

Interdisciplinary Capstone:
Bringing Dialogue in the Dark to Cincinnati

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Abstract:

The purpose of this capstone was to organize and pursue the creation of a Dialogue in the Dark exhibition in Cincinnati. Dialogue in the Dark is an organization that, since 1988, has internationally utilized exhibits that allow visitors to be led through an hour long simulation of blindness as lead by a visually impaired guide through four pitch black simulated environments. The purpose of this exhibit is twofold. In an immediate sense it is meant to demonstrate to visitors that those who we often marginalize due to their disabilities are in fact quite capable, effectively serving as a platform to recognize, address, and overcome problems created by perceived "otherness". The larger lessons derive from experiencing a profoundly different reality than is normally accessible in terms of both the specific type of experience and the degree of contrast of realities it poses. Such jarring experiences open a brief window for dialogue.

Drawing from actor-network theory, various principles and techniques from action research, and from fields such as organizational psychology, visual anthropology, and sociology, this capstone contains workable processes and objectives relevant to both the creation of a Cincinnati based Dialogue in the Dark and the framework for a Coalition for Community Action and Cooperation. These processes and objectives are to be constantly ongoing in development, and are only rudimentary in presentation style.

Additionally, this project contains a reflection on both the process of bringing Dialogue in the Dark to Cincinnati thus far, a discussion of post-capstone plans for Dialogue in the Dark, and, in the spirit of demonstrating my BIS inspired work in general, a condensed introduction to my "Theory of Grand Irrationality" and my "Social

Pulse Theory”, both of which are central starting points for the grad school experience I am both seeking and planning.

Introduction:

You must first discover what change you ought to be before being the change you want to see. This though from my notebook is, in hindsight, what I had in mind when I designed my major, this project, and my future. The general idea being tested by my capstone is that we as communities can take our fate into our own hands. We can't wait for an inspirational leader or idea to materialize and take initiative. We need to demonstrate to ourselves daily that we have free will and can better ourselves and our communities with thoughtful action.

The focus of this project is to bring the social enterprise & experiential learning exhibition, Dialogue in the Dark, to Cincinnati. Quoting from Dialogue in the Dark's website, “[t]he mission of Dialogue in the Dark is to facilitate social inclusion of marginalized people on a global basis. Our goal is to raise awareness and create tolerance for ‘otherness’ in the general public, thereby overcoming barriers between ‘us’ and ‘them’”.

Dialogue in the Dark is an organization that, since 1988, has internationally utilized exhibits that allow visitors to be led through an hour long simulation of blindness as lead by a visually impaired guide through four pitch back simulated environments. The purpose of this exhibit is twofold. In an immediate sense it is meant to demonstrate to visitors that those who we often marginalize due to their disabilities are in fact quite

capable, effectively serving as a platform to recognize, address, and overcome problems created by perceived "otherness".

Every day we are around people who are different from what we are used to. Often when confronted with individuals with stigmatized identities we do not know how to manage our gaze or conversation. Incapable of being able to truly understand their experience, and in some cases piece it into the norms of our social world, we may fumble conversations to the annoyance of both parties. There is seldom a way for people in general to comfortably engage in constructive conversations regarding perceived differences and their implications (Garland-Thomson, 2009).

This is true of burn victims, amputees, people in wheel chairs, the mentally ill, and the blind. This also applies to people of various races, religions, social statuses, gender identities, and sexual orientations. As those in visual anthropology and social psychology have found, as a community it is critical to have a safe but open environment to discuss how to overcome the issues and differences we all face and embody (Garland-Thomson, 2009; Martin, 2001). Dialogue in the Dark offers a relatively simple, engaging, and thought provoking experience that is accessible to all. Its gentle introduction to truly experiencing a different "reality" can be built upon to include discussions of a variety of issues of concern to the citizens of the Cincinnati area; discussions which will ideally lead to cooperative constructive action.

As a back burner, but related, project, I am in the process of laying out a blue print for a federation of sorts I call "The Greater Cincinnati Coalition for Community Action". This is partially influenced by my experience in Boy Scouts, partially influenced by the Action Research Center at UC, and partially influenced by my interactions with

John Bridgeland the organizations he works with (namely the Aspen Institute, the Building Bridges Coalition, Civic Enterprises, Americorps, Teach for America, and Peace Corps). This coalition would be able to adapt/reconfigure and respond to whatever issues members decide to address with the target population.

This overarching project would involve all sorts of individuals and organizations, and Dialogue in the Dark, as enhanced by us, would ideally serve as a central hub for information and skill exchange, as well as a minor central organization for the coalition. To be clear, Dialogue in the Dark, the *company*, does not normally do this, and to my knowledge no one has attempted anything quite like this before. The fact that whatever group or venue picks up Dialogue in the Dark can get exclusive licensing in the U.S. is of significant importance financially and for the purposes of autonomy of programming.

I believe, however, that Dialogue in the Dark has value because it is a learning experience and attraction accessible to all ages that intends to teach. As I said before, the chance to truly experience a different reality is rare and life changing to most. Dialogue in the Dark often requires financial backing, though it can be and has been run for profit. In spite of being a tourist attraction and something schools and families alike will frequent, it would help if it had more use and value in the community. If we enhance what it already offers in value, it would be the perfect hub for community learning and action; it would support the community and the community would support it.

Short Term Goal & Reflection: Dialogue in the Dark

I heard about Dialogue in the Dark for the first time in the summer of 2013 when I was studying in Chengdu, China. A friend who was visiting had heard about it and found out it was in the city, so we tried to go. It was closed that day. Curious though, I began researching the organization, liked its mission statement, and discovered had over 21 locations on almost every continent but North America. It was also, around this time I had finished reading John Bridgeland's book on service in America and had discovered action research and the Action Research Center at UC (Bridgeland, 2011). With these things in my mind, and a hyper awareness of the growing energy and possibilities Cincinnati and UC contained, I decided it would be great if Cincinnati had something like Dialogue in the Dark and a community service network. Eventually these two ideas would merge and inspire all sorts of possibilities.

On my return trip, I stopped in Singapore for a couple of days to visit a friend. Upon finding out there was a Dialogue in the Dark in Singapore, I convinced her to join me in trying it. The experience was unlike almost any other I have had, and that says quite a bit. It takes a little while for you to feel somewhat confident in your motions in pitch black. You have not seen your guide, and will not till the end, but they effortlessly guide you through the simulated environments and actions. Crossing a city street, sitting on a park bench, going on a boat ride, ordering and drinking coffee. You come to have an appreciation for just how capable the visually impaired really are, and you start to pay more attention to other times you might have underestimated or discounted someone. You start to understand what another kind of life is like in a way that you seldom can.

At this point I had really only thought about getting Dialogue in the Dark to Cincinnati as a good and achievable thing for the city in general. When I got back to UC for school fall semester of 2013, I took an anthropology course called “Critical Visions”. This class deals primarily with our visual interactions (i.e. eye contact, body language, and visual culture), what makes/guides visual norms and behaviors and their tolerances, and how these all effect you daily. The class was very influential and fit perfectly in with issues Dialogue in the Dark tries to address, but could frankly do a much better job at.

Namely, these issues are how we look or don’t look at individuals with disabilities or differences, and how that effects and reflects our persons and our society. The idea that visual disturbances create a brief window of opportunity for constructive dialogue or destructive experiences to occur was a powerful one. The class illustrated many activist and educational applications of visual disturbances. It was at this point I came to believe that if Dialogue in the Dark came to Cincinnati, it should be a platform for a wide variety of information and activities for kids and the general public, combating stigma, prejudice, and communication barriers at an individual and systemic level for the betterment of our city.

As that fall semester passed, I became more involved with the Action Research Center and, in part because of classes and part because of life, I became increasingly more interested in technology, economics, sociology, sustainability, and individual ability (an aspect of which is detailed below in the sections on “Grand Irrationality” and “Social Pulse Theory”). These interests, knowing that more people need to have access to them, programs, policies and people I became aware of, and John Bridgeland’s idea to start a service academy all seemed to fit in perfectly with Dialogue in the Dark.

After contacting Dialogue in the Dark headquarters in Germany with an introduction and a proposal to bring Dialogue in the Dark to Cincinnati, I skyped with their representative Anja Schweder, received more information, and began to plan my next few moves. I knew that when it came time to get investors or convince an influential person that there was community interest in such an exhibit, I would need evidence that key players supported this idea as well. I decided I should collect letters of support from parties I contacted. I drafted a general introductory letter that I would tailor to the individual I was contacting, requesting a letter of support and offering to give them a draft to edit as they pleased so as not to waste their time. This introductory letter, sent via email, I included all relevant official Dialogue in the Dark information. The first signed letter I received was from President Ono, and I included it as an added endorsement in future letters to organizations I wanted letters of support from.

Using my own methods in combination with the principles of Actor Network Theory, I compiled lists and documents containing all organizations and people I deemed potentially relevant to getting Dialogue in the Dark, or a custom made alternative version, going (Fenwick & Richards, 2010). Step one was of course gathering this information. In this process I found out about the Vision Coalition of Greater Cincinnati, whose members are all vision related organizations, and contacted its president as well as members of some of the larger organizations. I also printed out the lists of all the financial backers and corporate sponsors of our city's various museums in case a smaller venue decided to take on the project and needed funding. In hindsight, this step has been unnecessary because it seems like what ever venue decides to host Dialogue in the Dark has its own way of going about funding.

In mid-January, with the help of some one in the Action Research Center, I met with Mr. Richard Cooper, then one of the people in charge of exhibit content at the Freedom Center, and now Interim Director of Museum experiences at the National Underground Rail Road Freedom Center. I had chosen the Freedom Center as the prime venue because of its large amounts of space, its need of revenue and visitors, and because of its mission to promote freedom. As some one who visited the Freedom Center the first year it opened and a couple of times recently, I can say that very little has changed, aside from a bit more of a focus on modern slavery. I felt that if the Freedom Center widened its definition of freedom, shifting from focus on physical bondage to a wider variety of social oppression and strife, it could attract a wider audience and have a greater impact; I pitched Dialogue in the Dark from this angle. Mr. Cooper liked the idea, being an advocate of experiential exhibits himself, and said he would bring it up at the next board meeting but it was not likely to be a priority if anything at the moment because of some changes occurring within the Freedom Center's leadership.

In February I established contact with Carol Weinel, COA of the Vision Screening Program in the Abrahamson Pediatric Eye Institute at Cincinnati Children's Hospital, and met with her and members of the institute. They were interested in my proposal and Carol gave me the contact information of someone she knew at the Cincinnati Museum Center. I contacted that person several times, but received no reply.

In March, John Mitchell, CEO of the Cincinnati Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired, replied to my introductory letter from January. I met with him in late March and he was enthusiastic about the proposal. He suggested that the Clovernook Institute might be interested in hosting the program. He also suggested that the Special

Olympics and several other organizations might be good to get involved. At this point a family friend who is very well connected in the city had offered to listen to my proposal, so I told Mr. Mitchell that I wanted to wait on that meeting and draw up a more concrete plan before meeting again. He did say he would sign a petition for support though; I have yet to hear from him regarding this letter in spite of a couple of follow up attempts.

I met with our family friend in April and May, and she was very enthusiastic about my proposal. She arranged for me to meet with Elizabeth Pierce, Vice President of Marketing & Communications for the Cincinnati Museum Center and The Freedom Center, in early June. I gave an informal power point presentation over brunch. Ms. Pierce, who was largely responsible for some of the major exhibits the Museum Center has hosted, liked the idea of hosting the exhibit as well as the bigger picture community network I am hoping to create around it. However, the museum's current war for survival is the museum's main focus for the next few months. Ms. Pierce indicated she was confident the museum would survive, but the outcome would determine the speed at which Dialogue in the Dark would progress. If it is still seen as viable as things settle, she estimated it would take 2-4 years for it to come into being.

Long Term Goal: Greater Cincinnati Coalition for Community Action

Built and designed at every level on the principles of "action research"*, the coalition would be formatted so that every member group, individual, and program/task force would be able to, as small units, come together or dissolve as needed. They would be able to consult and/or plan action with other members and relevant parties. Their goals, at least in the beginning, would be identifying relatively small, or at least not

terribly complex, issues and getting the local community involved in finding a sustainable solution while empowering the community to address the issue independently should it rise again. Their goals would also include disseminating academic information and tools in a variety of areas, training with and access to technology, creating a live and online forum for amateurs and professionals alike to lecture or discuss a variety of topics with the common goal of improving our lives ourselves, creating experiential learning centers and creative/tech shops for inventors, hobbyists, and students alike to tinker in, community gardening centers, financial counseling clinics, and anything else people think of and want to take initiative on. *(“Action research” is a philosophy and methodology that values all parties knowledge and experience, aims to create change that can last and evolve after experimenter involvement concludes, and goes through cycles of “constructing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action” at and between each level of operations and analysis with involved parties (Coughlan & Brannick, 2010)).

I would also propose a sort of adult version of Boy Scouts that forms a large part of this confederation. Accepting of everyone over the age 18, these chapters would, after a training and certification period, try to conduct action research and institute positive democratic change in their communities. They would be encouraged to come together for larger projects or seek and lend advice from and to all, but especially fellow members. Short-term formations would be called task forces. There would also be a newsletter that everyone has a chance to publish in.

Additionally, as inspired by the Action Research Center’s desire for undergraduate action research courses and programs, and by John Bridgeland and General Stanley McChrystal’s expressed desires for a service academy, to coincide with

the creation of the service coalition I have been drafting up a proposal for a 4+1 service centered major. The plans are early in formal documentation, and for this reason I have excluded them from this project. However I can say that the vision is relatively simple.

Having met with Michael Sharp, director of The Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement, it became apparent that has its own course codes and, being friendly with the Action Research Center, would be willing to create courses and perhaps a major or certificate program of some sort. That is one option. Another is that students enrolling the program would simply have their normal college core credits and electives replaced with a more tailored, interesting, comprehensive, and vigorous core courses that compliment their major (sensibly interdisciplinary favored). Another option is that it becomes a program that is jointly run and taught by Cincinnati State, the University of Cincinnati, and a variety of other universities and technical colleges.

No matter where the academic support structure stems from, the program would be the same in structure and intent. Similar to ROTC, your academic structure will be accompanied by regular service, service learning, and various types of skill training. Most of this service will be relevant to your interests and goals, and the longer you are in the program, the more of a leadership role and autonomy you will gain. Many of your summers and breaks will involve high numbers of service hours, service trips, jobs, and courses. Your last year would be one year of full time service with an integrated masters program. Your first couple of years of education would give you broad and deep exposure to variety of analytical lenses, skills, and experiences. Depending on the exact structure, it is likely a small number of courses will be commonly required, and the rest will be either arranged by groups you pick a couple from, classes you specifically pick

and justify, or classes biased towards a chosen field (academic or otherwise). The goal would be to grant student autonomy and facilitate learning in a way rarely done, offering such an enriching experience only to those willing to put the service and time into it while taking advanced courses. I am still in the process of developing the specifics, but have brainstormed a few formats.

Present Status and Future Direction

As of now, I am working on creating a detailed concept map of my plans for Dialogue in the Dark and the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for Community Action and its subsidiary projects. The beginnings of this are included in the project, but I am still searching for software that can make the flow chart more professional looking and easier to edit as the project evolves. This map is important because in my meetings I have found it somewhat difficult to get scope of my vision across sometimes. I feel that with a comprehensive and easy to understand map of my vision, I can not only get people on board easier, but I can also take their input into account easier.

I also decided that instead of having a bunch of nearly identical letters of support (nearly identical because people would as if I had one they could just sign off on to make things easier), that a general petition would be more effective for people to sign. I have finished that and it is in the appendix. Additionally I am creating a survey for parties of interest and the general public to ascertain projects, areas, people, and groups to start organizing the coalition with and what it would look like.

Whoever hosts the exhibit will likely be handling their own funding and business matters. Options currently include the Contemporary Arts Center, The National

Underground Railroad Freedom Center, The Cincinnati Museum Center, and The Clovernook Institute. At the moment, the meeting with Ms. Pierce has made the Cincinnati Museum Center the leading candidate for host venue. Though, as previously mentioned, her efforts are focused on keeping the Cincinnati Museum Center funded and open.

I will be having a follow up meeting with Ms. Pierce before the year is done to relay further designs and options, as well as offer my services with anything possible. Once I have completed my map and survey, I will begin doing market research, recruiting, and organizing. I will then also arrange to meet with the Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired and The Abrahamson Institute to present my concept maps and see where they would like to go from there.

Introducing the Theory of Grand Irrationality, Social Pulse Theory, and my thoughts on

Purpose: A Statement of Theoretical Grounding

The following theories and ideas are works of my own that I have been working on and from in various capacities over the last year, and will continue to do so for the rest of my life. They are both what I consider to be groundbreaking, yet relatively simple theories that arguably resolve many theoretical and applied debates with in and across fields. The scope and nature of both theories include almost everything, and are rather good ways to maintain or track your relative objectivity as well as scale of understandings and interactions. Since the focus of this paper is on the capstone, and I want to present these theories in a more comprehensive book later, the theories are crudely condensed so as to only convey meanings and slight examples of implications.

Hopefully they come across clearly in this form, but as experience has demonstrated, it is often easier said than done.

The Theory of Grand Irrationality: Science and religion/spirituality fall prey to the same problem; they attempt to (by their own standards) “rationally” explain existence, its mechanics, origins, its past, present, and future, and every level of systems perceived or predicted. The limits of their “rationality”, and thus frame of what they consider to be the nature and origins of existence, often include a limit (i.e. God, or “edge of space/the void”), a (usually starting) state of true and absolute nothingness, or assume a constant state. When theories have a rationality that excludes such issues previously mentioned, and in fact account for what happens beyond previously traditionally conceived limits or options for states, they still tend to either look for a “starting” point or find “fundamental units” that still come back to the core issue as explanations of existence; they are and have “rational ends”.

The human mind, and likely all minds, are, at least at some level, machines that perceive and process differences. What is arguably cognitive dissonance, and our attempts to resolve it, drive over thought processes and behaviors as individuals and groups. Under standard assumptions from our best observations, organisms are sustained chemical interactions that actively seek to maintain their patterned existence, consciously or not, actively or not, with in a larger realm of relatively stable systems of interaction. Anything that can be perceived as a threat to this pattern can elicit certain behaviors or trigger certain physiological or cognitive responses, and natural selection kept the contextually effective adaptations.

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, something is rational when “it is based on or in accordance with reason or logic”, and our Grand Rationalities are our *standards and measures* of logic and reason. These rationalities are based on our perceptions, tendencies, and experiences, which can never be whole and even when close, are lost in translation. These rationalities dictate who we fight, why, and when. They dictate purpose, justice, understanding, choice, and consequence.

Once a conscious being begins to gain self-awareness, awareness of others thoughts, and is capable of questioning existence and things in general, the developmental patterns we are familiar with of course begin to emerge. Explanations for questions about events or existence traditionally, and still, are often unanswerable or unknowable. Sometimes these are small things, and misunderstanding them isn't of serious importance. Other questions that accompany consciousness such as purpose, rights, power dynamics, is there a God or Gods. In either case, I have termed systems and/or explanations of/for existence, consciousness, purpose, and anything in between, “*existential ends*”. Similar to Marx's concept of ideologies, existential ends are the overarching themes or rules that we use as our frame of reference and “objectively” define our perceptions and behaviors.

For some reason, when an individual perceives her or his existential ends to be threatened or to be threatening his or her self, the cognitive dissonance and response is often unbearable and leads to conflict or violence (though it is important to note that sometimes it simply leads to a changed mind). I believe that a person's existential ends are core to their identity and thus function. I believe that as beings that desire and do maintain their patterns of existence, and feel threatened and pained when they perceive

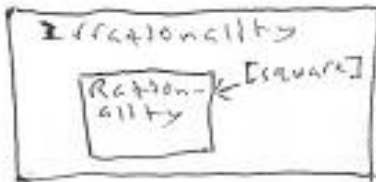
these patterns to be at stake of alteration, it is evident that our existential ends reflect our need of rationality and a naturally understandable fear of The Irrationality that underlies all.

Existence is *without* reason. It is inherently *irrational* in that it is impossible yet it is. Impossibility is inherent in existence's nature and the contradiction, which is inherent in a factual impossibility existing not just in reality but also Still As an impossibility, is not within the realm of rationality. Additionally, though less importantly, there can never, under any circumstances, be a true state of absolutely nothing, for even that nothing is something. Thus the foundation and nature of existence is inherently irrational and rationality can only be derived From irrationality. The reason we need and value rational thinking would then because without it, we could not be. Perhaps when rationality results in irrationality, it is not due to a *failure or break down* of rationality, but is rather the exposure of the constant underlying irrationality.

In other words, rationality, and thus consciousness, is momentarily patterned irrationality; existence is irrationality. This idea can be proved using the diagrams and equations below and on the next page [Note: though the concept and mechanics are mine, the mathematical representation below was developed with help of my friend Matt Dieringer].

In the context of Plato's hierarchy of knowledge, with Ideas being the purest form of something, and what we try to understand and communicate.

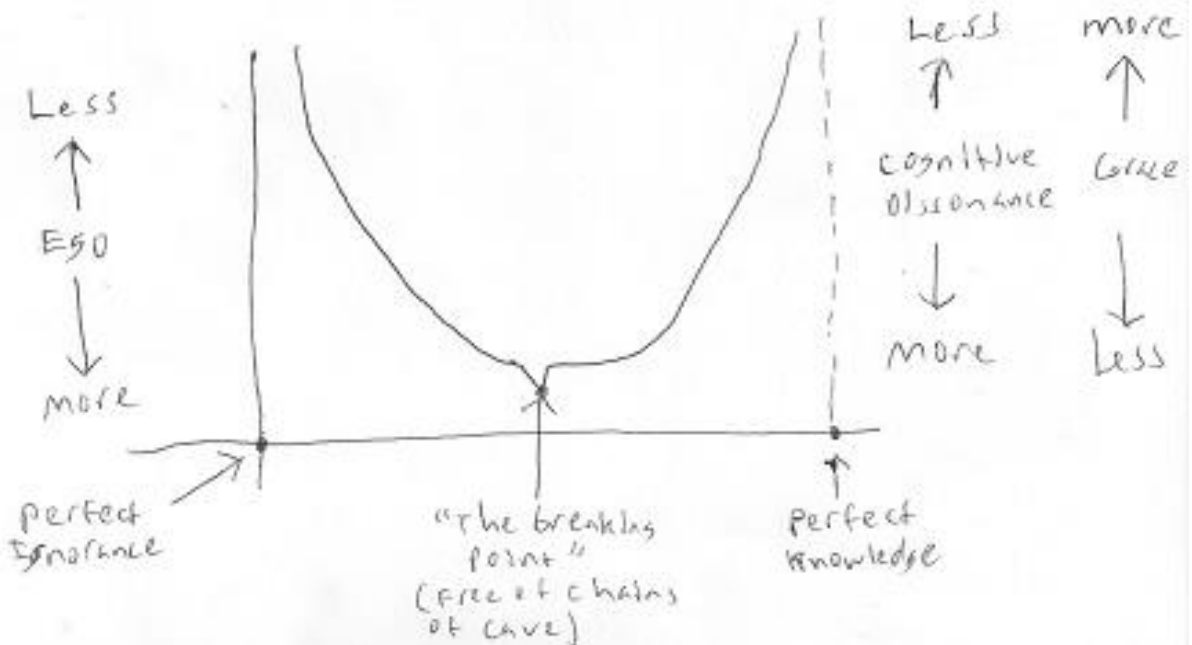
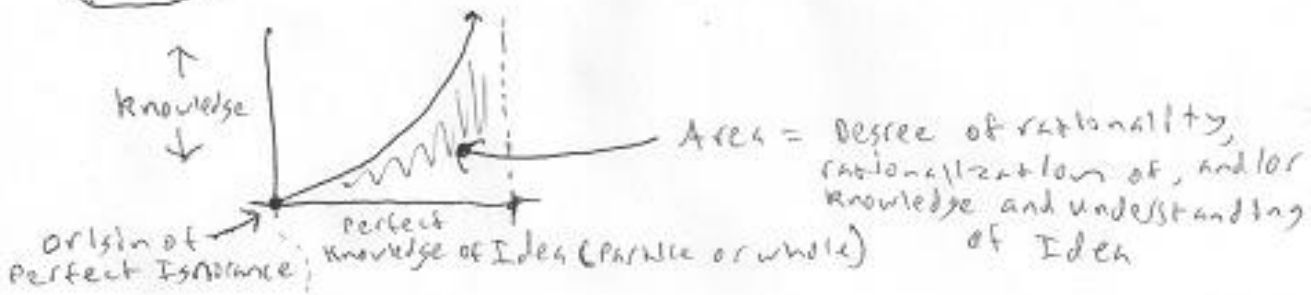
Key: I_p = Idea particle form: The patterned (rational) reality/objective "idea" we can never truly know, but is
 I_w = Idea whole form: the Idea of Existence a "knowable" and objective unit
 $I_w = \text{Grand Irrationality} = \underline{I R}$



Rationality \rightarrow Irrationality
 \downarrow

With assistance of math & diagrams

$$\sum_{i=1}^{\infty} \left(\lim_{\rightarrow I_{dep}} \left(\frac{\text{Knowledge}}{I_{dep}} \right) = R \right) = \underline{I R}$$



This represents the correction of many fields' and peoples' assumption that places rationality as the nature or fundamental principle inherent in existence and reality. If there is free will, it offers a drastically different starting point for dialogue and debate between all and about all. Much of what each group considered to be "irrational" and thus out of bounds, not real, or not to be considered, is now back in the game.

My Ph.D. Map: The map, mentioned earlier in this section's introduction, is a rough representation of all that stems from Grand Irrationality, and can be found in the appendix as Figure 1. While simple, it is in many ways a crucial tool. Breakdown in communication is almost always the source of conflict, and the breakdown often occurs because of an inability to understand or a misunderstanding, particularly concerning underlying assumptions of context. Inspired by a recurring debate I had successfully resolved between two people who I realized could not agree simply because their unstated underlying assumptions concerning reality were incompatible, I mapped out and used what I now consider to be the definitive starting point for just about any discussion or thought process.

There are three main points on a continuous scale; Matter, Matter & "Spirit", and "Spirit". These three points represent the basic possible ratios of our beings' composition, as defined in the chart's bubbles. Once you have established which assumption(s) you are starting from, you next determine whether you are assuming there is some degree of free will or if you are assuming there is no free will (purely deterministic process). Having established your underlying assumptions, depending on what you are researching,

discussing, or just plain old thinking about, you may move forward under it, or compare it to the results of other combinations of assumptions. I wish to map out as much under this map as I can, while formatting it so that others can too. In many ways, it represents the outline of a Ph.D. project I have been sketching out. It could also eventually be both a reference, especially for dueling theories or perspectives, and a crowd sourced virtual and print debate ground, with the results filling the map.

Social Pulse Theory: At each level of social science, and even hard sciences, there are always debates between competing theories and mechanisms, their hierarchy if correct in assumption or proof of existence, and usually fairly predictable short comings or trade offs. In philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, there are always debates about who or what drives what process, how, and to what degree. Is there free will or not? Does the individual chose and/or have the dominant influence, or does the environment and society? Does group consciousness exist and what does that mean? How do groups and organizations interact? How do policies come to be and effect those in their realm? What is normal? What is ethical? What is to be valued? What is mental illness or intelligence? Can and how do you map out all of these interactions? How do the different levels of analysis and spheres of academia relate and whose understanding of humanity is of greatest importance or accuracy? Are patterns linear, cyclical, chaotic, or dynamic? What impact does socialization have and what context dictates the impact? In political science, there the debates within international relations questioning which theory of operation, in terms of dynamics, values, and behavior, is the most accurate in understanding and using politics.

Luckily many of these debates have shifted away from the traditionally binary, black and white, battles, and most are at best starting to recognize the almost all-encompassing gray scale. However, even theories that take into account several variables tend to lack the complexity necessary to really think about something. While I realize what I am criticizing is often merely operational schema not intended to be comprehensive, I still believe that a.) Many misunderstand such things to more concrete and enlightening than they are, and b.) I have not only developed a better way of collecting and demonstrating complexity, but have done it in such a way that it resolves many conflicts between theories of function. It is important to note though that I have only developed the schema, and it is one of my academic goals to pursue creating and discovering the definitions and laws for operation of the schema.

Similar to interactionists, “social pulse theory” considers interactions to be things, and as such are to be taken into account just like the things interacting themselves. Anything that composes or interacts with a unit of consciousness, be it physical or intangible/abstract, can be said to be a social pulse. This obviously includes just about everything, and in the scheme of Grand Irrationality, the possibilities are significantly widened. For the sake of simplicity in this paper, I shall briefly illustrate the mechanics and beauty of social pulse with two simple examples. Remembering that energy and matter are interchangeable, patterns of physical and abstract interactions interact with our patterns at a certain frequency and intensity to form your sensory receptors, sensory input, patterns of electrical firing in your brain that process and respond to the stimuli, and in turn those neural patterns may be exhibited with your own pulses generated

internally, or you may simply display the environmental pulses (i.e. light bouncing off of you into others eyes).

When you speak to someone, chemical and electrical processes generate other chemical and physical processes, which in turn interact and go through the environment to interact and go through the chemical and electrical processes of the listener. Based on the context of your particles interacting with their particles, their particles will behave accordingly. When you speak to someone, you are sending out a social pulse, usually an abstract code or idea, that is then stored in/as or at least processed by a neuron or neural network. The neural pulses on one end are composed of and triggered by relevant pulses of all sizes and types, and in turn they generate a pulse that is interpreted by the pulses of the receiver who then performs or emits their own pulses.

Of course whenever a series of neural pulses occurs, connections are strengthened, weakened, or maintained. The wiring and sequence of firing dictate whether or not each neuron fires and how much/what kind of influence it has on the next. What I am proposing is that, at least as far as human consciousness is concerned, every person and group is essentially like a neuron or neural groups. The interaction of internal and external firing patterns and dynamics rule group and individual behavior and thought. In other words, neurons firing and changing interact with other neurons by causing them to fire and change. The strength and type of change (inhibitory Vs excitatory) depends on the nature and environmental context of the pulses in the sequence of interactions, and obviously there are numerous social pulses competing at any given time. It is also important to note that social pulses be at and are all scales of time. For instance, you hearing me whistle or holding the door open for someone are social pulses that occur in a

short span and likely had very short and small effects. A war or significant trauma or argument may have a longer lasting and stronger effect on the psyche and circuitry.

Such a mechanical schema is important for several reasons. First of all, the complexity of our world, especially socially, can be adequately captured by thinking of everything as competing waves/pulses/neurons/energy/power, especially because, at least in theory, they are all encoded by neurons. Additionally, the way neurons interact resembles the way conscious beings do.

The second reason also includes the second example of social pulse at play. At interpersonal, organizational, and, in this case specifically, international relations levels, you can diagram and eventually predict behavioral and cognitive outcomes based on power dynamics. In international relations, theorists and politicians alike view the world to operate a certain way (as individuals influenced by the social pulses of textbooks, readings, mentors, real world experiences, genetics, media, etc). Often there is strong evidence from two opposing schools of thought, and they end up debating for twenty or so years as to whose relatively binary or vague description most adequately and objectively captures how international relations works. This important because, while there may in fact be some objective ways international relations functions and should be understood to be, the reality is that for each competing school of thought, there are numerous individuals who take it or a modified version to be true and then operate under that assumption, often lending to the pool of evidence in their favor. Even if realists are right that every person and nation only and simply does what is in their best interests (namely accumulate power), there are still cultural and ideological influences that

regulate or shape the manifestation of their realist beliefs or their operation and effect with in the assumed realist reality.

Because social pulse takes subjective factors into account when dealing with objective outcomes, matters, or objects, it can resolve all theoretical debate in the international arena. A nation, usually via a diplomat or form of media, sends out social pulses. Encoded in these social pulses are the meanings the initiating nation intended and their objective appearance/portrayal. The relevant parties, who then act upon them in the context of their history and current state of mind individually and collectively, then interpret these pulses. The pulse's force, style, purpose, and type are colored by and the result of the pulse's origins, and the origin's relationship with the receivers. Thus, amongst those that believe in the power and effectiveness of organizations in the international community, will primarily behave in accordance, and their interactions will clash with those who believe and behave in accordance with pure realists, and whichever social pulse survives or is more dominant, is the one that will establish more connections.

When first thinking of social pulse theory I realized that you could, by taking regulatory mechanism such as laws, ethics, norms, and personality factors into account, map out the power dynamics. I soon after coincidentally discovered that there is an Australian professor who had made a name for himself by mapping out organizations power dynamics as an electrical circuit. This was in essence what I wanted to do, and I do plan on studying his methods, but an electrical circuit does not capture operational complexities and nuances that a neural network not only can conceptually, but also does regularly. Additionally, I wish to use social pulse theory to explore a wider variety of

systems and do so using a more complex or comprehensive set of regulators like morals, values, ethics, and existential ends.

The third reason is social pulse is important is that, especially under an assumption of there only being matter, consciousness rises from the interactions of things at a certain frequency and in a certain context. I say interactions because the atoms and molecules are of course never truly physically touching, just merely interacting in space and time. Therefore, we must assume that consciousness arises from interactions and cannot assume to know what types of interactions can and do give rise to consciousness. Given the infinite scale of existence, this has massive implications immediately at our scale and in general concerning questions life, consciousness, and the nature of reality.

The fourth reason is that social pulses are the mechanism through which we conceive, create, perceive, change, and destroy culture. TV shows and the media are social pulses. Financial expenditures are social pulses. Material in general emits social pulses. Conversations are the exchange and interaction of social pulses. Moods and history are social pulses. Politics are social pulses. When you think of the fact that money is an abstract representation of will or power, expressed through and created by these pulses. How we can create what was only in our mind as pulses through pulses, how authority and influenced at small and large scales, you begin to see pulses everywhere.

The fifth reason is that social pulse theory works in both deterministic and free will scenarios.

Thoughts on Purpose: Because perhaps the most essential property of our nature (again assuming free will) is the ability to generate, transfer, and comprehend abstract

ideas (such as purpose), and because we have no way to ever truly determine purpose (which is heavily influenced by nature and nature/general life experiences), then perhaps our nature and purpose is to make what we want/can out of our lives, and by truly attempting to do so (in combination with the concept of grace/understanding) that action is in itself our purpose (as a result of our nature). In addition, if our purpose/nature is to explore/create/try to achieve whatever we come to understand our purpose(s) to be, then

a.) It would make sense why there are so many seemingly equally valid conceptions of purpose and b.) Why they are often all in competition or opposition.

Two units can be trying to achieve their purpose, and thus having the satisfaction of being in the process of their general purpose of generating and achieving a purpose, but because one group feels their ability to pursue and achieve this purpose and thus real purpose is being attached or threatened, they react accordingly in respect to other factors of human and individual nature (power dynamics of social pulse).

This important thing to be taken away from Grand Irrationality, social pulse theory, and this discussion of purpose, is that no matter what, given that the only knowledge we can be certain to have is Grand Irrationality, there is a *moral imperative* to assume and act as if there is free will. This entails our purpose as described above, and arguably a requirement to try to do our best to help with world and each other.

Conclusion:

Why, aside from academic motivations, did I choose this project? Everyone I have met with has asked roughly the same question at some point in the meeting, namely, “what’s in it for you?” They were trying to discern if I represented Dialogue in the Dark

officially, if I hoped for a job or money out of all of this etc. I explained it to them all the same way. The reality is there is a ton I want to and can do in this world. I am going to be leaving Cincinnati to pursue my post-college plans I have laid out, and want almost nothing to do with Dialogue in the Dark and The Greater Cincinnati Coalition for Community Action when I am gone. This project represents an attempt to exercise free will for the greater good under the Irrationality that is all, as well as an example for those that wish to do the same.

As I have told those I have met with, I consider myself to be like the friend who thinks two people he knows would make an excellent couple. Like that person, I view myself as simply introducing the right parties, plans, and methods to each other before leaving them to get to know each other and do their thing once the ice is broken [specifically, I will be leaving Cincinnati next June for Teach for America or AmeriCorps]. These projects have significant value in of themselves, and I am more than capable of spearheading them into being. However, aside from generally being unwilling to make these projects the center of life for the foreseeable future, the major point behind these projects is to create something the willing and driven Cincinnatians can take over, build, manage, and prosper from. I do not wish these projects to become dependent on any individual so as to avoid falling when they leave.

There are a few critical lessons I have learned so far. The biggest one is that unless someone is getting something from something in an immediate sense, they tend not to show much interest or be very supportive. In line with this, balancing determined pursuit with patience and political savvy is difficult. Because of how busy people often are, you need to be able to pursue them doggedly, without crowding them or driving them

away. Some bits of advice I have received along the way include, “if you want advice, ask for money, and if you want money, ask for advice”, or “always have meetings during a meal time and with food, and treat the person that took time to meet with you”, the reasoning for the latter being that busy people rarely find time to eat or want to sacrifice that time, so they love it when they are able to get a chance to eat and do business. A lesson learned and applied early was that if you want a letter of support, you must make a template of one for the desired parties to modify so as to save their time. Expect people to take a long time to get back to you, but also follow up occasionally (again without crowding them). Finally I learned that even before getting the ball rolling, it helps to have concept maps to communicate your plan, and to bring others in to aide with their growth.

This winter I will be applying for Teach for America and Americorps positions. By next June, I will be starting training for them. In the mean time, I plan on continuing to pursue the long and short term goals of this capstone, volunteering as a tutor in preparation for my service, getting certified in a technical skill or two so I can find employment anywhere in the world, and continuing my education on my own. I plan on using the year or two break that Teach for America and Americorps represent to research and decide upon a masters program. This will either be on its own before, or during and as part of, the Peace Corps. After having completed Americorps or Teach for America, and after having completed the Peace Corps and a masters program, I should know what I want out of a Ph.D. program and will pursue that then. Until then, my academic experience has exposed me to many wonderful and amazing things, and I will be pursuing as many of them as I can.

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Appendix

Figure 1.

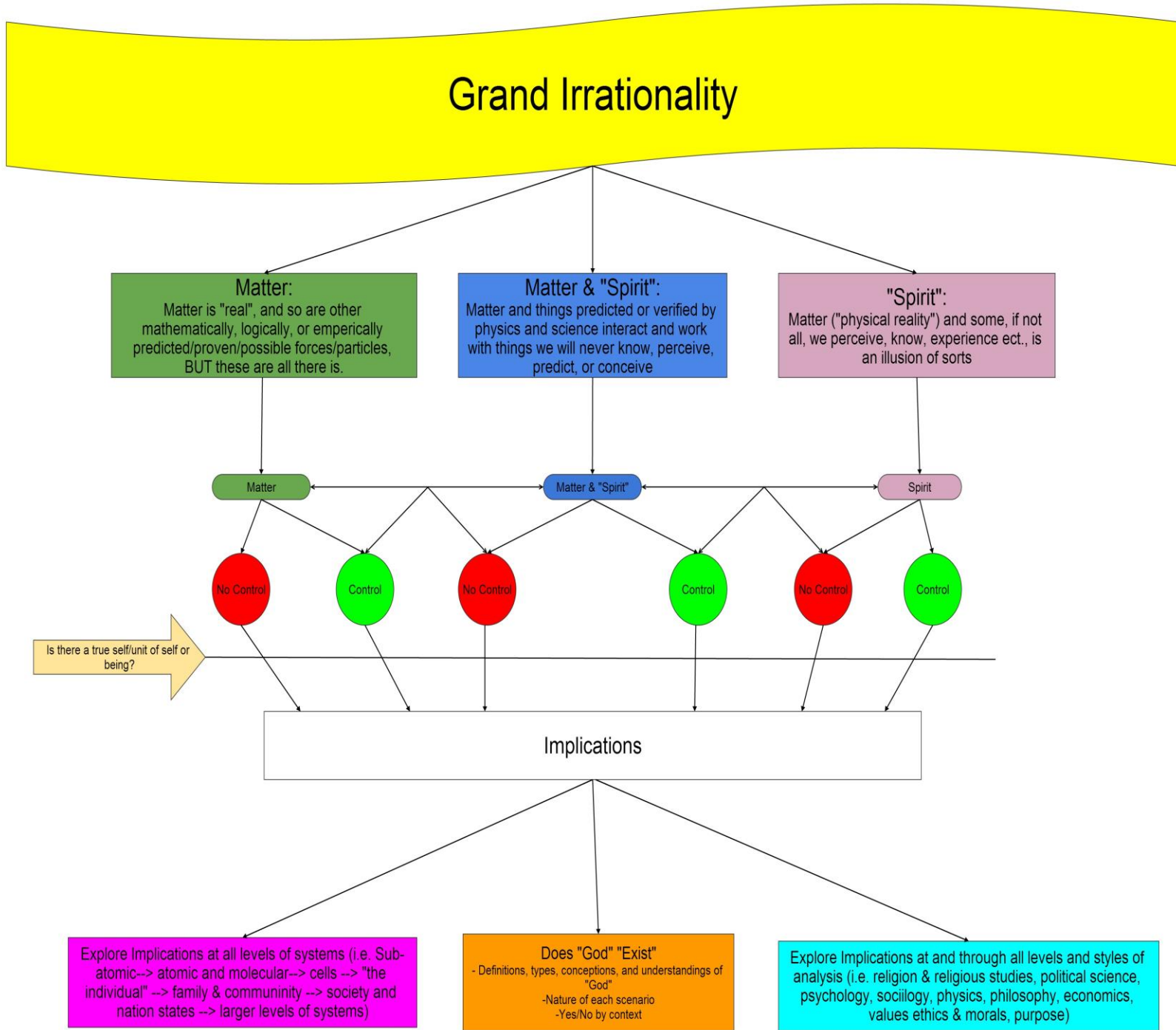


Figure 2. Project's Actor Network (see email attachment by same name for better quality)

