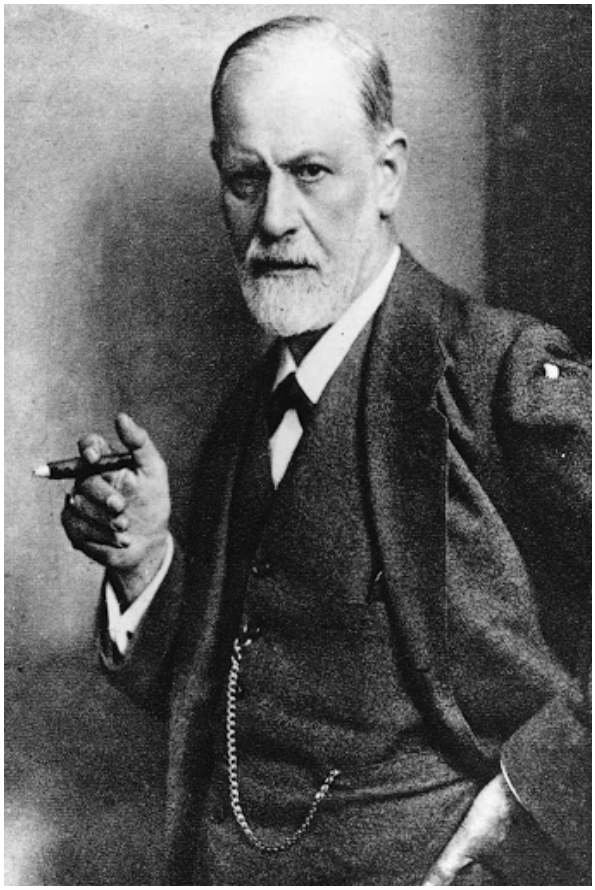

Today I went to Cousin's Cigar over on the east side to pick up a couple of cigars for my business partner and myself, for no other reason other than I felt like having a cigar.

I mean, really, what's not to enjoy about a cigar? You put a large brown log in your mouth, light it on fire, and stink for an hour or so as you slowly burn it into ashes. You're usually doing it around other like-minded individuals who enjoy playing with fire and generally embrace the concept of being offensive to the majority of society. Those are my people, and having a cigar with them is a great way of communing.

Some people like to psychoanalyze those who would prefer to have a cigar, calling on Freud to interpret the action of smoking a cigar as in some way expressing a latent homoerotic side to an individual. But as Freud didn't say (despite what people want to believe), sometimes a cigar is just a cigar. And even if it isn't, the dime store psychoanalysis is no longer interesting, relevant, and it doesn't make you seem smart. It makes you seem like a hack that likes to spout clichés.

It's funny how people like to analyze sexuality, and ascribe pejorative components to the

choices you make in such, choices that aren't often choices to the individual. Dan Cathy, the CEO of Chick-Fil-A, created huge controversy this week by speaking out against gay marriage, thereby creating a solid downward spike in their business and long-lasting ill will in our equally-judgmental society. Who are we to judge and to say what is right and what is wrong? Why can't we just leave people alone to live with the choices they make for themselves?

And why are we so hung up about who is sleeping with who, and so obsessed with sex in general as a society? Josh Hara (@yoyoha) summed it up earlier this month in under 140 characters with a thought-provoking tweet : "It's crazy how many people are willing to ruin their lives for a slightly different orgasm." I know someone right now who is destroying his family for said slightly different orgasm, creating a broken home for his kids who certainly will be negatively impacted by this decision in a permanent manner. He's the type of guy who'd probably shoot someone who would Jerry Sandusky his kids, yet willingly does similar psychological damage to them for the sake of a piece of ass.

Anyway, while I'm in Cousins, I see Rahm Emanuel on TV ejaculating on how evil Chick-Fil-A is, and how the City of Chicago is blocking them from opening franchises within, and that's what's got me pissed off this week. Because as ill conceived as Dan Cathy's statement was on gay marriage, he still has the right to make the statement as an American, and there, by the words in the Constitution itself, necessarily should be absolutely no governmental repercussions to him expressing said words.

Imagine an America where we weren't allowed to say stupid things. Charles Barkley , Ozzie Guillen, and their other diarrhea-mouthed brethren would be forced to walk around wearing muzzles like Bane or Hannibal Lecter, and what would the fun in that be? Who would insult unknown players in the Olympics by saying he "thought he was going to pull a spear on me" or show respect for Fidel Castro for his ability to retain power if not for these clear thinkers? Why would twitter and facebook even need to exist?

But no, Emmanuel has decided that since you can still rig an election in Chicago and run the city as an oligarchy, that he's immune to basically every other clause in the Constitution too. Punishing people that don't think like you do is the exact opposite of the goal of our representative system of government, no, it is more to protect the interest of the minorities and allow free thought and expression. Somehow, in the class warfare and wars of political correctness, we have lost sight of this.

Punishment should only be levied in the presence of an actual crime, a crime where a person in some way has created tangible harm to a person or business, and deprived them of their basic rights to life, liberty, and property. Punishment should always be in proportion to the crime, of this we can be certain, but why we do that is open for debate. Do we punish as retribution for the crime, in some way balancing the scales of justice, or do we do it to deter crime, necessarily applying a stronger consequence to a more heinous crime? Freud suggests that all humans innately have criminal instincts, and if we are improperly socialized as children, we become criminals. He also suggests that each individual has a sense of guilt for their various transgressions, and that manifests itself in a need within that individual to have punishment applied to him. Society merely adapts this subconscious need and applies punishment neither vindictively or preventatively, but psychologically.

And this in itself perfectly explains why Penn State HAD to be levied the completely destructive punishment it got handed this week. We aren't punishing those that did the evil and allowed football to rise above the safety of children. They are dead and disgraced already. We aren't preventing other programs from making the same callous and psychotic decisions with other moral challenges they may face, because there are systems in place to ensure such should never happen again, and we do trust the moral integrity even of the Nick Sabans and Lane Kiffins of the world to put the welfare of children (e.g.) above a football team. No, we punished Penn State because we needed to do it as a society. We felt guilt, and felt that there needed to be punishment, and it was just that simple.

And with the exception of a few Penn State players and alumni, we as a society are lighting our cigars confident justice was served, and now we can put the uncleanliness of this whole affair behind us and go back to the sex, chicken sandwiches, and rock and roll of our daily lives. Government permitting, of course.

Anyway, off to the questions.

How can someone who writes as solid as you and is seemingly well read and knowledgeable regarding a wide variety of topics be a complete and utter moron when predicting the number of games the Browns will win in 2012? At one time I considered you the CF version of the true renaissance man. Now I think you are just another fucking loser like the rest of us. Why Lars? Why? –mattvan1

First of all, thank you for the compliment. I appreciate it.

I love that discourse in our society can be boiled down so simply as putting people in two parties: those that agree with the mainstream opinion, and utter morons. Rahm Emmanuel uses this prevailing mindset to deprive Chicagoans of tasty chicken sandwiches and banana milkshakes. Often, dissent from the majority is indeed folly, and there is some deviation from the norm that can clearly be classified as moronic, like Scientology. But predictions of the future have proven to be far less reliable.

Take the 1987 Cleveland Indians. With Joe Carter, Cory Snyder, and a young team full of sure-fire future stars, you'd have to be an utter moron to say that team wasn't going to compete, right? Sports Illustrated put them on the cover and all. But after a 61-101 season, the morons that said we were going to suck were proven quite right.

Fact is, here's all we know will happen in the 2012 NFL season: Rex Ryan will say something stupid, reporters will tell us every time Tim Tebow farts on the sideline, and Braylon Edwards will not be an all-pro. Everything else is up in the air. Granted, looking at historical performances of teams that are largely similar to those in the past can give you some clues that the Packers, Patriots, Giants, and Ravens might turn in good seasons, but for those teams like the Browns who have had a complete makeover top to bottom, who's to say they won't click and win 11 games? Or who's to say it will all be the steaming pile of poo (SPOP) we've seen since 1999 reheated 16 times for a 1-15 season?

Fact of the matter is that the quarterback is the most important position in football, and I believe in Brandon Weeden. Colt McCoy sucks, it's true, look in your heart of hearts and know he killed the team last year like nun kills a hard on. Fixing the line, the running back, and most importantly the quarterback, while upgrading the receivers and the run defense will make this team very different, in my moronic opinion, than the usual SPOP. WILL we win eleven games? Likely not. But COULD we? Ah, that's the question.

If you're a fan, and it's July, and you can't see how we COULD win 11 games, then why bother to follow the team? This is the time for hopes, dreams, and aspirations. This is next year! When the regular season kicks off and Philly whitewashes us like Tom Sawyer painting a fence, that dream ends. But now, why not be optimistic and hopeful? What do you have to lose?

My uncle used to make marijuana brownies while living in Mexico, he says leaving in a

few seeds for the crunch was a nice touch and added to the experience. If you lived in Mexico , liked brownies, and considered MaryJane a naturally occurring herb with relaxing/entertainment value with less side effects than alcohol, would you consider seeds in the batter? -pod

Gone are the days where a bowl of brown uniformly mushy goo is considered haute cuisine. Properly prepared food balances acid with fat, and sweet with salty, in the right proportions for the particular dish being prepared, while creating interesting bites that contrast flavors, textures, and temperatures. Texture balancing requires bites that have high resistance, aka crunch, those that have a nice firm resistance, and those that are gushy and explode within your mouth.

Cacao nibs are a great way of adding this contrast to sweet preparations. They have a nice crunch, and a burst of flavor that is a deep rich chocolate flavor with hints of cherry and coffee within it. Sesame seeds are far from useless ornamentation, they also provide little bursts of crunch and an explosion of sesame oil and flavor as they yield to your bite. Other seeds have similar properties with more explosive and strong flavors, such as caraway, fennel, and cumin, which can actually provide both texture contrast and flavor pockets that make the dish fundamentally interesting.

But pod, your uncle is flat lazy, and as such he makes his MJ brownies wrong. Without corrupting the delicate youth that comprise loyal Out of Bounds readers, let’s just say the seeds shouldn’t be anywhere near the final batter. From what I’ve read, of course. You want texture? Cacao nibs.

Are ghosts real? Serious answer here, Lars. There are many credible people who have shared their stories that have absolutely nothing to gain from making shit up. On the other hand, there are countless douchebags on TV/Internet who will say anything to make a buck on the paranormal. I tend to believe there is plenty unknown in this world and it would be almost arrogant to believe that science knows even 10% of what's out there on this planet. –Brady

All we know for sure is that we don’t really know anything for certain.

To deny the existence of supernatural elements in this world is clearly, to me, mistaken. We as

men daily perform activities via the control of our mind that run afoul of the basic laws of nature and cannot be explained with the laws of thermodynamics. How we are able to make conscious decisions on actions and drive a chain of events one way or another not by the laws of the universe, but merely by our own individual free will, is an amazingly powerful thing to behold. How is this possible without a “soul” in some capacity, and how is this possible to refute the very laws of nature unless somehow we are given special dispensation to do such (think of it like building a Chick-Fil-A in Chicago)?

If we accept the existence of a soul in most people (wretched and evil in the case of the likes of Art Modell), then we’re faced with the same problem that municipal waste management is faced with: what to do with it when the body is dead. Does the soul necessarily live in the body and die with it? Do we recycle them? Does it wonder the earth like Caine, and do things like help us blow up Death Stars? Or does it transcend this plane and go to another? Since nobody has successfully died and then come back and given us the answers, we are left to fend for ourselves here.

There is a lot of stuff that is seen on this earth that is unexplained. A lot of this can be explained with a simple axiom: people are stupid. My personal philosophy on life states that 90% of people aren’t top 10% people. We’re easily duped, and thirst for entertainment, which is the only explanation for how a complete toolbox like Chriss Angel can be wealthy and popular. People that know this fact also try to exploit it, as you mentioned in your question. This makes the overwhelming majority of the unexplained either perfectly explainable, completely misunderstood, or a hoax.

But does this necessarily mean ALL of it is as such? There are a lot of pictures that capture blood-chilling images on them, stories of near-death experiences, strange encounters that provide data from the deceased that couldn’t otherwise be known, and weird happenings that can’t just be wiped away casually.

But are they ghosts? Well, what do you define a ghost to be? Is it strictly limited to a human soul that is lingering around for whatever reason? Is it an angel and/or demon, sent here to help with the governance of humanity and the shepherding and/or solicitation of the soul? Is there an entirely new form of life among us about which we can’t learn because we don’t have the capabilities to understand the time and/or spatial dimensions in which they live? And whatever they are, are they really responsible for the Cleveland curse, and if so, is there a way to get rid of them?

I have no idea to be honest, but I do know one thing for certain: The Cleveland Browns will win 11 games this season. And if they don't, it's the demons that reside in Cleveland Browns Stadium who will be responsible. Or Pat Shurmur.

Please email questions to lars.hancock@yahoo.com ,tweet them @ReasonsImADrunk, or DM them to me in the forae to LarsHancock.