

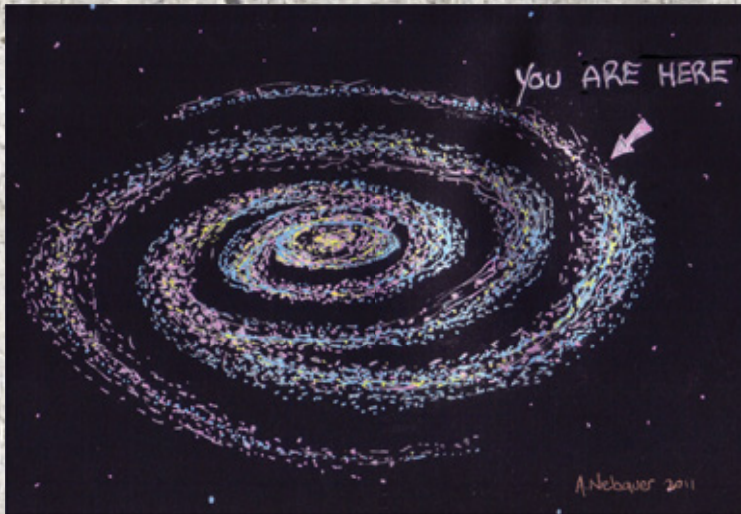
A close-up photograph of the front of a vintage car, focusing on the chrome grille and a portion of the headlight. The car is painted a bright orange color. The lighting is warm, highlighting the metallic textures of the grille and the glass of the headlight.

AARON NEBAUER

the **importance** of **LEARNING**
to be **unimportant**
(while still **KNOWING** that you are)

The Importance Of Learning To Be Unimportant

(While Still Knowing That You Are)



A Collection of Cartoons, Funny Thoughts
and Bumper Stickers

By Aaron Nebauer

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For my fellow Earthlings, may we live in peace.

Reading is fun. It allows you to inhabit someone else's neurological infrastructure for a while.

Please, relax and enjoy the scenery.

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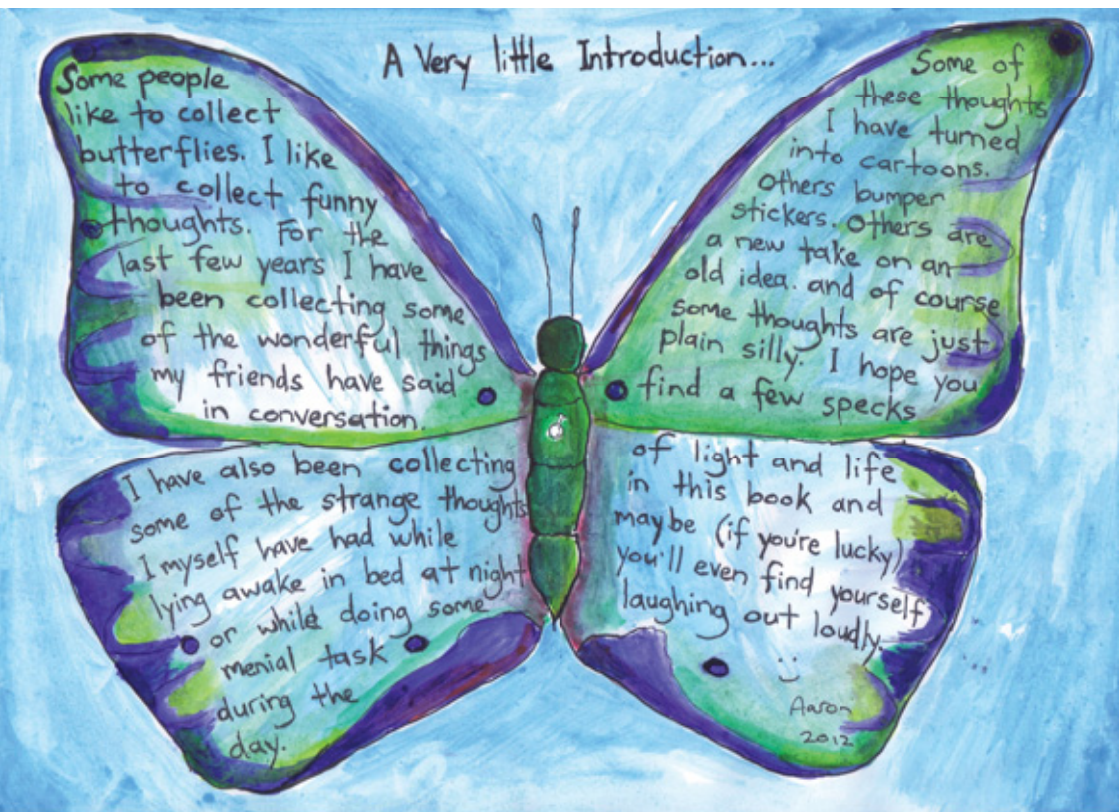
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A very little introduction



A slightly longer, more serious introduction

We can't **ALL** be really, really, ridiculously *important*...

My cousin Nathan made it into the reserve grade with the Parramatta Rugby League football team. He even scored a try in the reserve grade grand final before thousands of people at the Sydney Football Stadium. Because his game was played before the main game, the stadium wasn't full but there were still 57,000 people enjoying his talent and skill. For the main game the stadium packed out to full capacity but to me it begged the question, "How much is enough?" Nathan was a hero to us.

At the same time I was in a band trying to fill very small venues (let alone grandstands) and I thought to myself, "There will always be only a few players on the field and thousands in the grandstand." I have been making peace with this reality for some time. Whatever our pursuit, I think it's good to aim for the stars, to try to make a "ding in the universe", as Steve Jobs said, *but* I think we must also hold our grand dreams lightly.

But perhaps the field and the grandstand aren't even what it's all about?

And what does it mean to do something important anyway?

There are three quotes I love that profoundly capture the tension in these questions. The author Parker J. Palmer says, “Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am.”

Joseph Campbell said, “We must be willing to get rid of the life we’ve planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us. The old skin has to be shed before the new one can come.”

And Leonard Cohen put it this way—“I found that things became a lot easier when I no longer expected to win... you abandon your masterpiece and sink into the real masterpiece.”

For me, I have been discovering the ordinariness of life (in a good way) and am slowly letting go of the idea that someday there will be some big, defining event that will make sense of all the little lose ends. Mother Teresa is quoted as saying, “Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.” And frankly I love hearing people share their *small things*—like where they are finding new life, or ways they have been able to help others, where they see beauty, find inspiration or things they are grateful for. Hearing others share *small things* that bring them alive inspires me to continue on my journey of aliveness too.

I have also been thinking that maybe it’s about discovering who you truly are and generously sharing that with others?

My cousin Wayne says, “It’s all about who you are becoming.” At the moment, what I am trying to become is a balanced person. I am trying to balance the paradox of being a serious and an un-serious person... of being important and unimportant. As they say in AA, “Not too little, not too much.”

So this is a little book about paradoxes and balancing seemingly contradictory ideas; as well as being an exploration (and celebration) of the search for meaning, purpose, authenticity and

freedom. And lastly, as my friend Dr Steve says, “We must draw from the wisdom of the group.” So, this book also celebrates the wisdom of my little village and I hope to pass on some of the gems that have freely been passed onto me by folks who you may not have heard of, but are very important to me.

Enjoy!

“Whatever you do is not important but it’s important that you do it.” Gandhi



The beginning

(if you **start** here)

I'm not that great at being *happy*, but it's something I want to *work at*.

Common wealth

I saw a YouTube clip last year that really had an impact on me. It was about the King of Bhutan who had declared that GNH (Gross National Happiness) would be their national measurement of wealth, as opposed to GDP (Gross Domestic Product). I couldn't help but agree that 'human well-being' is a much more sensible yardstick of true wealth than gold, oil or the U.S. dollar... so I propose we trade in hugs.



The soul is like a digestive system: it takes in experiences, processes them, extracts the goodness and then... has to let them go.

Re-define WEALTH, SUCCESS and PROGRESS.

You are a star

If every atom in our body was originally once part of a star, then our bodies are filled with billions of incredible stories. I would love to interview a few of the atoms in my body one day and ask about their journey.



If I were invisible, the first thing I'd do is stand between two large mirrors and enjoy the infinite tunnel.



Sure there aren't many overweight animals, but can they cook creamy bacon carbonara?

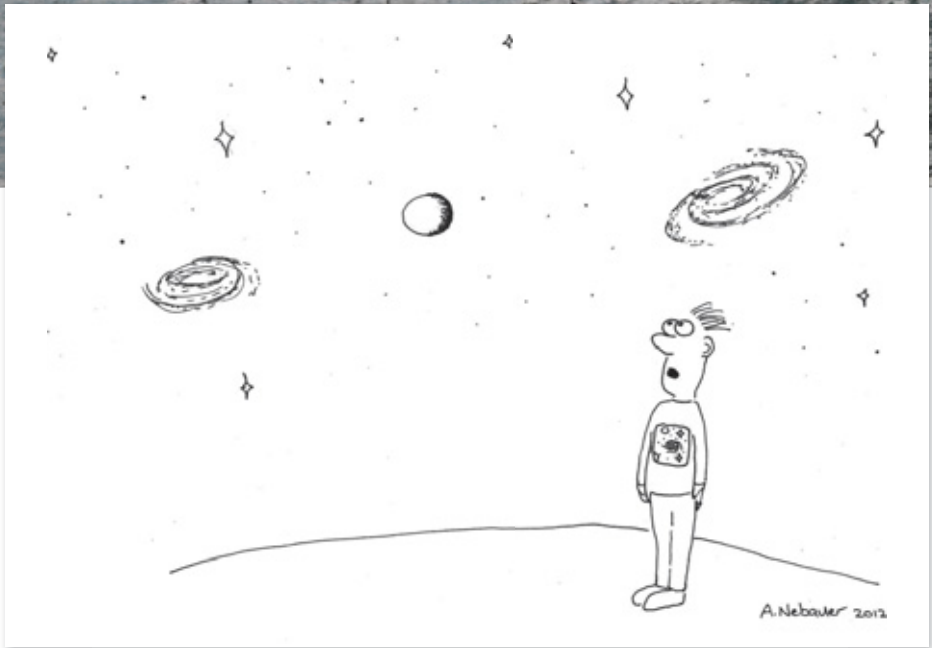


NGO

I want to start an NGO—a Non Government Organisation—one day. I will name it something like “Big Ideas” or “Breakfast Intervention...” just so long as when someone asks who I work for I can sing:

“B-I-N-G-O!”

(That was bordering on a Dad joke... but I have my licence.)



The universe is a strange and wonderful mirror to our souls.

Super police heroes

I think it's a shame that police—one of the closest things we have to super heroes in our society—are often caught up in petty revenue raising. Being super heroes, they should be allowed to get creative if they want to, you know, wear costumes, masks, utility belts, capes, drive cool cars with afterburners—if it helps them to “serve and protect,” I say, “Go nuts.”

And no one in a cape is going to give me a ticket for jay-walking.



Being a parent means that slowly but surely you become a wiggle.

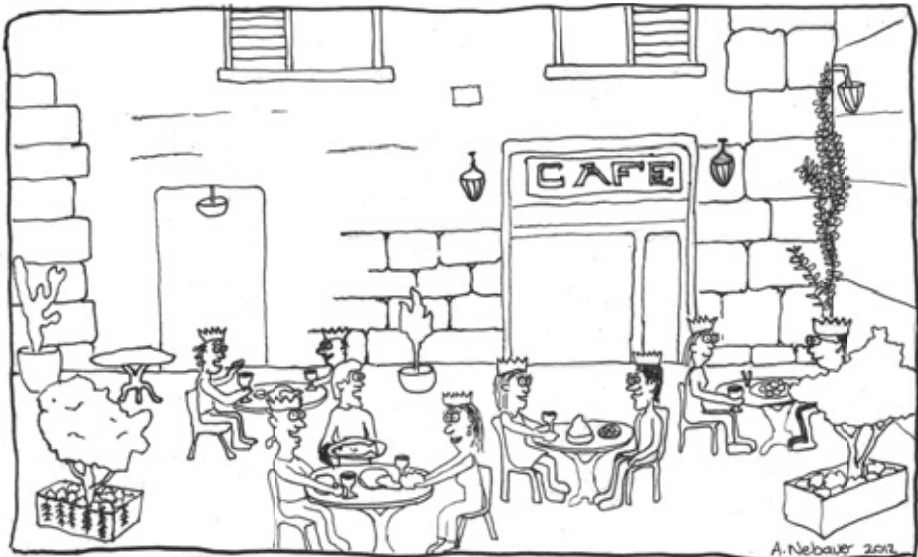
Becoming childlike

Whenever we go over a speed bump in the car, my three year old son calls out from the back seat, “Bump!” I am finding myself saying “Bump!” a lot too these days... even when he is not in the car.



Royal feasts

I was sitting in a café once listening to the sounds people made while deeply engaged in conversation and realised they were the same sounds people made when eating a good meal. “Mmmm”, “Yes”, “That’s so good”, “Wow.” A good conversation is an exploration of truth. The soul craves truth, not to be right, but to come alive.



Although at times painful, truth is most often a royal feast.

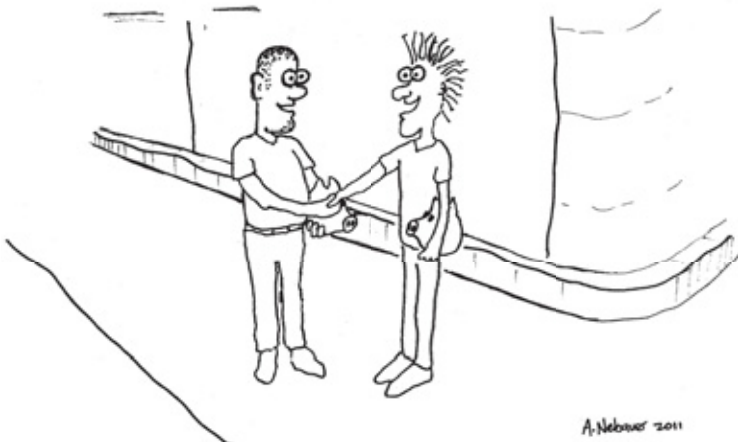
POET = ROSE SMELLER

"A poet is someone who can pour light into a cup and lift it to your parched holy mouth." Hafiz



Pig headed

When I was 19 my friend Steve L-D and I had a rather spirited but good natured debate about something or other (that seemed important at the time) and eventually Steve said, "Well if it turns out that I'm right don't be so pigheaded that you won't acknowledge it." And I said, "Well if it turns out that I'm right don't YOU be so pigheaded as to not acknowledge it." And then we smiled and shook on it. Looking back I realise that that was an important conversation for the both of us and even though I can't remember who ended up being right, it set us both on a path of being dedicated to the pursuit of truth.



A world with wings

I sometimes wonder what kind of world we would have created if we all had huge wings and could fly? And then I wonder what it'd be like if everyone except me could fly and if they'd look at me and say, "Oh no, poor guy he has to use his legs" and then I would say, "Oh it's cool, I like to walk."



Equations...

In Japanese economics they say:

Resources x Technology = Economic Growth.

I have been working on some formulas of my own.

Ping Pong Table + Urn = Community (PPT + U = C)

(Ping Pong for fun and the urn for coffee and 'D and Ms')

Childproof = Sleepy Adult Proof (C = SAP)

Time + Inspiring Creative Space = Good Art (T + ICS = GA)

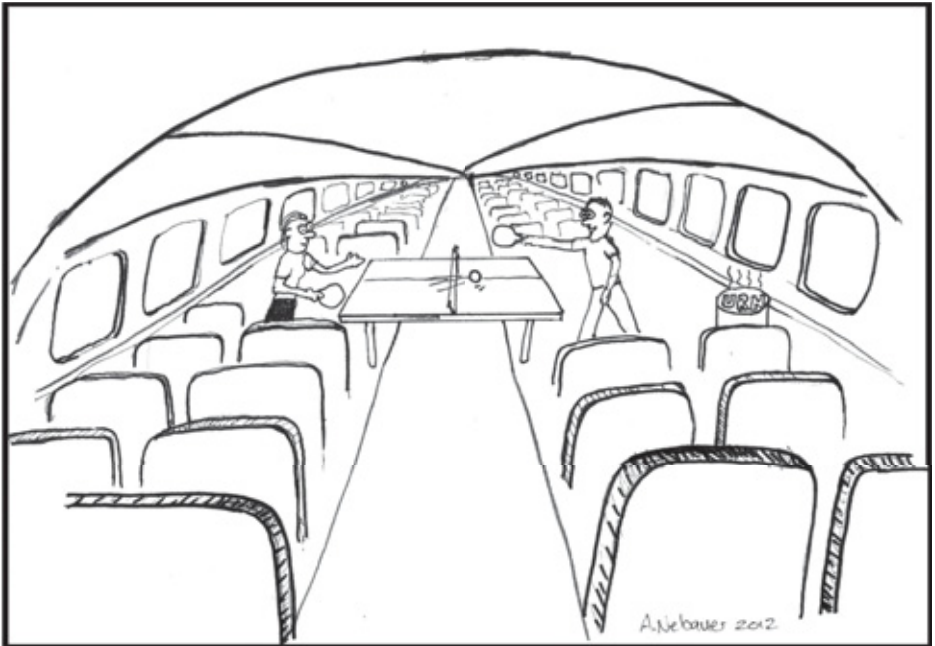
Good Art + Community = Social Change (ga + C = Sc)

Truth = New Life (t = nl)

You are here

Playing in the plane

I had a dream once that I was inside a huge plane and was free to move about and do what I wanted in the plane... but had no control over where the plane was actually going. I found that dream to be encouraging as it gently reminded me that although I do have limited free will in life there are still many things that are way out of my control. The serenity prayer from AA came to mind, "God grant me the serenity to change the things I can change, the courage to accept the things I can't and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen."



Reflections on truth

The **TRUTH** exists despite you

Can we handle the truth?

When my friends and I were about twenty, we were having a rather deep conversation about the nature of truth. My friend Chris grabbed a nearby bottle, held it up and profoundly commented, “Truth is like this bottle—we all see it from our own, tiny perspective.” A few years later I learned the famous story of the eight blind men feeling the various parts of an elephant and arguing about the “truth” from their various vantage points.

My Dad, Mark, always says, “It’s good for pilgrims to compare notes,” however, I think we often choose to only see and hear the notes that validate our current viewpoint. It’s uncomfortable to go beyond the belief systems (or social systems for that matter) that we feel we have mastered. If I am a blind man exploring the leg of the elephant it can be threatening to come across someone else’s notes that describe a trunk or tail, especially when I have built my life and identity around that leg. I think it’s very important to acknowledge common ground while holding the tension of the notes that don’t support your own. That could very well be the thing that stretches you. Once you discover you’re a blind man feeling an elephant, you approach any other unknown animals you encounter with a bit more humility.

Frankly that's what I love about all these new communication technologies; we are experiencing a global cross-referencing of notes and are being stretched like never before by the beauty and wonder of the bottles and elephants being held up before us. It's as if we, a collective entity (a worldwide brain, perhaps), are weaving fascinating tapestries of truth. Images are emerging and beautiful patterns are slowly being revealed.

If the truth isn't setting you free you're probably not doing it properly.

Call to prayer

I visited the Middle East in 2006 and had an incredible time. Jordan, Turkey, Israel and Palestine all enriched me in ways I could never have imagined. As I listened to the beautiful, haunting sounds of the call to prayer in Jordan, I wondered what an Australian call to prayer might sound like. Imagine if once a day someone went up to Mt Coot-tha (in Brisbane anyway) and through a loud speaker sang something like:

"Let us be still for a moment and focus on our breathing..."

"We stand humbly before the great mystery of life..."

"We are deeply grateful for the goodness we experience..."

"We confess our tendency towards selfishness and superiority..."

"Look into the eyes of whoever you are with and connect..."

"May we work together towards peace on earth..."

Truth is not fragile

My friend Drew once said, "The truth is not fragile." I like that. I have met folks who defend truth (as if it could not look after itself) and others who live it. (I think it's important to note too that Jesus' parables were not literal but always pointed towards great truths.)

WE ARE ALL STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LIFE...

~~it's just that some folks aren't doing their homework~~

~~and joy and sorrow are the professors~~

...AND THE LESSON IS LOVE.



Tangled in the interweb



I tweet therefore I am

I prefer the fantasy. Reality is so damn official!

Status updates are like fishing—sometimes you catch a whole lot of likes and comments and other times—not even a nibble.

facebook – keeps your past in your face.

My friend Jamie says, “Facebook is weird because the only time in real life I say anything in public is at the coffee machine at work where there are about four people. Yet here we all are, everyday, in front of a couple of hundred people, sharing our thoughts. It has blurred the line between private and public space.”

Sometimes I see Facebook as a series of tiny addresses to the parliament of human consciousness. Other times it feels like we are all CEOs of our own little radio station; programming and deciding which guests we will allow to appear on our show or not. Or other times I think of Facebook as a bustling marketplace where everyone is running a little stall and calling out for passers by to stop in and have a chat. I myself enjoy running a stall but also enjoy strolling through the noisy alleyways to see what crazy things my friends have been finding of late. As with many of our human interactions, attention seems to be the currency.

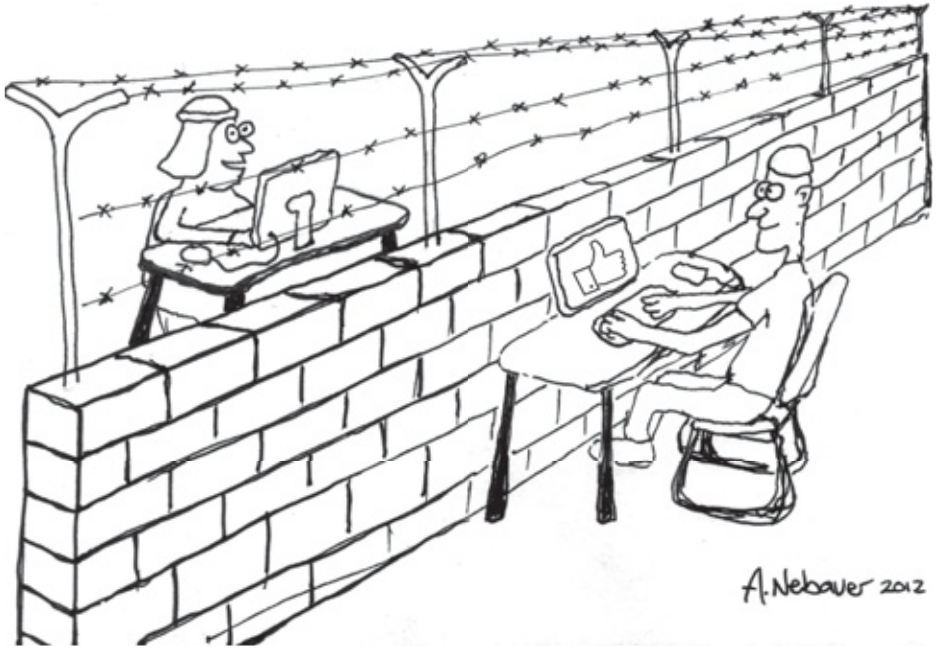
Pros and cons of facebook

Pros

- Allows a profound kind of conversation and spreading of ideas
- An incredibly democratic tool
- Teaches us we are not as important as we think we are
- Easy to keep up with friends/family.

Cons

- It's a narcissistic tool of the devil
- It feeds your ego projection of yourself
- It keeps you in high school forever
- Is extremely addictive and wastes time.



Like Your Enemies

After doing this cartoon my friends Julian and Peter both said to me separately, “Liking your enemies is different from loving your enemies.” You can send out love towards Hitler but you don’t have to like what he’s on about. Anyway, I still think it’s a funny cartoon!

Love your enemies, they have the most to teach you.

CELEBRATE DIVERSITY FIND Common Ground

Global perspective

The unique thing about our vantage point in the 21st century is that we are able to draw from both historic and global wisdom.

Random things

“Build a bridge and get over it.”

Now I almost shouldn't put this in here because it's a pretty outlandish claim and could make me sound like a quack but I'm pretty sure I came up with the addition of, “Build a bridge” to the saying, “Get over it.” Now it's certainly possible that I am tripping but as I recall I said it to a friend in the late 90's and felt smug that I had come up with a creative way of saying, “Get over it.” It's also possible that I heard it somewhere else, like in the background at a party or on TV or something, and thought I came up with it. Or it may have been that I and a few others around the English-speaking world all came up with it simultaneously which does happen with these strange artistic waves. *Or* it may in fact be a completely original work of mine and if that's the case I want royalties.



My friend Rees noted after turning 40, “The older you get, the hotter your cake gets.”

LOVE IS THE LAW – I JUST DON'T WANT IT ENFORCED



You can build the infrastructure to the water but you can't legislate that the horse drinks.

Vision

I don't think we are ready yet for anarchy but it's a good goal to keep in mind. I am all for good laws, like a 50km/hr speed limit in our quiet street where my kids play or putting strict laws on careless corporations to keep them accountable to the *greater good*. My friend Dave says, "Laws can negate the negative but they can't construct the positive" so it's important to also have a clear vision of what we are for.

The music of living

Among other things I teach guitar for a living. I have been thinking about the parallels between learning guitar and spiritual growth. I am convinced we want to grow, to learn, to go beyond, to participate in a goodness greater than what we are currently capable of—to make beautiful music with our lives. But growth is slow and incremental and sometimes I will give a student a piece that I know will take them several weeks or even months to learn. I think the spiritual equivalent would be a lesson like, “Love your enemies,” which is a profoundly difficult task, one that only a true master could achieve. I figure this will be a piece I will have to work on my whole life.



Judgement day

Judgement day for me would be having to explain face to face to a starving child overseas that I have to be conscious every day of what I eat so as not to put on weight. Revelations = light.



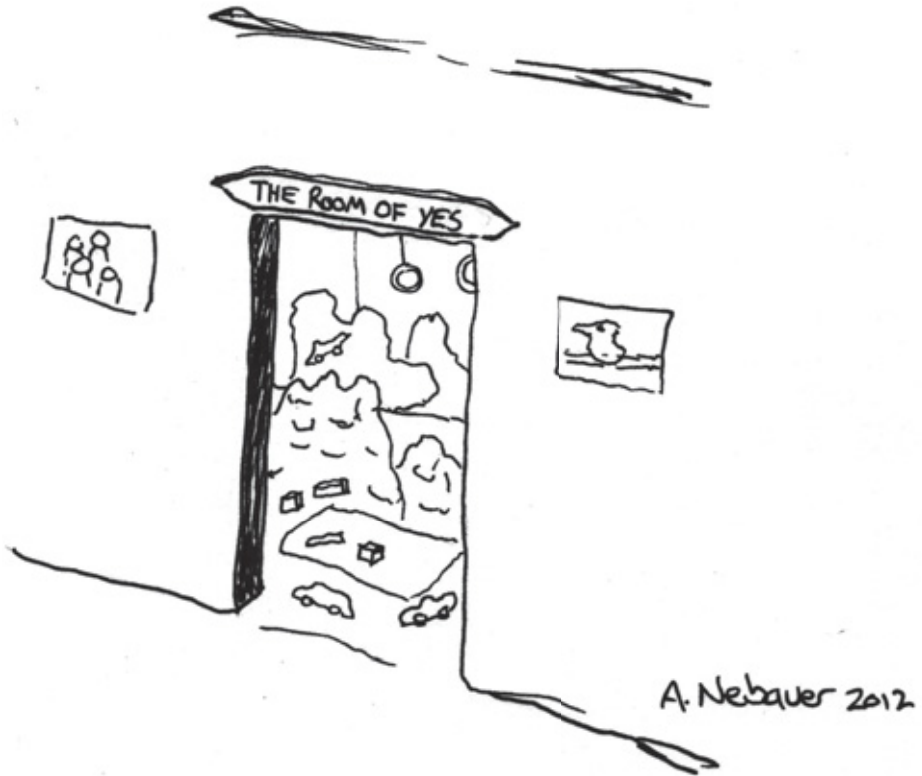
Personalised rings tones

I am thinking of personalising the ring tone on my phone so when my wife calls it plays music from Lord Of The Rings...
...one ring tone to rule them all.



The room of yes

After hearing myself say, “No, no, no” all the time to my son as a toddler, I decided to make his room, “The Room of Yes.” He can touch or break anything in there—it’s his domain. We do have a ritual of cleaning the room with him at the end of every day but if he chooses to live in a kid-sty during the day then that’s his business.



Ode to women

Systems hide prejudices. I never thought of myself as sexist but over the years I have had a few blind spots revealed to me. My wife was once reading a book called *Radical Homemakers* which I picked up one day and randomly read, “Societies have historically held masculine values.” I don’t know why that had never occurred to me before but it was suddenly so obvious, especially when thinking about empires and superpowers and their strong armies and big buildings, etc. I then realized that *feminine values* was the very thing feminist movements had been trying to restore all along, to bring balance.

And then I was chatting to my friend Greg not long after that who said something to the effect of, “The most reoccurring sin throughout history has been the inequality between men and women and if we really want to change the world we must truly listen to feminine values”. I learnt not long after that ‘Gender Equality and Empower Women’ is one of the eight 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Cool!

And now that I have kids I am becoming more and more convinced that mothers are the true heros in society. So much giving, cleaning, serving, etc. But as the old saying goes (if I can paraphrase), “What’s good for the woman goose is good for the man goose.”



Embodiment of the whole

I was thinking the other day that the conscious and subconscious minds are like a married couple. The conscious mind tends to be the dominant one while the subconscious speaks its message softly without force. Perhaps they need marriage counselling to help create more balance in their roles?

And sometimes I see my left and right arm in a similar way (I am right handed)—my right arm is the dominant one and my left arm is more comfortable to just go with the flow. Perhaps the right arm is like the business world and the left arm the arts?



I am right arm, I am strong. I am left arm, I am sensitive.

Always assume you have massive blind spots

Certainty

I am suspicious of certainty. There are some things, many things actually, that we as tiny humans simply cannot know for sure. Fundamentalists come in all shapes and sizes and they always seem to be very, very certain, which can often lead to emotional or physical violence. (I see this in myself too).

My friend Toni says, “Given that there are 7 billion of us on the planet and that our planet lives on the edge of one galaxy in a universe of an estimated 200 billion galaxies—the chance we know almost nothing is high.”

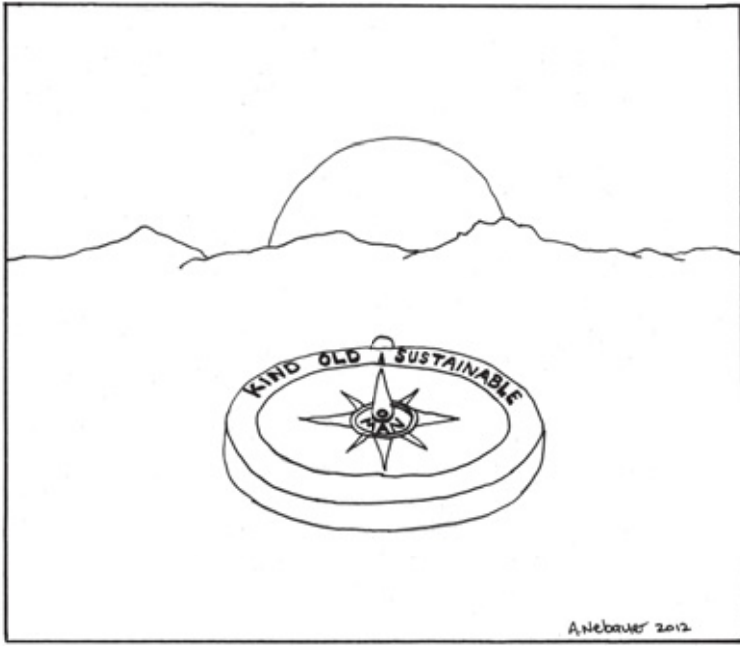
I made a sticker once saying, “It’s a mystery” (not my saying I just liked it) and my Dad suggested adding “Relax” to the beginning.

I really liked that.

Relax, it’s a Mystery

Kindness compass

My friend Keiran once said, “I will count my life a success if I eventually become a kind old man.” I think that is a great goal, not to mention a brilliant way to redefine success. For me I would also like to become a kind, old man and would also like to eventually have a completely sustainable life—solar panels, wind turbines, electric bike, huge veggie garden and fruit trees, living in tune with the rhythms of nature, that sort of thing.



A kind, sustainable old man—that's where I'm headed.

"Kindness is my religion" Dalai Lama



"A man's character is his destiny" Confucius

The liberal conservative swing

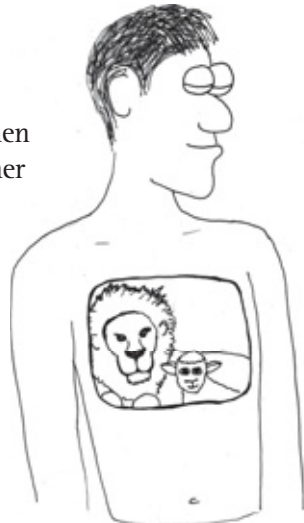
I have a dream—that liberals and conservatives can work together to help this hurting world...

My friend Dr Steve says, “When the political pendulum swings we often lose a whole lot of good things we just gained.” I think the left and right both have unique things to bring to the table and it’s important that we value both.

In my opinion the gift of the right is that they follow the rules while the gift of the left is that they break the rules. But the sin of the right is that they follow the rules and the sin of the left is that they break the rules.

I see this swinging motion within myself where I will have strict days then relaxed days, wild actions and tame. We all want to conserve the things we value and liberate things we deem bound; the difference lies in what we value (eg I have become more conservative towards rainforests).

I think it’s important to honour the existence of both the liberal and conservative within ourselves and then we will see it more easily in each other and that ultimately the goal is to get better at being both liberal and conservative, wild and tame simultaneously.





Getting to know you

Dogs have a sense of smell 300 times stronger than humans yet the first thing they do when they meet a new dog is to smell their butt. I thought about this for a while and wondered if maybe getting to know someone's worst stink straight up has some merit to it. What if when we met a new person the first thing we did was to ask them, "What are your three greatest gifts and how have you used them to hurt, control or manipulate others?" A very personal example—my gifts would be something like:

1. I have good critical insight
2. I am angered by unfairness or injustice and
3. I love hearing and communicating good ideas BUT(t)
 - i. I can be overly critical
 - ii. I can get angry at the wrong times and hurt people and
 - iii Sometimes I can love ideas more than people (and get upset if you don't agree with me).

X-men (and women)

I figure for every decent x-man gift that evolves there must be several crap ones. My friend Dr Steve gets a blue middle finger if he goes swimming in cold water. That's a crap mutant ability—not helpful if fighting crime. I have a guitar student whose fingernails grow at twice the rate of normal people. Maybe one day she'll be like Wolverine but for now, not very helpful. My wife can withstand temperatures in baths, showers and washing up water that no human should be able to endure—but again, useless against evil villains. I usually sneeze at least 5 times in a row and have been known to go as high as 10. Maybe someday I'll be able to shoot fireballs out my nose but for now, crap gift.

Metric alphabet

I think Australia, Canada and the U.K. should copy the Americans and say 'zee' instead of 'zed' so that our alphabet song rhymes, but in return the Americans should switch to the metric system. (My brother Ryan thinks we should just say 'ved' instead of 'vee' so the song rhymes.)

Wacky buildings

I saw some photos once of bizarre spiders' webs made by spiders on a variety of drugs such as morphine, LSD, caffeine, marijuana etc. I thought it could make for an interesting reality T.V. show to replicate the experiment with actual builders and see what kind of houses they came up with?

International jamming booths

One of my favourite documentaries, *What About Me by 1 Giant Leap*, was made by recording various musicians around the world improvising over one another one player at a time. Building on that idea, I think it would be cool to set up glass booths with a few musical instruments inside in several city centers around the world and, via web cam, allow local musicians to participate in a live, international jam session.

Zivis

In Germany, the young men can opt to do nine months community service as an alternative to nine months in the military. They are known as *Zivis* (civil service workers). I have long believed that exposure *is* education and experience *is* transformation so I started thinking of a list of transformational experiences that I myself would like to participate in and could perhaps be part of some kind of Zivis program for young people? (You could even turn it into a reality T.V. show? Or maybe that would cheapen the idea?) Over a year long period, participants would live/volunteer in twelve of the following situations for one month at a time.

- Taxi Driver
- Serving drinks in a bar
- Living in a third world slum
- Working in an abattoir
- Care worker for disabled
- Living with a hunter/gatherer community in the jungle
- Living in refugee camp or detention centre
- Stranded on an island
- Living in a Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Jewish community
- Living in a gay community
- Volunteering at a soup kitchen or *Meals on Wheels*
- Working on a cargo ship (to experience life at sea)
- Working as a Gardener (both veggie garden and nursery)
- Living as a homeless person
- Working with NGO helping build houses in developing nations
- Working in a cancer ward or hospice
- Learning to cook (and about health and fitness etc.)
- Living with a family in India, China or the Middle East
- A pilgrimage (e.g. “El camino de Santiago”)
- One month silent retreat



Symbiosis

The two best quotes I've heard in relation to how we treat the Earth are:

"You wouldn't poke holes in your life boat."

and

"We must move from a paradigm of host/parasite to one of symbiosis."

We are **ALL** in this together...

Healing the earth is progress!

Wealth = clean rivers and soil

A compost bin is like a savings account—if you diligently put away your excess every day, in a few years your soil will be rich!

give back to the earth

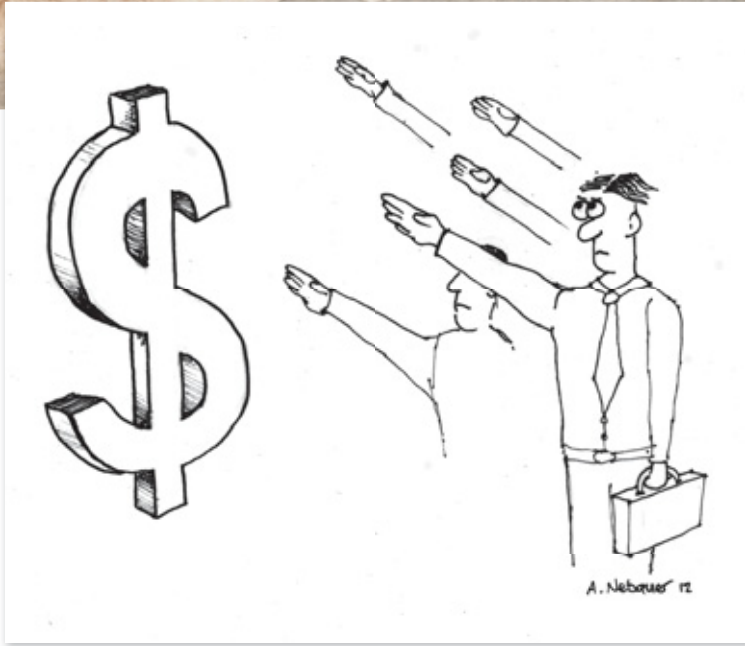
DITCH ALGEBRA TEACH PERMACULTURE

Soil

I love healthy soil. If you had told me ten years ago that that's what the future had in store for me I would have laughed. But here I am, no 'Nature Deficit Disorder' for me! I'm not exactly sure what meek means but more and more I feel like I am truly inheriting the Earth... in fact I think you inherit anything you really pay attention to so be wise with what you treasure. I love watching our garden grow and learning the best ways to create 'alive soil'. I was watching a documentary recently called, *Think Global Act Rural* and one of the interviewees presented a very interesting way to look at soil and said something along the lines of, "The Earth is truly feminine—when soil is alive it is like a fertile womb waiting for seed." I guess (often) men have just wanted control so we dam rivers and beat the Earth into submission.

There was also an amazing Indian activist in the documentary called Vandana Shiva (who appears in many of these kinds of documentaries) and she points out that industry wanted in on farming and had to find a way to continue making money from left over petro chemicals after WW2 so they turned them into chemical fertilizers and pesticides giving rise to industrialized farming. She says, "It's as if we declared war on the Earth."

Why must the organic farmers have to be the ones to label their foods "organic"? Wouldn't it be fairer for the non-organic, highly industrialized farmers to have to label their food as, "Ridden with Petro-Chemicals, Poisons and Pesticides"?



**Good FOR THE ECONOMY
OFTEN MEANS
Bad FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

**There are NO BAIL OUTS when it comes to the environment
We MUST live within the eco-budget**

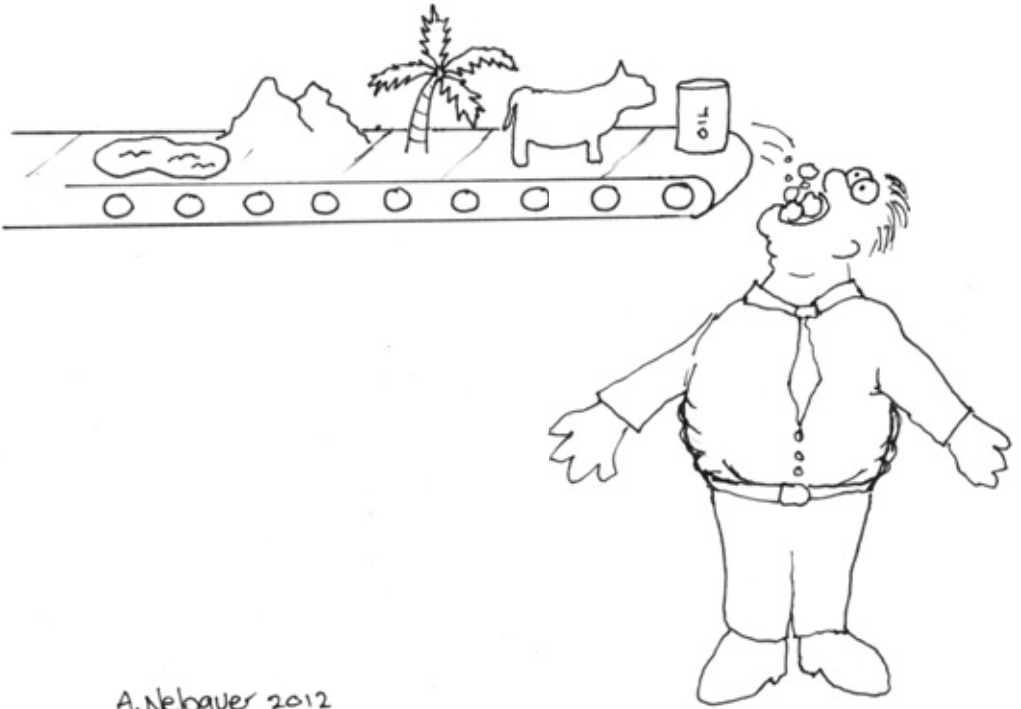
Sell the current stock

I went to Outback Queensland last year to be part of a protest against Coal Seam Gas. I had a good chat with a farmer who had been approached by the big gas companies to put gas wells on his property and at one point in the conversation he said to me, “There are plenty of new technologies to replace fossil fuels but the government is like a shop owner who wants to sell the current stock first.” In Australia it’s not popular to talk badly about mining as it is such an important industry but I believe the discussion must be had. I read a very sobering article by Bill McKibben recently (who wrote the very first book on climate change in 1989) which basically said that there are about \$27 trillion of known fossil fuels still in the ground (which our whole economy is based on) but we should probably leave \$20 trillion of it underground if we don’t want to fry the planet. We have put a lot of eggs in one basket. I like how one bumper sticker I saw put it, “There is no economy without an environment.”

LEAVE IT IN THE GROUND...
MOVE ON TO RENEWABLES.

HANDS OFF OLD GROWTH FORESTS!

Vote With Your Dollar\$
Every dollar you spend has an impact on the earth and its people



A. Nebauer 2012



Choose Life

LIVE SIMPLY

KEEP CORPORATE & STATE SEPARATE

Post carbon world

My friend Kinga once read a ‘stop smoking’ book that encouraged him in the first few pages to keep smoking while reading the book but slowly imagine a new story, a new way of a life without cigarettes. I think we need to do the same with fossil fuels, and who knows, it may be preferable.



Imagine if fast food restaurants made old cooking oil into bio-diesel and had little fuel pumps out front?



I will change the topic now—it can be controversial to talk about the weather these days :)

More funny thoughts...

Psychics in space

I was wondering the other day... if you scattered a whole lot of psychics throughout the universe 100's of light years apart, would they be able to communicate instantly or would it take 100's of light years to receive each other's messages? What is the speed of psychic?



Unarmed robbery

I think it would be possible to rob a shop with a thermos. If someone threatened to flick hot water all over me I'd give them the money.



5 Fairly bad jokes...

(I sometimes heckle myself.)

What do you call a group of dolphins wearing headphones?
An ipod. (Oh dear)

What did the dolphin coach say to his team?

There's no i in pod. (That doesn't even make sense.)

What did the astronaut say after his 8th mission to the moon?

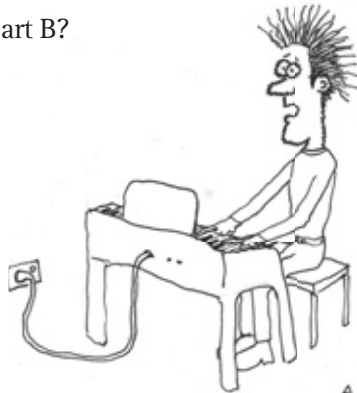
I'm so over the moon. (Please stop)

What do you call a failed drug shipment?

Dis organized crime. (Have you thought of getting a job at the bon-bon factory to help write their crappy jokes?)

What do you do before part B?

Paaaart A!!! (Ha ha.)



My friend Emma thinks 'electric piano' should mean anyone playing Chopsticks gets zapped.

Animal personalities

I'm often amazed at how animals retain the same personality generation after generation. Imagine if dogs and cockroaches had their personalities switched... after coming home from work your dog would bolt for a dark corner as cockroaches scurry up your leg to welcome you home.

"Animals minister to our souls."

Mum (Karen)

My friend Keiran says, "Life is like a giant game of snakes and ladders" and not that anyone else would get it, but I am thinking of making him a bumper sticker that says:

snakes happen

Uniforms

I was thinking about how uniforms can determine behaviour so I decided to get a few uniforms for around the house. There's my 'Gardening Uniform' which consists of boots, shorts, shirt (made of tough, thick material), gardening gloves, sunglasses and a hat. Then I have my 'Cleaning the House Uniform'—a favourite old shirt, comfy shorts and bare feet and lastly I have my 'Ultimate Relaxation Uniform' which is made up of some super comfy track-suit pants, an old baggy t-shirt and some ultra comfy moccasins with woolen insides. If I ever forget what I am doing I can just look at how I am dressed.



Did you know?

That the word 'kindergarten' is a German word that literally translates as 'children's garden' (kinder-child). The first kindergarten was simply a German man who taught children to garden where he said life's most important lessons could be learned such as sowing, reaping, seasons, growth, health, patience, etc.



That the amount of sunlight that hits the Earth's surface in one hour contains enough energy to power the entire world for a year.

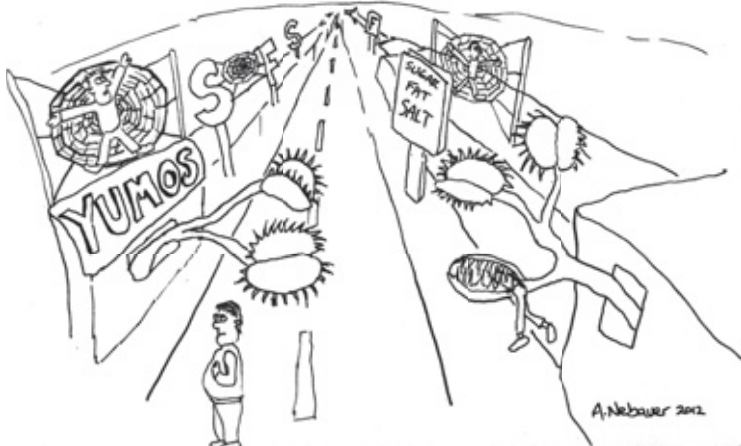


That the money spent by the world's governments on weapons in one week is enough to feed all the people on earth for a year?

Nurture your nature

When it comes to 'nature versus nurture' I think of a mandarin. If you are a mandarin then that's your nature. Nurture is to do with the health of the mandarin and all the forces affecting its

health. A healthy mandarin needs healthy relationships with its parents, teachers, peers and even itself. Sadly we spend most of our time trying to convince ourselves and others that we are in fact a watermelon.



The sugar, salt, fat trap.

only eat **MEAT** on special occasions

Peace frogs

Has there ever been a case of an introduced species not stuffing up an environment? What if there was all this tension between different frog species around the pond and then somebody accidentally introduced a peace frog who skillfully negotiated the conflicts and got the rival frogs talking again? Or are there only cane toads? I hope not. I hope there are peace frogs too.

Ode to yellow

Today I am grateful for yellow. What a great experience. Imagine a world without yellow.

3 horned steering wheel

I think someone should invent a steering wheel that has three horns. A quiet, polite horn that says, "Light's green friend, time to move along." A loud, angry horn for when you're upset and a fun, jovial horn for saying goodbye as you leave a friend's house. I would call it 'triceratops—the three horned steering wheel!'

Anyone can appear a genius or fool if asked the right questions.

be more tolerant towards lactose

If oil molecules ever get themselves a union we are screwed.

An artist...

An artist is someone who is honest, provocative and able to dress truth in beauty.

Organised football

I'm not a huge fan of organised religion but I think I'd prefer that to disorganised religion. At it's best, I think religion is simply just organised care. It's funny though, if you go to a football match you don't hear people saying, "I can't stand organised football."

Flowers in the compost

My friend Christel asked me the question at the end of 2011, "What has been your compost and what has been your flower this year?" I told her my children had been both.



Either or

If I'm ever on a plane I want it to be built and maintained by someone with a dualistic mind. The same would apply if I ever happen to be near a person disarming a bomb—binary is the way to go. But I think the inner world is more organic than mechanic. I do believe that there are things in the outer and inner worlds that are black and white, but much is grey...

Ultimately though, there is an awful lot of colour.



Non-dual awareness is like learning to think in 3-D.

Spheres

I agree with the notion that '*true perfection is the inclusion of imperfection*'... but I still enjoy a good sphere.

Miracles

It's all a miracle...

"There are two ways to live: you can live as if nothing is a miracle or you can live as if everything is a miracle."

Albert Einstein

There are some days where I just love being in life. Those days where you have an acute awareness that this whole thing is just so crazy. I'm amazed we don't greet each other more often with comments like, "Saturn is over there, Jupiter is out that way somewhere, the Earth is spinning at around 1700 km/hr (at the equator) and is travelling at a speed of 107,300 km/hr around the sun (30 km a second), our conversation is travelling on molecular vibrations through the air and then somehow a bunch of chemicals and electricity in your brain are making sense of what I'm saying... it is truly a good morning my friend, it's great to be alive!!!"

If the Earth were the size of a peppercorn the moon would be a poppy seed about 3 inches away. The sun would be a soccer ball about 26 meters away. The nearest star, Alpha Centauri (4.2 light years from Earth) would be about 6,760 km away. I actually find comfort in the fact that there is so much silence and space

at hand. My bumper sticker for all this wonder and magnitude would be:



Solar system, eco system, nervous system... luckily we don't have a nervous solar system.



Mind trees

My wife Christy is a very bright woman. After reading her neurological textbook recently she told me that some neurons in the brain can have as many as 100,000 synapses, or connections with other neurons. The potential creativity and communication possible with so many connections reminded her of trees in a dense forest sending out branches and roots in response to signals, interdependent on the surrounding ecosystem for life and vitality. So, as mind gardeners, we have the opportunity to strengthen pathways and allow the forest to fully flourish.



What comes first—the science or the worldview?



The science of the soul: explorers of archetypal landscapes

My friend Paul Y. once said something like, “Can we chart the exploration of the inner world scientifically as we have done with the outer world?” That sparked a whole lot of questions in me – What would be the equivalent of the stone wheel in the inner world? Can we chart the progress of compassion throughout the ages? Are spiritual truths compounding or do they need to be discovered anew by each person? Is there a logic to love? What are the physics of the inner universe and how much do they correlate to the physics of the outer world? Who would be the Isaac Newton of humanity’s spiritual journey? The Einstein? I then came across the work of folks like Rene Girard and Ken Wilbur who do chart and answer these very kinds of questions.

I concluded that the difference between the science of the inner world and the outer world is that in outer world science, truth is an external, objective experiment, quantifiable by observable results. But in the science of the inner world we ourselves are the experiment—the observer and the observed and the results are subtle, inner transformation. Or, said differently, science is the language of knowledge and spirit is the language of wisdom (which is experiential knowledge).

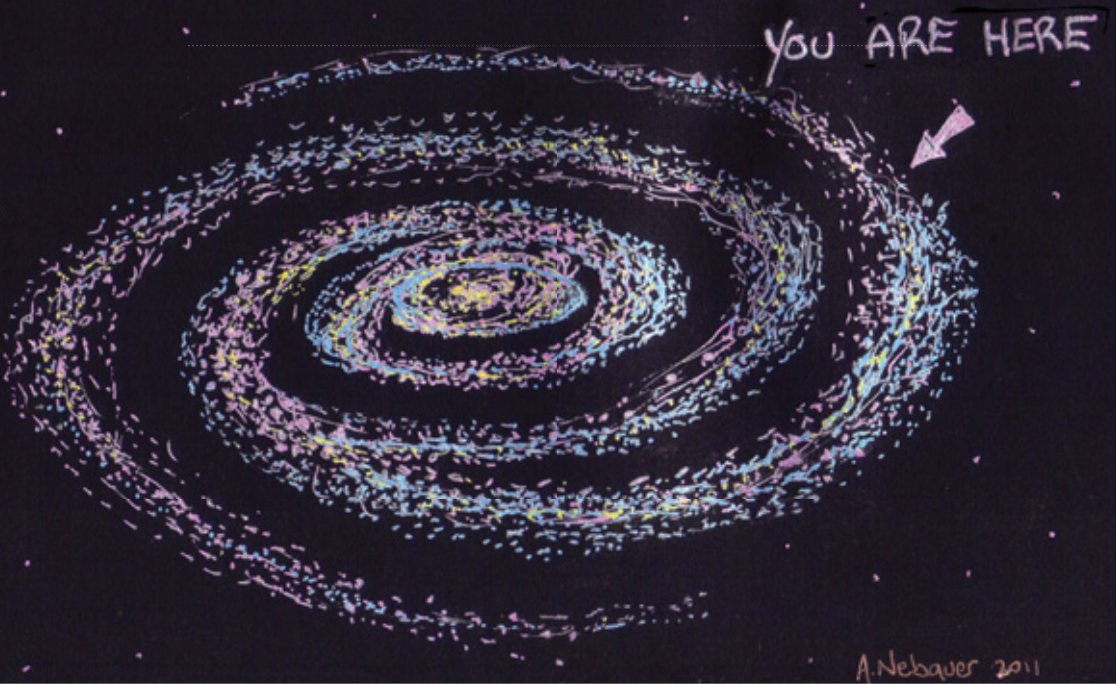


“He who knows others is learned. He who knows himself is wise.” Lao Tzu

“By their fruits you will know them.” Jesus



A. Nebauer 2012



It's **not** all about **you**

Life is a language

We are learning languages our whole life. Life is a language made of a myriad of dialects. Compassion, cynicism, prejudice, kindness are all absorbed into the heart and mind where they then continue the dance of conversation. If you want to be a good jazz guitarist hang around a good jazz guitar player. If you want to learn Italian spend some time in Italy. I'm finding that I'm becoming more and more drawn to folks who are, as my friend Patrick says, "Spacious and gracious." Who have accepted their strengths and weaknesses and learned to integrate their contradictory experiences into an authentic melody. There is a humility and freedom to their lives that I find to be like a beautiful language; one that I want to become more fluent in.

"Transformed people, transform people." Richard Rohr

Guiding stars

In a world of constant change I think it's important to have a few constants—a few guiding stars. (Not necessarily the type that come out of Hollywood). I was having a conversation via e-mail with my friend Swiss Dave, who also has two little boys around the same age as mine, and we were discussing what fundamentals or black and whites we should teach our children. I said to Dave, “We need to teach them what is and isn't important; they will need guiding stars to help navigate through difficult times.”

So I have started a little list of guiding stars. I'm sure many more stars will slowly fill our skies as we journey together (and there could possibly be a few supernovas) but this is what I have come up with so far (all things I have heard others say).

- ✧ you belong
- ✧ do unto others...
- ✧ you are precious and loved
- ✧ practice gratitude
- ✧ practice kindness
- ✧ laugh lots
- ✧ live simply
- ✧ practice compassion
- ✧ give much
- ✧ expect less



I also think it's important to be aware of what it is you seek first. If you seek first negativity you will find it. If you seek first imperfection you will surely see it. As a believer I will also share with my kids my belief that God is good and encourage them to seek first the goodness of life, even in broken places... To seek first the kingdom of heaven—where the rich share their wealth with the poor, where those who mourn are comforted, where power is used to protect the vulnerable and oppressed despite their nationality or religion. That, I believe, is where the truest treasures are hidden.



THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN CELEBRITIES

THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN SEX SEX SEX

Happy, noble societies...

Power, like **VEGEMITE** is best spread very thin.

Animal barn

If George Orwell's 'Animal Farm' was a critique of what happens when you go too far left, I think someone should write a book called Animal Barn which critiques what happens if you go too far right. I remember having a chat to my friend Steve L-D once who said that his lecturer at uni once commented, "The political spectrum is actually a circle, if you go too far left or right you end up with fascism." My friend Dave says a similar thing, "Any idea taken too far is not good." True democracy i.e. 'power shared by all' is a difficult feat. To quote my buddy Steve again, "Too far left and people hand over their power to the state. Too far right and people hand their power over to big business."

"The price of apathy towards public affairs is to be ruled by evil men." Plato



Dostgandheoffer

“The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons.” Fyodor Dostoyevsky

“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” Gandhi

“The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

I read the above quotes to my sister Hannah and she and I added a few things to the list and reworded the combined sayings as...

The greatness, health and moral progress of society is gauged by how well it treats it's elderly, children, prisoners, disabled, future generations, environment, animals, refugees, homeless and Indigenous.

A political rant about parks

I took my family to a beautiful public park one day and it really was a picture of peace on Earth. Everywhere we turned there was live music, beautiful gardens, kids laughing, people from all nations playing games and coexisting peacefully. Parks like this are kind of like the living room of a city. At one point a Muslim lady and I were pushing our kids together on a large swing and I had a moment of gratitude that we have chosen to spend our tax dollars on a park like this. My friend Chris says, “Governments are at their best when they provide services” and to that I would add, “And when they provide spaces of beauty and play.”

So I got home and wrote a list of all the things I am grateful for that are funded by our tax dollars. And no I am not pledging allegiance to the state, (I like to keep Aaron and State separate), nor am I encouraging extreme nationalistic pride or any kind of national superiority; but if I am going to critique the government

then I also need to give credit where it's due. (I have another list of things I am not happy about with the government but that's for another time).

This was my "Grateful Tax List":

- Clean water
- Hospitals
- Health care systems
- Sewage systems
- Welfare systems
- Public transportation
- Garbage collection
- Police (so long as they are on the side of the little people!)
- Skate parks
- Basket-ball courts
- Libraries
- Roads (although I think good bike paths and public transport is the way of the future)
- Botanical gardens
- Kids play grounds
- Museums
- Public art and art galleries etc.

SYSTEMS HOUSE ~~CHAOS~~

After that trip to the park I continued to reflect on how grateful I was to live in Australia and how I hoped that parks like these would be a good example of *how to build community and peace* if say a power hungry dictator from another nation were to visit. I also hoped that for Australia it is understood that "We are blessed that we may be a blessing." But I was also left with a few questions...

"How would the Indigenous feel about this list and my definitions of progress?" "Could we be more generous with our G.D.P. here in Australia and make sure other nations have schools, libraries, art galleries etc?" (After all, our toilet water is clean enough to drink).

And then I thought about that scene in Monty Pythons *Life Of Brian* where the oppressed Jews acknowledged that the heavy handed Romans did in fact give them aqueducts so I wondered, “Can you have aqueducts without crucifixes”? “Don’t we want to defend anything we build or that makes our life easier be it an aqueduct or a nice park?” “Do we really want peace on Earth?”

“It will be a great day when our schools have all the money they need, and our air force has to have a bake-sale to buy a bomber.” Robert Fulghum

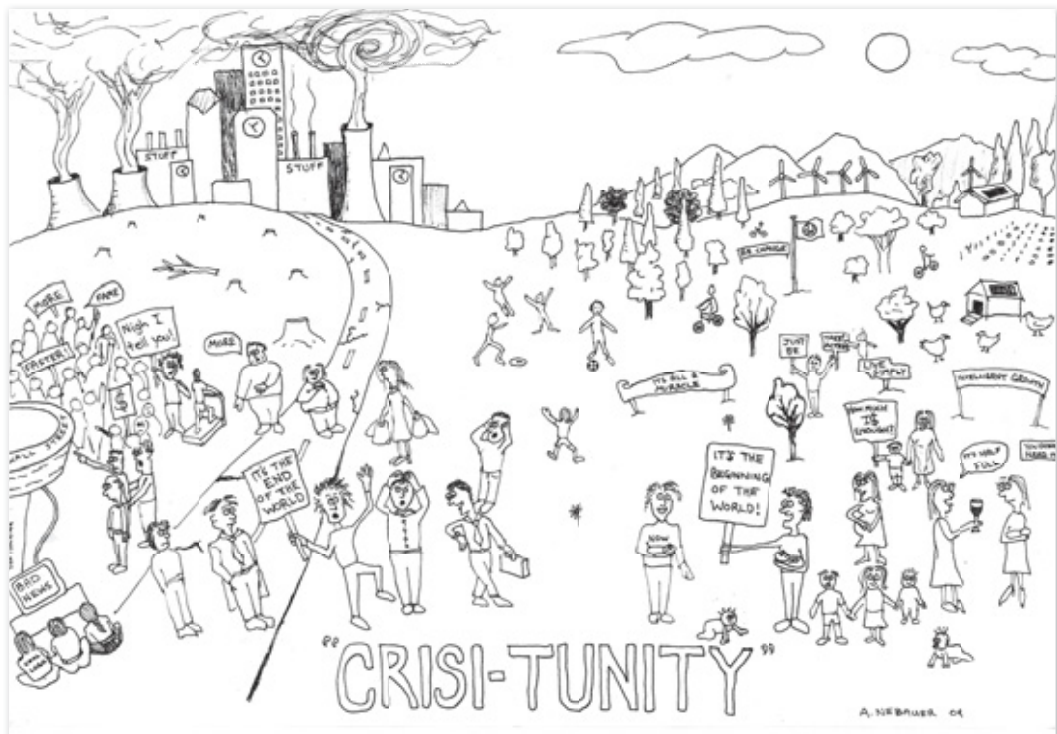
“Imagine.” John Lennon

Best and worst

I have seen humanity at its best and worst. I have seen my country at its best and worst. I have seen my religion at its best and worst. I have seen men at their best and worst. I have seen my friends at their best and worst. I have seen myself at my best and worst.

May we strive for, and graciously *seek first* the best in everything.

The only person in the world you can change is yourself...
BUT YOU CAN INSPIRE, INFORM, MOTIVATE, NURTURE AND EMPOWER



I did this cartoon in 2008 not long after the Global Financial Crisis. The word *crisitunity* comes from The Simpsons where Homer was having a crisis and Lisa tells him that the Chinese use the same character for *crisis* as they do for *opportunity* to which Homer replied, “Crisitunity!”

I refuse to give in to the **FEAR ORGY**

good **SHIT HAPPENS** too!

The East and the West...

If the Earth were a giant brain the East and West would be the left and right hemispheres.

Earth anthem

In 2006 I visited my friend Janine who's an aid worker in Israel/Palestine. One of the things I noticed during my stay there was how many Israeli and Palestinian flags I saw. They were everywhere - outside businesses, hanging from windows, flying on car antennas etc. At one point I said to Janine, "We need to zoom out past nationalistic pride, myths and paradigms and get ourselves an Earth Flag." I later typed "Earth Flag" into google and there it already was, thought of in 1969 by an American man named John McConnell who created it as a symbol of "equality" and "peace, justice and care of Earth." (Pretty poetic I thought, an American coming up with that in the year of the lunar landing!). My friend Paul and I decided our contribution could be an Earth Anthem celebrating all the universal common ground so we wrote some lyrics, got a bunch of our friends together and made a fun but rather cheesy song of us all waving Earth Flags and put it on youtube. (And no I do not want to welcome the Aliens nor do I want a one world government, I just think the flag is a fantastic symbol). Here are the lyrics for the chorus of our Earth Anthem

*We are but one, we share the sun and the moon and the milky way,
May we love one another as sister and brother,
We're a family out in space.*



Proud Earthling



Proud Earthling

Salaam



SHALOM



Nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons are use-less. They are useless against tiny groups of people who may plot bad things. They are use-less in creating peace and they are devastating from an environmental point of view and a people point of view. Two experiences in particular have shaped my views towards Weapons of Mass Destruction thus far. The first was a visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in Japan that recreated an eerie scene-by-scene telling of the events in Hiroshima at 8:15am on August 5, 1945 when the first ever nuclear bomb was dropped. At the end of that visit I vowed to work towards a world that is free of these ugly weapons. The second experience was in India where I realized the egoic nature of possessing nuclear weapons. I was chatting to some young men on a train who excitedly told me that India now owns a nuclear bomb. I was shocked. To these young men it symbolized power, that India was now somehow a player among the big boys, one of the strong nations. In the end I asked them, "What would Gandhi do?"

Your life?

I heard someone say once, “Your life is your greatest creation.” I liked that (and still do), but then my friend Purcey gave me a book called “Me to We” and I started to think that perhaps it’s not accurate to think of your life as a creation that’s separate to everyone else’s life. Perhaps it could be re-worded, “Your greatest creation is your life *and* the life you bring to others?”

The paradox of the ‘I’ and ‘We’

As a Westerner from a culture of hyper-individualism, traveling to Asia and the Middle East was an impacting experience for me in relation to the concept of *I* and *We*. I was most impressed at how the Eastern world seemed to emphasise the *We* rather than the *I* (at least that was my impression) and I thought about the times back home when I had actually felt a strong sense of the *We* and realized it was most apparent during any team activity I was part of (even washing dishes with a group of people). And then I began to think about it politically - perhaps Capitalism is good at the *I* (as in if *I* make a better product than you then let the (well regulated!) market decide). Where as Socialism is good at the *We* and keeps an eye on what’s best for the most amount of people. I hope we can regain a sense of our interconnectedness in the West but with such an emphasis on the *I* it sometimes feels like the Western world has been kicked right in the we-ness.

*“Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each of
you be alone,
Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver
with the same music.” Kahlil Gibran*

BUGGER THE JONSES!

“The declaration of interdependence”

Through reading the work of Canadian academic and environmental activist Dr David Suzuki, I was introduced to the phrase: *The Declaration of Interdependence* and even though he did not coin the term, it has stayed with me ever since. What a brilliant play on words.

My friend Geoff once said to me, “The strength of an eco-system is in its diversity.” It would seem that a rainforest is one of the best teachers of interdependence.

My friend Dale says that organisations and institutions can often be like pot plants rather than an interdependent ecosystem which made me think of the two key Quaker convictions: “1. Our guidance comes not through external authority but from the inner teacher. 2. We need community to help us clarify and amplify the inner teachers voice.”



Ubuntu

I love the African word Ubuntu which means, “I am what I am because of who we all are” or as I heard one other person express it, “A person is a person through other persons.”



Do you want to be
well...?

A. Nebauer 10

Religion and Politics

Tribalism runs deep. The only fight I ever got into at school was in grade 7 when a boy who previously went for the Brisbane Broncos (local football team) told me he now goes for the Western Magpies (Sydney football team). He then went on to say that the Broncos were a bunch of girls. Girls?! Not only had he changed tribes he was being pretty damn rude about it. This was a job for fists, not words. If I was a little older and wiser (and perhaps more secure) I could have said something like, “Well at least we both still like football.”

I think people are uncomfortable to talk about Religion and Politics because it can potentially put people into separate tribes. People often back political parties like football teams (we even use words like “the opposition party”). In my experience different groups tend to have different strengths and blind spots and once again I think it’s important to “compare notes.” After all, we are all in this together. I think tribes are necessary—we need a safe, sheltered space for formation and growth (a “shire” perhaps) to establish a sense of belonging and identity BUT I think we must then learn the skill of finding common ground and honouring the strengths in “the other”.

HOWEVER... I am still guilty of tribal thinking... it's a slow skin to shed. My wife said to me recently, "You want people to be more like you so that you'll be more comfortable." Bam! Guilty. And frankly I think she summed it up.

"It's not enough just to wake up, we must grow up too." Ken Wilber

Speaking of tribalism... when I visited India in 2008 I was intrigued to learn that the Buddha was raised a Hindu. When I got home I made a bumper sticker that said:



Buddah was a Hindu
Jesus was a Jew

It seems to me that neither of these two great teachers were trying to start a new tribe but to awaken and reconnect people to deeper realities.

"Dissent is the highest form of patriotism." Howard Zimm

TRANSCENDTRIBALISM

Worship

My friend Emma once told me that her boys had just told her that they loved her and 5mins later they were hitting each other so she said to them, "If you want to show me that you love me don't hit your brother." I wonder if God feels like that sometimes?

Open mind

My friend Rod said, "We are often most harsh and close-minded towards people who are still where we just were." We went on to discuss that being truly open-minded means you must be open-minded towards those whom you deem close-minded.

W.W.J.D.I.H.W.R. -What Would Jesus Do If He Were Roman?

I often draw inspiration from Gandhi, Jesus, Martin Luther King Jr but I had this realisation recently that they were all born on the side of the oppressed. As a white, middle class westerner I think it's important for me to look at the lives of folks like William Wilberforce, Dorothy Day, Pete Seeger, Moses etc. who happened to be born on the side of power but used their influence to look out for the oppressed.

EMPHasis

SIN or beauty? LAW or grace? THE RICH or the poor? FAME or ordinary.

Good Samaritan?



"Look I'm pretty sure there's a department that looks after this kind of thing. I'll shoot them an email for you now."

Love is a sacred garden

I was having a conversation about marriage with my friend Delia once who is originally from Malaysia and I remember her saying, “In the East they get married and then fall in love.” I was reminded of her comment when Christy and I were travelling in India and we were asked on a couple of occasions if we were a *love marriage* or an *arranged marriage* but what struck me was the neutrality of the question. To the Indians it is equally valid to have a love marriage or arranged marriage because I think they know that either way it requires much choice, commitment and hard work.



The Leviticus Police beat a gay man. A man near by eating shrimp grows nervous.

**Get in touch with your inner child,
your inner leper and your inner Christ.**

2 part lesson

I was recently in a situation where I was on the flip side of a previous experience. As I told my friend Zell about it she said something to the effect of, “I am amazed at how often this mirroring seems to occur. Maybe life has to teach us a lesson in two parts—one where we are the victim in a certain situation and the second where we are the perpetrator in a very similar scenario. This is the only way we can learn grace, empathy and forgiveness.”

Blessed are the poor..

Of all of Jesus' teachings the 8 Beatitudes are my favourite. My friend Dave says they are in compounding order and build on one another (poor, meek, mourn, hunger for fairness, merciful, pure hearted, peacemakers, persecuted). I have heard the Beatitudes called "The 8 fold path of Jesus" and I am particularly fascinated by the very first one, "Blessed are the poor." What a strange concept, lucky are the unlucky? Or happy are the poor?

My friend Dave says, "Blessed are the poor—who do not trust in status or riches."

The Franciscan Priest Richard Rohr says, "We can become possessed by our possessions."

My friend Peter says, "The rich fear change while the poor welcome it."

And my friend Katie once said, "The poor have to humbly ask one another for help, they don't have the option of independence."

Or as it's worded elsewhere in the gospels, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" which I think means blessed are those who know they are far from together, who know they only have a few scraps of the mystery and have much awakening and growing to do. To me, this is always the perfect starting point.



"The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast in dough..." Jesus

Happiness is living heaven now. Connected. Alive. In awe.

Mirrors...

I think Islam is a profound mirror for Christianity. I have met many beautiful Muslims and many beautiful Christians and have learnt much off them. My friend Drew was once sitting in his church listening to a rather fiery sermon by a guest preacher and he asked himself, “would I be comfortable if this kind of thing were being preached at the local Mosque”? May be a good rule of thumb is to preach in your place of worship as you would have others preach in theirs ... love others, look after the oppressed...



It's better to be loving
than to be right...

YOU ARE A HEALER

Participate in the great dance



MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY
FRIDAY
SATURDAY
SUNDAY
NAMASTE



Seeking refuge

If us Aussies are ever in a position where we need to seek refuge in another country and we are told to “f off we’re full”, have the petrol siphoned from our boats or are detained indefinitely (men, women and children)—we won’t have a leg to stand on.

Aussie. Aussie. Aussie. ???

When I was 17 an incredible opportunity came up for me to visit the United States for six months to help run jet skis and paint ball on summer camps. (Seattle too, which was the center of the musical universe for me at the time. I am grateful to this day for this experience.) While I was there however, I did become quite the Australian patriot and would make my accent just that little more ‘ocker’ to impress the girls but several years later after traveling to many other countries and seeing the dark side of patriotism (e.g. Nazi Germany), I started calling myself a global citizen and became suspicious of anyone overly patriotic. And then, as mentioned earlier, I came across the Earth Flag in 2006 but after waving it for a few years (as a patriotic global citizen perhaps?) I felt like it was time for me to zoom back in and make peace with my Australian-ness.

It seems that there have been a few folks who have done this journey of zooming out—*think global act local* and then eventually zoom back in—*think local act local*. I don’t know why but I always felt a bit alien to my country of birth but it was after getting to know some Indigenous Australians that I started to make peace with my own Australian-ness.

Meeting the Indigenous and listening to their stories impacted me in other ways too—I finally had the revelation of their incredibly painful and difficult journey which set me on a path of seeking deeper reconciliation and peace between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians. How rich it was for me to hear their voice.

**It’s a bit rude to take
someone’s country**





I made this image leading up to Australia Day 2012. It may not resonate with everyone but it was an honest artistic expression at the time. I actually think it's "un-Australian" to have Australia Day on a date that not all Australians can celebrate. I think we should have a day to celebrate all that is wonderful about this country but that we should let the Indigenous choose the name and date for this party.

Nations Are Like People...

If nations are like people,
war would be the equivalent
of a fight in the pub.

Nations, like people...

love to host parties,
have unique personalities,
love to influence others,
need friends,
have a past, present and future,
sometimes have to say sorry,
have strengths and weaknesses,
want to be noticed and appreciated
have insecurities
need to heal
need to mature.

Nations, like people are
on a journey.

Parenting...

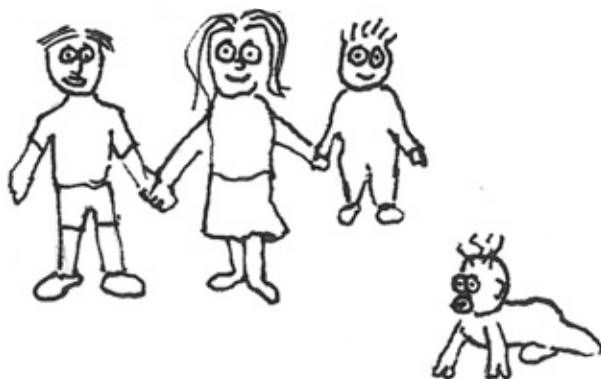
I need to have a bit of a rant on this one... I'm not sure whether to start with—parenthood is the most profoundly transformative experience I have ever had or parenthood has completely kicked the crap out of me (in the very best way of course). My friend Doug says, “If you want to discover how selfish you are get married. If you want to discover how selfish you still are—have kids.”

For me, both marriage and having kids have brought a whole lot of new life and whole lot of dying.



If life is a university then children are also our professors. To children everything is a game, everything is FUN...it's one of the best classes they teach. Of course they teach a few other classes too like Tantrums 101, Getting Used To Poo*, Life Without Sleep Is Fantastic and plenty of Lose It Yourself classes (which are usually scheduled just before the 'Realising-You-Can't-Do-It-Yourself' classes).

Kids reflect back to us who we really are and what we really value; like a hidden camera they show us what we are actually on about. In fact I have heard people say, “The thing we ultimately teach our children is what *we* value” and that “What we value is revealed by how we spend our time and money.” Gandhi said, “My life is my message” and Parker J. Palmer similarly says, “We teach who we are.” From what I have observed in watching parents over the years is that you must let your child become who they truly are, not who you want them to be. To celebrate and discover them like you would a wild bird or flower you had never before seen. If you can nurture an empathetic, responsible, kind human being who hopefully one day becomes one of your best friends... well I would call that a huge success. There are no guarantees and I can only hope and pray that I will achieve this with my own children.



*Actually speaking of ‘Getting Used to Poo’—I used to react really badly to getting poo on my hands when changing my kids nappies. Bad words were said. Often. But after a couple of years of parenting I noticed that I wasn’t reacting nearly as dramatically as I used to so I took a moment to celebrate this and realized that I had just passed through a more significant threshold than when I graduated from school, T.A.F.E. and university. I also realized that it doesn’t matter what religion you are or are not when it comes to changing pooy nappies—there is no such thing as Hindu poo or Buddhist poo or Athiest poo—as my couns Gavin says “poo is the great leveler.” Sorry, enough about that.

Your outer child

Something that has surprised me with parenting is that as I have practiced kindness towards my children I have also become kinder to myself too. They very much are a little, external you!

End goal

My friend Dave W. once pointed out that the word 'self discipline' means 'to self disciple'. Perhaps that is the end goal of parenting (and teaching guitar)?

Agenderless

You must not hold too tightly to your agenda when parenting, even a cup of tea is not a safe bet (no guarantee of tea). I call this state *trans-agenda* (not that I am that great at living it).



The **Aliveness** Is At Hand

Redefining happiness

Maybe happiness is not just those times when you laugh so hard your stomach hurts. Sometimes you can be deeply happy and not even smiling.



After all my searching I finally found the meaning of life in the dictionary.



The best answer I have ever heard to the question, “What’s the meaning of life” was graffitied on a wall. It simply said:



Gratitude

My friend Hailey was struggling with life a couple of years ago so she decided to speak to a Nun about it. She said to her, “The secret to happiness is reflection and gratitude.” Hailey, being a photographer, decided to take a photograph everyday for a full year of something she was grateful for and called the project “365 Grateful.” The project turned out to be very helpful for her and others soon heard about it and it eventually went viral on the internet. I think being grateful is kind of like wearing different goggles—grateful goggles.

GRATITUDE is the **ANTIDOTE** to **CONSUMERISM**



In her book Travelling Mercies, Anne Lamott talks about a priest she knows who said that sometimes he thinks heaven is just a new pair of glasses.

Is this life giving?

I used to use my creativity to think up all sorts of fearful scenarios of how my life could turn out. After I ranted on and on about one of my ill-conceived imaginations one day, my wise friend Irene said to me, “I don’t think it’s very productive to think about these things.” It was so simple but pierced me. She encouraged me to always ask the question, “Is this life giving?”



“Life is for living.” Cold Play

Health

If I ever feel myself getting run down my left nostril starts to run. That's my cue that I need to slow down. I asked a few friends if they have weird signals too and it turns out I am not alone. My Dad gets an itch on a particular spot on his back, my friend Dr Steve gets a croaky voice and my brother Joel gets sore teeth when he needs to slow down or is too stressed. Not that I am a doctor, but in the name of *sharing generously* and *comparing notes*, here is my little action list for when I get sick: (this may only work for folks whose left nostrils run?)

1. Slow down. Rest.
2. Take 1 table spoon of olive leaf extract 3 times a day
3. Cut up 1 clove of garlic, raw fresh ginger and gulp with big glass of water
4. Eat raw foods, vitamin C, lemon and honey tea etc
5. Go out side and be still with nature

Billboard

Three things no marketer wants you to hear—you are enough, *living simply* is good for you and the best things in life are free.

Phoebe's freebies

When I was depressed a few years ago my friend Phoebe wrote me out a list of some simple things I could do to help look after myself better. More and more I am seeing health as an eco system which requires physical, spiritual, emotional and social harmony. I have added a few things to the list and still use it to this day...

- Bath therapy
- Garden therapy
- Candle therapy (or campfire therapy)
- Nature therapy (rainforest, beach, country, animals)
- Sand therapy
- Art therapy (creating/reading/writing/nourishing films)
- Music therapy
- Stillness/silence/meditation/prayer
- Sleep therapy
- Dance, yoga (praying with your body)
- Cup of tea therapy
- Do something for someone else.



Spiritual stages

Stage 1 Child—I clearly don't know everything nor do I need to—I'm too caught up in the wonder of it all.

Stage 2 Adolescent—I am starting to feel like I have a good answer for a lot of things.

Stage 3 Young Adult—I have a good answer for everything and lots of certainty.

Stage 4 Mid Life—I'm realising there may be much I am still unaware of... am learning to say, "I don't know."

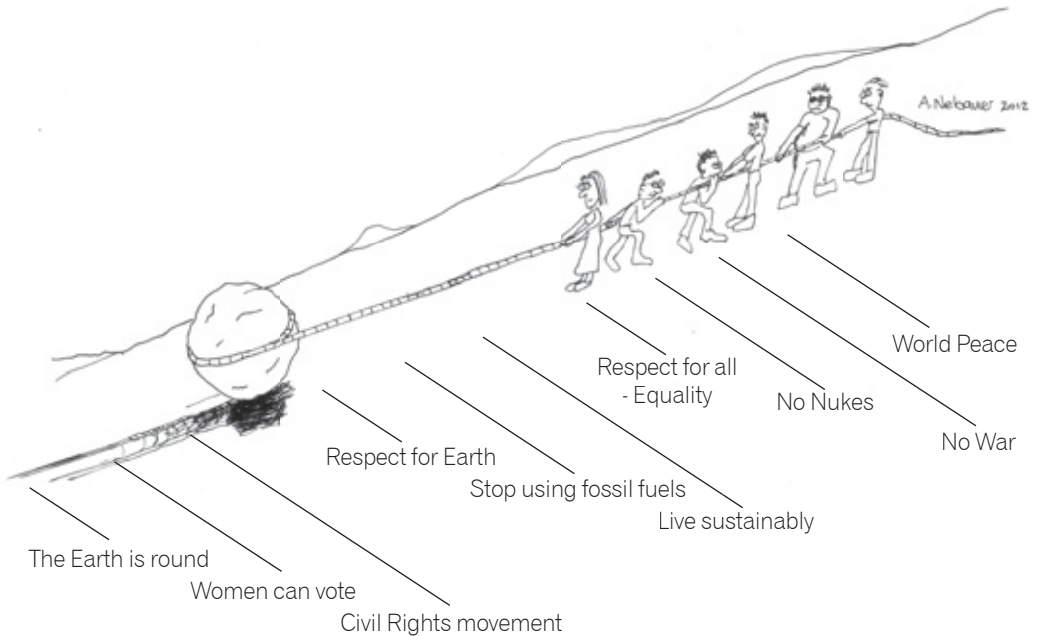
Stage 5 Wise Old Person—I clearly don't know everything nor do I need to—I'm too caught up in the wonder of it all.

Letting go of illusions of superiority

Greener than thou, holier than thou, more educated than thou, fitter, healthier, more attractive, cooler, richer, taller, funnier, thinner, faster, stronger than thou...

Files

If my friends ever refer to something I used to do that I have since worked hard to change I will say to them, "Please update your file." The truth is we live in a different world everyday and must constantly update our files but I think we must especially update the files of those with whom we have a long history as we can lock them in old roles and not allow or acknowledge new growth.



Recipe

Aphrodisiac Stir Fry. (This is an R18+ recipe.)

I once looked up all the aphrodisiac foods on google and made a stir fry out of them. The jury is out as to whether or not it's that effective but it's a nice meal in its own right. (If you're single this recipe may not be for you. If you are a teenage boy this recipe is forbidden and I suggest you look up all the non-aphrodisiac foods).

Step 1

Put on a good ipod mix.

Step 2

Pour 2 glasses of Aloe Vera juice.

Step 3

Cut and stir fry:

1 onion, 4 stalks of Asparagus, 2 fresh red chillies, 1 table spoon honey, handful of almonds, 4 cloves garlic, nob of ginger, 1 pack Hokkien noodles, 1 tbl spoon soy sauce, 1 tbl spoon fish sauce, 1 tsp brown sugar, juice 1 lime. Add some meat if you like (this is after all a special occasion).

Step 4

Turn on lamps and light candles. Pour two glasses of good wine.

Step 5

Dessert—chocolate and strawberries

Step 6

... ;)

Conditional

Growth is conditional. The conditions are sunlight, nutrients and water. Humans are funny though, they have free will as to whether or not they want to receive sunlight, nutrients and water.



Ranking and competition seem to be at the heart of the animal kingdom, which is why we must evolve and become human.



Universal Languages? Love, music, laughter, food, nature, art, beauty.



Languages of God? Love, Light, Silence, Nature, Beauty.



Your life is a house.

The goal is hospitality.

To God,

Others,

And *all* your experiences.

The meaning of life is to discover the joy of living



Before The Internet

Localisation

People and planet before profits

The system produces consumers not citizens. “We learn to earn” it says in the book *Affluenza*. From a young age we are taught this myth that if you do well at primary school you’ll be prepared for high school which prepares you for university which prepares you for a really high paying job and the whole goal is to own a bigger and bigger house filled with more and more stuff!

We need a better story.

I think rather than an *economic narrative* we need to embrace a *narrative of the common good*—a story which seeks first and foremost to see people and planet flourish, living sustainable, balanced and happy lives. (I am all for having an economy so long as is aligned with the reality of the biosphere.)

In short, spiritual growth not economic growth defines a society’s progress.

SURVIVAL OF THE CO-OPERATIVE

What motivates us to change?... hell, perfection, money, sex?

My motives to change over the years have certainly changed. Hell, perfection, money and sex have all been motivators for modifying my behaviours at various times but these all now seem pretty self-serving.

“What can be healthy in one season may be unhealthy in another season.” Tony Campolo

And there have been other times where I’ve had to ask myself honestly, “Do I even want to change?”

My friend Peter says, “Growth means change” and often it’s difficult to face the newness that change inevitably brings. Christy said to me the other day, “Humans fear change yet they are incredibly adaptable.” We are a funny mix of contradictions.

Ideally I think love, hope, compassion, justice, fairness, cooperation and creativity are the best fuel for change. However, sometimes reward and punishment, profit and loss, pleasure and pain and good old competition are the only motivators to get people moving.

I wonder if it would be helpful to have a *Religious Olympics* where medals are given to the most peaceful and compassionate religions and points are deducted for inquisitions, torture, holy wars that kind of thing. And, while we are at it, lets have a *Green Olympics* too and see which countries can be the most sustainable and pollution free...



Imagine if there were a 'Green Olympics' where countries compete to be the most sustainable and pollution free



"Hopeful people do hopeful things." John Dear

The Importance of Learning To Be Unimportant

everything is a gift

"We have to become somebody before we can become nobody." Jack Engler



"Everyone has been made for some particular work, and the desire for that work has been put in every heart." Rumi

In some ways this book is a bit of a crock because here I am trying to sound important and get your attention with funny cartoons and gems I have blatantly stolen from my friends. But maybe I honestly do just like collecting 'thought butterflies' and making little cartoons and bumper stickers just as my cousin Nathan loves playing football—no matter if the grandstand is full or empty? An audience is a bonus but it's not necessary. *People cheer therefore I am* is a dangerous illusion because the opposite must also apply—*people don't cheer therefore I am not*.

"The intensity of our sorrow will vary in direct proportion to the intensity of our feeling that 'I am important'."
Tara Tulku Rinpoche (Tibetan monk)

The other illusion I am suspicious of in myself is entitlement. *Expect less* has become a bit of a mantra for me of late. There aren't too many rich and famous Amish folks but I bet they're happy. We are constantly being sold an array of myths that emphasise the importance of being important over the importance of the common good. Pop idol stardom over of a gypsy jam session. A corporate ladder opposed to building social bridges. A pyramid of power rather than a circle of respect.

To have a world filled with folks who think they are really, really, ridiculously important and entitled to whatever they want is completely unsustainable. It's important to know that you are indeed important but if we are serious about putting a stop to the cycle of empire, of violence, about creating a healthy post-tribal, sustainable world where we move from *competition to cooperation* from *dominance to partnership* from *host/parasite to symbiosis*; then I believe we must let our illusions of over-importance die.

We are, each one of us, a speck that will soon pass.

In his book, *Legacy of the Heart*, Wayne Muller says,

“If we are not so important, we are no longer responsible for living up to the imagined expectations of a universe infatuated with our every move.”

And for me this is where the freedom is—the grain of wheat must die if it is to bear fruit.

As we die to our illusions of grandeur, we slowly “sink into the real masterpiece”, and like decomposing leaves on the floor of the rainforest; death leads to rebirth. For me, part of this slow ongoing rebirth has been to recognise that any butterflies I ever catch were never mine to begin with. Ownership is a strange concept that leads to all kinds of wars. It's like Chief Seattle says, “The Earth does not belong to us, we belong to the Earth”.

You cannot own truth, you can only participate.

Paul, a good buddy of mine, always says, “Everything is a gift”, and I think that ultimately every gift belongs to Love, to the Source, to God. Anything good we see in ourselves or others cannot be owned or hoarded—all we can do is celebrate it and let it complete the circuit back to the Source. My friend Steve L-D once said, “Maybe God is like white light, the source, which is then refracted into many, glorious colours”.

It’s important to rediscover why you (and everyone else) are important and for me the ongoing resurrection to this egocentric death looks something like this...

You are made of the stuff of stars and are interconnected with the glory of the universe.

The kingdom of heaven is within you, the abundance is at hand...

You are already part of the importance!

THE END

"No matter how broken our world may be, there is a hidden wholeness just beneath the surface of all visible things." Thomas Merton

Thank Yous

Thank you to my wife for encouraging me to do this little book project. You are very generous and I hope that any growth I have made through creating this blesses you :) Thank you my boys Judah and Lenny for reminding me how fun life is—if you look for it! Thank you Jamie Palmer for your amazing graphic design skills, you took the book and bumper stickers to a whole new level. Legend. Thank you Malcom Blaney for creating such a great website! Thank you to Di Schultz and David Sretenovic for using your grammatical eagle eyes to stop me from embarrassing myself by putting commas in the wrong spot or from spelling words wrong. And to my high school music teacher Faye Crane who used to write down the funny things we said in class, I realised only recently that's probably where I got the idea for this book!

To my friends I have not quoted in the book I am sorry but please know that although some things don't necessarily translate into a cartoon or bumper sticker they are still very important. Things like a kind listening ear or a warm hug. So to all of you, quoted or not, thank you! You have not only been wonderful teachers, you have filled my life with colour. Namaste.

In order of appearance: Nathan Cross, Wayne Nebauer, Steve Lamar, Steve Lewis-Driver, Chris Wilson, Mark Nebauer, Drew Gillies, Jamie Palmer, Julian Castan, Peter Branjerdporn, Rees Maddren, Dave Andrews, Christianna Nebauer, Greg Manning, Toni Powell, Keiran O'Leary, Ryan Nebauer, Andrew (Kinga) King, Emma Lamar, Karen Nebauer, Christel Palmer, Paul Young, Patrick Oliver, (Swiss) Dave Maurer, Hannah Powell, Homer Simpson, Janine Samuels, Andrew Purcell, Geoff Bice, Dale Hembrow, Rodney Ashman, Delia Wilson, Zell Sindel, Katie Manning, Aunty Jean Phillips, Uncle Joe, Doug Sindel, Gavin Nebauer, Dave Way, Hailey Bartholomew, Irene Alexander, Joel Nebauer, Phoebe Antonieff, Paul Sretenovic.



This little book is a collection of funny thoughts, bumper stickers, cartoons and quotes from conversations with friends and family. It explores paradox, spiritual growth, religion, politics, facebook and a whole range of very serious topics in a very un-serious way. Fun, quirky and a little bit deep, this book may well become the most important book in your toilet :)



Aaron Nebauer is a musician, writer, cartoonist, action person and Dad who has always been fascinated by big questions and big ideas, but also by the simple joys. He currently lives with his wife and two boys in West End, Brisbane, Australia.

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