The Distortion of Parallel Time

For a moment there was a silence, a stop in time, to be broken with the cries and screams of a newborn child. Everyone paused, mesmerized as a drop of purity fell from the pool of the impure. We know this droplet will have to travel through difficult terrains to make it to the finish line, adding to its surface tension, almost breaking its bubbling point, eventually forming an impure pool itself. This newborn's prospective experience is boundless, just waiting to tease the smell of green from the air after fresh rainfall, touching that refraction of white into all the colors of the sky.

As this baby grows up it will take in anything and everything that crosses its path. This journey will be slow, fast, and sometimes temperate. These phases are all a part of the race, sometimes braking and slowing down in order to go faster, but we don’t realize what we’re gaining in the first sprint of life. The child will follow a path of its own creation. On its path will be many difficulties and great beauty, but in the long run, all life comes to an end, leaving the shadow of that path in its wake. As the child grows, its purity fades. Each new experience enriches identity, shapes memory, but takes a cost in innocence.

As in the Garden of Eden, self knowledge, identity, ego, banish us from paradise. We drive forward, careening toward our desires. Transformative experiences shape us from children into adults, seeing our carefree days flash fast as light, while the work days drag, left dry and barren by compromise. We adapt and bend the rules, the rules, into routines, “managing” our time. Newness no longer defines us, change frightens us, sameness bruises us, having having lost those comforts that we grew used to in childhood. We forget to embrace the newness of each day,
instead we cling to what the amazing sameness. The English poet, William Blake, recognized this dichotomy in his masterwork: *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. There he contrasted the promises of youth against the pressures of dwindling time, as in the poem “The Echoing Green:”

Till the little ones, weary,

No more can be merry:

The sun does descend,

And our sports have an end.

One day we open our eyes and move out of bed but the body does not follow, we have to find the muscle to get up; this is a major turning point, a realization that we are getting older. Once this happens, other characteristics of age begin to emerge: driving slower, eating slower, moving slower, a shift in the experience of time that is hard to accept. With this shift comes a sense of grief, we mourn the loss of that bright blaze of fresh experience, but are blessed with the fullness of memory, the shadows that have shaped our lives. With age comes a sense of reverence by those around us, who visit more, offer more, celebrate the waning of life. It is hard to even take a nap because everyone around us holds their breath, making sure they can hear the faint sounds of inhaling and exhaling, one after the other.

The very elderly are much like newborn babies: they get taken care of by others, it is hard for them to control themselves, and they can not recall things as they were or if they have changed. These extremes - a lifetime of experience balanced against a complete blank slate - could be considered the “two contrary states of the human soul” (William Blake). Within these extremes lie all of human value: innocence, peace, and knowledge, and a distortion of parallel time.