



# HONEYBEE CAPITAL

## HONEYBEE PUBLICATION #16: SEPTEMBER 2011

### CONTEMPLATIONS ISSUE

*This issue will focus on key themes from two seemingly non-investment-related endeavors: my recent studies at divinity school, and just-finished 500-mile pilgrimage walk in Spain (which, due to one blissful morning on a bus, was more like 400 miles for me). The biggest surprise of many adventures, including these, is that they are so applicable to professional work, and not in a far-afield way, but in a directly relevant way. This issue is a bit more personal and qualitative in nature, and thus a bit less comfortable to write, so I hope you will find it of use.*

### KEY TOPICS:

- **Notes from divinity school**
- **Highlights from the Camino de Santiago – or, What I Did on My Summer Vacation**
- **Summer books & media review**

### QUOTES OF THE MONTH:

*“Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering.”*  
– Yoda

*“Mystery is not an argument for the existence of God; mystery is an experience of the existence of God.”*  
- Peter J. Gomes

*“The nights are long but the years are short.”*  
- Red Hot Chili Peppers, Brendan’s Death Song

*“How are we all so brave as to take step after step? Day after day? How are we so optimistic, so careful not to trip and yet do trip, and then get up and say o.k.”*  
- Maira Kalman, *The Principles of Uncertainty*

*“Memory is the enemy of wonder.”*  
– Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*

*“Trust is not transactional. Community cannot simply be commercialized.”*  
– Brian Trelstad, *Acumen Fund*

*“As consultants, we rent our brains by the hour – which doesn’t scale.”*  
– Gil Friend, *Natural Logic*

*“It’s the fragmentation and isolation of our problems that is the real problem – we need to think in terms of systems.”*  
– Jeffrey Hollender, *Seventh Generation*

### **THEMES FROM DIVINITY SCHOOL:**

- bravery vs. courage
- fearlessness vs. freedom from fear
- optimism vs. hope

*I must admit, in both Divinity School and my pilgrimage walk, I was secretly hoping for some big epiphanies – giant “a-ha!” moments that would fundamentally change my thinking, change my life. However, though dramatic headlines might draw us in, it is the ongoing narrative that ultimately compels us. With this in mind, then, I offer a few concepts that were illuminated through my recent studies – many more will surely continue to seep into these pages over time, but these few have already served to both broaden and further my thinking on a wide range of topics.*

### **BRAVERY VS. COURAGE:**

All my life, I have used these words as synonyms, and to be sure, their meanings are very close. But the root of bravery is bravo, showy or on-display, whereas the root of courage is coeur, heart. So when you tell someone (including yourself) to be brave, you are asking them to put on a show. But when you say, “have courage!”, you are asking them to draw on the strength of their heart. This is not to say that bravery is necessarily lesser – we’ve all put on our game faces at times, and sometimes that’s what helps to shore up our own quivery hearts. But I’d like to think of bravery as a steppingstone that can prop you up until you reach courage.

## **FEARLESS VS. FREEDOM FROM FEAR:**

Sometimes I summarize my last two years as a study of fear. But really, I can also summarize my whole investment career as a study of fear.

So much of our focus on fear seems to be posed in battle terms: conquering it, fighting it, overcoming it. And yet this misdirected, as fear can be a very useful thing. Ask any parent of a young child who is in the truly fearless phase of life – unafraid of traffic or hot stoves or flying off rooftops – this is not a sustainable state! Fear often points us towards important and genuine risks, things that can really harm us: we ignore it at our peril. So why would we want to conquer that? More useful to me is the concept put forth in many Buddhist teachings, that of becoming not fearless, but rather free from fear. It's still there, and we acknowledge it, yet are not trapped by it. Though it's easier said than done, this exercise puts fear in its proper place, as instructive, rather than inhibiting. When I see someone acting irrationally, or feel angry or hurt or, well, fearful, I've been trying to simply ask, what are you afraid of? Often it's fear of change, sometimes it's a silly junior-high feeling of just being vulnerable, and sometimes it's something deeper and more interesting. Though the answer is often not flattering nor uplifting, it is usually helpful. And once that fear is more visible, this exercise brings the added bonus of making it easier to feel compassion (whether towards others or oneself), instead of a constant need to fight. And *that* in turn can lead to real progress, real solutions.

*Please see the book listing for links to Pema Chodron's work on fear, which I have found especially helpful.*

## **OPTIMISM VS. HOPE:**

This distinction was highlighted in Governor Patrick's eulogy for Rev. Peter Gomes. Quoting from an unpublished interview, he highlighted Rev. Gomes' response to the question "are you optimistic?" Gomes noted that optimism brings with it an underlying belief in the goodness of people, a belief that the world will indeed bend towards justice. But this optimism brings with it a great risk, Gomes said, since when confronted with a reality that is often not good nor just, an optimist can be crushed, left with no alternative than to abandon his beliefs. Hope, Gomes said, is seeing the potential for good in all people and all circumstances, while accepting that that potential will not always be realized. He found this a more practical way to approach the world – still positive, but more resilient.

Personally, I am still optimistic, but if the day comes when I am not, I am glad that hope will be there to cushion the blow.

### **HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO:**

*I spent a good part of the summer walking this ancient pilgrimage road, from the edge of France across the northern part of Spain. The countryside was beautiful and the people along the way were extraordinarily kind, and yet the trip highlighted for me how inherently fragile we all are. A blister in a key spot, a day without food, a sleepless night, and suddenly I was often right on the brink of tears, barely able to cope with the smallest setbacks. And what a luxurious fragility mine was, always able to rest or find food, shelter, and band-aids within a reasonable timeframe, when for billions of people all over the world, they are right on that brink – or past it – every single day. The sort of strength I felt after the tougher times was inherently different from the strength I felt tromping up that first hill – it was calmer, less brash, kinder. If you ever have time to take a very very long walk, I highly recommend this trip.*

### **TOP TEN THINGS I LEARNED WHILE WALKING A LONG LONG WAY:**

1. Whatever it is, you don't need two. You might not even need one. Bars of soap, clean t-shirts, working limbs...
2. Eat fruits and vegetables, every chance you get.
3. 'Tis better to pee along the trail than to pass out from dehydration. Trust me on this one.
4. The right song – or the right company – can help you leapfrog right over a bad situation.
5. Graciously accept help when offered. And kindness. You might think you don't need them, but you do.
6. Siestas rock. They should be mandatory. Every day, every person, everywhere.
7. a) A pulperia is not a juice bar. b) A ferreteria does not sell ferrets.
8. Eighty-percent done is still a long way from done. But....
9. Once you start, you might as well finish.
10. German band-aids are the best.

## SUMMER READING LIST:

### **IMPACT INVESTING: TRANSFORMING HOW WE MAKE MONEY WHILE MAKING A DIFFERENCE**, by Antony Bugg-Levine and Jed Emerson

This is the first official book on impact investing, hot off the presses. I'm only halfway through but want to highlight it to anyone interested in the field, as the authors have a clear understanding of the evolution of impact investing (and all of its cousins), and they provide a helpful sketch of the landscape, including its challenges.

[http://www.amazon.com/Impact-Investing-Transforming-Making-Difference/dp/0470907215/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1315499862&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/Impact-Investing-Transforming-Making-Difference/dp/0470907215/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1315499862&sr=8-1)

### **THE PRINCIPLES OF UNCERTAINTY**, by Maira Kalman

Honeybee readers will already know that I am a big Kalman fan: recently I returned to this volume that was published a few years back. Kalman manages to wade right into the melancholy of life, not skirting the heartbreaking parts, and yet within that same heartbreak she illuminates hope.

"Let us float into the future. I am right behind you."

[http://www.amazon.com/Principles-Uncertainty-Maira-Kalman/dp/B002XULXSI/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1315499900&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Principles-Uncertainty-Maira-Kalman/dp/B002XULXSI/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1315499900&sr=1-1)

### **PEMA CHODRON**, various writings on fear

There are many helpful Buddhist teachings (and others) related to fear: I find Pema Chodron's to be accessible, practical, helpful, and comforting. Among the titles that might be of interest are *The Places that Scare You*, *Comfortable with Uncertainty*, and *From Fear to Fearlessness*.

[http://www.amazon.com/Pema-Chodron/e/B000AP9Y2A/ref=ntt\\_athr\\_dp\\_pel\\_pop\\_1](http://www.amazon.com/Pema-Chodron/e/B000AP9Y2A/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_pop_1)

### **ROBOPOCALYPSE**, by Daniel Wilson

Robo-Redux! After our robot issue several readers expressed dismay that this book was not mentioned... and after reading it straight through with barely a pause, I'm here to say I LOVED this book! It is an apocalyptic novel, a genre which usually holds little appeal to me, but the coolest, creepiest part is that the details Wilson sketches out are completely believable, extensions of trends and technologies that already exist. This

story also highlights the compelling issue we discussed last time: is there an advantage to being human? What can't machines do, even really really smart ones? This question of competitive advantage is one that has relevance far beyond robots.

[http://www.amazon.com/Robopocalypse-Novel-Daniel-H-Wilson/dp/0385533853/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1315597315&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Robopocalypse-Novel-Daniel-H-Wilson/dp/0385533853/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1315597315&sr=1-1)

### **THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS**, by Vanessa Diffenbaugh

I doubt that there are many readers who are enthusiastic about both this novel and Robopocalypse, but Honeybee is happily so. This novel takes a tough story with a tough main character and helps the reader to empathize through, yes, the language of flowers. A little sappy in parts, but hey, what flower isn't?

[http://www.amazon.com/Language-Flowers-Novel-Vanessa-Diffenbaugh/dp/034552554X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1315597404&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Language-Flowers-Novel-Vanessa-Diffenbaugh/dp/034552554X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1315597404&sr=1-1)

### **THE LEFTOVERS**, Tom Perrotta

Judging from all the buzz this past month, this is the "it" novel of the fall. Though the timing of its release (so close to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11) seems a little manipulative, this is a book that zips right along, its intersecting stories exploring the long ripple effects of trauma. Perrotta's writing is Chinese takeout to me – totally enjoyable, and easy to fly through, yet I am not always satisfied at the end. Most thought-provoking to me in this story is the concept that the "leftovers" (people remaining on earth after millions mysteriously disappear) feel left out, punished – not at all like they are the lucky ones.

[http://www.amazon.com/Leftovers-Tom-Perrotta/dp/0312358342/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1315499996&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Leftovers-Tom-Perrotta/dp/0312358342/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1315499996&sr=1-1)

### **THE BOTANY OF DESIRE**, by Michael Pollan

Taken at face value, this Pollan book is a solid offering: neat cases studies of a few key plants and their histories over time. But pulled up to a slightly more abstract level it's even more interesting, as it addresses the intersection of human society and the natural world, and examines desire as one form of demand - themes applicable to valuations of all sorts.

[http://www.amazon.com/Botany-Desire-Plants-Eye-View-World/dp/0375760393/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1315499822&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/Botany-Desire-Plants-Eye-View-World/dp/0375760393/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1315499822&sr=8-1)

**SUPER NATURAL EVERY DAY**, by Heidi Swanson  
**ANCIENT GRAINS FOR MODERN MEALS**, by Maria Speck

If you purchased a big sack of spelt in a fit of wholesome intentions and find it still sitting in your pantry 6 months later, these are the books for you! They are chock full of delicious, uncomplicated recipes that leave you feeling genuinely nourished, without spending all day toiling with obscure ingredients. Really, anything that can get me to look forward to bulgur as much as pasta is genius – and these two do it.

[http://www.amazon.com/Super-Natural-Every-Day-Well-loved/dp/1580082777/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1315596425&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/Super-Natural-Every-Day-Well-loved/dp/1580082777/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1315596425&sr=8-1)

[http://www.amazon.com/Ancient-Grains-Modern-Meals-Mediterranean/dp/1580083544/ref=sr\\_1\\_5?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1315596505&sr=1-5](http://www.amazon.com/Ancient-Grains-Modern-Meals-Mediterranean/dp/1580083544/ref=sr_1_5?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1315596505&sr=1-5)

**FEATURED WEBSITES, MEDIA, MUSIC:**

**PROJECT SYNDICATE**

I recently had a mini-crisis while flipping through cable channels (that'll teach me). There were so many talkers! It was hard to find the primary inputs – the news or the sports event or the art itself – amidst the layers and layers of deafening commentary. (We trust that our loyal readers will refrain from noting that Honeybee provides the exact same sort of commentary that we find so distressing in televised form).

On the other hand, some commentary is good: informed and insightful. Project Syndicate features Felstein, Dyson, Rogoff, Stiglitz.... Folks with some substance behind their opinions. Even when you disagree (perhaps especially when you disagree), it's interesting and helpful to consider their views.

<http://www.project-syndicate.org/>

**SCARCITY AND ABUNDANCE:**

These photographs of weekly food consumption from around the world are well worth viewing: though at first glance the sheer physical overload of the United States and some other countries is blinding, it also highlights another sort of scarcity – having too much presents its own set of clear challenges. Perhaps over-abundance in one area is always balanced by scarcity in another? Take a moment and really think about the photo from Chad.

<http://www.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1626519,00.html>

## **PERSEVERENCE!**

Let's hear it for staying power! Both IBM and the Girl Scouts are 100 years old in 2011-2012. What strikes me as most notable with both organizations is the criss-crossing of the mission and impact – the significant social emphasis and benefit IBM has had over that time, and big economic impact of the Girl Scouts. I wonder if our organizations today (and our evaluations of them) are pushed a little too hard to be single-minded, missing out on the great benefits in other arenas that can accrue while fulfilling primary missions and goals.

<http://www.ibm.com/ibm100/us/en/> (the short film at this site is pretty cool)

[http://www.girlscoutsrv.org/100th\\_anniversary/](http://www.girlscoutsrv.org/100th_anniversary/)

## **POPTech MIXTAPE:**

This is the best possible note to end on – literally. Zee Avi, John Forte, John Legend – all live performances from PopTech conferences over the years. The next PopTech is coming up in October in Camden, Maine – check out their website ([www.poptech.org](http://www.poptech.org)) for more details.

[http://poptech.org/mixtape\\_vol\\_1?utm\\_source=PopTech+Newsletter+Master+List&utm\\_campaign=280ba0f12f-PopTech\\_Mixtape\\_9\\_1\\_2011&utm\\_medium=email](http://poptech.org/mixtape_vol_1?utm_source=PopTech+Newsletter+Master+List&utm_campaign=280ba0f12f-PopTech_Mixtape_9_1_2011&utm_medium=email)

## **COMING UP NEXT:**

Impact investing continues to evolve, quickly! Our next issue will circle back to discuss the state of the market for impact investing, highlighting some new endeavors and structures and comparing the field's evolution with other markets and eras.