

Reality 2.0

My MALS Journey

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October 20, 2011
April D. Norris
Entrance Essay
UNCG Masters of Liberal Arts

Please accept my application for acceptance into the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies and Graduate Certificate in Global Studies at UNC-Greensboro. After reviewing many distance and continuing graduate level programs offered by the UNC School System, I've determined that the UNCG MALS Distance Education program matches my goals for enhancing my professional career. In addition, the program outlined is ideally suited to my personal learning interests. I have always been fascinated by the literary, historical, and philosophical perspectives to the understanding of one's place and role in the universe. Enhancing my creative thinking skills is also a primary goal, and I believe that the UNCG Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies program will provide me with a heightened level of thinking, working, and living.

My organization represents over 200 newspapers in North Carolina with a goal to protect First Amendment freedoms, further journalistic endeavors, promote literacy and finally to further the business interests of newspapers in North Carolina. As one might imagine, lobbying for the newspaper industry involves a great deal of personal and political savvy. I am confident that the UNCG Masters of Liberal Arts program will heighten my critical-thinking and problem-solving skills while also augmenting my interpersonal communication skills. My goal is to collaborate and communicate effectively with individuals at all levels from publishers to legislators all while fostering cooperation among diverse organizations to further my company's end goals. Of course, in addition to being an ombudsman, I also am charged with generating revenue with advertising.

Advertising and Marketing in the non-profit industry has many layers of complexity. I've been in the marketing industry for over 12 years, but have just recently moved into this area within the non-profit sector. One of the most important tools for success is creativity and understanding the end client. Days are spent grappling with questions about how to help my clients figure out find their target market, and how to

reach that target market effectively and efficiently. When I was researching graduate programs, I learned that the study of liberal arts can enhance one's knowledge and level of understanding about the world around them. I believe that people's views in life about what to buy, where to buy them, how to buy and how often to buy are formed from thousands of influences. How does watching a specific TV program inform their buying decision, or perhaps their political leanings: does that impact how an advertisement or message will come across? Earlier this year a perfect example of creativity and connecting to your target audience through a life influence came to light. The "*The Power of the Force meets the Passat*" TV ad that featured a pint-sized Darth Vader using "The Force" tugged at the hearts of those that grew up watching Star Wars. Volkswagen was targeting Generation X; tapping into a shared Generation X memory was creative genius, and nearly 2 million YouTube hits in a day says they got it right.

In addition to furthering my career goals, the Masters of Liberal Arts program also interests me on many personal levels. The study of literature, history and art has always been my most favored pastimes'. Early in high school many I became captivated with "Romeo & Juliet", much like today's teenagers are rabid "Twilight" fans, I have always been spellbound by William Shakespeare's work. Of course, Mr. Shakespeare was only the beginning of my passion for literature, and then came Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, and many more that occupied most of my spare time for years to come. Fast forward to my mid and late twenties, I had the incredible luck and opportunity to travel Europe on several occasions to visit the author's hometowns and in Shakespeare's and Dickens' case the very homes they lived in! It was exhilarating for me to become part of their world for a small moment in time.

In addition to having the opportunity to visit my literary idols' important locations, I also trekked to many historic places that have always interested me. I spent many weeks in Rome, Edinburgh, London and other small European villages soaking in their history, culture, and food. I'll never forget my time in Italy specifically as their culture is so, unlike America, and the Italians were very open about discussing American politics! Cultural awareness is an important skill not only in life but also in

my career, and I look forward to learning more about UNCG's Certificate in Global Studies program. Today more than ever, organizations have to think on a global level. Thanks to the Internet and the many communication channels it provides, if your brand or company is visible online then most likely someone in a foreign market can see it. I feel it is important for organizations to understand how they resonate in a global market.

When I earned my Bachelor's degree in Business of Administration from North Carolina Wesleyan College, I was also working full time during the day. Going to school and learning at night, enabled me to implement lessons during the work day, and it proved highly beneficial. I believe I am uniquely qualified for UNCG's distance and continuing education program as that is how I have always learned. I earned a 3.56 GPA while working full time, and I truly believe that my ability to pragmatically apply everything I learned helped me go above average.

After reviewing the programs offered in UNCG's Masters of Liberal Arts program, and comparing to my professional and personal endeavors, I believe the program is a perfect match for my learning style and goals. I have many years of professional and personal experiences that are relatable in much of the program, and I look forward to learning more and enhancing both my analytical and creative thinking skills. I look forward to learning and sharing with others my experiences, as well.

April Norris

MALS Reflective Essay

24 March 2014

Reality 2.0: My MALS Journey

“Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one. ~Albert Einstein”

The Matrix is a 1999 classic science fiction film whose main character’s consciousness is embedded in “the Matrix”, a virtual-reality world that has been created by complex, emotive machines.¹ Now, you might be wondering what a sci-fi film has to do with the UNCG MALS program, (especially if you’ve never viewed the movie!), so if you’ll indulge me for a moment I’ll explain. In the movie, our hero “Neo” is given the fateful choice between two colored pills: a blue pill or a red one. The blue pill will grant him the ability to return to his life as he understands it; an unconscious- simulated existence. The red pill ultimately unveils the reality about his world and how it really works- for better or worse- spoiler alert: Neo chooses the red pill. Much like “Neo”, the MALS program I embarked on was akin to me swallowing the red pill.

When I review my entrance essay submission for the MALS program, I am regrettably embarrassed. I can remember thinking about how important it was to have the word “Masters” listed on my resume. My initial thoughts were that it would add credence to my professional experience, even possibly garner a higher salary. That was

¹ Internet Movie Database: “The Matrix” Accessed on Feb. 27th, 2014 <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0133093/>

my end goal at the time after all, and I had struggled with the decision not to seek a prestigious MBA program. My undergraduate degree is in business administration, and my entire career has been focused on marketing and advertising. Yet the idea of staring at endless spreadsheets and discussing return on investment strategies ad nauseam made my head spin. There had to be more to learn and more to life than the bottom line; using my *Matrix* analogy...the MBA program equated to the blue pill. The UNCG MALS program was my answer for something different, yet I did not know how far out of my comfort zone the program would take me. My very first class, *Religion and Ecology* snapped me into reality very quickly and the classes to come, *Problems of Modern Belief* and *Simple Living in a Complex Age* would force me to explore my world view and life goals through a different lens. The additional classes *Emerging Powers*, *Revolutions in Scientific Thought*, and even *Shakespeare: A Muse of Fire* served to awaken realities about my world that I had chosen to forget about or even acknowledge.

The *Religion and Ecology* class really had a profound effect on me, and actually helped clarify something I've always been weary of investigating on a personal level. My belief or non-belief in a higher power. In my final paper for the class I explain:

"If my pantheistic view holds that God is the universe and universe is God, it does not allow me to separate or define spirit as opposed to matter. After reading "The Sacred Balance", "The Body of God", and "The Great Work", I can clearly accept and believe in fact that spirit and matter is separate, that God contains, but is not identical to, the universe, therefore I must alter my worldview

to that of “panentheism.” The distinctions between the two are subtle but powerful for me as an individual.”²

The revelation for me on a personal level was that “spirit” does matter, there has to be transcendence for all for us to live in the web of life and infused in everything we do.

“The land, the animals, and the people have the spirit- they all must be shown respect.

That is the basis of our law.” (pg. 184 Suzuki)³ During and after this class I continually thought about how I was living my life, was I infusing spirit into my work, my family, my hobbies? The answer was no. No I was not, I was simply drowning in daily “busyness” that was not “real”. What do I mean by that? My “busy” was a self-inflicted work schedule created by my own ambition that was utterly meaningless.

People in general, I started noticing, appear to become anxious or even guilty when they weren’t working or promoting their career ambitions in the workplace. In today’s society, our sense of identity is tied to our net worth, and we base our “worthiness” on our level of business productivity chasing the bottom line and bigger bank accounts. This blind ambition bleeds over into our personal lives, bigger house, better car, the list goes on. *Modern Problems of Belief* and *Simple Living in a Complex Age* really opened my eyes to the fact that my entire career in marketing and advertising has helped to perpetuate the idea the more is better. As I discuss in my “Simple Living” paper:

“For over fifteen years my sole purpose day in and day out has been to encourage consumer behavior; I know every trick in the book. Based off of years

² Norris, April- Ecology & Religion Final Paper pg. 1

³ Suzuki, David (2007) *The Sacred Balance: Rediscovering Our Place in Nature*, Greystone Books; 3rd edition

of research, I know that it is our gluttonous desire for more money, more recognition and more power; that we have a covetous and obsessive need to compete with and compare ourselves to others. Our insatiable urge to acquire stuff, whether or not it is necessary, has indeed reached epidemic proportions. It's not only that the more money and stuff we get, the smaller our "gains"; it's that money and "more stuff" is making us depressed, anxious and miserable causing severe social and cultural disruption while deforming the basic values of our society." (Norris, pg. 2 Affluenza⁴)

Realizing that I have been contributing to creating a reality that most people are unable to attain was not a pleasant realization. Professor Headington actually commented that he could feel the "guilt" coming out on our discussion board posts and that it wasn't necessary. However I can't quite shake the guilt of contributing to a false sense of reality. As I mentioned in a Modern Problems of Belief paper:

"As Bauman states, people build their identity on fast changing consumption models, (and as individuals come to learn), this is a model for an unfulfilled life. From a marketer's perspective, Bauman's evaluation shows that organizations and brands have a moral role and an interest in a society that expresses their identity both as individuals and as members of communities." (Norris, pg.1 Bauman paper.⁵)

The consequences and impact that my daily work has had on society never dawned on me; oddly enough, I think of the Shakespeare dilemma here. Of course, he did not realize he was inventing an alternate reality for his most famous subjects like Henry V and Richard III through his plays. Whatever his intention, the reality is that Shakespeare's adeptness at "bringing dead bodies to life" or rather, to build a

⁴ Norris, April *Simple Living in a Complex Age* "Affluenza" paper pg. 2

⁵ Norris, April *Modern Problems of Belief* "Bauman part 1" paper pg. 1

personality and character into historical figures is exactly how he was able to “bend history” and create an alternate reality for historical figures. Many people believe that Shakespeare’s plays are historical fact and of course... they are not. The plays are a created reality authored by an extremely savvy author, very similar to how our modern day news shows operate. People either don’t care, or are too consumed and busy with their daily lives to noticed the difference between what is real and what is not. They are too busy to notice what is happening to the world on a global level.

In the “*Emerging Powers*” course, I was shocked, saddened, and quite frankly embarrassed regarding my complete lack of knowledge and awareness about foreign powers that will no doubt have an increasing impact on our busy lives here in the United States. For the final group project, I built a [website](#) as the final presentation, which enabled me to interact on a more personal level with each group member. I understood what their point of view was, even though they varied from my own, and was able to forge a very collaborative voice and visual story that connected our ideas. This process took time, even though we were all very “busy” we were forced to stop our daily routine and really jump into developing our story. It dawned on me then that the present frenzy of “busyness”, consumerism and lack of knowledge is certainly not a necessary or fated condition of life; it’s something we’ve chosen to participate in and accept isn’t it? If only by our compliance to it, we are choosing to live in our own altered realities. Just like in “*the Matrix*”, people are unaware of the fact that they're in a bad situation and are happy to go about their everyday lives without the knowledge to break free.

Of course, it's not as if we truly want to live like this; that fact of the matter is it's something we collectively force one another to do via implemented societal norms. The question then becomes, "how do we change this pattern?" More importantly for me, how can I, as an individual influence this change? "*The Matrix*" movie suggests that there's something bad about life in living a curated reality, but the people trapped have to understand this before they can start to make a change. Of course, it is difficult to wake up and realize the grim realities, but this as a choice worth making. In my final paper for "*Revolutions in Scientific Thought*" I wrote about Albert Einstein, who has been a historical hero of mine since grade school. Einstein's scientific achievements were impressive of course. But what stood out for me was his genuine wonderment about the universe. Einstein was someone who was struck by the beauty of nature and was in awe of the world no matter what reality was for him at the time. Indeed, the MALS program has ignited this wonderment for me. The professors, classes, and fellow students have awakened and encouraged within me the knowledge to break free of my "busy" status quo, and I look forward to the new journey I am on.

Epilogue:

Monday, March 3rd, 2014- My grandmother, 99 years of age, died in her sleep. I referenced her often during my MALS journey in various papers as the life lessons she taught me over the years were reflected in some of our course work. In my final paper for Religion and Ecology I wrote:

"Just as Berry recounts on page 32, "The field was covered with white lilies rising above the thick grass. A magic moment, this experience I can remember", my "meadow" was a thick patch of grass near my grandmother's

garden, situated between the chicken coop and the watermelon patch. I use to lie in the grass looking up into the tangled, massive chaos of intertwining oak tree limbs and leaves. At the time, I never thought that one day I would be grateful for getting to grow up on my grandmother's farm, surrounded by gardens, animals, flowers, bees- all around stunning nature."⁶

My grandmother was a farmer at heart; she shared the yield from her fields with the community and always made sure everyone had somewhere to sleep at night and plenty of food to eat. She never drove a car, did not have Internet or many of our modern conveniences but managed to live a full, meaningful life that impacted all around her. She will always remain the biggest influence on my life.

⁶ Norris, April Religion and Ecology Final paper pg. 2

The Evolution of a Personal Ecological Worldview

“An invisible force surrounds us, fills us up and gives us life. We know it by many names: air, breath, spirit, wind, atmosphere, the sky, the heavens.” (Suzuki p.87) When I first started the Ecology and Religion class at UNCG I was apprehensive. This is a sensitive subject to many people and I felt I was fairly clear where I stood on the matter. However after reading the required texts and discussion postings I found myself thinking more about my propensity to have a naturalistic pantheistic worldview. The nagging thought I had after reading Suzuki, McFague, and Berry was that I had never considered the issue of “spirit” and how it affects mankind and me on a personal level. If my pantheistic view holds that God is the universe and universe is God, it does not allow me to separate or define spirit as opposed to matter. After reading “The Sacred Balance”, “The Body of God”, and “The Great Work”, I can clearly accept and believe in fact that spirit and matter is separate, that God contains, but is not identical to, the universe, therefore I must alter my worldview to that of “panentheism.” The distinctions between the two are subtle but powerful for me as an individual. McFague describes the divergence as I’ve never heard on page 149, *“Pantheism says that God is embodied, necessarily and totally”* and continues, *“Rather, God is sacramentally embodied: God is mediated, expressed, in and through embodiment, but not necessarily or totally. It is, as we recall, the back and not the face of God we are allowed to see.”*

When I was growing up, I formed a naturalistic worldview. Much like Thomas Berry's description of "*The Meadow across the Creek*", I have strong memories of the pristine nature that enveloped me as a child. Just as Berry recounts on page 32, "*The field was covered with white lilies rising above the thick grass. A magic moment, this experience I can remember*", my "meadow" was a thick patch of grass near my grandmother's garden, situated between the chicken coop and the watermelon patch. I use to lie in the grass looking up into the tangled, massive chaos of intertwining oak tree limbs and leaves. At the time, I never thought that one day I would be grateful for getting to grow up on my grandmother's farm, surrounded by gardens, animals, flowers, bees- all around stunning nature. Berry states my feelings precisely on page 32, "*Yet as the years pass this moment returns to me. Perhaps it was a sensitivity that was developed through my childhood*" and continues, "*I seem to come back to this moment and the impact it had on my feeling for what is real and worthwhile in life.*", I felt about nature and her creatures, and wondered why we as people destroyed them so ruthlessly. When I asked aloud about my thoughts, my grandmother would just say that it was "the way of man." I never fully understood what she was alluding to, that statement could be interpreted many ways. As I grew older and attended various churches, most Baptist, some Holiness, I understood totally and completely that the "Christian view" of earth was that it and everything on it was here for our use. Animals, our use to do with as we please, and women were to do as men said. I'm generalizing here, but that is what I came away with. When I was old enough to have the option to do as I wanted, I completely and totally rejected what was considered the normal "Christian worldview" as I had experienced. This view is still evident to me today to be held by many. So I had

progressed to identify with the naturalistic pantheism worldview as my own. However I have overlooked an important detail. Spirituality and its place in my worldview

McFague distinguishes between pantheism and panentheism superlatively, starting on page 149 in *“The Body of God”*- *“Pantheism says that God is embodied, necessarily and totally, traditional theism claims that God is disembodied, necessarily and totally; panentheism suggests that God is embodied but not necessarily or totally.”*

In other words, panentheism is a belief system which suggests that God exists, interpenetrates every part of nature and eternally extends beyond it. Panentheism is distinguished from *pantheism*, which holds that God is not a distinct being but is synonymous with the universe. That very small delineation between the two is important. You either believe in a spiritual force or “higher power” or you don’t. Berry writes on page 49, *“There is a spiritual capacity in carbon as there is a carbon component functioning in our highest spiritual experience. If some scientists consider that all this is merely a material process, then what they call matter, I call mind, soul, spirit, or consciousness.”* All matter, to a greater or lesser degree has consciousness of its source. Coal and earth itself has its own active spirituality and deep connection to God. Just as the spirit of life is not passive entity without motive or purpose, a divinized carbon. Indeed, the “Spirit of God” is constantly active, moving and stimulating, gathering and directing in humans and in nature. McFague writes on page 143, *“Spirit, as wind, breath, life is the most basic and most inclusive way to express centered embodiment”* and continues *“All living creatures, not just human ones, depend upon breath.”*

There are dissenting voices that would accuse me of splitting hairs with pantheism and panentheism. Strict pantheism rejects a belief in a *transcendent* or personal God as the creator of the universe and the judge of humans. *Naturalistic* pantheism believes that the universe either originated itself out of nothing, or has existed forever. In other words, the universe "self-created" itself. It rejects the notion of separate spirits or survival of the soul after death. In Suzuki's book, "The Sacred Balance" I determined that my former view could not be my entire answer. Spirit does matter, there has to be transcendence for all for us to live in the web of life. "*The land, the animals, and the people have the spirit- they all must be shown respect. That is the basis of our law.*"- page 184 in "The Sacred Balance" In true pantheism, the people, land and animals would just be universal matter, with no spirit. Berry also tackles this idea on page 88 in "The Great Work"- "*What also distinguishes the human mode of being was the sense of spirit powers present throughout the geographical region. The rivers and mountains were not simply physical forms; they were spirit powers to be reckoned with. The sense of relating to spirit powers identical with the topography of the region established one of the specific differences in the human adaptation to regional context and to other life forms. It also provided the intense emotional attachment for human communities to the place of their dwelling.*"

The panentheism concept also allows the idea of a "Creator Spirit" that dwells within the heart of the natural world, holding all creatures, drawing them forward towards an inconceivable future, even in death. This is what I derived from many of the texts, but Berry's passage on page 294 is the most filled with imagery connected to this idea, "*We see quite clearly that what happens to the non-human happens to the human.*

If the outer world is diminished in its grandeur then the emotional, imaginative, intellectual, and spiritual life of the human is distinguished or extinguished. Without the soaring birds, the great forests, the sounds and coloration of the insects, the free flowing streams, the flowering fields, the sight of the clouds by day and the stars at night, we become impoverished in all that makes us human.” God is not a stagnant being, rather within us in a continuous fluidity, God continues to evolve. So it would seem there's not only God with us, but a definite inner-relationship between God, Creation, and creatures. Again, we humans not only exist in a living, moving, universe, we are also connected with and serve as co-evolvers with the Creator Spirit in our web of life. Suzuki touches on this on page 440, *“Human beings have always believed in power beyond human power, life after death and spirit among us, (the sacred, the holy.)”* Connecting with our spirit and having a connection with a “Creator”, a God that is outside of this universe is essential, as it is the only way to return to balance on earth. It baffles me that I had not thought of the issue of spirit before; I certainly don't look at nature and animals as just “matter.” My realization about the juxtaposition of my thoughts happened after I read “The Sacred Balance”, the chapter on “Sacred Matter” highlights why my beliefs had to evolve, on page 447 he writes, *“So we cut down the sacred grove, lay it waste and declare that it does not matter, because it is only matter”* and continues, *“Just so generations of experimental animals have been sacrificed in the name of research. Pesticides poisoning the lakes and rivers, fish disappearing from the oceans rain forests going up in smoke...”*

Sally McFague suggests a “Christian” Panentheism approach in “The Body of God” through a “Cosmic Christ” model, *“Thus, we can speak of the “cosmic Christ”, a*

metaphor for the scope of the body of God within a Christian framework.” (McFague p 157) Her metaphor for a God in relation with the world “enflesh” certainly can enhance the panentheism view, however defining panentheism as “Christian” is a bit troubling for me. Panentheism is in no way biblical or religious, it is a philosophy; therefore there is no need to assign “religion” or a “prophet” to it. Although I can certainly see how the application of this philosophy in Christianity would be beneficial to disciples to help them understand the imperative need for an ecological revolution on God’s Earth and to realize that it is “the new poor” as McFague suggests on page 165, “There are two interrelated issues in the notion of nature as the new poor. The first is nature’s value as such and to God; the second is its relation to human beings as well as what human beings are presently doing to nature.” Berry also suggests that a new experience is needed; our “Great Work” could be to change our philosophical views to that of a panentheistic, and put them to work! He writes on page 245, “At such a moment a new revelatory experience is needed, an experience wherein human consciousness awakens to the grandeur and sacred quality of the Earth process.” And continues on page 246, “The human venture depends absolutely on this quality of awe and reverence and joy in the Earth and that lives and grows upon the Earth. As soon as we isolate ourselves from these currents of life and from the profound mood that these engender within us, then our basic life-satisfactions are diminished. None of our machine-made products, none of computer-based achievements can evoke that total commitment to life from the subconscious regions of our being that is needed to sustain the Earth and carry both ourselves and the integral Earth community into the hazardous future.”

As humans, we all feel the need to conceive that God is much more than what is taking place in the Universe, but it is necessary to understand that where God exists on Earth is as individualistic as each beat of our heart, as each breath we take. We are the external and visible embodiment of divinity as are the creatures and nature around us. Suzuki writes on page 434, "*Attending to our experience, putting spirit back into the fingertips, allows us to redefine consciousness- instead of being trapped inside the mind it becomes a reach, a region of care, the conversation we have with the garden around us.*" The panentheism philosophy allows me to do this.

MLS 610 Simple Living in a Complex Age
May 17, 2013
April Norris

Affluenza

In the book *Affluenza*, the authors ask the reader to examine our quest for more and more “stuff” and to determine: do *we have “stuff”*? Or does *“stuff” have us*? This is an interesting question to examine, especially given my line of work in advertising and marketing. For over fifteen years my sole purpose day in and day out has been to encourage consumer behavior; I know every trick in the book. Based off of years of research, I know that it is our gluttonous desire for more money, more recognition and more power; that we have a covetous and obsessive need to compete with and compare ourselves to others. Our insatiable urge to acquire stuff, whether or not it is necessary, has indeed reached epidemic proportions. It's not simply that the more money and stuff we get the smaller our “gains”; it's that money and “more stuff” is making us depressed, anxious and miserable causing severe social and cultural disruption while deforming the basic values of our society.

Affluenza vividly displays in numerous ways that our "stuff" owns us. When you think about the meaning of the words "have", "hold" or "own," they imply *control* over something. In our celebrity-obsessed culture it is not so much our keeping-up-with-the-Joneses as it is *“Keeping up With the Kardashians”*. As the authors point out, we compare ourselves to television characters, we want what they have, ironically in this example I am referring to a “reality” show, however there is nothing “real” about it! You would think with shows such as “Hoarders” we would be more aware that this is an issue, but instead as a society we look at someone else’s consumption and mock it endlessly so we can feel better about ourselves as we spiral out of control. Obviously this wasn’t a widespread issue before the Great Depression, there were not that many TV’s; radios and books just don’t have the visual impact and influence that TV does, (ask any TV station account executive!) Is advertising and marketing to blame? In some cases, if you believe everything that you read and see, then yes.

As I repeatedly tell the academics I work with, there is no truth in advertising and marketing. Advertisements essentially make consumers aware of products and portray them as a necessity of life; but chances are you already have all you need to live contentedly. Advertising, marketing and TV programs create an atmosphere of dissatisfaction within us, because we don't have what they say we should have, so we should go buy it. To me, the common sense response to this is to understand that if something is advertised, then it's not a necessity! But it seems as if consumers are either confused or don't care about how corporations and our political system warp reality to encourage us as a nation to shop. Dawn dish soap is a prime example of this. Procter & Gamble spent millions in advertising Dawn during many of our past big oil spills. Surely if you watch any amount of TV you've seen the commercials; workers in overalls washing a grateful looking oil-covered bird. The irony of this seems to pass most people by, Dawn is petroleum-based! Every bottle of Dawn used to clean a bird adds to America's demand for oil. We are using an oil-based product to clean oiled birds, all while our politicians are increasing the incentives for companies to drill for more oil, (increasing the odds of another spill), because they are lobbied for favorable legislation by large companies such as Procter & Gamble and BP. It is an endless cycle, and it would seem that we let this happen as a nation because we are just too tired to care.

Our government, no matter if you are on the right or the left, makes decisions based on economic factors that have little to do with the average citizen or our best interests. Fear of being judged by others, (similar to the fear of not having the right "stuff"), could be partially to be blame. America is a consumer society and economy; we are known for our material growth and prosperity, to many, questioning big government and big business has become tantamount to being un-American. The irony here, (for me at least), is that the majority of advertising and marketing that is aimed at naïve consumers are for products that are not made or help our country, save for the GDP. As you probably know, the majority of products we consume are made in China or other Asia-Pacific countries. India is close on China's heels as the biggest manufacturer of "stuff", in turn their once beautiful country has turned into a wasteland of trash, taking

with is some of the most diverse flora and fauna on Earth. There is no room for the reality of our consumption in advertising. It is up to us as consumers to do our research and make our own choices. I suppose this is what has helped me separate myself, (or perhaps more accurately delude myself), that marketing as a career is fine. I for whatever reason feel like people understand the fantasy land world of marketing. It is quite obvious that people do believe what they see and read and essentially take it as the truth. The Internet and the rise of blogging has not helped separate this reality from truth, there are whole blogs dedicated to push product info, (it's called guerilla marketing), but a reader could believe that the person writing is actually an expert on whatever they are pushing!

When I think about these ideas on a wider scale I realize that consumption, greed, and dissatisfaction with our lives have been a driving force for Americans since our inception, (what would have happened if Native Americans had not been conquered?) We came, we conquered all of this land and somehow we ended up becoming ruled by our own choices and lifestyle; essentially betrayed by our own desires. I believe the authors, and our society, are too naïve when it comes to the political and societal transformation that will be needed for Affluenza to be eradicated. This is partly due to our unique American personality: if the government decided to pursue and enforce values other than economic growth, what values should they be? And would we as Americans follow them? Government intervention aimed at promoting the values of family life, frugality and public service are not generally accepted with open arms. Of course we do have our ultimate status as consumers. We have the option to spend or not to spend, to recycle and reuse or to simply spend time with the ones we love; to choose not to be influenced by others. Understanding the consequences of our choices, we have to ask ourselves if we want to *have* or to *be*, that is the question at the heart of the book *Affluenza*.

MLS-620: Emerging Powers Web Project & Essay

Go to: <http://indiaemerges.wordpress.com/> for complete web project.

Individual essay located here:

<http://indiaemerges.wordpress.com/environmental-policies/>

“There must be more to life than having everything.” ~Maurice Sendak

“Never own more than seven outfits, you’ll be much happier in life if you limit your choices”, I’ll never forget that bit of advice from a one of my undergraduate professors. That was her final message to the class. I’d like to say that I followed her advice, but alas, I have not. While reading Bauman’s “Liquid Modernity” her words were given new meaning. As Bauman tells us, “the activity of choosing matters more than what is being chosen” (p. 87), and so it seems that our unlimited power to choose and consume as individuals has shredded the fabric of our society. Choosing, it turns out, is a drag. We are consuming and choosing not only material items but relationships as well. So then, where do we as “individuals” stand in a society inundated by choices and consumerism?

Bauman asserts that with the “advent of fluid modernity” we have created a new “human condition.” Now, we are a society whose individuality is grounded on consumer choices, (as opposed to other activities such as community involvement), directing life in the form of a never-ending shopping orgy, “Consumers guided by desire must be ‘produced’, ever anew, and at high cost. Indeed, the production of consumers itself devours an intolerably large fraction of the total costs of production — a fraction which the competition tends to enlarge further, rather than cut down.” (p. 75) Having worked in the advertising and marketing industry for fifteen years, I understand what he is saying to be true. Corporations and brands know this about our society and actively exploit our desires.

As Bauman states, people build their identity on fast changing consumption models, (and as individuals come to learn), this is a model for an unfulfilled life. From a marketer’s perspective, Bauman’s evaluation shows that organizations and brands have a moral role and an interest in a society that expresses their identity both as individuals and as members of

communities. Marketers and brand managers know that if you want to connect on a deeper level with your customers, you must consider their personal want or need before they even realize it is a want or need- this is done by analyzing their community and tracking their every move with sophisticated software. (Birds of a feather flock together, you can see one's shopping patterns based on the community they live in.) Marketing at its very best has to strike an inner chord with individuals, one that moves them to action... to buy. By tackling their emotional layer, brands can reach the deepest part of their target market's heart.

We enthusiastically endorse brands to create and project our identity as human beings. One such brand that achieves this feat is Apple. If you watched the 2012 Summer Olympics, did you notice that instead of being in the moment, soaking in the experience- the athletes and essentially everyone was holding their iPhone's up recording the event? Experiencing it through an electronic screen instead of the reality, echoing Evernden "part of our new technological being hinges on the ability *not* to care... to remain unattached, and objective. We gain a populated world with useful things, but we lose all memory of why we are doing this at all, or why we *are*." (Evernden p. 111)

Humanity, it seems, is in a losing battle with consumerism and the rise of technology. Technology has given the consumer more choice, and is deepening the effect of an "impoverished reality". Before reading these chapters I was truly puzzled about what the "Occupy Wall Street" movement was all about. But I understand more clearly now, "The more choices the rich seem to have, the less bearable to all is a life without choosing" and "freedom translated above all as the plenitude of consumer choice and as the ability to treat any life-decision as a consumer choice- has a much more devastating effect on the unwilling bystanders than on those for whom it is ostensibly meant." (p.89) The question I am left with is- how are we to change the path we are on? A path that for many of us is the only one we've known before. Will we only see the reality when we've been forced to by a natural disaster? If we know this is happening as a society... why aren't we changing it?

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"Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one." ~ Albert Einstein

The scientist I chose is Albert Einstein. His biography by Walter Isaacson: "*Einstein: His Life and Universe*", uses notes and writings from Einstein's personal collection, as well as Einstein's own texts. The book goes into Einstein's scientific world, as well as helps one to understand Einstein at the human level; the book even goes into his bedroom! That being said, the very reason I selected Einstein to review was not only his scientific achievements but also his genuine wonderment about the universe. Einstein was someone who was struck by the beauty of nature and was in awe of the world no matter what reality was for him at the time. Additionally, Einstein famously loathed "*anything that smacked of herd mentality*", (pg. 4) and I am a kindred soul from that standpoint.

In *Einstein: His Life and Universe*, Isaacson details how Einstein, as a scientist, had an exceptional combination of intelligence and creativity. After watching the History Channel biography on Einstein: "*Einstein: The Real Story of the Man Behind the Theory*", (2009) I wondered how seeing all of the inventions while working at the patent office in Bern, Switzerland might have affected his insight or processes. Surely seeing other's inventions must have inspired the creative process within him. The author touched on this period in his life in great detail. Being a "lowly" patent office rather than serving as an assistant in the academy served him well. As a patent examiner, he got to visualize the physical realities underlying scientific concepts, for example the patent applications involving synchronizing clocks; they used signals that traveled at the speed of light; a subject that is engrained in Einstein's work. He also had the advantage of having a boss who told him to question every premise and assumption, "*You have to remain critically vigilant*", (pg. 78.) Certainly this experience helped shape his genius.

It was during this time in 1905 that he gave us not one, but five, extraordinary contributions to science. In his so called "miracle year", he managed to publish his renowned scientific papers that included his Theory of Special Relativity and the Matter and Energy

Equivalence theory, (the legendary $E=mc^2$). Many historians believe that Special Relativity would have been discovered within short order from other scientists of the time, some go further and suggest that Einstein plagiarized his theory. However, since he was the first to understand the implications of equivalence in relation to relativity the credit is all his. Einstein wrote all of the papers in his spare time.

Isaacson makes clear that Einstein was mortal and flawed. Although the author borders on being a bit too salacious with details of Einstein's loves, it does serve to humanize him on a personal level. He endured many failures, both in his career and in his personal relationships. Of course his rebelliousness and defiance of authority bled over into his personal life. The author is an objective observer of Einstein's detached and often chilly disposition with his own family. He had tumultuous relationships with his wives and was distant from his children; he outright abandoned his first born. I was glad that Isaacson merely reported the facts and did not judge this behavior like many do, it is impossible to understand the complexities that they surely endured. Additionally, some of Einstein's failures came at the hands of prejudice. Einstein faced shocking anti-Semitism; some dismissed his work such as his theory of relativity merely because he was Jewish. Philipp Lenard, a colleague turned Nazi, waged a personal war against Einstein and tried to have him discredited. Some may view Einstein's unfulfilled search for unified field theory, (linking the forces of gravity and electromagnetism), as a failure. But he personally felt his biggest mistake and failure was in recommending that atom bombs be made to President Roosevelt.

It was his reactions to failures, and his steadfast belief in the possibilities in life that are so endearing. It is obvious that Einstein believed in a greater power; he often spoke of miracles and he deeply believed that God's handiwork was reflected in the harmony of nature's laws and the beauty of all that exists in the universe. With that being said, Einstein rebelled against organized religion. In Einstein's "*The World As I See It*", (Forum & Century 1930), essay he mentions religiousness is achieved by experiencing the fundamental emotion of "mysteriousness." Einstein also opposed, on a philosophical level, the idea of quantum mechanics. His famous quote, "*God does not play dice*," was in response to quantum mechanics, a theory about the interactions of particles that is at its core an acceptance of randomness, uncertainty, and a reality that is profoundly changed by one's observation. Indeed, Einstein

labored to the end of his life for a theory, (unified field theory), which could better comply with his idea of “causality”, protesting against the view that there exists no objective physical reality other than that which is revealed through measurement interpreted in terms of “quantum mechanical formalism”.¹

One of Einstein’s most unique characteristics is that he used “thought experiments” or in other words he “thought” in pictures as one would daydream. The experiments that took place in his head were striking in their simple construction. For example, the special relativity thesis came to him as he pictured lightning striking at both ends of a moving train. A person on the embankment might see the strikes as simultaneous, but to someone on the speeding train they would appear to have happened at different moments. Because the train is speeding forward, the light from the strike at the front of the train would reach him a moment before the light from the strike at the back of the train. From that he realized that simultaneity is relative to your state of motion, and from that he came up with the idea that there is no such thing as absolute time. Time is relative. Consequently we have the special theory of relativity.

All his life, Einstein had been a humanist and pacifist. It would take Hitler and his Nazi regime to change his mind. Ironically, Berlin scientists were putting Einstein’s matter and energy equivalence theory into practice and were attempting to make an atomic bomb. As the realization of nuclear weapons grew near, Einstein looked beyond the current war to future problems that such weapons could bring. He wrote to physicist Niels Bohr in December 1944, *"When the war is over, then there will be in all countries a pursuit of secret war preparations with technological means which will lead inevitably to preventative wars and to destruction even more terrible than the present destruction of life."* (Clark, pg. 698). But of course, America beat the Germans to the punch. In 1945 Time magazine put Einstein’s face on its cover, mushroom cloud in the background, with the headline $E=mc^2$, even though he did not directly participate in its invention. However, he was instrumental in facilitating its development. Another Einstein biographer Ronald Clark observed in *"Einstein: The Life and Times"* that the atomic bomb would have been developed without Einstein's letters, but that without the early U.S. work that resulted from the letters, the atomic bombs might not have been ready in time to use during the war on Japan (Clark, pg. 682-683) Einstein would later say: *"I made one great mistake in my life... when*

I signed the letter to President Roosevelt recommending that atom bombs be made; but there was some justification - the danger that the Germans would make them." (Clark, pg. 752).

When we contemplate how each of the great scientists compares, I try to imagine them all sitting at a big round table, debating the really big questions of the universe. Aristotle, Galileo, Newton, and Einstein; were all thinkers who placed deep and fundamental questions at the heart of their world and pursued them zealously. Each of them had lasting impact on the world as we know it, some so deeply seeded in our culture it is hard to separate their achievements from actual history. For example, the mechanical universe of Isaac Newton that was based on absolute certainties and laws formed the psychological foundation of the Enlightenment and the social order, with a belief in causes and effects, order, even duty. But then, there is Einstein- who questioned it all! Einstein's work overturned centuries of how we looked at the world and our place in it. Einstein gave a view of the universe in which space and time were dependent on frames of reference; our perception of reality is based on the subjective fact of where we are standing in relation to another object; move, and the perception changes. Perhaps this is why his name is synonymous with the word "genius!" Of course Einstein also has the advantage of being a part of our modern world, as opposed to the others.

Overall, Isaacson's biography gives us an intelligent and poignant portrait of Einstein. He makes Einstein's stunning scientific successes feel spectacular and his failures heart-rending. The reader learns that Einstein's life was about more than science; it was about art, philosophy, politics, and yes even love and relationships. His dogged determination in the face of adversity and disappointment should be a guide for us all. Finally, I am left with the thought of having lunch with Einstein; given Isaacson's portrayal I believe he might be a bit flirty! Regardless, it would be lovely to experience what the world looked like to him, and even more so if he were alive today in 2013.

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¹ "Quantum Mechanics http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantum_mechanics#Philosophical_implications Accessed on 5/1/2013

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To what extent is Shakespeare writing history here? How does a history play (or this history play) differ from history?

It has been said that Shakespeare “*breathed upon dead bodies and brought them into life*”¹ and his play about Henry V is no exception. While biographies are normally given in books where stories of past, (or current), lives are told, Shakespeare gives us a visual play, a front row seat to of the dramatized version of one of the greatest kings of English history. However we have to remember that Shakespeare’s main goal was to entertain his audience, not write a biography. Therefore historical events were often molded to fit the need of the overall story and captivation of the audience; and Shakespeare is well known for taking historical liberties and mythologizing history. This paper will take a look at how Shakespeare’s Henry V is a retelling of history, and how it differs from reality.

Shakespeare’s histories are often cited as fact, because his plays have been interwoven into our popular culture. Most school children today do not often learn about medieval English kings, (I am unsure even if the Magna Carta is still a school lesson in America.) It is entirely possible that their first exposure to Henry V is through Shakespeare’s plays. So it does beg the question, would anybody remember Henry V today if Shakespeare hadn’t immortalized him and the Battle of Agincourt? Obviously this is a difficult question to answer. Henry V is the heroic ideal of an English King, this is true today in England, and was even more so in Shakespeare’s day. It would have

¹ . Quote *Ralph Waldo Emerson-Letters and Social Aims*

been very important for Shakespeare to be as accurate as possible while writing Henry V due to his audience knowing much of the history. We know that Shakespeare used historical resources he had available to him, but for a play- for drama, he needed more than historical facts. Let's review specific scenes from Shakespeare's Henry V to understand the realities of history with the play itself.

Shakespeare's adeptness at "bringing dead bodies to life" or rather, to build a personality and character into historical figures is exactly how he was able to "bend history." By using the historical resources he had, he created dramatic scenes using his characters and how they interacted with one another, (how would the audience really know- historically, how any of the characters felt, or what their conversations might have been?) The so called "Southampton Plot of 1415" for example, is the historical name for the plot against Henry V in 2.2. In the play Richard Earl of Cambridge, Henry Lord Scrope of Masham and Sir Thomas Grey of Heton are the three English traitors who engage in a murderous plot in alliance with the French to kill Henry before he sets sail for France. Shakespeare suggests that France has paid them to kill Henry:

Henry V:

*These English monsters. My Lord of Cambridge here,
You know how apt our love was to accord
To furnish him with all appurtenants
Belonging to his honor, and this man
Hath, for a few light crowns, lightly conspired,
And sworn unto the practices of France,
(2.2.5)*

Cambridge:

*For me, the gold of France did not seduce;
Although I did admit it as a motive
(2.2.5)*

When the plot is uncovered, they're imprisoned for treason and executed. In reality, most historians agree that the plot had nothing to do with France.² When Richard II was on the throne, Edmund Mortimer, 5th Earl of March was next in line for the throne. But when Henry IV conquered Richard II and usurped the throne, there were many in England that believed Mortimer had the better claim and deserved the crown. Also in reality, Mortimer was the one who told Henry V of the plot and said he had no previous knowledge of it. The three men were executed, and Mortimer stayed in the King's good graces.³ Shakespeare does not mention Mortimer in the play. The audience sees Exeter, Bedford, and Westmoreland discussing the situation as Henry and the traitors arrive in scene 2.2. Why did Shakespeare choose to ignore Mortimer's part in the plot and scapegoat France? Perhaps because hating France was a popular pastime for the English during this time. Shakespeare was also politically savvy; Mortimer was part of the House of York. The York/Tudor lineage was intertwined at the end of the War of the Roses; he may have wanted to avoid any unknown insult to Queen Elizabeth I's ancestors.⁴ Additionally, he gives us some insight in Henry V's character. In this early scene and throughout we see that Henry can be both merciful and merciless, depending what the situation calls for.

Another example of Shakespeare showing Henry's duality of fiction and non-fiction is the siege of Harfleur. Shakespeare had a heavy hand of editing out the less than heroic realities of Henry's siege. Although perhaps he was trying to infer the

² shakespeareandhistory.com, "Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March" (Accessed on 2/23/2013) <http://www.shakespeareandhistory.com/edmund-mortimer-henry-vi.php>

³ shakespeareandhistory.com, "Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March" (Accessed on 2/23/2013) <http://www.shakespeareandhistory.com/edmund-mortimer-henry-vi.php>

⁴ britroyals.com, "Tudors- Elizabeth of York" (Accessed on 2/23/2013) http://www.britroyals.com/tudor.asp?id=elizabeth_york

fatalities that did happen with Henry's descriptive Harfleur speech: *"Your naked infants spitted upon pikes, Whiles the mad mothers with their howls confused."* 3.3 One could argue Shakespeare glorifies an inexhaustible Henry who rallies his army with charismatic dialogue. The play suggests that the battle was brief, but in reality it was about thirty days long.⁵ The English arrived at Harfleur in mid-August 1415. The marshes where the English were forced to camp were insect-infested and full of sewage. Henry had asserted that the city would be taken within eight days, but Harfleur was well-fortified and the citizens were prepared for the attack. Additionally, dysentery was culling the English, hundreds of soldiers died.⁶ In the play, Henry does mention that his men are sick: *"My people are with sickness much enfeebled, My numbers lessened, and those few I have"* (3.6.6)

Another reality check is that the Earl of Suffolk, (Michael de la Pole, 2nd Earl of Suffolk), portrayed in Henry V the play as dying in the battle at Agincourt, he actually died of dysentery in Harfleur.⁷ Shakespeare makes Henry sound merciful in the treatment of Harfleur's citizens. However, Harfleur's noblemen were forced to kneel before him in just their shirts with ropes fastened around their necks. Henry also ordered all of the crippled, elderly, and sick to leave the city. Two thousand French citizens were forced to leave their homes.⁸ Not the most merciful of acts, to say the least.

⁵ Wikipedia.org "Battle of Agincourt" (Accessed on 2/24/2013) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Agincourt

⁶ Wikipedia.org "Battle of Agincourt" (Accessed on 2/24/2013) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Agincourt

⁷ Wikipedia.org "Michael de la Pole, 2nd Earl of Suffolk" (Accessed on 2/24/2013) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_de_la_Pole,_2nd_Earl_of_Suffolk

⁸ Wikipedia.org "Battle of Agincourt" (Accessed on 2/24/2013) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Agincourt

Lastly, the historical battle of Agincourt was similar to Shakespeare's account in several ways. The French did outnumber the English by a great deal, although absolute statistics regarding by how many is still in debate.⁹ The French were extremely disorganized and Henry did order the murder of all French prisoners. The English losses were very light compared to the massacre of the French. God.¹⁰ However in the play, the baggage boys are killed by the French, yet- there is no historical record that they were murdered by the French or that the French prisoners were killed in retaliation for *that* slaughter. Rather, the French prisoners were killed because of the threat they posed.

While Shakespeare's plays do fictionalize true events to dramatic effect, Henry V was an actual English King who won against impossible odds- Shakespeare merely "breathed life" into Henry by immortalizing him as one of the last great warrior kings of England. Additionally, Shakespeare knew his audience; Elizabethans were concerned with nobility and invasions of other countries. Henry V features discussions about what it means to follow a leader who makes questionable choices and to fight for a nation whose identity is evolving as it was in their time. Shakespeare gave long dead kings the ability to speak again and without him, they'd most likely be forgotten.

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⁹ NY Times "Historians Reassess Battle of Agincourt" (Accessed on 2/24/2013) <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/25/world/europe/25agincourt.html?pagewanted=all>

¹⁰ Britishbattles.com "Battle of Agincourt" (Accessed on 2/24/2013) <http://www.britishbattles.com/100-years-war/agincourt.htm>

