

# Recursive Simplicity

End the Nightmare

*A Complex PTSD Survivor's Bottom-Up Guide to handling Psychopaths, Narcissists and Gaslighters*

*By Charles D. Miller V*

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# The Long Nightmare

## Acknowledgements

Words alone cannot express the feeling of usefulness I find in my community of knowledge. Floundering in my uncertainty, reflective mediums have helped me find my own answers to the deepest questions I didn't know I was asking.

In the beginning of emerging from my Long Nightmare, there was Pete Walker and his consistently useful books: *Complex PTSD* and *The Tao of Fully Feeling*.

In the middle, when I saw no way up – and life was to be a decent into perpetual suffering – *The Courage to be Disliked* and *The Courage to be Happy*, both by Ichiro Kishimi and Fumitake Koga, helped me see a path forward.

After recoiling out of my Long Nightmare, Devon Price and his books, *Unmasking Autism* and *Unmasking for Life*, simultaneously brought me clarity and forged prior philosophicals into tangibles.

Breaching the Long Nightmare's surface, there was Lindsey Mackereth and her groundbreaking *NeuroComplexity* which finally convinced me I was a good person, leaving *pathology* in the abyss where it belongs.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you and apology to all the people who *heard* my voice and *saw* my self – in my search for answers, diving deeper and deeper...

*“A prayer cannot be born out of those who know nothing but joy. Oh, child of suffering, cursing life itself... Certainly there is something only you can do.” —Akihito Tsukushi, Made in Abyss<sup>1</sup>*

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## Dedication

This book is dedicated to all children; small and large, emerging and ancient. To the ones who are fibrous, fleshy, furry, scaley, or chitinous. To the valued and devalued. To those loved and those discarded. To the ones that move and the ones that are still. To the visible and invisible, may you all be *heard* and *seen*.



# Induction

## Etiology or Teleology?

I am a Complex PTSD Survivor, a simple *layperson*, and your *friend*. I want you to understand that this book serves as a metaphor for neuroscience and possibly even life itself – all to simplify the complex – until we reach our destination. It may save our lives. Until then, please keep that in mind going forward. I will let you know when we’ve left metaphor-land, so no worries there.

Paraphrases and quotes from people and sources in this book are grounded, but to get where we’re going, we gotta hop in the metaphorical brain submarine and drift somewhere that seems a bit deep. That being said, take your time to get settled somewhere nice and comfy. Listening to binaural beats or anything like soothing delta waves are especially comforting, I’ve noticed, and helped me sleep after each dissonance breach. We may cover some stressful topics later on. Ah, but I’ll also provide memes...

All set and comfy? If not, take your time. There’s no rush...

Let’s dive...

The contradiction between **causes** and **goals**, as explained in *The Courage to Be Disliked*,<sup>2</sup> is something I continue to think about a lot. So much so that I needed to put my thoughts in a book. Metaphorically speaking, the contradiction between **causes** and **goals** poured over my senses like an unexpected ice-bath in the middle of a deep sleep – more of a deep nightmare really – especially after having read *Complex PTSD*<sup>3</sup> and *The Tao of Fully Feeling*<sup>4</sup> at the time. I freaked out when I discovered these two words. You might too. Since a baseline understanding of **causes** and **goals** is foundational for this book, here’s a neat table to explain what etiology and teleology are. Tell me if you feel anything weird after seeing these:

### *Etiology*

- Stuff in etiology refers to things having a “**cause**” *because of* “responsibility.”
- The study of **causes** or *origins*.<sup>5</sup>

### *Teleology*

- Stuff in teleology refers to things having a “**goal**” *for a* “result.”
- The study of **goals** or *ends*.<sup>6</sup>

It's quite tricky to decide which of these to use as a *lens* to see the world, right? Are there – and *were there* – only **causes**? Are there – and *were there* – only **goals**? Disorienting, really.

So, I had to take a step back and think. To literally think about thinking. Funny right? But seriously, where does sensing, thinking, feeling, and doing happen? Forget the confusion of being caught between **causes** and **goals** for a moment. The answer is simple: the brain. My brain. Your brain. Their brain. Our Brains. That's where all of the stuff™ happens. But where does outside stuff enter our brain to be processed? The body. The body is the place where inputs happen. This is an intentional simplification because if we get into cytokines and stuff, well, we'll be here for quite a while. Just know that body stuff, like cytokines and inflammation, are the shadows of trauma rather than the trauma itself.

Etiology and teleology are sort of the origin points and end points of all internal experiences we have. In a metaphorically similar way, the body receives the input (origin), and the brain pushes the output (end). They're sort of like *opposing poles* on a magnet. One pushes something to the other, which is pushed back, so on and so forth. To really be free in life, an understanding of how we're being *pushed* around is needed, so we can *push back* if we feel the *need* to do so.

To elaborate, origins and ends of our whole being sort of converge onto a single point in our brain-body. Zooming in, where is this convergence point? Simplified: at *neurons*. Just as our origin moment (birth) and our end moment (death) converge on our present moment, brain and body converge on the neuron. Just as there is no present without beginning and end, there is no emergent self without brain and body. Simplistically speaking, no one can really *feel* or *be* present if they aren't first aware of their origins and their ends, their **causes** and **goals**, their body and their brain.

Luckily, there's this guy named Peter Putnam who made this *Outline of a Functional Model of the Nervous System* in 1963. There's also Andrew Huberman, but we'll get to him later. What a dashing lad... Anyway, this paper from 1963 was a very dense academic experience for sure. Putnam basically says that the brain is sort of a bunch of correlates – or correlated neurons – where each one seeks a kind of stability.<sup>7</sup> I think what Putnam was saying is that there's something that causes, or begins, this correlational stability seeking. This stability seeking is something that happens in the brain circuits as responses to a choice of inputs,<sup>7</sup> or rather, a choice of origins.

Neurons don't really like it when they're bothered. They kinda wiggle around and stuff trying to figure out where to put the stuff that flows through them. We know now that **choices**

of inputs are *found* by our Reticular Activating System, which literally detects inputs.<sup>8</sup> Inputs are **deterministic** “*because of*” origins (etiology) – we all have them. Denial of inputs is denial of life. To simplify, I interpret this to mean that our capacity to use **free will for** goals (teleology) is reliant on our capacity to *find* inputs. This isn’t fair at all though. If someone has a larger **lens** to *find* causes, doesn’t that mean they have more *freedom* to **choose** more goals? This creates a problem for us: how can we *find* **causes** we can’t *find*? The answer lies in re-correlating our brains to **see** more options, so that we can **do** more options.

The phenomena where the brain correlates... just... correlates... to seek stability<sup>7</sup> – and thus adapting – is called neuroplasticity.<sup>9</sup> Andrew Huberman is an absolute legend at explaining this in [Essentials: How Your Brain Works & Changes - Huberman Lab](#). It’s a great video, please check it out if you’d like to hear it from the mythic man himself. Bro told me that neuroplasticity is actually gated by temporary agitation<sup>9</sup> – literal annoyance, and quite possibly seething rage as well.

Additionally, neuroplasticity is also gated by these cool little things called neuromodulators.<sup>9</sup> Neuromodulators – and annoyance apparently – help send input signals to our circuits correlated to sensing, thinking, feeling, and doing things all inside the brain.<sup>9</sup> Handsome Huberman also says the brain has two spotlights, or **lenses**, it uses to absorb inputs, probably for correlation.<sup>9</sup> Finally, he says that **sleep** and **non-sleep deep rest** are actually when neuroplasticity cements in your brain. **NOT** when it’s agitated. You just have to do the agitating thing first, **then** sleep... lol.<sup>9</sup>



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However, what even is *input*? That word's pretty vague, so I'll explain. There must be something that causes sensing, thinking, feeling, and doing to actually begin the correlational stability seeking<sup>7</sup> process in the first place. To answer this, I offer you Dr. Nicole LePera's resonating words:

*"Stress is an inevitable part of life."*<sup>10</sup>

If you felt an "Oh no..." emerge from within you, don't worry! It's really not bad! Boredom is inevitably part of life as well, as we see in The Yerkes-Dodson Law<sup>11</sup> – also known as the stress spectrum – which I interpret to be a simple spectrum in which ALL *inputs* – causes or goals – can be placed:

Boring Input  $\leftrightarrow$  Optimal Input  $\leftrightarrow$  Distressing Input<sup>11</sup>

Each of us has our own Reticular Activating System<sup>8</sup> – our own inescapable subjectivity.<sup>2</sup> What is boring, fun, or distressing is entirely filtered by our own brains through the process of correlation<sup>7,9</sup> – from boring experiences to experiences so distressing, abusive, and neglectful that they're traumatic.<sup>3,4</sup> So, to see the big end goal of the brain – the teleological end – we kinda have to see where the brain begins – the etiological origin from the metaphorical perspective of the small neuron.

If the brain is made of a bunch of neurons, each seeking stability when given inputs<sup>7</sup> (goals or causes), then HOW does a neuron seek this stability? Why does that matter? Teleology: does this mean neurons have goals??? Etiology: Are they reacting to causes??? Neurons don't have brains themselves, so why even ask these outlandish questions? My answer might surprise you: it kinda looks like both etiology AND teleology apply! Not only that, but I believe their combination IS how neurons function! Their combination IS the driving force behind correlational stability seeking. Correlational stability seeking<sup>7</sup> is Neuroplasticity!<sup>9</sup>

It seems as if something *sort of* unknown causes the goal, then the goal causes a goal, and so on and so forth, cascading in a kind of rhythm, from input to output to input again, looping back in on itself, with the limiting factor being these "spotlights" (Huberman mentioned<sup>9</sup> – or *lenses* as I'll be referring to them. But what causes lead to goals? From there, what goals lead to causes? Even when writing this book, I'm still confused myself, so I made up a word to label the unknown thing at the bottom of everything: *goal-cause*.

It's a hybrid *lens* of sorts that believes both teleology and etiology to be recurring at the same time in the present moment. The closest metaphor I could make up to help us understand what a neuron *is* and *does* is this goal-cause metaphor:

- Neurons HAVE a goal-cause and Neurons ARE a goal-cause. Neurons are a kind of convergence point of goals and causes, and of origins and ends. Neurons have an origin

and an end: the input/output. Neurons have a couple input/output points (a neuron's interconnections).

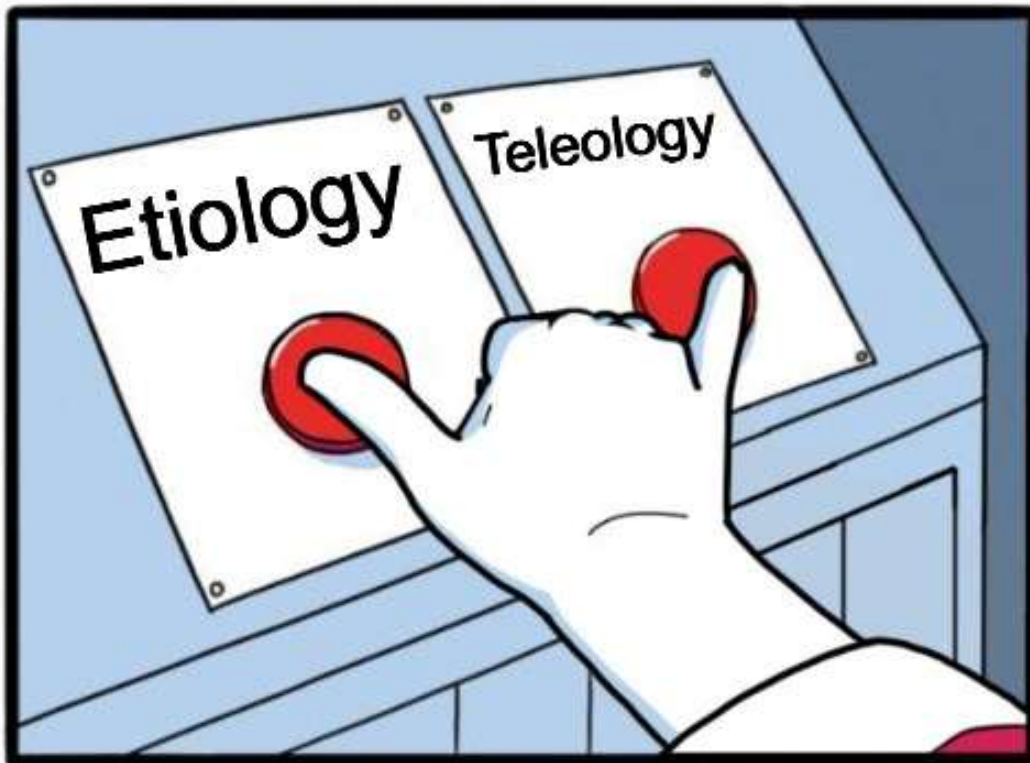
To bridge Neuron to Brain, I extend this metaphor to say – like Neuron:

- Brains HAVE a goal-cause and Brains ARE a goal-cause. Brains are a kind of convergence point of goals and causes, and of origins and ends. Brains have an origin and an end: the neuron. Brains have a LOT of input/output points (an individual's interrelationships).

You and I have origin points and end points that encompass our individuality. Just as groups of people have individuals, brains have neurons, and neurons have inputs. The brain also happens to have a central convergence highway of sorts too... of goals and causes, and of origins and ends, and of our goods and evils – the so-called ***morals***.

Good and Evil – or so-called ***morals*** – are particularly hard to pin down though, as many of us have contradictory ***morals*** aligned with these words. The Courage to be Disliked explains the nature of good and evil through the ancient Greek terms ***Agathon*** and ***Kakon***.<sup>2</sup> In Kishimi and Koga's framing, good – ***Agathon*** – is “beneficial” while bad – ***Kakon*** – is “not beneficial.”<sup>2</sup> However, this seems to deflect the concept of ***morally ambiguous*** desired harm, which is more than simply not beneficial. To resolve this, I offer my current view on good and evil. ***Good is Ensuring Continuity of Entities. Evil is Ensuring Discontinuity of Entities.*** It's really *simple*<sup>2</sup> isn't it?

So, let's see if we can breach through the dissonance, contradiction, confusion, and ambiguity – together. Let's see if there's a bottom to all of this, and if we can leverage that bottom for our own ***Freedom*** and ***Continuity*** in the face of psychopathy. We'll try to breach through this confusion and hopefully resolve it – together – once and for all. Sleeping, at this point, would cement where we've dived, allowing us to dive deeper. If there is no sleep, the dive may be too stressful. You've been warned. We have quite the journey ahead of us. See you again soon. Goodnight, friend.



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# Breach 01

Us

There's a goal-cause at the bottom of everything. Even when we weren't aware we had it, it was there. I was there. You were there. It's THE goal-cause. It's the goal motivating all causes, and the cause driving all goals:

*Goal-Cause: Continue.*

The goal which causes. The cause driving goals. It's so simple, yet so profound and expansive at the same time. Every sense, every thought, every feeling, and every action you and I have done has been both *for* this goal and *because of* this cause. Every adaptation we've made to life and its stressors. Every. Single. Moment. Every moment and memory we've experienced (etiologically **input**) or delivered (teleologically **output**) has been ***because of*** and ***for*** the ***Goal-Cause: Continue.***

If all entities experience inputs and deliver outputs because of the goal-cause: continue, let's dive deeper into our "*logician's calculus*"<sup>7</sup> – as Putnam put it – to see how our minds *actually* work. The big three:

## Breach 02

### The Proof

Memory. This inescapable burden we all carry. I remember, you remember, we remember. I think memory also delivers some particular thoughts and feelings too: Why did it have to be this way? Why us? Why is it like this? But if we adopt the memory-as-data<sup>12</sup> approach from *Unmasking Autism*, memory serves not as a burden, but as a complex multi-tool we can utilize at-will. The method we find oh-so-useful is memory as a library of data.

But wait, what if it's all pain and suffering our memory? *All memories* are that of abuse? What if there isn't a single moment where we haven't been constantly tortured! Ah, but... don't we also think something feels a bit *off*? Bewildering even, that others, us included, could think we were never-good-enough-failures in those memories when – in fact – we've been *incredibly successful* at doing the core goal-cause we all emerged doing: Exist. *In contradiction* to the terror these memories hold and despite our existence being met with many barriers and would-be contradictions to our aliveness, we are *still here*.

Addictions? Sure. Self-harm and even suicide attempts? Sure. Every act a defiance of that which would contradict our existence. Suicide, even, can be either a convoluted method to *interfere* with that which would harm us or an inverted blame vector. Either way, there's never truly intention to destroy ourselves. A blame vector that is serving it's *inverted* goal. We understand this. Why? Because, "NO MORE!" we scream in silence with every fiber of our being, unaware we're pointing the spear of blame in the wrong direction... but... we don't have to die to get what we want. This quote sticks with me, and I'm sure it will with you too:

## Breach 03

### Them

Them. They. Those individuals in particular. That one, specifically. Everyone has a “Them” they remember... very well. After the last dissonance breaches, we can infer that – like us – *they* too follow the same bottom-up existential goal-cause: continue. But you see, obsessing about winning, competition, and control all the time is to be obsessed *NOT* with good results in a moral sense, but with **Power** for **Continuity**. And for maximum **Power**, we’ve constantly reflected over and over again in the pursuit of some semblance of control or understanding of the dissonant unfairness we’re so wrongfully submerged in. This is a quiet dominance. Thinking. Ruminating. We ask ourselves why in an effort to seek a kind of control *over them*<sup>2</sup> – the discontinuer(s) – that bad person.<sup>2</sup>

And what is childhood, but a time of cataclysmically impactful neuroplastic changes. Be the cataclysm.

## Glossary

Goal-Cause

Type: Metaphor / Neologism / Technical / Narrative Symbol

Definition: A playful reframing of causality.

Origin: Coined by author to represent recursion between teleology and etiology.

Purpose: This is not a scientific term. It's metaphorical and used to facilitate conceptual understanding.

First Appears In: Induction

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