



JOHNNY MAHAFFEY SAYS:
"We Make Our Present"

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The sayings go—we make our own future—we make our own luck—we reap what we sow—and in an endless index of aphorisms. And, in the end, they're not much better than saying—it's wet when it rains—when you're it; you're it—it is what it is—and the like.

I'm adding: We make our present.

The Arrow of Time can be a total bitch. One choice, and EVERY choice we make, all put us in a particular present—and at the junction of each present, we sit at a pivot—a merging of past decisions, and a diverging of possible futures that lock in one particular Arrow of possible directions as we decide in that present slice of time.

We are all human, and won't always use our heads when making a decision. Sometimes—especially when we are adolescent, immature, or inexperienced—we make decisions out of total emotion, passion, spite, or in the simple want of pleasure. It's with wisdom of experience that learn to overcome the base emotions, and do what we know to be right and honorable. But, even then ... we make mistakes.

There's a wide range of stupid in the world, and stupid is as stupid does (ha, another one)—and, I see a lot of people doing stupid things and bitchin' about the outcome—over and over and over. I'm one of them too, setting myself up for failure. I keep forgetting the most important maxim of all for a man, in my choice of women—but, I won't say it (write it / type it)—can you guess what it is? I said no stone casting this year, so ... I have to be nice.

I made my present.

They made theirs.

You made yours.

Or, did we?

Because I can point out specific bends and turns in the Arrow that were NOT of my own making, or choice. For example, the armed robberies that I was a victim in during my time as a General Manager, GM, of a prominent pizza franchise. The last one, was the very trigger to most, if not ALL of the events that led me to where I am today. I'm still responsible for my choices and actions—but, I know that the influence of those victimizations had a large affect in my decisions, and it was a long time before I was normal again. So long, in fact, that it's now quite possibly too late for me to ever recover any sense of normalcy in life.

I face choices now, that will determine my future.

Choices that will decide if I even HAVE a future.
And, once they are made, they're made, no redo.

DETERMINISM

"The concept ... that our actions can change nothing in the events of life which were firmly established through causal connection, and that man is not free to dispose of his own will and to choose between good and evil in his actions." (Bleuler, E. "Textbook of Psychiatry, 1930). (1)

FREE WILL

The concept that people are free to dispose of their own will; that they can choose between alternatives in such manner that the choice is entirely uninfluenced by factors not consciously controlled by them. The opposite of free will is "determinism"(2).

ENVIRONMENTALISM

The view that attributes all that we are to nature (typified by the "schizophrenogenic mother" concept). After the 1950s, it gave way to "determinism" (genes determine behavior), and, most recently, to "probabilism" (a view that considers both nature and nurture, positing that genes determine the likelihood of behaviors).(3)

However, I'd like to coin another, if at all possible--it may be new, maybe not; or, it may just fall under environmentalism:

SOCIETALISM

This would not be, socialization, but something more specific as to how our socialization within a specific society, and locale within that society acts as a kind of Societal Determinism on us. And, to go a step further, not only our specific locale within that society, but the time in which we are there. For example, a person born and raised in 1970s Los Angeles, California, compared to someone from 1970s Columbia, South Carolina; then, a parallel comparison of two people from those same exact locations, but born and raised in the 1990s!

We would see this study yield completely different types of individuals, each with their own spins on ideology and opinion--thus, each under the influence of a unique form of Societalism driving their life path along the Arrow of Time.

Pluck one individual from where they were, toss them back in time, to a new locale, and let them be formed under a different societalistic influence--and see who they become then. And with that done, what does it say of "free will", "determinism", and "environmentalism"? I'll use myself as an example: I was born in Texas, and lived in South Carolina, where I do not share the same societalism, and my ideologies and opinions greatly differed from those around me--creating conflict. However, what if I had stayed in Texas my whole life? Would I be who I am? What if, I had been born in ... New York, and lived my life in Los Angeles? Would I be who I am?

I don't believe I would be, because I am currently the product of the location of my rearing. The "probabilism" acted in response to my particular social experience within a sub-group of Americans, that usually refer to themselves as Southerners. In a location, at that time, called the "Bible Belt", where my beliefs, or lack thereof, while not an issue for me, were for many of those around me.

George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) developed the theory of "social behaviorism" to explain how social experience develops an individual's personality (1962, orig. 1934). (4)

I won't go into all of Mead's concept; but, I'm sure you get the gist of it. The most relevant part, is that Mead explained that, "understanding intention requires imagining the situation from the other's point of view." (4)

Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929) used the phrase "looking-glass self" to mean "a self-image based on how we think others see us". (4) This, obviously affecting some more than others: because a large number of people place more value on social image than others. And, why not? There's a whole industry now profiting on image alone.

Our sex, sexual orientation, race, class--it all plays a role in the probabilism that guides our path. The probabilism of those around us--not just immediate and related family, but friends, coworkers, random people we encounter (in life, or digital), those who victimize us, or those we may wrong in some way--can have a say in our present, thus influencing the causality leading to our future. Mass media, be it TV, movie, or Internet--now cross all borders of locale, influencing the life paths of individuals worldwide.

We make our present, together, as a whole--creating the future in which we must navigate; yet, we are each responsible for our specific outcome. So, take tomorrow into consideration within your choices of today--but, never forget yesterday, or ... the mistakes of before, will repeat, over and over and over ... until we admit them, and learn from them enough to change.

My path can have, has had, and will, nudge at the paths of others, and I'm learning to let go of trying to purposely guide any one else's Fate: I'm not responsible for any but my own, and I need to be mindful of what influence I make, and try to make my presence in anyone's life a positive one.

This choice, right now--to post--shapes my future, in many possible ways. Every day is full of influence, on me, and from me: I got to speak with my son CJ on Wednesday, which affects every day thereafter; emails I received from Candice this week have had a positive affect on decisions I've made; incidents and drama(s) here at the prison have had a say in my choices, and what choices were even available. Opal's comments. Jaime's words to me. Me missing my kids all the time. So many things make me who I am. I miss everyone I've loved, my family, my friends; and it defines a lot of who I am at the moment. I am "Me" just as I always have been. But, am I a version of Me that would not exist anywhere else, in any other time?

This leads to an interesting thought experiment on the Grandfather

Effect in Time: Would I be Me, anywhere or anywhen? Could a change be made in the Arrow, to create an alternate Me? Or, was this Me locked in from day one to exist, predestined or determined, despite any effort to change it?

If yes, or no, then: Who am I? What am I? Am I anyone?

Or, are we all together ... everyone?

I feel Me, inside--I feel the same Me that's been there all my life--and I'd like to think that despite of locale, or time, I would still be who I am ... just maybe not in prison, or alone.

It's now 7PM here (I took a break to drink a coffee, and eat a snack--twice), and I have no idea what the night will bring. Earlier, they locked the cell doors because of a sheet hanging out of a broken window in another dorm--so, I wasn't going to be able to use the phone again tonight even if I'd wanted to--and we all know I did want to. I'm worried about Jaime, have been since 4:40 PM, a feeling I can't shake. In fact, I'm typing right now, just to occupy my mind, to keep away from the phone room--that's why I started this post. And, that, is another example: she affected me, thus changing my day's course ever so slightly--now this post exists--and now, you are reading it, and the postulations and theories stated may give you pause in thoughts you had about causation, or simply plant a seed or two about new ideas, or way of seeing your own actions--or the actions of others--present, past, or future.

Hopefully for me, and all of us, tomorrow will be a better day. A good moment in time--a present worth living in. It could go in an infinite number of ways--all based on decisions that each and every one of us made, and continue to make today. Each of us not only effecting our own path, and what happens to us; but, influencing the paths of others, just as we are altered by them. As Trance Gemini would say, "all possible futures".

We may have a say, maybe not; or, maybe it's all of us together, as a whole, making something outside our own individual scope, tied together in quantum entanglement within a Universe that's like a living cell, part of something even farther outside our scope? And this cell's beginning, middle, and end, all just a blink of an eye in the bigger picture of whatever encompasses us? But, unzooming back into our little corner of existence: societalism, could very well be the worst form of determinism, and ... it may be completely unavoidable. So, our best action may be (as Mead put it): "imagining the situation from the other's point of view." If we could all do that, just a little more, everything would be so different, for ALL of us! In that light, societalism could be viewed as the most beautiful of deterministic ideologies, with each of us playing our part within the bigger picture.

Whether we want to or not: we make our present.

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