

Life is fragile and unpredictable

by Mark Pavilons

It's been said that 'the best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry,' although the original Robert Burns poem has a more Scottish flair to it.

His 1785 poem points to the vulnerability of all living things to unpredictable circumstances.

Specifically, the narrator of this piece destroys a mouse's winter nest, making the mouse keenly aware that most carefully laid plans can be ruined by outside forces.

So, are we humans at the mercy of our parental gods? Mother Nature, Father Time and the rest of the mythical family members?

Art Buchwald put it succinctly when he said, 'whether it's the best of times or the worst of times, it's the only time we've got.'

Take it from someone who lives day to day, the best and worst coincide.

Are we truly in control of our actions, decisions, and the course of our lives, or are we merely products of external influences and circumstances?

Determinism says that all events, including human actions, are ultimately determined by external factors. In other words, our choices and actions are not truly free, but rather predetermined by a complex web of causes and effects.

If we are blowing around 'accidental-like' then we have no purpose, no meaning, no control.

I doubt that's the case, for many reasons.

First, we beat almost impossible odds to have been created in the first place. To defy these mathematical numbers, there must be some rhyme or reason. We must be part of some massive, universal plan, a huge puzzle in which we are all pieces. As most of us know if a puzzle is missing just one tiny piece, it's incomplete.

If we are not meaningful, essential and otherwise vital, our lives - and the lives of all of our ancestors who fought to survive and continue the line - were all for naught. Do you believe thousands of generations and their contributions were for naught?

I don't think so.

There's much more than we know right here, right now. From the microscopic worlds beneath the soil to the atmosphere that keeps our planet safe, miracles abound.

I believe there's way too much in terms of perfect harmony - from our strands of DNA and sharing a joke with a dolphin, to watching a bumble bee fly - to be accidental-like. No, my friends, these are intricate, complicated, planned wonders - marvels beyond our comprehension.

Just as humans occupied this perfect sphere of ours, what about other life forms spread throughout the universe? What are their origin stories?

Did they arise through cosmic dust blowing around accidental-like, or were they given purposeful life by some extraordinary power?

Maybe a little of both.

Our decision-making is influenced by our past experiences and conditioning. Our upbringing, education, and life experiences shape our beliefs and perceptions of the world. These beliefs and perceptions act as filters through which we interpret and make decisions about our lives.

One view of life is that everything happens by chance. I am lucky to be alive, given the astronomical odds of coming into being. Yet I am mortal, subject to the whims of the forces of nature. I am reminded of this each and every day.

In my current journey with cancer, it seems like we're always chasing cancer's tail. It's like putting out spot fires every time one erupts, and then moving on.

I'm somewhat resigned to the fact my life now revolves around blood work, scans, treatment, and repeat.

I knew this from the day I was told my prostate cancer had metastasized. The key was to keep PSA as low as possible, and try to stall the progression of cancer ? stop it in its tracks.

It can't be defeated, but anything that hinders its spread offers more time ?ore time to live, more time to discover more treatment options.

Even after my journey thus far, I still don't feel like a ?cancer patient.?

Sure, I accept it, understand it and work around it. At this point, fate, and the recommendations of learned physicians, make up my journey moving forward.

I have no choice in the matter.

I have asked for strength ?hysically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, along the way. But really, all the positive energy, prayer, healing vibrations and supplements are not enough.

Christians view that God not only rules the world but is intimately involved with everything that transpires. In this sense, destiny replaces fate.

According to Meade's book, ?Fate and Destiny: The Two Agreements of the Soul,? he writes: ?What I am calling fate has to do with the way a person's soul is seeded and shaped from within, like a story trying to unfold and become known. What I am calling destiny has to do with the inner arc and arrow of one's life. For each soul is secretly aimed at the world and inclined toward a destination that only becomes revealed in crucial moments and at turning points in life. The elements of fate and destiny are intimations of the story our soul would have us live, both the limitations that must be faced and the destination that would be found. As fate would have it, they are often found through what seems like a big mistake, a strange accident or a surprise.?

He admits that fate involves ?earthly limitations, but destiny on the other hand, says we are ?of the stars.?

So, my dilemma is the tug-of-war between fate and destiny. Where does choice enter the equation? Our Creator, and even the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, give us freedom of choice. So why can't we exercise it in all circumstances?

Some higher thinkers would smile that smug smile and say, ?you do, Mark, you do.?

Every decision, turn, journey, diagnosis and treatment are all part of my fateful destiny. They were all meant to be part of my personal adventure.

But why? What purpose does such a struggle, and premature end, serve?