

APPENDIX E

CULTURAL ARTIFACT EXAMPLE

John Doe

Cultural Artifact #2



As a kid, for some odd reason, I had some sort of complexity in my behavior where I would always create a weekly schedule for every single little thing I did (which this behavior did not disappear until the beginning of junior high). Every single week, I would create a schedule that included eating, sleeping, homework, cleaning, free time, chores, and whatever else that was going on that week. Surprisingly, this schedule was insanely complex and detailed as far as a child's mind can go, but because it was so detailed and accurately pinpointed in terms of timing and strictness, I would freak out if the schedule wasn't followed because of some random occurrence or something out of my control would happen. Even though I still don't know what caused this behavior to occur in the first place, I could definitely see the after-effects of being so meticulous and training myself to be clean-cut in everything I did, which was unhealthy and unsustainable.

Referring to Taleb, my ideal day-by-day routine was one that had no random occurrences, no unfortunate events, and predicted cost-and-benefit activities that I could see the end of to its fullest. Even after that whole phase of writing and planning out a weekly schedule ended, the desire to have everything "settled" or predictable in my eyes was straining on my ideals and behavior; if everything wasn't perfect or as organized as I wanted it to be, it wasn't the "best" day I could've had; there was always some day that was going to be better than the last (as an aside, the man I was back then is nothing like the man I am today thankfully, but I couldn't have been like this without this experience). Striving for ideal days of perfection and no hassles or worries made me fragile; I couldn't adapt to the changes that came my way, and I always tried to

predict the unpredictable which as Taleb would put it, isn't possible. If my friends couldn't hang out a certain day, some test completely ruined my self-esteem, or some argument or misfortune came my way, it would make my day bad regardless of all the other positive aspects of the day. I was susceptible to change; and these Black Swans, little or large, would sometimes lead me to worry or stress where I would end up relying on others for comfort, advice, or compensation for the day's misfortunes. As Foucault would say, this condition of tutelage developed due to the fear that those random or misfortunate events in my life would never disappear, where my days wouldn't be great or perfect because of them. If a test came my way that was hard, I would worry to where I would rely on others for knowledge or confirmation of my own knowledge, regardless of if I truly knew it or not. If I liked a girl, I wouldn't go with my own initial thoughts or actions but rather would go to my friends or classmates for their advice simply because I developed a fragile attitude; my own knowledge or actions weren't good enough to make my life great, so relying on others to do that for me became my go-to. But even with my paraskeue (equipment), nothing could've helped me prepare for these events.

Through college and simply experiencing life, I've learned to become antifragile to random events, learning from experiences (positive or negative) and getting back up from the ground. Rather than trying to prevent or soak up events or occurrences out of my control, I learned to accept them and see the best that can come out of them. I can't predict random events, and I can't see into the future; but I definitely can get back up. If I fail a test, that's unfortunate, but being antifragile means I can recover from that test, study harder, and do better next time. For my life, there's always going to be good and bad days, but I can see the positives and rejoice in them rather than focusing on the negatives and wallowing in the imperfection of life. Life's not fun with perfection, but rather imperfection. I don't have to be perfect or knowledgeable for me to benefit from random events, and there's always positives in a day that doesn't seem like it has much to offer. And I have to say, I'm much more content with my life regardless of what has come my way and what will come my way.