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Epilogue: An Undisciplined Life

We commonly do not remember that it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking.

Thoreau

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The origins of this book go back quite a way. It may be worth while to explain how I came to be a dedisciplined philosopher.

When I was a boy in St Louis in the 1960s my father worked weekends at a bowling alley. The place was called South Twin Lanes. Across my childhood and youth he stayed there from 8 am to 5 pm on Saturdays, and from 9 am to midnight on Sundays. (During the week he traveled as a lock salesman.) Eventually I worked those hours too.

Not that this was work in an oppressive sense. On Saturdays during the school year the lanes were packed with kids bowling in the junior leagues. One of the parents would serve as league coordinator, leaving my father free to operate as overseer and bon vivant. During the summer the lanes could be eerily quiet. Then we'd go out back to play bottle caps – baseball with a broom handle, swinging at the caps from beer bottles collected from the bar. We'd play for hours in the sweltering heat.

Sundays would start out quieter. We would bring in breakfast, often heart-clogging chocolate donuts, which we'd eat in silence while reading the (now defunct) St. Louis Globe Democrat – the local Republican-leaning paper, but delivered in the morning and with the better sports page. We'd keep an eye on the few heathen bowlers who would show up during church hours. But basically it was just hanging out until 11am or so.

Then things picked up quickly. During the cold months and rainy weekends the lanes were packed from noon on: teenagers, dates, families. The waiting list would grow to an hour and a half, and would last until 6pm when we would need to clear half the house for league bowling. Then the mixed (couples) league would run until 9 or so. By 10pm the lanes were down to the few stragglers who would keep us there until midnight.

Running the front desk, my father would pass out rental shoes and score sheets – no electronic scorekeeping in those days – call out names from the waiting list, and announce incoming phone calls over the loud speaker (with no cell phones the house phone was the de facto public