

Why did the chicken cross the road? He didn't have much of a choice. We are forcibly thrown into the world and faced with temporality. The chicken always thought it was a dumb joke.

"To get to the other side. How prescriptive. As if those featherless chickens know what I long for.." It was mildly interesting as an idiom for suicide. "But what other side? There's nothing over there."

He enjoyed learning about the natural world, but as the days wore on, life revealed its unsubtle absurdity to him like an old lunatic flashing their neighbors. Pattern-seeking had its place, but it was on the outskirts of his wonder.

The local population worshipped road crossing. It was a rite of passage, and more than that, a religious experience. Every now and then a black sheep refused to cross and they were exiled to live on the plain's peripheries. Less food, more predators. But they met others like them and chickenized each other's experience, reflecting on the chicken condition.

"If I stay over here, I need to search for food, find shelter, over and over again. Sure. There's no cars. No asphalt. No clucking at the stars for pity like the rest. But I'm posed with choice after choice regardless.

"Even then, even in this meadow, I'm perpetually at a crossroads."

He squabbled and gawked as if trying to cough up the demon who sprung him in to life's gambit. He no longer cared which side he was even on. He could not escape his fundamental position in the world as a being faced with ephemerally unfolding decisions. Try as he might the chicken was ever at a crossroads.

He looked to the left and saw his beautiful romantic interest clucking in the meadow. He looked to the right and saw a promising woodland, perhaps rife with everything that was scarce in his current home. His heart hurt. His head felt heavy.

"And why, when I am blessed with such opportunity, my sadness only grows?"

Distal life arrows radiated outward and his soul lay completely still as they pulled him in different directions. For more than a moment he was a centroid perfectly balanced on a needle's tip.

"I don't understand. I may as well flip a coin. But it's heavier.."

He thought back to his youth, and the possibilities that stretched out before him, and wilted in time with overwhelming probability. Each one left a unique etch in his mind – lives lost, experiences he yearned for, broken futures. A flash of regret seared through him, left him feeling tired, overwhelmed, but strangely more whole. There was no sense in resisting it. The blackened petals piled around his being. He swallowed them into his self-concept and embraced the pain of regret. It was unavoidable. Every conceivable road led to the annihilation of an infinite number of universes.

That night he dreamed in the meadow. He was featherless in a boat. From the river a giant catfish emerged - made an arc - submerged. Its barbels trailed beside and fluttered through the water. The catfish mogged towards the shore and a village gathered. Children began jumping in like lemmings, slaves to their curiosity. The catfish moved with amicable indifference. It again arced; they rushed to pet it and feel its shimmering scales. The beast ran through their countful hands. One second passed. Then two. Three. Four. How big was it? Five. It submerged again. Those in their prime dove into the water to measure their power with it whilst dozens grabbed their fishing rods. It once more arced. The catfish's pupils rolled through its gelatinous eye fluid like an uncanny UFO. Then the

strongest men got a full waistlock around it: it glided out with the least bit of effort. The river god was a familiar face; the elders wordlessly gazed at the vanishing web of fishing lines as it said goodbye, see you again.

A fellow black sheep posed the question: “Why should we not kill ourselves at this instant?” and it bypassed his mind into somewhere more limbic, moving his soul if you will. It was the kind of question he loved - a child can grasp it, yet thinking cannot wrest it out of the water.

Years past and the sieves of time filtered some of his regret while the remainder settled into the sediment of his coarser inner grief. The emotional landscape of life’s potentials and the lives of his dear friends, family, lovers, coalesced into one boundaryless scape. When he dreamed vividly, he flew over it and could make out coagulated regions that he could put names to. Grief, eudemonia, listlessness, fatigue. It was a patchwork, yet exactly where they stopped and started was impossible to say. Every day he felt larger and wider like a quilt being sewn. The years worked away at his physical frame but it had no bearing on his being, as a chicken, ever at a crossroads.

It came with pain and a cadence to time that dragged on too slowly for comfort, but his “why” for choosing life dwindled into a point, towards nothing, while his verror and devotion to life grew in equal and opposite measure. First he could hold his grief and live beside it. Then he came to experience it like a drop of water quenching his soul’s thirst, knowing it too had limits, and one day he would have to part ways with experience itself. He grew older, he grew more tired of language. A hot cup of tea. A lizard skitting in the bushes. Talking less, thinking less, letting life’s exotic shapes merge, constellate, dissipate. Every drop of rain, every gust of wind, every glance from his dear, moved him so deeply, he abandoned any hope of expressing the impression it made.

The car hit him at night. When the details got messy his brain registered an F# hum, and a bright burst of white light that faded into the absence of color. When the two bodies collided, his inner world took a thousand cuts over hundreds of milliseconds. Numerous thought streams derailing in haphazard succession as the tight fusion of stomach pains, hankerings, and musings that make up daily life unwinded itself. The body, without alternative, accepted its dispersal. Despite the nightmare playing out, he simply felt hot, hotter than anything he’d ever known before, and at the same time weightless. The world as hallucinatory as thoughts, thoughts as cold and heavy as the world.

“It’s pointless to ask why the chicken crosses the road. We simply cross.”