but they could not copy my mind.  
And there I left them stealing and sweating  
a year and a half behind”.

Motivation is also crucial to creativity and is expressed in passionate, persistent interest and curiosity, a tendency to explore, to read and to experiment independently, and a desire to excel.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, the more you create, the more creative you become.

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9 In this context Francis Bacon noted: “Nay, the same Solomon the king, although he excelled in the glory of treasure and magnificent buildings, of shipping and navigation, of service and attendance, of fame and renown, and the like, yet he maketh no claim to any of those glories, but only to the glory of inquisition of truth: for so he saith expressly. ‘The glory of God is to conceal a thing, but the glory of the king is to find it out’; as if, according to the innocent play of children, the Divine Majesty took delight to hide his works, to the end to have them found out; and as if kings could not obtain a greater honour than to be God’s play-fellows in that game”. See: Francis Bacon, *The advancement of learning (1605)*, as quoted in D.J. Boorstin, *The discoverers. A history of man’s search to know his world and himself*, New York: Vintage Books, 1985.

10 Ochse, R., *The making of creative genius*, Cowies Hill: Gecko Books, 1994, pp. 171–178

Creativity entails *inter alia* efficient dealing with information: man first has to map his world mentally before he can alter and expand its form. For instance, even Mozart needed nearly twelve years before he had mapped all the dimensions of his musical insights and only then could he really renew the music of his time.

Productive creativity is rooted in knowledge and discipline. The path to creativity is steep, uneven and uncharted. Only those able to endure a considerable amount of hard work and pain can reach the summit. Creators prefer to work and think in solitude and work primarily for themselves.<sup>11</sup> It seems that privacy is the only real soil for inspiration.<sup>12</sup> Their creations are the imaginary worlds they prefer to live in. They may be motivated by money, power, fame, simple curiosity or the need for personal achievement, but ultimately their creations should have an economic or social return in the physical world. They are a bit like the compost heap that eventually wants to be spread over the lands.

The world of thought is foremost a world of freedom, and therefore gives rise to another fear for those who want to rule the physical world: how to control the freaks? Typically the serious thought crimes occur in sleep (see: George Orwell, 1984). However, to do and to think whatever you like comes at an opportunity cost. Do not ask of fate to be free and rich simultaneously. You have to make a choice.

Creators are bound to be uncomfortable creatures, and by definition are at odds with the majority. They may have a hard drive, but usually fail badly in leadership, which demands too extensive theatrical skills and veils of illusion.

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11 Boorstin, D.J. *The creators, A history of heroes of the imagination*, London: Vintage Books, 1993.

12 Ochse, *op cit.*, p. 178.

If science does indeed walk on the two legs of induction and deduction, as is sometimes said, induction is the creative part (i.e. Dionysian in nature), while deduction is the logical component (i.e. Apollonian in nature). Apollo may demand discipline and sanity, but without the imagination and fantasy of Dionysus there would be no role for Apollo left. Again a golden mean has to be maintained between Dionysus and Apollo to ensure progress in your thoughts.

### **La forza del destino**

Do not praise the day before the sun has set. Fate may strike at any moment, and change an up to then happy life into one of total misery. Terrible “bad luck” may rob you of your beloved one, your eyesight, your health, your senses or your honour. It can mutilate your life beyond recognition within a split second. No one is invulnerable to disaster – some blow that will turn what has been a good life so far into the worst of calamities.<sup>13</sup> The inability to prevent tragedy stands in sharp contrast to Socrates’ “Virtue is knowledge” and illustrates the limits of reason. What will you do if fate strikes so hard? There are a number of possible responses with the ultimate choice depending on your character, e.g. improving your understanding, trying to forget, taking the knock with equanimity or timing your death voluntarily.

Firstly, it should be understood that fate and character are closely linked. Sophocles tried to present this view in his tragedies. Typically of ancient Greek tragedy Oedipus ostensibly had everything to ensure a happy life: King of Thebes, intelligent, quick-witted, wealthy, and powerful. Nonetheless fate determined that he had to become instrumental in fulfilling a curse brought on

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<sup>13</sup> Taplin, O., “Call no one happy until ...” in Royal National Theatre, *The Oedipus Plays*, London, 1996.

his father, Laius, the former King of Thebes. The Delphic Oracle informed Oedipus about this curse in his youth, namely that he would one day kill his father and marry his mother.<sup>14</sup> To keep the prophecy from being fulfilled you would expect Oedipus to avoid killing strangers and marrying women who are older than himself. However, the play *Oedipus, the King* emphasises that Oedipus' fate was essentially in his character. He could not temper his anger (which resulted in Laius' death). Neither could he temper his sexual impulses when he met Jocasta. The rest of his life (in exile) Oedipus tried to understand the meaning of Heraclitus' words: "Man's character is his fate". His misery could be overcome only through understanding. Intellectual activity distracts the mind from pain.

Secondly, when your fortunes are hammered by the calamities of the world, you could also court the muses: "He is happy whom the muses love". The nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (goddess of memory) will enable you to forget your dark thoughts and not remember your troubles. Tragedy can be overcome by entering the world of thought, by stimulating your imagination and increasing your intellectual activities.

In imagination the role of memory was already known to the ancient Greeks.<sup>15</sup> Memory and eyesight are familiar in that both are

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14 Byron would have added here: "Upon such a shrine / What are our petty griefs? / Let me not number mine".

15 Thomas Hobbes expressed his views on the subject thus: "Time and education begets experience; Experience begets memory; Memory begets Judgement and Fancy; Judgement begets the strength and structure, and Fancy begets the ornaments of a poem. The Ancients therefore fabled not absurdly in making memory the mother of the muses. For memory is the World (though not really, yet so as in a looking glass) in which the Judgement, the severer sister, busieth herself in a grave and rigid examination of all the parts of Nature, and in registering by Letters their order, causes, uses, differences and resemblances; Whereby the Fancy, when any work of Art is to be performed findes her materials at hand and prepared for use". Ochse, *op. cit.*, pp. 140–141.

designed not to be perfect. The brain determines what information the eye can ignore. Similarly it determines what trivial information can be quickly forgotten. Only important information is seen or remembered, and ideally painful memories should be “extinguished” from the brain. However, unlearning is difficult should the information be captured in the long-term memory.<sup>16</sup> In such a case it is best to “overwrite” the memory with new information, which implies that you have to engage even more in the world of thought than you did previously. Creativity, passion, and pain often go hand in hand, as they all force you to live in the world of thought and imagination. Moreover, pain is a powerful aid to memory. It is one of the privileges of creative people to win release from the pains of life through their creations. Beethoven for instance nearly sought his lodging in the grave: “But only Art held back; for, ah, it seemed unthinkable for me to leave the world forever before I had produced all that I felt called upon to produce ...”.

Thirdly, should you fail to overwrite a painful memory, you could also decide to live with the pain. For example, Queen Victoria went into mourning at the death of her Prince Consort at the age of 42 and till her death 40 years later everybody around her had to adjust accordingly.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, Schopenhauer adjusted to the pains of this

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16 Current scientific insight seems to indicate that memory building works on three levels. Firstly, short-term memory: nerve cells simply modify existing proteins. Secondly, intermediate memory: nerve cells make more proteins of types that were already manufactured. Thirdly, long-term memory: new genes are switched on and entirely new groups of proteins are produced. The production of long-term memory capacity takes place particularly at night-time. Accordingly to promote long-term memory it is worthwhile to enjoy a good night’s sleep and use your memory span of 24 hours a day intelligently. See: “Memory building”, *The Economist*, London, 29 August 1998, pp. 76–78.

17 Characteristic of Victoria she would ensure that every night at Windsor Albert’s clothes were laid-out on the bed, and that every morning fresh water was put in the basin in his room. Victoria slept with a life-size photograph of Albert over her head.

world. For this philosopher of the pessimistic school the outer world was chiefly material for reflection: “Life is a disagreeable thing – I have determined to spend it in reflecting on it”.<sup>18</sup>

If one takes the long view, there is a lot to reflect on. The sun, already 4,6 billion years old, will have burned-out its fuel of hydrogen and helium about 4 billion years from now. Long before that time the earth will be frozen solid, while the qualities of hatred, envy, and greed will have shortened human life even quicker. The dinner party on earth is already deep into the night. No one can stop the wheel of fate. Time has come to joke about it.<sup>19</sup>

Fourthly, you can start phasing your life, like the four seasons in nature – with every season for man lasting about a generation (or some 20 years). Fate could help you to improve your timing, particularly in the winter of your life.

The right to choose to die is based on the premise that every individual has a right to self-determination. Towards the end of winter pruning has to be done and death has to be invited into your close circle of friends.<sup>20</sup>

In the end you are powerless to prevent yourself from being born – but this error can be corrected.<sup>21</sup> With modern medicines and medical support does “natural” death still exist? Even the choice

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18 Schopenhauer, *op. cit.*, p. 33. Note, however, that pessimism can easily become a product of idleness and laziness as well.

19 Kantian thoughts on the pleasures of the table are that during dinner the table talk should progress from *narration* (e.g. telling a nice story on how you lost a fortune on the stock market), to *reasoning* (e.g. arguing how to value stocks properly), and then to *joking* (as no one wants to reason too much during a nice meal). Background music was considered barbaric by Kant.

20 In old Germania the protocol was: “Live sincerely, fight with total disregard for death, and die with a smile”, while in England Shakespeare (*Julius Caesar*) noted: “Cowards die many times before their deaths; / The valiant never taste of death but once”.

21 Nietzsche, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

between suicide and murder does not have to be absolute. There is a gentle gradient: suicide; assisted suicide; voluntary euthanasia; involuntary euthanasia, accelerated death from necessary palliative treatment (i.e. the so-called “double effect”); accelerated death under cover of palliative treatment (with benign or malign motives); and murder. Where do you draw the line in the sand and say this is immoral and illegal under all circumstances? But wherever you decide to draw this line, remember that to extend life beyond its due date is always sentimental. As Nietzsche noted: “Whoever has a goal and an heir wants to die at the time most favourable to his goal and heir. The ‘natural death’ in the end is very ‘unnatural’ ... An unfree death is a death at the *wrong* time”.<sup>22</sup> Before you know and understand what is happening, your soul may even long to go back to where it was before you were born: “Hermes, what other adventurous journeys do you still have in store?”.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136–144.

## GLOSSARY

### CLASSICAL AND ECONOMIC TERMINOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

**Aphrodite:** Goddess of love, sex, regeneration, and bodily beauty. Patron deity of prostitutes. Married to Hephaestus, but with Ares as a frequent lover. She is the mother of Eros (by Ares) and Hermaphroditus (by Hermes).

**Apollo:** God of intellectual inquiry, music, poetry, dance, shepherding, colonisation and medicine. Son of Zeus and the demigoddess Leto and the twin brother of Artemis, goddess of the hunt. He represents the virtues of reason and restraint.

**Ares:** God of war, with minute moral aspect. Son of Zeus and Hera. Ares and Aphrodite were the parents of the child god Eros and of Harmonia.

**Athena:** Virgin goddess of wisdom, handicraft and the disciplined aspects of war. Protector of civilised Greek life. Patron deity of kings. Where Ares embodies war's madness and waste, Athena tended to represent the more glorious aspects – strategy, discipline, national defence.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Sacks, D., *Encyclopedia of the ancient Greek world*, London: Constable, 1995 and Howatson, M.C. *The Oxford companion to classical literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

**cash constraint:** Current expenditure is ultimately limited by income earned and / or capital profits realised.

**Daphne:** A nymph and daughter of a river god Ladon. She was a huntress and wanted no lovers. When pursued by Apollo, she fled from him, praying to the river god Peneus for deliverance, whereupon she was transformed into a laurel tree.

**Dionysus:** God of wine, vegetation and religious possession. Son of Zeus and the Theban princess Semele. He represents the irrational aspects of the human soul.

**domini canis:** Literally dogs of god – a word play on the dominicans who often were the inquisitors during the Inquisition.

**Echo:** Nymph deprived of speech by Hera, except for repeating the last words of the interlocutor.

**Eros:** God of love. While Aphrodite personifies a universal sexual principle, Eros, as a boy god, represents more the romantic feelings one has for a specific person.

**Europa:** A Phoenician princess of the city of Tyre. Carried by Zeus, in the form of a bull, over the sea to Creta. Europa's brother Cadmus searched futilely for her and during his crossing to Greece eventually founded the city of Thebes.

**Hades:** God of the Underworld. Also known as “The Unseen One”, his more popular and euphemistic title was Pluton, “The Rich One”.

**Helios:** God personifying the sun. A charioteer who drives his horses across the sky each day from east to west and returns by night, sailing in a giant golden cup on the stream of Ocean, to start again next morning.

**Hephaestus:** God of fire, volcanoes and craftsmen. Son of Zeus and Hera married to Aphrodite. Hephaestus was thrown off the Mount Olympus by his father, and crippled, when he sided with his mother in a quarrel.

**Hera:** Both wife and sister of Zeus. Patron of women and marriage. An independent wife, but jealous of Zeus' many extramarital amours.

**Heracles:** Mythical hero famous for his strength, courage and generosity of spirit. Son of Zeus with the mortal woman Alcmena. After his twelve labours worshipped as both god and man throughout antiquity.

**Hermes:** Messenger of the gods, god of roads and boundaries and conductor of the souls of the dead to the Underworld. God of luck, particularly in the matter of making money, and oratory, with an interest in literature generally. Divine patron of merchants, thieves, athletes, and herdsmen. Son of Zeus and Maia (daughter of Atlas). Hermes is the only god to visit intermittently the realms of Zeus, Poseidon and Hades. Every lucky find is a "gift of Hermes" and any successful communication with enemies and strangers is due to him.

**Horae:** The hours, time.

**King Midas:** Last king of the wealthy, non-Greek nation of Phrygia in Asia Minor (c 700 BC). Offered any wish by the god Dionysus, Midas asked that whatever he touched might be turned to gold. Finding that he ruined his food so touched, he prayed to lose the gift.

**law of diminishing returns:** After a certain point, an increase in the capital and labour applied in production causes a less than proportional increase in the amount of the product.

**Minerva:** The Roman equivalent for Athena.

**Minotaur:** Mythical semihuman creature, with the body of a man and a bull's head. He hid, and was imprisoned, in the Labyrinth, a maze-like palace at Cnossus. Theseus with the help of Adriadne eventually killed the Minotaur.

**Mnemosyne:** Goddess of memory and mother of the muses.

**muses:** The nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne who together or individually inspired human song, poetry (both closely related as the Greek poetic metre was a form of rhythm), and later all intellectual pursuits.

**Narcissus:** Son of the rivergod Cephissus and the nymph Liriope. Echo fell in love with Narcissus, but was rejected. Aphrodite punished him for this cruelty by making him fall in love with his own image reflected in water.

**Natura Artis Magistra:** Nature is the master of art.

**Oedipus:** A Theban king who could not escape his fate.

**Olympians:** Besides Zeus, these included the subordinated gods: Hera, Poseidon, Apollo, Artemis, Athena, Aphrodite, Ares, Demeter, Dionysus, Hermes and Hestia. They comprised the important twelve deities for most spheres of life, with the exception of the Underworld.

**Olympus, Mt.:** The celestial home and royal court of Zeus on the tallest mountain in mainland Greece. Olympus and earth were shared – in principle at least – by the three brothers Zeus, Poseidon and Hades (sons of the Titans Cronus and Rhea). Zeus represents the heaven (the realm of will, power and thought), Poseidon the sea (the realm of emotions and instinct) and Hades the Underworld (the realm of souls, as glimpsed during dreams).

**opportunity cost:** The cost of anything in terms of the most desirable alternative, or gain, foregone.

**Pasiphae:** Wife of Minos, King of Crete, who fell in love (as a punishment of Poseidon) with the bull of the sea. The result of their union was the Minotaur.

**Poseidon:** God of the sea and all other bodies of water, as well as of earthquakes and horses. Divine patron of mariners and fishermen.

**Silenus:** A mythical semihuman creature, half-man half-animal with horse-ears, horse-legs and a tail. Is said to have resembled the living philosopher Socrates. Tutor of Dionysus and was part of his retinue together with the satyrs and nymphs.

**Tiresias:** A seer renowned for his wisdom and longevity. Spent part of his life as a woman, and was therefore in the position to say from experience which gender enjoyed sex most.

**Thanatos:** God of death and brother of Hypnos, god of sleep.

**Zeus:** King of the gods, ruler of the sky, orderer of the universe, chief judge, peacemaker and civic god. Son of Cronus and Rhea and brother of Poseidon and Hades.