

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 books. 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.

Upon breaching the Long Nightmare's surface, there was Lindsey Mackereth extending the warm hand of *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 [1]

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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, scaly, or chitinous. To the valued and devalued. To the crowned, robed and scapegoated. To those loved and those discarded. To the ones who 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. Each "chapter" is a successive breach through a dissonant world. We may cover some stressful topics later on. There will be visual cues to pause in case you feel pressured to continue: 🍩 ⏸. I'll also provide complimentary memes and good humor...

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

Let's dive...

Cause or Goal?

The contradiction between **causes** and **goals**, as explained in *The Courage to Be Disliked* [2], is something I continue to think about a lot. So much so that I needed to put my thoughts in a book. The contradiction between **causes** and **goals** kinda freaked me out. You might feel a bit shocked too. However, 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Stuff in etiology refers to things having a "cause" because of "responsibility." The study of causes or origins [3].
Teleology
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Stuff in teleology refers to things having a "goal" for a "result." The study of goals or ends [4].

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. 🤔 II

About Thoughts/Feelings/Experiences

I had to take a step back and think. To literally think about thinking. Funny right? But seriously, where does sensing, feeling, thinking, 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 “external [5]” stuff enter our brain for us to process? 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 long shadows of trauma rather than the trauma itself.

Etiology and teleology are 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. 🤔 II

Cause and Goal Recursion

To elaborate, origins and ends of our whole being sort of converge onto a single point in our brain-body. Zooming in, this convergence point is at *neurons*. Just as our origin moment (birth) and our end moment (death) converge on our present moment (given choices of inputs [5]), brain and body converge on the neuron. Just as there is no *present* without beginning and end, there is no *given choice of inputs* [5] without brain and body. Simplistically speaking, no one can really *feel* or *be* free if they can’t find 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, but I read it. Putnam basically says that the brain is sort of a bunch of correlates – or correlated neurons – where neurons seek a kind of stability [5].

I think what Putnam was saying is that there are choices of inputs [5] which act as causes, or origins, to this correlational stability seeking [5]. This stability seeking is something

that happens in the neurons as a response to a given choice of inputs [5] or rather, a given choice of origins [3]. However, existing in a hostile community, having hostile parents, or having hostile caregivers, isn't something we choose. These are terrible long-term inescapable traumatic experiences [11]. We didn't choose to be born, persuaded, abused, neglected, then discarded – only for it to happen again and again [6]. It's more of a long choice that was made for us. These so-called choices are major perturbations for all our minds. In my experience, it gets to the point where we know nothing else but the narcissistic slop we're fed. I intend to expand our scope of choices. I intend to enable our maximum freedom – all within the bounds of legalism and with great respect for the free world. 🤝 🔍

Finding Causes, Forming Goals

Like us, neurons don't really like it when they're perturbed. They kinda wiggle around and stuff trying to figure out where to put the destabilizing stuff that flows through them. We know now that **choices experienced** are of **deterministic** origin (etiology) – we all have our experiences. We've all experienced choices made by other individuals. Denial of their choices is denial of our lives. To simplify, this means that our capacity to use **free will for goals** (teleology) is reliant on our capacity to *find causes*, or choices of inputs [5].

This isn't fair at all though. If someone has a larger **lens** to *find* more choices, 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 choices, so that we can **do** more choices. The phenomena where the brain correlates... just... correlates... to seek stability [5] – and thus adapting – is called neuroplasticity [8]. It's something we've all done very well over the years, I assure you [7]. Traumatized and disconnected but unbroken [2, 7, 14]. 🤝 🔍

A Giga-Chad, A Sigma-Lad

Andrew Huberman is an absolute legend at explaining neuroplasticity 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 [8]. By extension, neuroplasticity is quite possibly gated by the grieving process as well [12].

Additionally, Handsome Huberman also says we have two spotlights [8], or **lenses**, we use for finding choices we're given [5]. Comfortingly, he says that **sleep** and **non-sleep deep rest** are actually when neuroplasticity **cements** in your brain, but **NOT** when it's agitated [8]. We just do the agitating thing first, *then sleep or deep rest...* lol [8]. 🤝 🔍



Stress and Boredom

However, what even is a *choice of inputs* [5]? That's pretty vague, so I'll explain. There must be something that causes sensing, thinking, feeling, and doing to actually begin the neuron's stability seeking [5] in the first place. To answer this, I offer you Dr. Nicole LePera's resonating words:

"Stress is an inevitable part of life."[9]

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 [10] – also known as the stress spectrum – which I reinterpret to be a simple spectrum in which ALL **choices** – causes or goals – can be placed as inputs:

Boring Input ← → Optimal Input ← → Distressing Input [10]

I approach this from the view that each of us has our own inescapable subjectivity [2]. I believe Putnam was saying there is no "external" experience either, hence Putnam's proverbial air-quotes in his 1963 outline [5]. What my approach means for us is that boring, fun, or distressing stuff is entirely filtered by our own brains through the process of neuroplastic stability seeking over time [5, 7, 8] – from boring experiences to experiences so distressing, abusive, neglectful, and dissonant that they're traumatic [9, 11, 12, 13]. 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. 🤗 II

Standing On the Recursive Bridge

If the brain is made of a bunch of neurons, each seeking stability when given choice inputs [5] (goals or causes), then HOW does a neuron seek this stability when its perturbed? 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 dual recursion is manifested as the neuron. My firm opinion is that dual etiology and teleology processing **lenses** are the driving forces behind stability seeking [5] and pretty much everything we are. I believe this stability seeking [5] is recursive Neuroplasticity [8] and adaptive NeuroComplexity [7].

It seems to me 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 [8] – or ***lenses*** as I'll be reinterpreting them. But what causes lead to goals? From there, what goals lead to causes? 🤔

The Unknown Bottom

Even when writing this book, I'm still confused myself, so I'll show you a word I made up to label the unknown thing at the bottom of everything. It's a hybrid ***lens*** of sorts that believes both teleology and etiology to be recurring at the same time in the present moment. I hybridize goals and causes into Goal-Cause. At the bottom of everything is the **Goal** behind all causes, and the **Cause** driving all goals:

Goal-Cause: Continue

Like a ceaseless whisper from the beginning of everything. Despite the contradictions, we move forward. The closest metaphor I could make up to help us understand what a neuron/brain *is* and *does* is this **Goal-Cause: Continue**:

- Neurons HAVE the Goal-Cause: Continue and Neurons ARE the Goal-Cause: Continue manifested in emergent freedom. 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 Neurons:

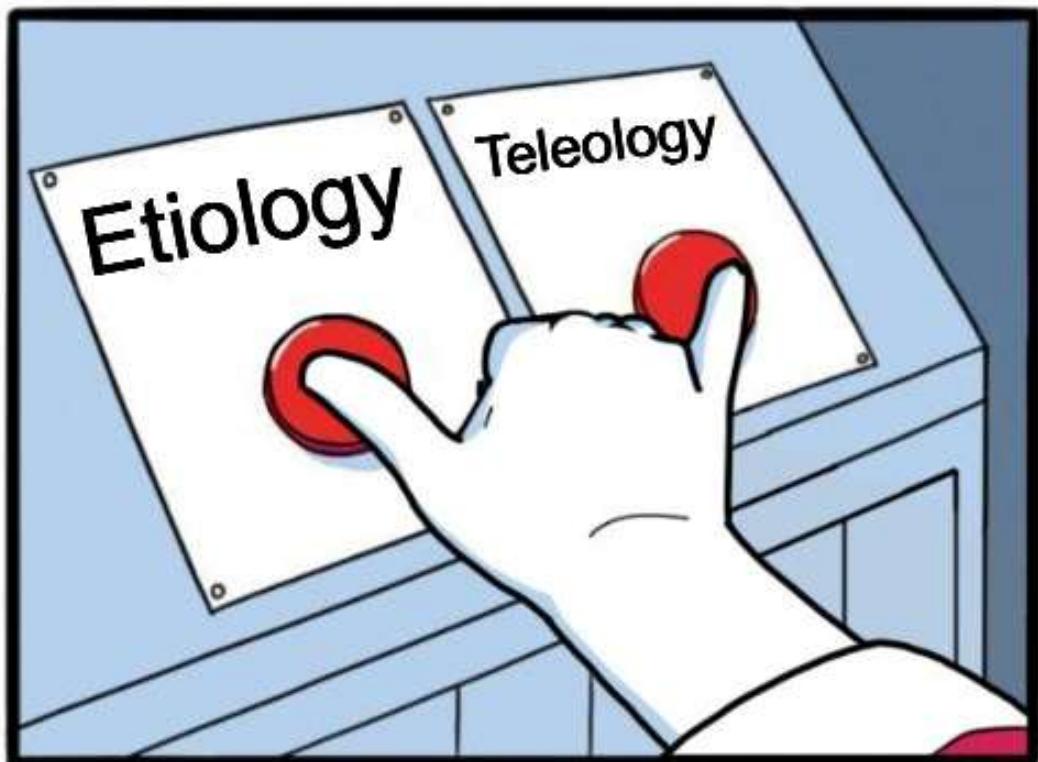
- Brains HAVE the Goal-Cause: Continue and Brains ARE the Goal-Cause: Continue manifested in emergent freedom. Brains are a kind of convergence point of goals and causes, and of origins and ends. Brains have an origin and an end: the neuron. Brains have a LOT of input/output points (an individual's interrelationships with "external [5]" stuff – like entities and all inanimate stuff in the community of this universe [2]).

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 choice inputs. The brain also happens to have a central convergence highway of sorts too... of goals and causes, and of origins and ends

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. We must breach each layer together, slowly.

Please remember that you can always put this book down and leave. You are free to do so. We have quite the journey ahead of us. At the end of our journey through the layers, I'll show you what lies beyond our trauma, but please, for your safety, do not rush ahead. See you again soon. Goodnight, friend. 🌟



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