Business Essentials: Communication. Negotiation. Unbranding.

From the "Major Works" series

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Preface

The motley collection at [Jonathan's Corner](#) includes a few works addressed to the business world; of particular interest are "[An Open Lettter From a Customer: I Don't WANT to Abuse Your Customers and Be Rewarded for Gaming the System](#)" and "[Friendly, Win-Win Negotiations in Business: Interest-Based Negotiation and *Getting to Yes*](#)"

Both speak to improving effectiveness in the world of business.

Table of Contents

Friendly, Win-Win Negotiations in Business: Interest-Based Negotiation and [Getting to Yes]

[Getting to Yes: How to Negotiate Agreement Without Giving In]

The negotiation classic [Getting to Yes: How to Negotiate Agreement Without Giving In] introduces something called "interest-based negotiation" and presents it as the ultimate power tool for adversarial negotiations where the other party has the upper hand. And it may well be that power tool, but some of the best mileage I've seen has been in friendly negotiations, and business world problem solving.

[Getting to Yes] opens by discussing two main styles of negotiation that occur to people: hard and soft negotiation. Hard negotiation is a matter of taking a position and insisting on it: playing hardball. Soft negotiation, more characteristic of friendly negotiations, still involves taking a position, but being very flexible.

[Getting to Yes] presents a third option, that of interest-based negotiation. Individual positions taken by either side of the table are ordinarily poorly suited to the interests of the other side; and interest-based negotiation involves uncovering what the basic *interests* of the two sides of the table are, and then problem solving to, as best as possible,

satisfy the interests of *both* sides of the table. [Getting to Yes](#) speaks of being *hard* on interests, *soft* on positions.

Examples from the world of information technology

It's obvious, in the context of a negotiation between bosses and stakeholders on the one hand, and information technology on the other, that a stakeholder or boss has interests involved in negotiating what information technology professionals will do for them. What is less obvious is that information technology professionals *also* have interests. These interests include interests that amount to good engineering concerns, including a realistic solution, avoiding technical ways of painting themselves into a corner, *and* solving the problem in a way that will work well for stakeholders. (If a cobbler makes a shoe that fits comfortably, the customer will make fewer requests for adjustments than if the shoe pinches.)

On this last point, it might be remarked that initial solutions (positions) proposed by stakeholders should be viewed with suspicion. When someone non-technical tries to design a technological solution, there is a real danger of a solution that looks good on paper, but amounts to a shoe that pinches. One time my brother, then a database administrator, commented that on his team there was a system administrator who, when he was asked something that amounted to, "Is there a way to—", would rudely cut the person off and say, "Stop. Tell me what you want to have accomplished." And he gave an excellent example of interest-based negotiation, even if it is a better way to avoid being curt.

The example he gave was, if there was concern about a disk filling up, someone asking, "Is there a way to run [the Unix command] 'df' every five minutes and send it to the system administrator's pager?" And there are several things wrong with that position. First of all, this was a little while ago when there weren't smartphones with high-resolution screens. The Unix 'df' command is designed around a full (text) screen, producing half a page or a page of text (probably more given their environment), and decidedly not optimized to quickly give useful information on a pager. It would require scrolling to see if the 'df' output represented a problem or not. And constant messages that require digging to see if they

mean anything important amount to spam from the system administrator's view: the fact that one more verbose message was sent to the pager means nothing particularly interesting to a system administrator. And that spam risks a real "boy who cried wolf" syndrome, with the system administrator having no clue when a real problem is occurring.

Not that there is any need for helplessness if disks fill up. There might even be a better solution that would use pagers. For example, there could be some monitoring tools that page a system administrator if a disk reaches some threshold of being too full, or if disk usage is growing too quickly. The basic issue is one that people can take steps to deal with. But the system administrator's blunt "Stop. Just tell me what you want to do," was almost kindness in disguise; it was meant to pursue the *mutual* interest of solving a problem as well as possible, as opposed to a solution that amounts to, "I've solved the problem badly; now you go implement it."

The system administrator's blunt response when he sensed positional negotiation was, "Stop. I don't even want to *hear* your position. Just tell me your interest and let me address that."

For another, slightly more technical example, there was a system administrator at our company who had written an asset tracking program, and later on I was charged with writing a purchase order system. When the system was shaping up, he said he wished his asset tracking system could simply go away, superceded by the new purchase order system.

The general consensus was that the order tracking system was *tolerable*, and the CTO consulted with some people from other companies and said nobody had really done better than tolerable like our asset tracking. The system administrator wanted me to replace his asset tracking program, and my expectation was that I might be able to do a *little* better than him, but not a *lot* better. And I think he was modest about the solution he had pulled off given what he was dealing with. I told him, at a social meeting, "*The reason my program is crisp and clear and*

your program is messy, is that the problem my program solves is crisp, clear, and simple, and the problem your program solves is messy and hard." And I could see a smile and shining eyes on his wife's face, but my remark was not intended as a merely polite statement. As we did business, the problem of purchase orders was cut and dry, and I didn't have to make any especially hard judgment calls: mostly it was straightforward adaptation as requests came in. By contrast, the tracking system covered assets and components, venturing into territory the purchase order didn't touch, and the territory of assets and components came with genuinely fuzzy and difficult border cases, where you had to draw lines about what was an asset and what was a component and deal with subjective factors that the purchase order system never touched.

Once the two systems were up and running, it looked like that meant duplicate data entry. It would have been an option for me to write a replacement asset tracking system, but I think my co-worker was being genuinely modest about a real achievement, and it did not seem obvious to me that my replacement for a working system would work better. We looked at publishing data from the asset tracking system to purchase orders, and then set things so that entries in the purchase order system were automatically carried over to the asset tracking system. That solution was one that was stuck with: it did not involve, as had originally been suggested, that the asset tracking system would be superceded by the purchase order system, but it did address the basic interest: *no need for duplicate data entry*. The asset tracking system was made aware of entries in the purchase order system, and the solution addressed the various interests. Including, one might like to add, that the company would lose *none* of the benefits of a respectable, solid existing system, which would now be working better than ever.

An example from private life

In one family I know, the parents decided that their son could own a pocketknife (he owns a couple), but not carry anything dangerous. That may be a sensible decision, but it was annoying to the son, and I understood his frustration: I know what a [Swiss Army Knife](#) meant to me when I was younger, and still to some extent means to me now. Besides being practical, a [Swiss Army Knife](#) is a nifty device, dipped in coolness. And I could identify with his being frustrated that his parents would not let him carry either pocketknife: not because he specifically wanted something dangerous, but because he wanted coolness.

For Christmas I gave him [a Leatherman multi-tool designed to be useful and cool while still being something you could carry through TSA-approved airport security.](#) It only has a few features as far as multitools go, but it has enough, and he greatly appreciates the gift. It satisfied both his desire for something cool, and his parents' concern that what he carry not be dangerous, and so he carries it now.

In a non-work interaction at work, my boss received a copy of [Hello World! Computer Programming for Kids and Other Beginners,](#) a book that introduces the powerful language Python with pirates and ninjas, and I asked him if I could borrow the book for a few minutes to copy bibliographic information. His reply was "Let me send you an email," and forwarded me a promotional email with a coupon code worth $20 off the book's price if you ordered by such-and-such a date. In this friendly negotiation, I took a position and my boss responded in a way that would address my interests better than my initial position.

Step one: Identify the interests
Step two: Problem solving

All of these negotiations have an element of problem solving. The first step is to identify interests. If someone comes to you with a position, which happens 99.9% of the time, it is a position motivated by interests, and you need to appreciate those interests. Anthropology-style observation, if you know how to do it, helps. Being empathic and trying to see what benefit someone's position will bring them helps. As much as possible, bring interests out into the open so they can be addressed.

A win-win solution may not always be possible; the pie may not be big enough for everyone even if they cooperate. ([Getting to Yes](#) may be of some help here.) But **a win-win outcome will be more often found by trying to address interests than simply starting with positions, *staying* with positions, and only doling out who makes what concession to the opposite position.** And creative problem solving can help address those interests once they have been identified: for my brother's workplace, system administrators can be automatically notified, including by pager, when any of several identified red flags is tripped. Being dangerous is not intrinsic to being a cool multitool: therefore one can search for a safety-friendly multitool. *Is there a hidden opportunity in interests that have been identified?* Check and see.

Conclusion

Interest-based negotiation is not always easy; [Getting to Yes](#) provides few examples: one of these few has two sisters arguing about an orange, splitting it, and then one sister ate the inside of her half and the other sister used her half of the rind to bake a pie. And the introduction states that stories are hard to find. Part of my effort here has been to provide examples, taken out of my experience because that's what I know, even if it would be best to have third person stories and avoid stories that present me as a hero. But the rewards for at least *trying* for interest-based negotiation are worthwhile. And, as stated at the top, [Getting to Yes](#) may present interest-based negotiation as the central power tool for a hostile negotiation where the other party is more powerful than you, some of the best mileage I've gotten out of it has been in friendly negotiations with other people who share some of the same goals. And this is true inside and outside of the business world.

It's worth recognizing negotiation as negotiation: not all negotiations have a dollar amount. And once a friendly negotiation is recognized, identifying interests can be a powerful tool to obtain win-win results.

Is there a place where you could use friendly, win-win, interest-based negotiations more?

The Administrator Who Cried, "Important!"

Once upon a time, there was a new employee, hired fresh out of college by a big company. The first day on the job, he attended a pep rally, filled out paperwork concerning taxes and insurance, and received a two page document that said at the top, "Sexual Harassment Policy: Important. Read Very Carefully!"

So our employee read the sexual harassment policy with utmost care, and signed at the bottom indicating that he had read it. The policy was a remedial course in common sense, although parts of it showed a decided lack of common sense. It was an insult to both his intelligence and his social maturity.

Our employee was slightly puzzled as to why he was expected to read such a document that carefully, but soon pushed doubts out of his mind. He trotted over to his new cubicle, sat down, and began to read the two inch thick manual on core essentials that every employee needs to know. He was still reading core essentials two hours later when his boss came by and said, "Could you take a break from that? I want to introduce you to your new co-workers, and show you around."

So our employee talked with his boss — a knowledgeable, competent, and understanding woman — and enjoyed meeting his co-workers, trying to learn their names. He didn't have very much other work yet, so he dutifully read everything that the administrators sent him — even the

ones that didn't say "Important — please read" at the top. He read about ISO 9001 certification, continual changes and updates to company policy, new technologies that the company was adopting, employee discounts, customer success stories, and other oddments totalling to at least a quarter inch of paper each day, not counting e-mails.

His boss saw that he worked well, and began to assign more difficult tasks appropriate to his talent. He took on this new workload while continuing to read everything the administration told him to read, and worked longer and longer days.

One day, a veteran came and put a hand on his shoulder, saying, "Kid, just between the two of us, you don't have to read every piece of paper that says 'Important' at the top. None of us read all that."

And so our friend began to glance at the first pages of long memos, to see if they said anything helpful for him to know, and found that most of them did not. Some time after that, he realized that his boss or one of his co-workers would explicitly tell him if there was a memo that said something he needed to know. The employee found his workload reduced to slightly less than fifty hours per week. He was productive and happy.

One day, a memo came. It said at the top, "Important: Please Read." A little more than halfway through, on page twenty-seven, there was a description of a new law that had been passed, and how it required several jobs (including his own) to be done in a slightly different manner. Unfortunately, our friend's boss was in bed with a bad stomach flu, and so she wasn't able to tell him he needed to read the memo. So he continued doing his job as usual.

A year later, the company found itself the defendant in a forty million dollar lawsuit, and traced the negligence to the action of one single employee — our friend. He was fired, and made the central villain in the storm of bad publicity.

But he definitely was in the wrong, and deserved what was coming to him. The administration very clearly explained the liability and his responsibility, in a memo very clearly labelled "Important". And he didn't

even *read* the memo. It's his fault, right?

No.

Every communication that is sent to a person constitutes an implicit claim of, "This concerns you and is worth your attention." If experience tells other people that we lie again and again when we say this, then what right do we have to be believed when we really do have something important to say?

I retold the story of the boy who cried wolf as the story of the administrator who cried important, because administrators are among the worst offenders, along with lawyers, spammers, and perhaps people who pass along e-mail forwards. Among the stack of paper I was expected to sign when I moved in to my apartment was a statement that I had tested my smoke detector. The apartment staff was surprised that I wanted to test my smoke detector before signing my name to that statement. When an authority figure is surprised when a person reads a statement carefully and doesn't want to sign a claim that all involved know to be false, it's a bad sign.

There is communication that concerns the person it's directed to, but says too much — for example, most of the legal contracts I've seen. The tiny print used to print many of those contracts constitutes an implicit acknowledgment that the signer is not expected to read it: they don't even use the additional sheets of paper necessary to print text at a size that a person who only has 20/20 vision can easily read. There is also communication that is broadcast to many people who have no interest in it. To that communication, I would propose the following rule: *Do not, without exceptionally good reason, broadcast a communication that concerns only a minority of its recipients.* It's OK every now and then to announce that the blue Toyota with license place ABC 123 has its lights on. It's not OK to have a regular announcement that broadcasts anything that is approved as having interest to some of the recipients.

My church, which I am in general very happy with, has succumbed to vice by adding a section to the worship liturgy called "Announcements", where someone reads a list of events and such just

before the end of the service, and completely dispels the moment that has been filling the sanctuary up until the announcements start. They don't do this with other things — the offering is announced by music (usually good music) that contributes to the reverent atmosphere of the service. But when the service is drawing to a close, the worshipful atmosphere is disrupted by announcements which I at least almost never find useful. If the same list were printed on a sheet of paper, I could read it after the service, in less time, with greater comprehension, with zero disruption to the moment that every other part of the service tries so carefully to build — and I could skip over any announcements that begin "For Married Couples:" or "Attention Junior High and High Schoolers!" The only advantage I can see to the present practice, from the church leadership's perspective, is that many people will not read the announcements at all if they have a choice about it — and maybe, just *maybe*, there's a lesson in that.

As well as pointing out examples of a rampant problem in communication, where an administrator cries "Important!" over many things that are not worth reading, and then wonders why people don't believe him when he cries "Important!" about something which *is* important, I would like to suggest an alternative for communities that have access to the internet. A web server could use a form to let people select areas of concern and interest, and announcements submitted would be categorized, optionally cleared with a moderator, and sent only to those people who are interested in them. Another desirable feature might let end receivers select how much announcement information they can receive in a day — providing a discernible incentive to the senders to minimize trivial communication. In a sense, this is what happens already — intercom litanies of announcements ignored by school students in a classroom, employees carrying memos straight from their mailboxes to the recycle bins — but in this case, administrators receive clear incentive and choice to conserve bandwidth and only send stuff that is genuinely important.

While I'm giving my Utopian dreams, I'd like to comment that at least some of this functionality is already supported by the infrastructure developed by UseNet. Probably there are refinements that can be implemented in a web interface — all announcements for one topic

shown from a single web page, since they shouldn't be nearly as long as a normal UseNet post arguing some obscure detail in an ongoing discussion. Perhaps other and better can be done — I am suggesting "Here's something better than the status quo," not "Here's something so perfect that there's no room for improvement."

In one UseNet newsgroup, an exchange occurred that broadcasters of announcements would be well-advised to keep in mind. One person said, "I'm trying to decide whether to give the UseNet Bore of the Year Award to [name] or [name]. The winner will receive, as his prize, a copy of all of their postings, minutely inscribed, and rolled up inside a two foot poster tube."

Someone else posted a reply asking, "Length or diameter?"

*To those of you who broadcast to people whom you are able to address because of your position and not because they have chosen to receive your broadcasts, I have the following to say: In each communication you send, you are deciding the basis by which people will decide if future communications are worth paying attention to, or just unwanted noise. If your noise deafens their ears, you have no right to complain that the few truly important things you have to tell them fall on deaf ears. **Only you can prevent spam!**

An Open Letter From a Customer

I don't WANT to abuse your employees and be rewarded for gaming the system.

cjshayward.com/customer

Dear Customer Service;

I don't WANT to abuse your employees and be rewarded for gaming the system.

As a customer and as a member of the public, I like being treated with courtesy and respect, and it is nice if customer service employees can be gracious to me whether I am right or wrong. And if "**The customer is always right!**" is about being gracious and representing the company well whether the customer is right or wrong, then I'm all for **that version** of, "The customer is always right!"

However, if you say "The customer is always right!" as **a policy that invites customers to be deliberately abusive,** and treat your employees as punching bags because they know you will treat them better than customers who act like mature adults, I will take my business to places like Starbuck's (for one example) where employees give the excellent customer service that only employees supported by their management can give.

I do, sometimes, come in with a complaint that I want help with. But even then, I'm not looking for "free hits" on a punching bag. I'm not even looking for a shoulder to cry on, although it might be nice if customer

service can offer a sympathetic ear when a customer has had a rough day. What I really *am* looking for is help fixing a problem, and **the bigger the problem is, the more an empowered employee is my best ally.** An unsupported employee who has been put out as a punching bag, and is trying to hide resentment from being put out as a punching bag by management, is not nearly so big a help to me as an *empowered* employee. I've heard that bad internal customer service never gives good external customer service, and **when I need help, I want an empowered employee acting with management support, not someone management pushes forward as a doormat.**

Like a lot of other people, and like a lot of other *customers*, **I don't like to watch someone be abused,** and then treated better than those of us who try to respect your employees as humans. The message is very clear, whether or not it is one you would want associated with your organization. The message? You are willing to let us see others who are obviously acting abusive to your employees to get ahead of us when they are "just" being abusive to game the system, while people who treat your burning-out employees with respect are effectively second-class customers. Why? Because we are not gaming the system by abusing your employees.

I've heard of stores where the management treats employees with enough respect to call the police if a customer will not stop treating employees abusively. This happens perhaps once or twice a *year*; most of the time the employees are trying to make any reasonable effort to please customers. But when it does happen, **the spontaneous response from the other customers is to clap and cheer**. Most customers do not enjoy seeing someone be abused, even if the abuser *isn't* getting rewarded for gaming the system.

I spent a bit of time in England, and one thing that really struck me there was that customer service settings seemed to quite often have a poster that said something like, "**I am here to help customers. *Please let me do my job.* If you treat me in an abusive manner, my supervisors will put their foot down and call the police if they need to.**" I was, for a very, *very* short while put off the first time I saw one of those posters, and then very, *very* impressed. And I realized

that **those posters went hand-in-hand with excellent customer service:** not just the routine details, but deftly smoothing some very ruffled feathers when a customer was wrong and upset at not getting what he wanted.

And perhaps it stands to reason. I know the English place an emphasis on politeness, but customer service people who are treated as punching bags will probably be working hard to hide resentment. I may be missing something, but these customer service people didn't seem to have much resentment to hide. (If any.)

I miss that customer service, and for that matter I miss the posters. Now I often get the inferior customer service that comes from employees who know that management doesn't support them (and knowingly expects them to take abuse), not the top-notch customer support of employees who are supported by management, are not expected to take frequent abuse, and act empowered and free to help me as the customer. It's quite a difference.

It's a shame when "The Customer Is Always Right" gets in the way of treating employees well enough that they can deliver good customer service.

As a customer and as a member of the general public, and as a man and a human being, I would appreciate if you treat your employees as human beings who you will no more allow to be abused on your premises than a customer.

Sincerely,
Christos Jonathan Hayward
cjshayward.com

A Disruptive Take on Unbranding

An opening "Heads up!"

This article is intended to do something that is usually best avoided, at least in the context of an article.

Some students of culture describe semiotic frames that define a society's *possibles et pensables*: they shape what is seen as **possible** and what is even **thinkable** within a society. And it is usually preferable to handle communication so that you aren't asking people to overhaul their mental frameworks: if you can think far enough outside the box that you find *possibles et pensables* the sort of thing that can be easily brought into question, that's a wonderful thing to be able to do, but it is usually best kept under wraps, and usually best kept in a back pocket.

This piece is designed to delve into deeper work and not be as quickly digested as other fare. It's harder to process than an article intended to persuade you between two options that we both *already* understand well enough. I tried to think about how to make my point while dodging working on what is seen as possible and what is even thinkable, and I don't see how to eliminate that work from my point. I want to revise what is seen as **possible** and what is **thinkable** about branding today.

Where did *branding* come from anyway?

To the best of my knowledge, and to only present the beginning and end of a story, branding was once what happened when cattle owners would use a hot iron symbol to *brand* an identifying mark on cattle they owned, to be able to claim whose cattle they were if there were any question. There is a fairly close equivalent to this in the modern business world, but the equivalent isn't really "how a company communicates itself and its offering to the outside world." It's really much more the unsexy practice of attaching metal tags to valuable company equipment that say, "This is property of XYZ corporation, serial number 12345." And while there may be good reasons for engaging in this part of due diligence, it is hardly that interesting or deep.

Not so with real branding in today's business world, not by any stretch. As I have prepared and thought about the question, I'm not sure I can think of an equally significant concept that I have met. To pick two examples from my own field in information technology, Agile development and open source software may be significant concepts, but I do not see the same niches and layers. There is some theory about open source software as such, and people may complain that a company that releases software under an open source license but "drops [external contributions] on the floor" isn't really walking the walk, but in my experience the theory that most open source software developers are interested are the computer science and software engineering issues concerning their tools and pet projects, and you simply don't have subspecialized high value consultants on the theory and ideology of open source. But branding is in fact a *very* big concept, and you do have high-value consultants actively engaged for their expertise in some specialization or subspecialization somewhere under the "branding" umbrella.

And with this significance comes something else, maybe something less attractive: however useful or prominent it may be, it is far from a worldwide universal, and I am not aware of any Great Teachers who have thought in terms of branding. Not only that, but Socrates might very well have lived to a ripe old age, instead of being condemned to death, if he

have lived to a ripe old age, instead of being condemned to death, if he had lived a brand that would have been socially acceptable to the citizens of his city. (The entire story of his gadfly's teaching and life is an example of how to avoid branding yourself if you want to succeed and live.) Discussion of branding may be anachronous if applied to Socrates, but the principle justifies such an intrusion.

Two seismic shifts, one after another

In the popular *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, that a shift had taken place in wisdom literature: that is, what people have written about how to succeed as a person; one definition offered for such wisdom is, "skill for living." Whenever the text was written, the author had apparently read a great deal of wisdom literature over time and made [a cardinally important distinction between a *character ethic* and a *personality ethic.*](#) Up until about World War II, the basic framing assumption in wisdom literature in the U.S. is that success is success arising from character. One needs to be diligent, and humble, and merciful to others, and so on. In short, we need virtuous living to get ahead. These virtues may include practices: Ben Franklin's "A penny saved is a penny earned" is an exhortation to the virtue of thrift. But success is acquired through growing as a person, by growing in virtue.

The subsequent sub-par *personality ethic* was much more superficial; it offered tips and tricks to get ahead, while avoiding anything calling for real internal transformation. And while there are definitely mere practices that we could do better (I could smile more), most of my problems aren't on the level of personality, but where I need to do more inner work. The shift Covey documents is a seismic shift, and it is difficult to overstate its significance. Something like the character ethic and the personality ethic exist at least to some extent side-by-side in information technology: there are people who have been educated in computer science and software engineering, and who maintain a lifelong curiosity towards those areas as well as working their way through fads and individual tools, and there are educational programs that just teach buzzwords and individual tools with only incidental coverage of deeper issues in theory. A manager who has dealt with both kinds of programmers will know the difference well.

I would posit, or rather point out, that there has been a second shift after a shift from a *character ethic* to a *personality ethic*: a shift from a *personality ethic* to a (personal) *brand ethic*. There are books I've read that offer an induction into a brand ethic in ways that someone who's not

already an insider will understand: but I don't remember anything I've read treating as a live question whether we need a *brand ethic* or a *personality ethic*, or whether we need a *brand ethic* or a *character ethic*. Personality has a place: it has a place because a personal brand on Twitter that incorporates some amount of what feels like personality is a stronger brand than one that is one-dimensional. The place for personality is neither more nor less than what the brand ethic calls for. And that's *odd*.

But you, *C.J.S. Hayward*, have a brand!

In one sense, at least some people will say that I have a brand, and one that I have consciously contributed to. This blog's background, for instance, is one touch out of many things that provide a sense of brand. Old-fashioned, exaggeratedly recognizable links could be called another. None the less, I meet the concept of a personal brand with some degree of puzzlement. I've written dialogues before, but I'm drawing a blank at how to flesh out a dialogue with pretty much any of the world's great teachers about marketing-style branding as a paradigm for how to relate to others. I do not find branding in the [Sermon on the Mount](), I have difficulty envisioning what Sun Tzu or other sages would say, and for that matter I do not think that Muhammad would have understood the concept, and if he *had* understood it, would find it to be extremely offensive: much as democracy's foundational attitude that you have a say in things is profoundly un-Islamic (when George Bush was pushing to endow Iraq with democracy, my comment to friends was, "I wish that Bush would herald a goal that would be less offensive to Muslims, like a hambone in every pot.").

It is possible for brands to be layered. It is possible for brands to have depth. It is possible for brands to present a tip of an iceberg with lots of room to dig. However, I would pick as a particularly bad piece on personal branding a book chapter which advised the reader to pick three positive adjectives on the list, and simply decide, "These will be my brand." And this isn't just one book. When a company has announced that XYZ represent its values, it gives the impression of something arbitrarily chosen and tacked on, something plastic, something that would really make Michael Polanyi squirm.

Our close contemporary Michael Polanyi ([Wikipedia]()), to pick one of the achievements he is best known for, argued essentially that knowledge is not something separate from people. When people are initiated into a tradition of expert practice, there is knowledge tacitly held by those who are already insiders in the culture of expert practics, and this knowledge is tacitly transmitted to people who are being trained to become insiders,

without ever being held or passing consciously to those in *either* role. He comments that swimming coaches and swimmers alike breathe differently from non-swimmers in that they expand their lungs to hold more air when they breathe in, and they keep more air in their lungs when they breathe out, using their lungs this way for added buoyancy. Other explanations may be available in this case, but, the broader picture is one that uses *tacit knowledge*, or to take the deliberately chosen title of his magnum opus, ***Personal** Knowledge*, and recognize that we have many layers beyond the surface. And I'm trying to imagine Polanyi reading a text telling him to pick three adjectives that should identify him as his personal brand. I see him squirming, much like the Far Side cartoon entitled, "Baryshnikov's ultimate nightmare" that shows a square dance caller saying, "*Swing your partner 'round and 'round, now promenade left and don't fall down…*"

However, the concern I raise, which may or may not be terribly distinct from Polanyi, isn't just that a personal brand is shallow, or at least has been shallow in every book I've read telling me I need a personal brand. It's also designed as artificial and plastic, not real and alive. It may have an alive motif, like the handmade-looking lettering and art in cookie-cutter Starbucks locations. But it is what Neal Stevenson described in [In the Beginning was the Command Line](#), in describing a mediated and vicarious experience waiting in line for a ride at Disneyland:

> The place looks more like what I have just described than any actual building you might find in India. All the stones in the broken walls are weathered as if monsoon rains had been trickling down them for centuries, the paint on the gorgeous murals is flaked and faded just so, and Bengal tigers loll amid stumps of broken columns. Where modern repairs have been made to the ancient structure, they've been done, not as Disney's engineers would do them, but as thrifty Indian janitors would—with hunks of bamboo and rust-spotted hunks of rebar. The rust is painted on, of course, and protected from real rust by a plastic clear-coat, but you can't tell unless you get down on your knees.

And on this point I'd like to mention a point from *The Cost of*

Discipleship. I don't know now whether I'd agree with the suggestion Bonhoeffer makes, but he highlights that the [Sermon on the Mount](#) says both [Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven](#), and also that we are to conceal our good deeds: [But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth](#). Asking how these two incongruous commands fit together, Bonhoeffer says that we should do good deeds but hide them from ourselves, that we should reach a state of doing goodness that we do it without being aware of it. Now whether that should exactly be believed in reference to the Gospel, I don't know. But something like that is true of some secular skill. I remember a conversation with a Unix professional who said that in a job interview he had claimed to be a Unix wizard because that was required in that social situation, but it would have been "an outright lie" for him to make that claim among his peers. I assure you he was very competent. But his competency had reached a level where (among other things) he knew how little he knew and how much more there was to know, and like almost any good Unix wizard, he found calling himself a Unix wizard to feel like an outright lie. When I was asked in high school as the school's student Unix system administrator, I hesitated, and I was both surprised and delighted when a friend said "Yes" for me; I would have been making an outright lie (in my mind) to make that claim. Nor is this a specific local feature of Unix wizardry. That is just an example close to my experience, and it seems that nobody considers themselves what in H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* terms would be called Morlocks. There is a kind of "reverse hypocrisy" here. A Morlock, to expert practitioners, is someone else at a higher level of skill. (Linus Torvalds has voiced confusion about why others consider him technical.)

The general rule is that the most confident in their performance are usually the most-overconfident, and the most competent are actually less confident; unlike the over-confident, they are guided by a sharply tuned inner self-criticism, the same self-criticism that in any competent practice of classical music means that musicians hear their performance mistakes more quickly than even the most discerning audience members. What is going on here is the same thing as was told to me as a child, which I'll leave in politically incorrect terms:

An Indian and a white man were standing on a beach, and the white man drew a small circle and said, "This is what the Indian knows." Then he drew a larger circle around it and said, "This is what the white man knows." Then the Indian drew a huge circle encompassing both other circles and said, "This is what neither the Indian nor the white man knows."

And this quality, of seeing a huge encompassing circle of things that none of us know, is foundational to being a genuine expert almost anywhere. Hence a high school biology text compares the discipline of biology to trying to discern the characters, plot, and themes of a long and intricately complex movie, when all you have is half a dozen stills in varying conditions. Hence one biology teacher I remember fondly saying very emphatically that we don't know what's going on: all that biologists know now is only a tiny slice of the truth.

So what does this all mean for branding? It means a couple of things, and perhaps it may be good to have three positive adjectives you seek to represent. But one thing it means is that people are often not aware of their good (and bad) properties, or at least not all of them. This *might* be true morally, but it is also true in terms of professional competence. I remember going to a presentation on getting a government job and the "stupid questionnaire" (the presenter's preferred term) where you were asked to rate yourself from 1 up to 5 on different areas of competency. Now coming from a business background where I had been asked to rate myself 1 to 10 in competency and advised the higher self-rating I gave, the harder test questions would be asked of me, thought of rating myself mostly 3's with a couple of 4's on the ones I was strongest, the presenter made crystal-clear that that was not going to work. The only acceptable answer was a 5, or maybe you could get away with one or possibly two self-ratings of 4. And that's *not* selecting for *competency*. It is selecting for *overconfidence*, and for *gaming the system*. For someone who is genuinely *competent*, and is not aware of how and why to game the system here, giving a sincere and well-thought-out self-evaluation is a recipe for elimination even if that employee's past five supervisors would mark the person as a clear 5 across the board.

The title I've been mulling over, *The Twitter Job Search Guide*, is

part of the cohort of books where branding is bedrock. It also suggests that Twitter competencies expand outside of Twitter, so that a cover letter is composed of a few tweets and a resume is composed of a few more tweets. Now that's an idea I'd be cautious about dismissing; communicating value concisely is a valuable skill, and in some sense Twitter might be seen as a Toastmasters of written communication. Toastmasters' Competent Communicator course trains people with five to seven minute speeches addressing core competencies in speaking (plus a couple of other details), and the thought is not exactly that participants will only need to give speeches of that length, but rather to lay a foundation that is explicitly intended to be adaptable to longer or shorter speeches. And Twitter is not always 140 characters of nothing; there are profound contributions made, and it is a valuable skill, and one quite often present among the most ~~competent~~ gifted, to make a significant point clearly and concisely. For a business world that just wants the time, not the whole process of a watch being built, it may be good discipline and skill to be able to write a six tweet cover letter and twelve tweet resume. But I am concerned when this all falls under the aegis of branding. And in *The Twitter Job Search Guide*, the tweets for a cover letter and resume all fall under the heading of communicating a brand. Though there is (for instance) discussion of what constitutes a good ratio between professional and personal tweets, I've read two thirds of the text and I haven't yet seen advice to tweet or communicate something that does not fall under the aegis of your personal brand. The beginning, middle, and end of what you are advised to communicate is *brand*. There is no other way to relate to others, it seems, and this is a plastic form of life.

Now before going further, there is one point I would like to clarify about boundaries (a topic that I believe is ill-framed, but that is not my interest here). One professor, addressing graduate students who were or probably would be teaching assistants, talked about "being the same on the outside and on the inside." She went on very directly to state that this did *not* mean "letting it all hang out"; that was precisely what it was *not*. Normal social interactions embody both what is anthropologically called "positive politeness" and "negative politeness", and on this point I would recall another professor talking about appropriate communication in

crossing cultures. He gave some examples of positive politeness, things like saying "Hello!" to a friend (the sort of examples of politeness that jump to mind). Then he said that when strangers approach each other and look down at the sidewalk when they're a few meters apart, that's *politeness*. It is a refusal to wantonly intrude; it says, "You have not invited me in and I will not presume where I am not invited and I do not belong." And that is *politeness*. He mentioned, to drive the point a little bit further, that he had one good friend he visited, and though he did not do so at this visit, he would have thought *nothing* of opening his friend's refrigerator and helping himself to anything inside. The principle of negative politeness is that you do not do things without invitation; one may surmise that some point along the way the professor's friend gave one or several invitations to rummage through the fridge without asking specific permission, and I would be almost certain that the professor had not *asked* permission to arbitrarily rummage his friend's fridge; he had presumably been *given* that permission as the friendship developed. And outside of a few exceptions like this, it is a significant violation of negative politeness to rummage through someone's fridge without asking.

Socially appropriate relations, or boundaries, or negative politeness, or whatever you want to call it, applies; that can and should mediate our interactions, and brands that have any sense to them will stay within these boundaries. However, while I believe we need the mediation of negative (and positive) politeness, there is something plastic about the mediation of brands. It's good not to give TMI, but a personal brand is neither the only nor the best way to communicate within positive and negative politeness that respects boundaries.

I'm not sure this addresses all of branding; I'd expect that someone who knew branding well could point to currents within branding that survive this critique. I've picked examples that struck me as silly; I haven't discussed the silliness I see about corporations picking three identifying values, and in much more mainstream and professional venues than a book in a career center offering a list of positive adjectives and an invitation to pick three as defining your personal brand. But for what I'd like to see instead, I don't have a big program to offer, just appropriate social interaction: social interaction that is appropriate to

degree of relationships and the roles of the participants. Others have written [The Clue Train Manifesto](); I have not examined that manifesto in depth but its opening words about a human voice suggest I'm not the only person, nor the first person, concerned with human communication.

My personal unbrand

I wanted to give a bit on my personal brand, or rather unbrand, or, if you prefer, ersatz brand. You're welcome to say, if you like, that it is in *fact* just a personal brand, only a personal brand that embodies at least one classic and cardinal mistake. Or at least two mistakes, apart from the easily digested simplicity of an effective brand, the bulk of my effort is growing in terms of both who I am as a person, and how I can achieve deeper competence. Some attention is given to appearance, but a brand works primarily on image management. Skills one acquires, for instance, are there because of their usefulness to a branded image. But let's return to the other basic attribute in what makes sense in a brand.

One of the parameters that is desired in a brand is doing one thing well, simplicity. There may be contours to the brand's landscape, but if you are a jack of all trades you are assumed to be a master of none. One part of a brand's job description, personal or otherwise, is to present a simple core, perhaps one core feature that offers a value proposition with one core benefit. Or, perhaps, there are a few pieces working together, but if you can't write it on the back of a business card, you have failed. And in fact this is not restricted to branding. [Good to Great](#) talks about good companies that became great companies having and/or discovering a core "hedgehog concept" that they keep returning to, and while such a general title on business has to assume marketing and with it branding as part of the picture, I do not recall the emphatic "hedgehog concept" discussion portraying it as a particular issue for marketing and branding. In [Good to Great](#), the "hedgehog concept" defines a one-trick pony that fundamentally outperforms Renaissance man opponents.

In my own case, what I offer is a profoundly gifted portfolio of interconnected skills. Want to know what reading Latin and Greek has to do with the business world? At a competitive local exchange carrier, we were working with an upstream provider who did business with us because they were required to by law, even though they didn't want to, because they saw us as cream-skimmers. Nobody else in my group could make sense of their opaque, bureaucratic communication. I could, and

there wasn't much of a hiccup when my boss, with my consent, added communication with that provider to my responsibilities. I don't know if any of my bosses have cared that I enjoy writing, but several have cared that I could create and edit clear and high-value documents. I don't know whether any of my bosses have particularly cared that I've received rankings as high as 7th in the nation in math contests, but they do care when I apply that to solo programming that hits the ball out of the park. In the positions I'm focusing on now in User Experience, I don't really expect my prospective bosses to care that I have postgraduate coursework in essentially *all* major User Experience disciplines: anthropology, cognitive science, computer science, linguistics, philosophy, and psychology, with [a distinctive work addressing something at the core of User Experience competency](). However, once I am hired and running usability tests, I expect they'll care how much that background lets me draw out of a test.

And, to dig a bit deeper, the achievements I value are not because of intelligence, but *communication*. I've calmly spoken to a bawling four-year-old with an extremely painful blood blister under her thumbnail, until she she had stopped completely. I've been asked why I know how to relate to Ukrainians. I've been told, "You are like a white American and like a black African, and closer than an African brother." I've communicated across large gaps with remarkable success.

And, to give one last detail, I've had many projects and there is a common thread running through virtually all the ones I've liked most: I've reduced user pain, or made something a joy to work with. To pick one example from when I had just started a new job, I was given a four-word spec before my boss left for his vacation: "*Get [name of employee] off overtime.*" The employee was a revenue assurance auditor who was trying to keep on top of a provider who was slipping us inappropriate charges, a responsibility that had him on heavy overtime in a company which normally stuck with a 40 hour workweek. And I winced when I saw what he was doing. I respected him and his actions as a team player, but he was cutting a steak with a screwdriver because that was the only game in town, and I wanted to give a razor-sharp knife, designed for him personally. When he said he was perfectly willing to do drudge work, my

unspoken response was, "I appreciate and respect that you're willing to do drudge work. I still want to get it off your plate." And I drew on Edward Tufte's principles and made a carefully chosen greyscale (instead of numbers) system that cut his involvement down to 40 hours a week, then further down so only part of his time was spent keeping on top of this responsibilities, and he was in a position to engage other responsibilities that were out of the question earlier. At a certain point into the process, I told him, "The only reason I *ever* want you to do us the old tools is because you *want* to," and he very quickly answered, "I don't want to!" In other words, the new tool completely superseded prior methods, which is a rarity. I don't remember *exactly* how far along we were when my boss returned from vacation, but the employee told me he was raving to my boss, and in that whole position my boss never really showed much inclination to micro-manage me. (He described me as "nearly self-managing.")

These and other things could be a basis for a number of personal brands that I could treat as my working contract with the professional world. However, it is my preference not to have my dealings mediated by a constructed personal brand. I'd like to give my friends and employers alike the real "me", and while I will act differently with friends, family, church, and an employer, I don't want people dealing with an artificially infused personal brand. *I want them to deal with me.* And while one friend explained that a fellow graduate student in psychology who dealt in measuring psychological traits answered a questionnaire for a job application, she understood exactly how the test worked, answered like the personality profile that the company wanted, and just made sure to act like the profile they wanted while she was at work. I don't want to judge, but I find something very sad about the story. And it has everything to do with working with a personal brand.

This is not as crystalline as a normal brand. That's intended.

Back to a character ethic…

Theory of Alien Minds: A UX* Copernican Shift

The asterisk besides "UX" originally meant "User eXperience" in information technology. Now the meaning of "UX*" appears to essentially be, "UX and pretty much everyone else who needs to understand and communicate with people who are not *already* on the same page as you." This means almost all of us at some point.

There was one moment of brilliance, I was told, when a North American missionary visiting in Latin America was asked if clothing and sheets lasted longer in her first-world home. The question was not surprising and it reflected cross-cultural understanding: bedsheets and clothing in the U.S. can last for quite some time, while bedsheets and clothing in the host country wear out quickly, perhaps in a few weeks, and it is nickle-and-dime drain on none-too-deep pockets to keep replacing them. The question, perceptive enough, was a question about privilege and easy living.

The missionary's response was astute. She thought for a minute, and then said that yes, sheets in her home area lasted much longer than several weeks if properly cared for... and continued to explain, in addition, what people wore when they were all bundled up for bitter cold. Winter clothing is not mainly for modesty, and gloves, hats, and scarves (or, today, ninja masks) exist because on the very worst days *every*

square inch of exposed skin will be brutally assaulted. The conversation ended with a slight degree of pity from people who only wore clothes for modesty realized that yes, as they had heard, bedsheets and normal clothing lasted much longer than several weeks, but there were some other price tags to pay. The missionary's communication was in all sympathetic, human, and graceful.

Something similar may be said of the degree of IQ where you learn firsthand that being making other people envious is *not* a good thing, and where it happens more than once that you need to involve authorities or send a C&D letter for harassment to stop, and where others' insecurities leave you socially skating on thin ice surprisingly often. Nonetheless, what may be the most interesting social lesson may have every relevance to "UX," or **U**ser e**X**perience, *and it has to do with what is called* ***"theory of other minds"***. The normal conditions for developing "*theory of other minds*" can run into difficulties, but there is something very valuable that can happen.

Theory of other minds,
Split into "theory of like minds", and:
"theory of alien minds":
A Copernican shift

One classic developmental step in communication is developing a "theory of other minds", meaning that you relate to people as also having minds, rather than as some sort of *thing* that emits what may be inexplicable *behaviors* instead of *acting out of human motives and beliefs*.

Part of how the normal "theory of minds" develops is that children tend to give adults gifts they would like to receive themselves, such as colorful toys rather than books. At a greater stage of maturity, people can go from giving gifts they would themselves like to receive, to giving gifts they would not want as much themselves, but another person would. However, in normal development this is an advanced lesson. For most people, the baseline is assuming that most people think like them most of the time.

For outliers in some dimensions, this simple picture does not work. People start with the same simple assumption: that you can relate to people as basically thinking like you. But if you're different enough, you'll break your shins with this approach. Perhaps outliers communicate markedly better if they know one person who starts on the same page, but communication is harder.

The crucial distinction I would draw is between **theory of like minds** and **theory of alien minds**. Both *theory of like minds* and *theory of alien minds* relate to others as having minds. But *theory of like minds* is based on the assumption that other people think as you do. *Theory of alien minds* also really and truly relates to others as having minds, but it is based on a realization that you are not the center of the universe, others often do not think like you, and you need to build bridges.

"Theory of like minds" says, "Other people have minds that are basically just like mine."

"Theory of alien minds" takes a step back, saying, "Other people have minds, and they have minds *whether or not* they're basically just like mine.

This Copernican shift has every relevance to "*Let's not forget the user*" disciplines in UX.

So what does a "theory of alien minds" really look like?

Let me provide several examples, before getting into what it has to do with UX:

Hayward has worked long and hard to communicate well.

Many people might guess that the *features* of his [giftedness] would bring benefits...

...but few guess how much.

The same kind of thing goes with excellent communication. When a friend came from out of town to live in a local apartment, quite a few friends gathered to help unload the moving van.

Hayward, asked for an assignment, expecting to be asked to carry something. Instead, for reasons that are still not clear, she handed him a leash and asked him to look after a dog she has introduced as *not at all* comfortable around men. And the dog very quickly moved as far away as his leash would allow. But Hayward worked his magic... and half an hour later, he was petting the dog's head in his lap, and when he stood up, the dog bounded over to meet the other men in the group.

In another setting, Hayward was waiting for labwork at a convenient care center, when a mother came in, with a four-year-old daughter in tow. The girl was crying bitterly, with a face showing that she was in more pain than she knew how to cope with, and an ugly bulging purple bloodblister under her thumbnail. Hayward understood very well what was going on; his own experience as a child who smashed a thumbnail badly enough to get a bloodblister underneath, was the most pain he had experienced yet in his life.

When the convenient care staff threw the mother a wad of paper to fill out before treatment (as opposed, for instance, to first just

administering anaethesia and only after that detain the mother with paperwork), she left the child crying alone in a chair. Hayward walked over, wanting to engage the girl in conversation in the hopes of lessening her pain. He crouched down to be at eye level, and began to slowly, gently, and calmly speak to the child.

Some time later, Hayward realized two things.

First of all, his attempt to get the girl to talk were a near-total failure. He had started by asking her favorite color, and she was able to answer that question. But essentially every other age-appropriate prompt was met with silence: *"Q: What kind of instrument does a dog play?"—"A: A trom-bone."* (But maybe her pain was too great to allow regular conversation.)

Second of all, she had stopped crying. *Completely.* And her face no longer showed pain. He had, partly by his nonverbal communication, entirely absorbed her attention, and she was unaware of pain that had her bawling her eyes out some minutes before. Hayward realized this with a start, and tried to keep up the conversation such as it was, regardless of whether he had anything to say. A rather startled Hayward did his best not to break the illusion, and did so smoothly enough that she seemed not to notice.

Some time later, Hayward was called for his blood draw. He returned to find the mother *comforting* her daughter, as she had not done before. The little girl was crying again, but it was a *comforted* crying, a world of difference from when she was alone with really quite vile pain. The mother seemed awestruck, and kept saying, *"You have a very gentle way about you."*

Another time, Hayward was asked to substitute-teach a class for parents of English as a Second Language students. He was provided an interpreter who spoke Spanish and English, and the class met all objectives...

And Hayward didn't really use the interpreter. He adapted to language and culture to bring an enjoyable class for everyone.

When studying abroad, Hayward was quite pleasantly surprised (and very much surprised) when a Ghanain housemate said Hayward had challenged some assumptions, saying Hayward was "like a white American, and like a black African, closer than an African brother..." and from that point on he enjoyed insider status among Ghanian friends. He has perhaps never received a greater compliment.

Hayward thinks at a fundamentally different level, and he needs to build bridges. But the good news is that he has been working on bridge-buildling for years and built bridges that span great differences. Being in a situation where has to orient himself and bridge a chasm doesn't really slow him down that much.

In addition, these "super powers" can have every relevance to business work. No employer particularly cares if he can read ancient and medieval languages: but one employer cared that he could easily read bureaucratic documentation that was incomprehensible to everyone else.

No employer really cares that at the age of 13 Hayward crafted [crafted a four-dimensional maze](), worked on visualizing a 4-cube passing through 3-space, and looked at a data visualization in his calculus book and (re)invented iterated integration...

But some employers care a great deal that he can take a visualization project, start work along the lines suggested by Tufte's corpus of written work, and start to take steps beyond Tufte.

No employer really seems to care that he has studied at the Sorbonne, UIUC, and Cambridge (England) in three very different fields: but co-workers have been puzzled enough that he so effortlessly shifts his communication and cultural behavior to have a colleague and immigrant ask him why he relates to Little Russia's culture so well.

But some employers appreciate his efforts to listen and understand corporate culture. In serving like a consulant for a travel subsidiary, Hayward's contacts within the organization that picked

up he was trying to understand their language on their terms, and the Director of Sales and Marketing half-jokingly asked, *"Do you want to be a travel agent?"* Hayward perhaps would not be an obvious fit for personality factors, but she picked up a crystal-clear metamessage: "I want to understand what you are saying, and I want to understand it on your terms."

Furthermore, while no employer has yet to care about Hayward's interest in writing, one employer cared a great deal that he took a high-value document concerning disaster recovery and business continuity, valuable enough that it would be significant for the employer to file with e.g. their bank, and took it from being precise but awkward and puzzling to read, to being precise, accessible, simple, and clear.

What does this communication across barriers have to do with UX?

Everything.

I've had postgraduate training in anthropology, cognitive science, computer science, philosophy, and psychology, and I consider "theory of other minds" communication to be out-and-out the central skill in UX. Perhaps the most structural of these disciplines is anthropology, and a training in anthropology is a training in understanding across differences.

Once anthropologists found difference by crossing the Pacific and finding aboriginal people untainted by modern technology. **Now anthropologists find difference by crossing the street.** But the theory of alien minds is almost **unchanged**.

Jakob Nielsen has been beating for essentially forever the drum of "You are not a user". Perhaps his most persistent beating of his drum is:

One of usability's most hard-earned lessons is that '**you are not the user**.' If you work on a development project, you're atypical by definition. Design to optimize the experience for *outsiders*, not *insiders*.

What this means, in competency, is "Communicate out of a theory of alien minds." Or, if you prefer, a theory of "outsiders", but don't assume that deep down inside "outsiders" are really just like "insiders." **Exercise a theory of alien minds.**

What Nielsen is telling people not to do is coast on a "theory of like minds," and assume that if a user interface is intuitive and makes sense to the people who built it, it will just as much make sense to the audience it was built for. *It won't.* You have to think a bit differently to build technology, and that means you need a theory of alien minds. Assuming that you are the center of the universe, even if it's unintentional, is a recipe for failed UX. We all want better than that.

An Epilogue About Hell

At a meeting with some other people working on our communication, one speaker talked about she kept getting blown off-course from original intent, but these disruptions ended up making things getting better.

I commented, as I have to one other fellow Toastmaster, that if you keep having to adjust to getting blown off-course and end up with something better than it would ever have crossed your mind to even ask, that may be a sign that you are doing something right. On the other hand, if you have everything planned out, and not only are you in control but every possible detail is going exactly according to your designs, the term for that is, *Hell.*

There is more that I could have said. Many things have been legitimately said about Hell, and they can be hard to put together, but my use of the term "Hell" is a fully serious use of the term by someone with some theological background. C.S. Lewis's words echo far more ancient writing when he says that the Gates of Hell are bolted and barred from the *inside.* Likewise when he says that there are in the end two kinds of people: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God, in the end, says, "*Thy* will be done."

The Lord of the Dance bids us enter a larger world where we may see others' glory rather than rest unperturbed in our solipsistic plans. We would do well to follow Him!