

The Good Life

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What is the Good Life?

Attempting to encapsulate a subject as far reaching and as important as the Good Life into several pages of black and white text, was a daunting task for me. After all, the question is one that has been puzzling humanity since the beginning of civilization. I have no illusion that this paper holds the complete answer or even a partial answer, but certainly I have tried my best to put forward an attempt. I am the fourth member of my family to write the Good Life Paper. My sister Clare and my brothers Michael and Conor completed their answers about living the Good Life, far before I even considered mine. Perhaps my ideas are completely different from theirs, or perhaps there will be much in common. As individuals, raised basically in the same circumstances, it would be interesting to see how different or alike are our concepts about what constitutes the Good Life. No matter the result, I hope that at least this paper sparks an interesting debate. The Good Life for me is a combination of three basic human desires; Wisdom, Faith, and Family. Each of these virtues alone can help a person in living the Good Life. All of them together make attaining the Good Life certainly within grasp. Wisdom teaches you how to live the Good Life, Faith tells you where to find the Good Life, and Family will help you get there.

Wis•dom:/wizdem/ n. **1** state of being wise. **2** experience and knowledge together with the power of applying them. – *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus*

Wisdom is an important step in the fulfillment of the Good Life. In fact, Cicero states it is the attribute most sought for by man. This is the point where Boethius and Cicero seem to diverge. Boethius believed that happiness is the only thing that any man really desires. Cicero believed that what man truly desires is wisdom. I believe they are both right because wisdom, in my mind, is part of what creates happiness. The question then becomes what is wisdom exactly and where does it come from? Wisdom is often thought of as a quality that cannot be defined because no matter what kind of quandary it is applied to,

the answer is not always the same. We live in a very circumstantial world, where all consequences of any action cannot be perceived beforehand by any person, no matter how wise. How then can any person be called wise? I believe there are four attributes intrinsic to the attainment of wisdom. The first is experience. The second is knowledge. The third is the realization that moral goodness is fundamental. The fourth is the intangible quality of intuition.

Experience is crucial to knowledge. A child cannot simply be given the wisdom of a man who has lived many years. Each person has to earn it through his own experiences. As children most of us were at times irrational, impatient, and bold. These tendencies often led to mistakes, but we learn as much or more from our mistakes as from our successes. Youthful folly one might call it, but it carries a lesson for all ages. The lesson is that to acquire wisdom you have to remember the boldness of your youth, to be a risk taker, and risk making mistakes.

One who is wise is usually thought of as a person of great foresight and the ability to recognize and avoid future mistakes. How then does this tie into being a risk taker? Perhaps the greatest risk any of us can take is believing in our ability to achieve the dreams we have. In this, we risk a life spent in pursuit of something that cannot be assured. Failure is always a possibility, but to attain wisdom the risk of this pursuit must be taken. Failure or success does not matter because in either case you gain a better understanding of who you are. People who seemingly never make mistakes are usually not wise; they are simply safe. Wisdom requires experience and that experience is earned by the courage to take risks. This realization still leaves us short of wisdom however, because to be wise is not only to risk playing the harder game of life, but to be good at it.

“Wisdom begins in wonder.” – Socrates

As the definition states, wisdom requires more than just experience (attained by the risk taker), it requires knowledge. If knowledge is required for wisdom, another very important quality must also be considered, namely curiosity. Each of us is born into a world of which we have no prior knowledge. In the beginning everything is foreign and new to us. Again wisdom is often found in the child, for it is children who are usually the most curious people. My mother tells me that when I was very young I had a persistent and almost annoying habit. I always asked the question, “Why?” “Why is the grass green? Why do cars need gas? Why does Michael always punch me?” And of course the king road trip question of them all, “WHY AREN’T WE THERE YET?” The curiosity of our childhood is often

lost as we grow older, but if wisdom is to be achieved that curiosity must not die. Socrates said that the wisest people are simply those who realize how incredibly little they truly know. Man's capacity to obtain knowledge is also what makes him different from the rest of nature. It is a quality that should be nurtured for the simple reason that it is what makes us unique. With this in mind I think the wisest thing I might tell someone who was seeking wisdom would be, "ask as many questions as you can because in short, all of us have lot of catching up to do."

"When the universe has crushed him, man will still be nobler than that which kills him, because he knows that he is dying, and of its victory the universe knows nothing." - Pascal

Experience and knowledge are not enough for wisdom; we need the underpinning of moral goodness. Understanding wisdom requires more than the ability to believe in yourself, take risks, be curious, and accumulate knowledge. These are the tools which set you on the path, but they do not assure you will arrive at the destination. To put it bluntly, one could possess all of these qualities and not only be unwise, but be utterly devoid of wisdom. One might ask what is missing amongst these qualities for attaining wisdom? I can see no possibility where moral goodness is not a primary focus of wisdom. In every society and culture, a recurring theme has appeared. It is the concept that some have labeled the "Golden Rule." The concept has been transformed over and over to fit into the varying cultures of our world, but essentially it remains the same: "do unto others as you would do unto yourself." It is guideline for seeking goodness. I believe there is a great deal of wisdom to be learned from it. Its persistence throughout history and its success time and again in my life are the only proof I need to believing in its invaluable worth.

Concepts such as the Golden Rule, however, are also a point of great contention when trying to define wisdom. Niccolo Machiavelli, a sixteenth century author explains the rationale as to why exclusive reliance on moralistic concepts such as the Golden Rule (especially when applied to politics) are often grossly impractical and therefore lacking in wisdom. If a ruler were to execute an innocent few to preserve the peace of many; can he be considered wise under the aforementioned basis that moral goodness is the primary focus of wisdom? The answer for a great many, including myself, is no. I would argue it is more important how we achieve the good then whether or not we achieve it all. At first

this statement appears purely sentimental, but there is logic in it as well. Everything we accomplish in our own lives and as a people is built upon an invisible but very crucial foundation. The foundation is comprised of every action we take while achieving our goals. If we achieve great things by temporarily sacrificing smaller moral rules, have we still built great things? The answer for those who believe in an invisible foundation is emphatically no. In fact, we have possibly done worse than accomplish nothing. We have set ourselves up for a potential fall that will leave us far below where we started. In our example of the ruler faced with executing people to ensure peace, let us suppose he chose to eliminate the competition utterly, as Machiavelli suggests. An extreme and ironic result might be a revolt of the people against the state for its crimes, in which the ruler he did not even achieve his goal of serving a greater good!

Intuition is the final quality in the makeup of wisdom. It is that intangible quality that although influenced by experience, is largely not understood. In each of us there is an ability to feel the right answer, rather than to solve it through deductive reasoning. I have no proof of this, simply observation and faith. It is gut feeling about where the truth lies in any situation. Perhaps it is the small voice in all of our heads that Socrates spoke of. Its' origins are in birth, and whether genetic or metaphysical, I have no clear explanation for it. This is why wisdom is so elusive and why attaining it is so difficult.

Attaining wisdom means transcending the simple virtues of experience and knowledge. It is the combination of these things with an understanding of the importance of moral goodness, and the utilization of whatever intuition God has granted us. Wisdom expands your imagination and allows you to see further and more clearly into all of life's possibilities. Those who attain it are happier because they have learned the most basic and powerful quality in overcoming life's problems; the power to see a solution. It is a quality that will help answer any question that may arise in life including the question, "how do I live the Good Life?"

"I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world." - Albert Einstein

"For most of human history we have searched for our place in the cosmos. Who are we? What are we? We find that we inhabit an insignificant planet

of a hum-drum star lost in a galaxy tucked away in some forgotten corner of a universe in which there are far more galaxies than people. We make our world significant by the courage of our questions, and by the depth of our answers.” -- Carl Sagan

“We are the music-makers, And we are the dreamers of dreams, Wandering by lone sea-breakers And sitting by desolate streams, World losers and world forsakers, On whom the pale moon gleams: Yet we are the movers and shakers. Of the world for ever, it seems.” - Arthur O’Shaughnessy

Faith:/faith/ n. **1** complete trust or confidence. **2** firm belief, esp. without logical proof. **3** system of religious belief. **4** duty or commitment to fulfill a trust, promise, etc.; allegiance (*keep faith*). – *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus*

The word faith encompasses a great many things all of which tie into the Good Life. Life’s greatest struggle is the individual’s search for purpose and meaning. The answer is never simple and it is also never given. No matter how we choose to answer this question, it requires faith. There are those who would argue that there is no purpose, no design, no meaning; and sadly they would have a lot of evidence to support such claims. Yet even they must have faith in something. Faith is more than a religion or lack thereof. It is also what allows individuals to work as a whole, what allows individuals to accomplish great feats alone and what allows each of us to conquer our fears. Faith in God, faith in yourself, and faith in other people; these are things that each us rely upon every day whether we realize it or not. Faith is a remarkable human quality. It is as Plato said, “our light” which illuminates both purpose and direction, allowing each of us a chance at the Good Life.

Faith in God is perhaps the most personal struggle that each of us goes through. When I was young, God was just a name and church was that hour every Sunday I couldn’t wait to be over. As we grow older something happens which changes all of this. We realize our mortality. Suddenly there is more to life than just the present, there is an inevitable future we all must face. Every person reacts to this truth differently and it causes each of us to look deep inside ourselves and decide what we truly believe. I believe if for no other reason than my heart tells me so, that God does exist. However, I also believe that no religion completely encompasses what God truly means. When I look at religions, including the one I was raised in (Christianity), I see a great many truths. Most of the truths revolve around the importance of goodness, which I have absolute

faith in and believe all faiths should. My faith becomes less clear when we begin to talk about the details. Religion is usually a positive force in the world as seen through its ability to give a sense of community and as a platform for preaching morality and goodness. It is however, open to many interpretations and as such has the ability to be distorted. If one looks at the statement in Christianity that a belief in Jesus is the one and only way to God, does that mean the Hindu child born in India who has never heard of Jesus or Christianity is doomed to be forgotten by God? Or rather does this statement mean that the belief in what Jesus represented (goodness, love, charity, etc.) is the only way to God? An example very applicable to the present would be the emergence of radical Islam. The word Islam means peace and the majority of Muslims in the world interpret the teachings of the Koran to represent a desire for peace. This is obviously not the only interpretation as seen through organizations like the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Interpretation can be a flaw, however, it is also a strength. Religions of the world would not have survived if they were not flexible enough to evolve with the times and strike meaning with new people as they spread into new regions and cultures. So where does all of this place me in the scheme of religion? I was raised a Catholic and because of that I will always hold its traditions and beliefs with great reverence. I also, however, believe that other religions and philosophies have a little something say about God as well.

I am eclectic in my beliefs and draw many ideas from many different sources. In pertaining to the Good Life and religion, I believe the greatest lesson is simply to have faith in something. Faith is a starting point and it allows us to explore the world around us by assuming first that some things are true. This in turn allows us to see further to what is not. Faith is like a candle in a dark room shining a beam of light at a vast wall. The wall is the world around us and the light illuminates a part of the wall, but not all of it. Without faith there is no light and we see only darkness. Some might ask, "What if a person does not believe in God, does that mean he can see nothing?" The answer is no because faith can exist for that person too. The truth is it takes a lot of faith not to believe God, perhaps more than it does to believe. This is understood simply the act of trying it. It is not easy and in doing so one realizes that while there is no incontrovertible evidence that God exists, there is also none that he doesn't. The question then becomes, "If in the end that person is proved wrong how did his false faith serve to illuminate part of the wall?" It did so because it illuminated a part of the human condition. The truth of this statement (under the assumption that God does exist) can be seen through the many brilliant works that have come

from the minds of existentialist and atheistic authors and philosophers. One such work, *Waiting for Godot*, portrays a view of humanity's struggles and sadness, along with a way to find purpose in a world with no chance of hope. It illuminates a valuable truth about human frailty and strength that probably could not have been created with the same power, by a believer in God. As a believer in God, I still think there is much to be learned from such works. I have come to conclusion that when applied with a belief in moral goodness there is no faith that is not a positive force. Every faith helps us understand a different part of ourselves, a different part of the wall, and in doing so helps give meaning and purpose to our lives.

One aspect of faith that needs to be emphasized is faith in yourself. Without this quality the Good Life is not possible. It allows each of us the strength to achieve our goals and conquer our inner fears. I have seen the truth of this in all my life efforts whether they be in sports, school, or the basic endeavor of improving ones' self.

"Golf is Deceptively simple and endlessly complicated, it satisfies the soul and frustrates the intellect, it is both satisfying and maddening, it is without a doubt the greatest game mankind has ever invented – Arnold Palmer

I play many sports but it is in the sports of tennis and golf that I have best learned the lessons of faith in yourself. I have one great downfall when it comes to playing tennis. I know the exact outcome of almost any match before I even play. The reason is simple; I feel confident or I feel afraid. I have by no means achieved a level of faith in myself where absolute confidence in my abilities arises. I do however, believe it is possible to live in such a mindset, and that achieving that mind set is a powerful tool in living the Good Life. I am not talking about overconfidence that will not help you. Overconfidence is not faith in yourself as you are, it is a faith in something that you wish that you were but are not. One who has attained the level of faith where absolute confidence exists is a person who in any endeavor or competition is extremely hard to defeat. I have on some occasions glimpsed this feeling of faith while playing golf. The only way to describe the feeling is that for a brief moment in time you have no self-awareness, you forget everything and have absolute trust in yourself. As you bring the club into the swing there are no doubts. Swinging through you connect with the ball and create a drive of sheer perfection. I ask myself time and again what makes this possible and why can't I do it every time? The answer is simple; I lack faith in myself. Obtaining an absence of doubt is one of the most difficult

things in life, as Siddhartha found in his attempt. He tried to eliminate doubt by destroying the self and failed. He did however succeed, but he did it through embracing the self he sought to destroy, and ultimately having faith in its worth.

“The consciousness of self is the greatest hindrance to the proper execution of all physical action.” - Bruce Lee

School is an environment that requires faith as well. In fact, all learning environments demand it. The one downfall in learning something is when attempting to do so a person believes that the material is beyond their comprehension. In my family I have both the privilege and burden of being the one who is turned to when anything technical goes wrong. For some in my family it is simply laziness that prevents them from learning similar skills, but sadly for others it is more than that. My mother, though one of the smartest people I know, has firm lack of faith when comes to learning technical skills. She declares that if for nothing else then fifty years of trial and failure, her lack of faith is justified. I’m sorry mom, but I must disagree and the only proof I need is to look at how well you absorb other things equally as complicated such as literature, politics, and my amazing intellect! She is small example but the point holds true and I see it every day in myself as well. I often have decided in my AP Physics class that a problem was just too hard to answer without help. I’d spend hours failing in the attempt only to realize that the problem was not hard at all. I only needed to decide that not only could I comprehend it, but that it was much simpler than it appeared.

If nothing else, life is a process in which we seek to improve ourselves, a process of attaining wisdom. This is where faith in yourself holds the greatest importance. In Siddhartha there is very beautiful and worthwhile belief. The belief is that each of us is inherently good and therefore all of us have the potential to transcend our present existence and become something greater and more enlightened.

“When I die I will soar with the angels, and when I die to the angels, what I shall become you cannot imagine.” - Rumi of Persia

In Christianity this transcendence is seen through the redemption of Jesus attained through a belief in him. In Buddhism it comes from a realization of the unity of all things, the attainment of Nirvana and Enlightenment. In Hinduism it is achieved through the triumph of your karma allowing oneness with Brahman (God.) In Islam it comes through a deep understanding of the Koran which is the

word of God. No matter the method one uses to improve the self and attain a piece of enlightenment the first step is a strong faith in yourself. No self-enlightenment is possible if you do not have faith in your ability to attain it. It would be very much like my mother trying to learn about computers while being certain that such a feat was not within her. It simply does not work. Faith in yourself means a belief that within you alone wisdom, enlightenment, and the Good Life can be found. Boethius was utterly alone in prison and yet it was in prison he found wisdom. How is this possible? I believe he had faith in himself, faith that each of us holds as Socrates believed a “divine spark” which when believed in can allow anyone attainment of the Good Life.

“The way to do is to be” – Lao Tzu

*“If you think you are beaten, you are;
If you think you dare not, you don’t!
If you’d like to win, but you think you can’t,
It’s almost certain you won’t.*

*If you think you’ll lose, you’re lost;
For out in the world we find
Success begins with a fellow’s will;
It’s all in the state of mind!” - Unknown*

Family: /families/ n. (pl. **-lies**) **1** set of parents and children, or of relations. **2** descendants of a common ancestor. **3** brotherhood of persons.

Faith in other people is an essential part of the Good Life. It is here two fundamental parts of my life come into focus; family and friends. I have been blessed many times over with a family that needs little faith to believe in. Everyone in it desires the family to be strong and all of us seek to make that happen. Each of us through similar, are very different people. Despite this through the years we all have developed a mutual sense of trust, respect and faith in each other’s wisdom. This circumstance has allowed me to learn many lessons about the Good Life through the simple act of listening, observing and then trusting the lessons I have learned.

The family starts with my father, “Dad” as I like to call him. Dad is by far the wisest person I know and has taught me three main things about the Good Life. The first is to be selfless in every endeavor. He has taught me this through his actions alone. His job requires him to be in a hundred places at once and

therefore he is forced to travel all over the world. Sleeping on airplanes and eating airline food are not an acquired taste, but somehow he manages. The amazing thing is that though he loves his job, I know he would much rather be on the golf course with my brother and I, then bargaining some deal in Moscow. He works so ardently because he knows the life it will give his family. Selflessness like his is rare. It has made his life and ours a good one as well as teach me a valuable lesson. The second lesson he has taught me is to learn how think outside of the box. In life all of us face problems. The solutions to them are not always clear. The details of a problem can be anything from social to mathematical and this lesson will always apply. The lesson is about looking at a problem from a different angle, forgetting all assumptions and considering it at face value for the first time. Time and again this little piece of advice has helped me in many ways. Even now I am using it as I consider and write my Good Life paper. The last lesson is to at all costs protect the people you love, especially your family. The merits of this lesson are clear in the context of the Good Life. In protecting the ones, you love, you are protecting yourself, because they are your life and without them you are alone.

My mother is no slouch herself when comes to learning advice about living the Good Life. She has the uncanny ability of seeing only the best in other people. I have learned that this seemingly small quality can make life a lot more enjoyable. It is not to say you should ignore the faults in those you love and not help to improve them. The lesson is about accepting that no one is perfect including yourself and therefore not to assume that because a person has a fault, that they as a person are flawed. Understanding this is what makes interaction and connection with other people possible. Without this connection attaining the Good Life is virtually impossible. My mother has also taught me another valuable lesson about the Good Life which is simply not to be afraid of trying something new. I remember when I was young I hated fish with a passion, especially salmon. The odd thing about it was I never had actually even tried it. One day she put her foot down and forced me to trying something different, and lo' and behold I went from hating salmon to loving it with a passion. This small example has repeated itself many times and often in situations of much greater importance. No one is born knowing what the Good Life is and I learned from this that if you are going to find out what it is for you, you have to do a little taste testing!

Mary Ellen Louris is my grandmother, a fact I say with pride. To my brothers, sisters, and I she is known by the name of Nonny and each of us holds a

respect for her that cannot be put into words. She does not have a single element of anything but kindness and understanding in her and frankly I don't understand it. I guess you can say that there are just some people who are farther along in the road of life and she is one of them. Nonny has taught me the lesson of humility. Humility is such a powerful quality because it makes you impervious to all the downfalls of ego and pride. Wealth, power, and fame can be achieved easily through life spent in pursuit of satisfying your ego. I believe those heights are false as Boethius believed in *The Consolation of Philosophy*. All they serve to achieve is to raise you up to great height, only to be disappoint you in the end when they fail to bring you happiness. The dangerous thing about the ego is that is the natural tendency of man to try and satisfy it. The only defense against this tendency is a strong cultivation of humility. In observing my grandmother throughout the years I have marveled at how she is one of the most content people I know. She has proved to me that humility is a powerful source for happiness and in doing so has taught one of the most valuable lessons in seeking the Good Life.

The eldest child of my family is my older brother Michael. Michael is the most responsible child in the family. In living the Good life however, he has taught me not so much about responsibility as much as the very basic and very important quality, of knowing how to have a good time. One of his favorite quotes is from the movie Ferris Buhler: "Life is fast, if you don't take a minute now and then to look around, you might just miss it." Michael has taught me the truth of this statement. The guy knows how to do three things better than anyone; laugh at funny jokes, drink fine beer, and make everyone in the room just relax. He understands more than most that the simple pleasures in life are sometimes the most fulfilling. He also has a great ability to balance this need to relax with a strong work ethic. As my older brother I can think of no better role model for living a balanced life.

Conor is my second eldest brother and he has taught me two lessons which few get to learn in the way I have. First, life is not fair and the cards dealt to you at birth are never truly equal to anyone else's. In fact, for many they are down right lousy. The amazing thing about Conor is that despite being born with Autism, he has triumphed. Doctors predicted he would probably never even be able to read. Well I hate to disappoint the doctors but right now not only is he reading, he is attending College. It is true story of triumph over tragedy, which has taught me a second lesson. It is one of the most important lessons I have

ever learned, even to this day: ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE! Anything is possible, no matter how outrageous, whether it be rockets to the moon or living the Good Life, this is only attitude which makes things happen.

Clare is my eldest sister and she has taught me the lesson of friendship. In my first years in high school I felt utterly alone. My old friends were no longer my friends and I can remember weeks where I didn't talk to a soul at school. Clare had mastered the art of making and keeping friends and I think she noticed my loneliness. As any great sister would then do she brought me into her group and from there I learned how to create my own group of friends. I owe her a debt beyond measure for this. Now at the end of senior year it is from my strong group of close friends that I draw a great happiness and contentment. Friendship is a crucial part of my conception of the Good Life, which I will go into more detail later and which in great part I owe my understanding of it to Clare.

Since I am next in the family and never have been good at giving advice from myself to myself, we will skip to my younger sisters Lael and Kate. They are the "little ones" of the family but are not exempt in the ability of teaching me lessons about life. Lael being the older of the two has taught the lesson of being different and making an effort to stand out. There are six billion people living on the planet and if that doesn't make you feel small, I do not know what will. The bottom line is if you want to be noticed, you have to find out what makes you different and show it. Lael has no reservations in doing this as clearly seen in her idiosyncratic qualities of making up off the wall words like "meano" and "freakazoid," or in her peculiar habits like eating whip cream as it were ice cream and exaggerating just about every sentence she speaks, especially when that sentence involves bugs. Her off the wall comments and light hearted attitude make her stand out in a crowd. It is a rare quality which certainly deserves a place in my Good Life paper.

The last position in my family falls to my youngest sister Kate. Kate is a quiet leader with strong opinions and has the distinct honor of being at the bottom of the family. Kate has taught me one very valuable lesson. Respect for other people's feelings. Many people react in many different ways to certain actions. It is not always enough to simply be kind to other people you must also be careful. Just as interpretation was a problem with religion, it becomes an even bigger one with people. Since people and the bonds, we make with them are so very important in my conception of the Good Life, realizing this fact is very important step in trying to achieve success.

Family is more than just your relatives. As the definition states, it is a “brotherhood of persons.” I consider my friends a different but very close part of my family. In living the Good Life, friends can make a hard thing much easier. Few of us have brothers or sisters that are of the same age. Those who do still desire more than just one or two companions who are in the same circumstances of life. In response to this void, all of us desire friendship with people outside of our family. These are people who live under similar conditions to which we can relate. The nature of friends and what they do for us is key point in understanding the Good Life.

Cicero states that a common belief system is necessary for true friendship. I disagree with Cicero on this point, but I do agree a common ground is necessary. The common ground for any true friendship is a mutual belief in goodness. The details behind the sources of that goodness are meaningless. I have explained how all faiths with a moral background are a positive force. I also believe that all friendships with a moral background, regardless of other details such as race and religion, have the potential to be true friendships. Diversity brings strength through a multitude of opinions that can coalesce into a broader understanding of truth. It is a strength which further allows friendships to fulfill their purpose of bringing happiness into our lives.

My friends are a true source of happiness for me. Friends allow the Dionysian side of my personality to come through. Life is not only about things such as wisdom, faith, and self-progress. Life is also about simply having fun and enjoying yourself. In the Bacchae, Tiresias understood that a balance must be maintained to live a happy life. The balance is between the “reason” of the Apollonian and the “release” of the Dionysian. Certainly most of us have not reached a level of sainthood. As a result, a quiet discomfort arises in anyone who chooses to ignore the need to at times simply abandon some of their reason and release. This release is done through laughter, love, and the million tiny things that each of us do with our friends. Friendship can be very crucial when it comes to this point, for if there is no release the pressure rises exponentially with only dire results. In Bacchae we hear this directly, “We ignore at our peril the demand of the human spirit for the Dionysian Experience.” If you allow too much of the Apollonian into your life the Dionysian gets lost. Eventually something inside you is going to snap. Friends prevent this and allow the demand for the Dionysian experience to be satisfied. My friends and I are very good at doing this! We love to have and go to parties, we love to simply hang out, and our diversity as people

allows us to do this in hundreds of ways. Each way we find to embrace the Dionysian reminds us of a very important life lesson. Never take yourself too seriously.

Friendship is also a rite of passage. All of us are traveling on a road that goes somewhere. The satisfaction of reaching a destination on that road however, will be sadly lacking if there is no one to share in your triumph. At some time in the future the paths of all friends will be divided, but it is my supreme hope that in the end, my friends and I will reunite in some way. Perhaps in different places or perhaps even in different lives, but to reach that place where we are headed and have those friends of whom you started with, would be amongst the greatest joys.

“the most satisfying thing of all is to reach the end of the race with the same companions who were with you at the starting post.” – Cicero

“The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, nor the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when he discovers that someone else believes in him and is willing to trust him with his friendship.” -- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Conclusions

I can remember a few, but very distinct and very clear moments in my life where I felt truly at peace. The Good Life existed for me in those moments, and yet they quickly faded. One moment was in a dream where I was standing on a beach during sunset and I saw an array of many colors. I looked around me only to find I was not alone, but standing with my family. My parents were as they are now, but everyone else including myself was as they were when children of an age no older than ten. Then for no apparent reason I cried. Freud might have a lot to say about such a dream, but I will not dissect it. Rather I will simply recognize that it taught me the importance of family. Another moment was on a hiking trip across Isle Royal in the middle of Lake Superior. I wandered off by myself until I came to a small clearing in the woods. Surrounded by nature I sat in thought for many hours until it became dark. I looked up and saw more stars than I knew possible. Suddenly the world seemed much larger and everything much more real. I suppose it was then that I realized the universe was so vast that to understand it, I needed some sort of faith. A final moment that I had which pertains to wisdom was when I first sailed a boat alone. It was a clear windy day on Lake Hubert in Minnesota. For the first half hour I was absolutely terrified that

a gust of wind would tip me over. Suddenly out of blue I had no fear and mastered the boat to my will. A great sense freedom came over me. I realized that what I thought was impossible, was possible, and that through experience I could gain the wisdom to steer any course I would choose in life. The peace of those moments has faded but the memory of their lesson remains. They were moments that shaped my conception of the Good Life and I will not forget them.

Wisdom, Faith, and Family are my best attempts at describing ways to achieve the Good Life. I feel however something else must be included. The paper as of now has tried to address universal issues, while leaving out a few things that I have a personal hope will be a part of my individual Good Life. I hope to always have the time to enjoy the simpler pleasures. Things like playing golf, commenting on the news with my parents, enjoying a good meal with family and friends, or even having the occasional small fight between siblings. I hope that I will not forget the satisfaction of listening to music, reading a great book, or memorizing a poem. I hope that I will once again get to sail a boat, fly a plane, and travel to distant places in the world. Finally, I hope that no matter how my life turns out that at least I will never forget how blessed it has already been. I hope that in remembering the strengths of my past, I will have the strength to "strive, to seek, to find" and as Tennyson once wrote and in attaining the Good Life, never yield.

*'T is not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are, --
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*

- **excerpt from "Ulysses" by Alfred Lord Tennyson**