

Digging Deeper into the Cosmic Stuffing

Written by Alex Baer

Thursday, 27 November 2014 14:48 - Last Updated Thursday, 27 November 2014 20:00

Atheists, agnostics, and religionists can all agree on at least one thing at Thanksgiving: The staggering, blinding, on-target brilliance of the phrase "mixed blessings."

We mere mortals can only stand in awe, slack-jawed and agape, at the stunning mind that spotted that shared genetic trend-line, and first put that blunt, apt description into play.

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(This is as good a time as any to remind myself that my screenplay -- there are now nine people in the country, by actual count, who are *not* working on a screenplay -- *Slackjawed & Agape* would be a fine name for a law firm of hapless lawerly bunglers -- or maybe a pair of washed-up private detectives who drive around in a souped-up muscle car, exploring catch phrases, cornering escaped grammarians, arresting suspicious syntax...

... except that a lot of people would think that I meant the *other* agape -- the outbursts of spontaneous, altruistic love... the love of a deity for its people... the meal that early Christians shared in brotherly love... Well, there's nothing like Thanksgiving to shake *that* whole concept loose for another year.)

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Recipe for Festive Holiday Psychosis:

- Toss together a steamed bunch of strangers related only by birth or marriage.
- Whip in a peck of stressful, half-baked seasonal schedules and unwashed demands.
- Blend thoroughly with the persistent, deep-fried subconscious expectations of the Normal

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Rockwell holiday portrait.

- Parboil chit-chat with polarizing political righteousness over open nuclear family fires.
- Smash and beat psyches into a pulpy consistence with naked, warlike football aggression, marinated in traditional testosterone sauce.
- Place entire day in massive pressure cooker; set heat on maximum and walk away.
- Wait until the entire shooting match leaps from the rails, on fire, plummeting down steep embankments, into open, blazing fissures in the earth, cracking the planet in half.
- Serves absolutely everyone, and no-one (somewhat like politicians).

Talk about being a chip off the ol' crock pot (or maybe just a keeper of the *Whatta-Crock...*), but it's... um... an

old

family recipe. Although, for the life of me, I have no idea how any family gets to live

long

enough to be old, and have old recipes, given this regimen of razor-sharp moving turkey parts and twirling, swirling death-gauntlets common to all holiday gatherings.

* * * * *

Such contradictions we live: Loving the ramp-up to, and thought of, the holidays, but concluding them with gritted teeth, locked jaws, nervous ticks, and oaths to forgo the next batch. Another? Disliking the hell that is *other people*, for heaven's sake, but *adoring the hell* out of *some* heavenly individuals. There's always professing

love thy neighbor

while fantasizing about a sudden meteor-cratering of their offices and abodes. Or, maybe just loving life, but doing almost everything we can in our actions to move the personal, spiritual, and species football much closer to the Final End Zone Where There Is No Spiking, or Even Any Breathing.

Any sober scrutiny of the human condition convinces us of two things: The Universe has a truly warped and sadistic sense of humor, and, too, that another Rehoboam of champagne is in order, holding, as it does, four and a half liters -- about three times as much as a magnum -- which helps keep down the drudgery of placing constant orders to *keep the painkiller flowing, nurse*.

As far as family goes, there's no way, I've found, to hug anyone at arms' length, although there

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is probably a genius grant awaiting anyone who does.

On the other hand, *MacArthur & the Family Grants* could be another sure-fire winner of a screenplay, about these *genius-grant* funders, see, who have to deal with the lovable, daffy, but *dumber* members of their own...

Nah. That sort of feel-good Americana has already been done. And in every living room. Since the beginning of time -- or, since this one particular holiday began. *This* one, I mean -- *to day* -- not *all* Thanksgivings. See, Time is funny that way -- you're either sizzling along at light speed, or you're frozen solid in a lime Jell-O mold, suspended inside with the cole slaw and mixed fruit, while Aunt Earlene explains all the ins and outs of lumbago, gout, shingles...

Sometimes, we just have to steel ourselves to the idea that Life is sometimes a lot like being in the dentist's waiting room with a throbbing jaw, brain, skull, spine, and feet, cursing one's own meat-based humanity... or, maybe, like being in *another* waiting room, the one where your car is in the shop -- the one with the battery-acid black coffee, the loose newspapers scattered around are from 1918, and the country-western muzak comes in too loudly, and over a half-tuned radio with a loose speaker wire -- where the ancient mechanic periodically shuffles out every three hours and tells you he found something *else* that just now *got broke* on the ancient Gremlin of your escape.

Or, more often, Life is like being in both waiting rooms at once. *Twice*.

... which, come to think of it, could actually be, *uh*, like, this kind of existential sitcom, you know, where the customers go through this life-changing experience or one sort or another every week, in a *Night Gallery* and *Twilight Zone* sort of way, but then everything works out happily in the end...

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Yeah, I know. This is 2014 -- *after* Republicans crashed the economy, ended democracy, and committed us to a state of endless war. Even though the nation's still living in a GOP fantasy land about all that, asking people to swallow *happy endings* is simply asking too much.

Speaking of being asked to swallow too much: Pass the Rehoboam gravy boat.

* * * * *

Some of my thanks that I give today are heaped up and cobbled upon questionable underpinnings, I know. For example, I have much to be thankful for, being an unsuperstitious survivor (knock on Formica) of a heart attack *and* cancer. One of those, I can blame on too many 80-hour weeks trying to help save a company I thought was going bankrupt, when in fact, the owners were simply trying to make the bottom line sparkle, so they could gut the company and run...

I am thankful I don't work there anymore. And, not having anything rock-solid to blame the cancer on, I'll chalk *that* one up to *them* as well, cancerous growths that they and cutthroat capitalism both are. And, while I attempt to rise above, forgive and forget, and move on, I'll take this occasion to very serenely wish them all multiple events of stepping barefoot on painful, poisonous bottom-feeders, snakes, jellyfish, and assorted sea life, while they enjoy their swindled millions in the Bahamas, and so that they, too, might feverishly enjoy the inside of hospital rooms for extended periods, while nursing legs swollen to the size of Chevy estate wagons. Plus, lots and lots of tapioca pudding. And sub-zero bed pans, right from the freezer.

As I say, I am pretty young in the Cosmic Acceptance department. All I can say in my defense is that I am working on it, *I'm working on it...*

... just like my *other* screenplay, about these rabid Republican investment business people who go around the country leveraging companies for pennies on the dollar, stealing union retirement funds, and leeching value out of companies, only to sell everything off, profitting like mad while leaving their cardboard debts behind, and escaping offshore, all while blaming the unions for

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benefit demands, blaming the *gummint* for minimum wage amounts with half the buying power of 1938's inflation rate, and blaming tax policies established by their very own majority Republican politicians...

Actually, something like *Weezul & Whipsnade, Unlimited* could work, come to think of it. Oh, wait -- it's already been done, and is still being done, every single day, and in the rich, majestic theater of real life. Dang that Romney-Koch vulture-capitalism expose on *Lives of the Rich and Shameless*, anyway

,
stealing our thunder like that.

Well, so much for a daffy sitcom about people who'd steal anything not bolted to the floor -- not bolted to the *planet*, more like.

* * * * *

OK, there's being thankful for not being like the Koch brothers. Check. (Although the money would be nice. And who among is not convinced we could spend their money way better than *t hey* could? I can tell you I'd like the opportunity to prove to you that I'm absolutely right in this regard...)

There's being thankful I'm not a [shudder] Republican, or a [aftershock sympathy shudder] Republican-Lite. (It's simply that I respect dogs far too much to ask them to become blue; after all, I still have distant** hopes that a system of social democracy can be achieved in the United States, where people are more important than profits, and where full throat can be given to shouting down cutthroat capitalism.)

- ** *Distant*: Roughly the same sort of *distant* as *Andromeda*, the nearest galaxy to our own, at 2 and a half million light years.

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OK, so the pressure's on to come up with a new, solid list of thank-you notes to the Universal Node, here. Obviously, I'm going with the same short-list as I do every year -- thankful for the family and friends who have shared good times and bad, and have stood by me, especially while I took time out of lives to explore the startling concept of mortality. (Trust me: Until you have to take Death out for a test-drive, personally, with your own personal self, the whole *mortality thing* is just a theory. Something that happens to *other* people.)

I'm also thankful to have survived the finding-money process to buy life-saving health care, even though I am saddened to know that millions of people have had to, and will continue to have to, go through the twin battles of fighting for one's life, while *also* fighting for the *money* to wage that war.

There's nothing quite like scouring the countryside for health-care funds to help treat you on your last legs, *while* you are on your last legs. (It's a lot like taking a deep breath, out in space, during your hunt for breathable air.)

Let's see now -- what else should I thank the Fate Fairy, the Pagan Bunny, Cupid, the Magic Pumpkin, and all the other holiday logos and mascots for, this past year?

I'm thankful our President found some way to provide *some* health care for many, many people -- even while Republicans have spent, and continue to spend, millions and millions of dollars to repeatedly battle ***against*** health care for Americans -- more than 30 times, in a huge waste of taxpayer money, time, and people's lives -- and while we all sit on the sidelines watching that show, over and over and over, some cheering, but most oblivious and asleep, hibernating, waiting for some mythical Spring to reawaken.

I'm thankful there is some health care -- although I am saddened a grim, thin solution was reached solely by making increased business for insurance companies, and where profit always

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trumps sanity, sharing, doing the right thing.

I'm thankful our President has not had to be any more Republican than he is, although I am saddened to see Republicans fighting so forcefully, and so ignorantly, against someone who has so often championed their own pet plans. I am thankful Republicans have -- after 72 months, more than 2-thousand days, of stone-walling, pledged to start the People's work once again, although I am saddened to see another push for a lame and laughable Presidential lawsuit instead, and while the red tide of Republicanism is still a high water mark and a heavy stain on the nation.

I'm thankful for the system we have -- imperfect as it is, abused as it is -- although I am saddened to know banks and bankers can still bring down on top of us all the very system we charge them to manage, and which they bleed like famished leeches, no longer interested in keeping the corpse alive for future meals, just in gouging their fill *today*.

I am thankful for Elizabeth Warren and for the consumer protection group -- but am saddened to know we still treat the Wall Street crowd and its players, serial killers all, like jaywalkers, asking them to pitch back pennies of billions stolen... and rigging the rules to ensure they can steal even more, and while publicly slapping the wrist of the hand that feeds the political system itself, and all the players.

I am thankful for servants of the people like Warren, and like Bernie Sanders and Jeff Merkley and others, who continue to hold high the finest aspects and banners of Liberalism, and Sanity -- but am saddened to know their numbers are few, fewer than ever, and that the parade of Republican madness is unending, and that many have forgotten what Liberalism is and all it has done for the country.

I am thankful for comedy programs like *The Daily Show* and *Last Week Tonight* for their hard news reporting -- but am saddened that regular news shows are so incredibly daft, laughable, and inane.

I am thankful for our freedom of speech in this country -- but am saddened what Rush and Fox have chosen to do with that freedom.

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I am thankful our founders were so trusting and brilliant as to cobble an ingenious plan that would rely on an informed and engaged public to sanely steer the nation -- but am saddened that we have chosen to become ill-informed, become disengaged, and become quite, quite insane.

I'm thankful to have survived being thrown away by the economic system of the country, care of demographic trending, and rigged supply-and-demand economic employment -- thrown away like a square of Kleenex or bath tissue. A square of *used* bath tissue -- and we're *not* talking a *take-me-away-Calgon* bath here.

- Maybe we need a sitcom where a staff of crack consumer champions places needed warnings on dangerous and confusing products -- like placing *Not Intended for Internal Consumption* on all Republican speeches, promises, and plans, or *Not to Be Used in the Tub, You Moron* for bath tissue... I'll get back to you on that, once development is green-lighted.

No, to go deeper into more meaningful territory here, way above and beyond screenplays -- no matter how good a sitcom called *Thank God It's Black Friday* might really be, about The Grim Reaper and the assorted, wacky hijinks that ensue when ol' G.R. keeps messing up every single Friday, after eternally-long weeks, always messing up and harvesting the wrong people, and then has to go back and restore everyone wrongly taken back to life, once the dearly-once-departed have learned some important life lesson or other, and all done in a neatly packaged, laughably human way -- that one is going to take some *much* heavier thinking.

No, to reach more deeply into that warm, moist, humid cavity of Cosmic Stuffing, so to say, is going to take some more candied yams, clearly, and, yes, some more turkey.

In case you're curious, there's more tryptophan in cheddar cheese than in turkey, so when that solidifying cannonball in your gut gets your Nap Alarm flapping like a flightless bird in full panic, reach for the Tums and blame the tummy, not the turkey.

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Next year, in fact, I think we're carving a turkey out of this *huge* block of cheese, making it look like a monster roast turkey, and starting our very own Black-Friday-esque holiday of Fabulous, Conspicuous American Consumption.

How else to celebrate living in a country where one out of five kids --16 million children -- still go to bed hungry in the Greatest Country in the World, and where the top one percent control 40% of the nation's wealth? Where we simultaneously fight obesity, diabetes, and wrestle control of our own taste buds every waking second of the day, all while industry researchers scheme to collar our hunter-gatherer taste buds against us and create *hotnew* Must-Have Fast Foods?

By the way: I have no beefs*** with our love of food, although our love of long shelf-life foods is not helping our own bodies' shelf lives. Pumping hydrogen through our fats helps the foods stay around longer, but I am far less sure what pumping hydrogen through our circulatory system does to our blood vein walls and to our own longevity. Or our memories, *whatever the hell it was we were talking about*.

- *** *Beefs*: I'm going with the spelling rule on "roofs" here, and not "rooves." I love burgers, too, but I think "beeves" is just wrong. I will probably come to rethink beef in time, too -- but the fake burgers have to get better first. Speaking of which, don't gross yourself out by Googling fake burgers, as it will have you swearing off all food on this, our holy American festival day of St. Gluttony.

However, I do think a giant turkey made of cheese can help us celebrate our yearly Festival of Buffet-and-Banquet-Table Inhaling, here, in the land where Competitive Eating in sponsor-logo'd bibs is every bit as much a legitimate and respected sport as Couch-potato Surfing in our jammies and Online Shopping in our underwear.

To all, I wish a bicarb, along with an intensive period of self-reflection (only during commercials), thanks-giving (in between loving squabbles), and life-giving renewal (right after the feeding-frenzy coma dissipates).

And, may the Cheesebird of Paradise never, ever fly up our noses.

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Pass-the-turkey news:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2014/11/24/no-turkey-doesnt-make-you-sleepy-the-science-of-thanksgiving-feasts/>

Transfats & memory:

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/11/18/trans-fat-damage-memory/19213173/>

"What have liberals ever done for America" letter: <http://www.thomhartmann.com/forum/2010/11/thanksgiving-debate-ammo-what-have-republicans-ever-done-letter>

Turkey Day Not-so-Phun:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeff-reichert/dear-new-york-citys-unins_b_6184470.html

<http://www.nokidhungry.org/problem/hunger-facts>

Turkey Day Phun:

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2014/11/24/366345445/sandwich-monday-the-thanksgiving-hot-durkey>

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<http://www.npr.org/blogs/theprotojournalist/2014/11/19/365195079/when-thanksgiving-was-weird>

The R-Rate Holiday Food Section

Death to Turkeys:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8Buy2X0kFo>

... but, **Life for Salmon:**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?annotation_id=annotation_2517669647&feature=iv&src_vid=X8Buy2X0kFo&v=I9qA8c-E_oA