Mid Term Reflection

I have learned about the qualitative experience of smell and how behavior drastically influences the smell image stored in our brain, which has lead me to believe an emphasis should be placed on *why* humans eat and not *what*. I noticed a behavior in myself of not placing careful attention to my mid-day meals, and it was always subject to the schedule that I felt a need to follow rather than intentionally eating a meal to sustain that afternoon’s activity. I then made connections from learning our ability to learn from the interactions between the olfactory cortex and olfactory bulb and asked the question: if we cannot honestly reflect on our behavior, and our odor images are dependent on behavior, does that affect our relationship to why we eat food?

In the following week I focused on contrast enhancement and lateral inhibition. In this process I was wanting to see where my independent thoughts were in relation to a more grounded understanding of the brain through *Thinking, Fast and Slow* - but I am yet to read that text. Reflecting on this week’s work, I was starting to find an increased understanding of the material but had the context to place the information was incomplete. I made several connections that were helpful for me to put on paper and in the second half of the program I hope to refine them when relevant (as I have done with a few diagrams by finishing Shepherd’s *Neurogastronomy*) through studying Ken Wilber’s *A Brief History of Everything*. Highlights of this week include me putting to words and picture how one might experience genius by planning interactions between both modes of thinking in the brain, what might be happening when people leave their sense of self when experiencing something they consider “the other” (not themselves nor will be), and several other connections regarding phasic and tonic responses in the context of human perception of lateral inhibition and contrast enhancement.

In week 4 I created a diagram that sums up a lot of my work in the final weeks of last quarter succinctly with additional information. The image provides an additional circle on a linear plane to a venn diagram creating the opportunity for growth to be shown in the middle of the circle, in the form of a flower, to attract a sense of being with a bee buzzing around outside of the diagram itself. On the left the interactions of the two circles represent our physiology as explained by Dr. Alan Watkins in the context of moral centrality and how we engage with a larger group of people. On the right the interactions of the two circles represent a modified example of Dr. Alan Watkins that includes what I refer to as the  “intuitive crutch” - the ability to trick ourselves through appealing to our sense of emotion in certain moments which alter our ability to store memory and C.S. Hollings infinity loop connecting environmental behavior and human behavior as one. Using the beauty of the infinity loops allow for me to suggest a circular motion of breathing in my modified physiology diagram (a motion that can be sketched to replicate qi gong breathing) and offer as a visual cue for intentional consciousness training which can exist in several different forms for the individual. I hope to modify this (and potentially add a few diagrams for clarity) in the following weeks reading Ken Wilber.

I am excited to share that in week 5 I have started studying crossovers between the neuroscience of food and music. Before getting to that point, I spent a lot of time outlining the most honest, humble understanding of what Shepherd discussed in *Neurogastronomy* to get an idea how much is known about flavor in the brain because a lot of information is still unknown. What surprised me is that there is not a unified belief in how we even smell - through lock and key imagery theory or vibrational frequency theory. In this past week’s reading through scientifically peer reviewed articles I have started to believe that humans breath through the nose and pick up vibrational frequencies because the rest of the world doesn’t operate through *releasing* images. I looked at expert trackers and read about their understanding of concentric circles, and it would make much more sense of the nose functioned as a tuning fork to the natural environment. If a strong mind controls the body’s ability to reflect on smells and limits what it *means* to them through repeated exposure to the same natural environment, it becomes a quicker response to identify smell (survival advantage) and disruptions in the environment stand out. But, after learning about how our brain stores the odor image immediately after intaking the scent in order to scan it by other odor images stored in the memory of the brain to compare and contrast similar smells to identify what scent was picked up, I believe that both of these can exist for different people because of how the olfactory cortex and olfactory bulb interact to create a unique perception of the incredibly unique experience of tasting and chewing. As soon as we are done smelling the brain stores the smell as an odor image and upon reflection we more rationally conclude that it is imagery based. If we breath in a way that is unifying our breath to the surrounding environment does it affect how quickly we create the odor image and the corresponding memory storage time of that image? As Cytowic says on page 94 of *The Man Who Smells Shapes*, “An interesting idea. It is the sensation that is memorable, not the name. The name is just semantic baggage attached to it.” In the next week I intend on continuing to plan for my week 8 meal for the class by studying how intentional jaw movements can enhance the motor functions part of our brain, how intentional breathing and smell interact with isochronic tones, how the Loci form of memory storage can potentially be used to unify individual senses to form a multisensory walk through memory lane, and how certain the perception of certain flavors can be altered by providing certain background music.