

# THE SENSATIONALIST: #18

3/27/23

"You are the proprietor of your life"



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# On Will (1)

Henry Levitt

## Preface

There are many places and ways in which I can begin this discussion of will. After all, will necessarily exists within almost every facet of all life and its absence is equally palpable. While I could begin with a definition of will, I find this approach quite pedantic (and for that reason equally repulsive) and I would rather begin where my previous discussion “On Placebos” ended. Before I do so, however, I want to highlight the fact that there seems to be a dearth of will in our modern society--or at least an understanding of its power and proper place within an individual's life. It is through this focus that I implore you to view the following ideas as the “proper place” and power of will unfold through the structure of this discussion. Later on we can discuss the implications of the power of will on notions of realizing a collective betterment of societies and sub-societies, but the purpose of this paper is to extoll the power of will and relate it to the individual before all else. And the best place to start this investigation of sorts is by pushing the idea of placebos to its extremities to reveal the underlying principle behind its capacity to change reality.

## On Perception

The first part of this discussion (“On Placebos”) utilized data to arrive at the conclusion that this discussion will begin at. This continuation will be rooted in empirical reasoning but will not include data from scientific studies. Due to this, I want to make clear that the data in the first part is by no means the basis for the premises we will suppose in “On Will”, but instead functions to build credibility for “On Placebos” as a standalone argument. Even still, I would like to use it as a jumping off point to dive into the root of why will works. This *why*, the power of the mind, will then explicitly serve as the underlying presupposition for both “On Placebos” and this essay, “On Will”.

“On Placebos” ends with the main point that one's perception *is* reality. This means that the mind is the creator of reality for an individual as it is the organ that unites and translates all perceptions from both the outside world and internal systems. A vast majority of this information from the senses feeds first into the unconscious brain where it carries out necessary bodily processes (like digestion and heart contractions) and essentially automatic mental processes. An enormous amount of information is processed before the conscious self is even aware of the information that is proliferating its mind. When one hears his native language, for example, he cannot help but to understand the sounds as words and sentences that contain meaning. He cannot consciously shut off his ability to understand language and revert to hearing meaningless noise. When one looks at a tree she will immediately be able to recognize the kaleidoscope of colors as a three dimensional object and be able to classify it as a tree. It is impossible to force oneself to not recognize an object that is familiar.. These two processes, along with a multitude of other functions, are carried out by the unconscious mind before the conscious mind can begin to interact with content uncovered by

the senses. The content that the conscious mind does interact with has already been distilled and filtered and its abstract meaning assigned based on existing knowledge.

It follows that one will never be able to comprehend “objective reality”<sup>1</sup> because it is something that exists beyond the narrow senses evolution has fine tuned for our continued survival. Furthermore, the human body can only accept a finite amount of information due to physical constraints. For example, the human eye is not able to see ultraviolet or infrared rays. We can only hear sounds within a certain pitch range. We cannot detect the dark matter that is constantly flowing through our bodies. And after the information of the senses has been accepted into our minds, we receive an incredibly subjective account of reality due to automatic mental processes that assign meaning to the world around us. In assigning meaning, we lose much of the raw information that the unconscious mind once perceived. Therefore, our senses combined with the mind’s automatic processes, or conscious perception, are the building blocks of our individual realities. It is worth noting here that this conscious perception includes an enormous quantity of abilities. For example, capacity to reason, use of language, sense of self, emotions, object recognition, taste, spatial awareness and a thousands of other cognitions we do not even know about yet are elements of conscious perception.

Learning adds new awareness of perceivable constructed significances; learning and experiences allow the mind to assign meaning to the senses. I call the meaning constructed because it does not exist without an observer assigning the meaning. An hour is a concept that represents a period of time passing only because we choose for it to represent this. An hour does not exist separate from human beings. An example of how the mind can acquire the ability to assign meaning can be found in a child learning to read. The child will at first perceive letters as symbols and sketches that carry no meaning beyond their face-value shapes. However, as the child learns, he or she will be able to recognize once nonsensical symbols as letters that form words. Soon enough, the child will not be able to view letters without understanding their meaning and seeing the shape simultaneously within his or her conscious mind.

While it is possible to gain understanding of constructs, it is not possible to expand one’s physical senses as it is limited by anatomy. No amount of training will allow an individual to see more colors or hear more sounds. No amount of concentration will grant a human the ability to feel individual photons hitting his skin. One may refine a sense and perceive it more clearly through practice, but it is impossible to actually expand the ability of the sense or add a new one. Perhaps in the future technology may be able to lend new senses to the human body or mind, but as of now the closest example to augmenting or adding a sense is vision correction in the form of glasses, contacts, or surgery.

The conscious mind is constantly experiencing reality. The senses are always engaged for a conscious being and so are the mental faculties that refine stimuli into conscious perceptions. Experiencing these conscious perceptions is the primary way in which the mind learns and grows its capacity to perceive significance in the information gathered by the senses. Using the example above,

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<sup>1</sup> Whether “objective reality” exists is another question that I do not aim to answer here. However, in the case of its existence I have included some thoughts.

when a child is learning to read, he or she is experiencing reality in order to learn. The knowledge of letters and words does not spontaneously permeate into the mind when the child decides he or she wants to know how to read. Some knowledge, though, is intuitive for survival purposes and does develop without external help. Infants intuitively know how to suckle on a nipple without any experience of the world. Many people have phobias of heights without ever being taught the dangers of falling. There are many examples of intuitive knowledge that likely developed through evolution's elegance of culling organisms that do not exhibit the intuition necessary for survival. While intuition is a fascinating subject, the main point that I aim to develop is the connection between one's experience and expanding conscious perceptions of reality.

The actual mechanisms of learning (learning being synonymous with expanding conscious perception) currently are shrouded in mystery, but it is clear that learning cannot exist without experiences. While not all experiences may lead to increased knowledge in a tangible way, all learnings are caused by experiences. Otherwise the knowledge would originate from intuition. Because raw sensory experiences undergo mental processes before reaching the conscious brain, all conscious learning is filtered by existing unconscious structures. Essentially, the unconscious mind shapes the learning that an individual is aware of by refining senses into intelligible perceptions. These intelligible perceptions influence how and what an individual learns through experiences. In this way the unconscious mind acts as an oil refinery. The input is crude oil, a metaphor for raw sensory experience, and the output is refined petroleum, conscious perceptions, that can be used by combustion engines, or the conscious mind. The refined petroleum in this metaphor is the content that adds to one's perception of significances. Every mind refines the raw oil differently and ends up with a different end product that they feed into their mind-engine. The type of refining the unconscious mind does changes the outcome of what a person learns.

However, learning occurs beyond the scope of the conscious mind. One does not have to understand and consciously perceive experiences to learn from them. Much of the learning our minds do is unconscious. And often we are not aware of the connections the unconscious makes as learnings slowly develop into automatic mental processes that become one's normal perception of reality. An excellent example of this is classical conditioning where involuntary behavior becomes associated with an unrelated stimulus. Let's say that every time right before you pee, your phone vibrates in your pocket. If this pair of stimuli (needing to urinate and the phone buzzing) occurs multiple times, there is a good chance that your phone buzzing in your pocket will increase your urge to pee immediately. Just like how these stimuli condition the mind, any two or more stimuli can combine into a perceived causal connection that becomes a new understanding of reality, though perhaps a subtle one. As we are constantly experiencing stimuli, most experiences condition us and create learnings in some way. When you consciously experience an event, whether internal or external, it is likely that some new understanding or connection will arise.

*\*\*Next part, "Will as an Agent", appears in the next issue\*\**

# Crushing bore, do not say my name again.

Henry Levitt

Crushing bore, do not say my name again.  
Unless you desire to wring my wet rag  
Like those fickle neuron cords  
Coated in wet clay slag.

So if you come back to my mild drug den  
And seep through my facial pores  
To stretch the moments into eons  
Then I'll give you some gore.

I'll take a toothbrush, back end first  
And through my eye socket thrust  
The weapon of insanity  
To let ocular goo flow, nonplussed.

On the floor my Corpse will fold  
And any feeble soul can view  
That these extreme feats  
Are within humanity's purview.

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# The Sensational Times

## University of Georgia Unveils Plan to Taxidermy Deceased Bulldogs

Henry Levitt

**ATHENS, GEORGIA** - At the annual University of Georgia fundraising Dinner for the Board of Trustees last weekend, the University's President, Jere R.<sup>2</sup> Morehead unveiled his newest engagement initiative. The seventeen-step plan outlines a project that has been in development for a number of years known by insiders as "Dawgz After Death". Essentially, the "Dawgz After Death" initiative will immortalize all the UGA mascots who have passed away by taxidermying and displaying their carcasses in various locations. Once the taxidermy process has been completed satisfactorily, Mr. Morehead plans to first display all nine dogs in glass cases within his office. Though not included in the initial presentation, it was later disclosed to the *Sensational Times* that the glass cases will each contain a different environment modeled on UGA Investors' vacation houses that Mr. Morehead has visited. Per step nine of the plan, the glass boxes will be arranged in the Sanford Stadium endzones during home games. The University plans to purchase a specially designed vehicle for transporting the taxidermied dogs.

Mr. Morehead extolled the numerous benefits of this project. He cited a new study by the UGA Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that analyzed data to find that the initiative would have "an immediate and significant impact of lessening racism, sexism, and homophobia on campus and help marginalized groups to be more resilient in the long run." The study also found that Jewish related hate crimes would drop by up to 97% and anti-Asian graffiti around Athens would be slashed in half. In addition to the DEI study, Mr. Morehead did his own independent research at the golf course last month and found that the taxidermied dogs "...will increase interest in UGA by 37%," and lead to "a nice bit of revenue for us," ostensibly referring to the investors present.

The dog carcasses, currently frozen in the basement of the Food Sciences Building, are to be thawed and taxidermied as soon as a willing taxidermist is found. The entire project is estimated to cost \$985,000 before embezzlement fees. The budget does not include the expected \$40,000 needed to replace the leg of Uga III that was stolen in the Ludwig Incident of '87 in which the fraternity Kappa Sigma grilled up the leg during a tailgate before the University of Alabama game. The "Dawgz After Death" initiative will be funded partially by reallocating funds from

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<sup>2</sup> Top scholars and investigators currently believe that the R in Jere R. Morehead's name stands for Rabbit.



the 2023-2024 Department of Religious Studies budget. The move is expected to cause the layoffs of three tenured professors. Mr. Fligs, the Assistant Interim Advanced Senior Vice President of Finance for the Board of Trustees said, “The decision to cut the funding was easy; The Department of Religion is old and boring and doesn’t excite investors like it used to--we need something new.” The move to cut funding was expected to be controversial, but after Mr. Morehead finished presenting the plan, he received a unanimous standing ovation.

Critics of the “Dawgs after Death” initiative, while not directly opposing the project, do cite some concerns over the data presented by Mr. Morehead. They claim that the sample size may have been too small and the DEI study may have extrapolated some conclusions that were not found in the initial report. Regardless, the University will be going ahead with the project. Mr. Morehead also promised to revisit the project and taxidermy more animals if the DEI goals have not been met by January 2024.



# The Baby Pile

By Jake

Watching bare naked babies crawling about in a pile, groveling and crying, knowing only the names they've given themselves. Desperately they cry them out, craving acknowledgment, craving divine choosing. They scratch and bite at each other while hissing every name they ascribe to the sack of dust they sit in, attempting to escape the pile whilst digging deeper and deeper into the wriggling mass, begging something to call them something, that they may confirm that they indeed are, something.

And how foolish I must look to be naked and bare as well, but to say "I care not for your names" when there doesn't seem to be anything else to care for.

I want to sit and be a baby;  
Content immersing myself in cosmic incontinence, drooling ethos out of my little mouth, lest a teat appears to nourish me.

It's quite intrusive to my existence that I should be shouted at and harmed as a means to an infant's confirmation of their individual existence. "Your name is your hubris," I tell my fellow babies but they don't listen. They cry at my inability to care for their many names as they themselves do.

And yet no one has asked me mine.



## 2053 A

In the year 2053 a pernicious virus was unleashed on the world. It spread like wildfire among the global populace, but peculiarly it was accompanied by no symptoms whatsoever. Even more strange was that it only infected those with a y chromosome. But as the years passed, the virus strengthened its grip on virtually every male human on planet Earth. Starting in December of 2054, though our contemporary scholars place the Great Withering slightly earlier in the year, the virus reared its ugly head. In droves men and boys began to experience the most hopeless illness to ever exist within known history. No matter how much food infected individuals ate, they still starved and withered daily. None of the great scientists, many withering themselves, could get close to figuring out the mechanism behind the virus, let alone a cure. As the situation became more hopeless, living skeletons willingly festered and withered in enormous pits until the last disfigured being drew his final breath and entered into the endless void.

The broken remnants of human civilization--women and girls of every age--mourned for their brothers, fathers, husbands, sons, uncles, nephews, grandfathers, lovers and friends. A period of deep melancholy descended like a thick fog. Eventually though, a resolve was proposed by the wisest matriarchs. And from this abject wasteland of human suffering and untenable grief sprouted a delicate little flower. Nurtured by compassionate hands, the little flower bloomed perpetually. With every passing year the stem put forth a new shoot with a healthy sky blue bud that opened into an ethereal lattice of iridescent petals. Some, lucky enough to witness this symbol of hope, say that as light hit the petals every conceivable color and hue presented itself in unabashed joy. This flower, the greatest accomplishment of the matriarchy, lifted those drowning in despair, and radiated light into the darkest corners of humanity--crevices that have been neglected for all of recorded history. With the understanding that human beings were to go extinct, all able women wove a cohesive global community. The society that ensued cleanse the ills of humanity before ultimately passing silently, but contentedly, into the endless night.

## 2053 B

In the year 2053 a pernicious virus was unleashed on the world. It spread like wildfire among the global populace, but peculiarly it was accompanied by no symptoms whatsoever. Even more strange was that it only infected those with two x chromosomes. But as the years passed, the virus strengthened its grip on virtually every female human on planet Earth. Starting in December of 2054, though our contemporary scholars place the Great Withering slightly earlier in the year, the virus reared its ugly head. In droves women and girls began to experience the most hopeless illness to ever exist within known history. No matter how much food infected individuals ate, they still starved and withered daily. None of the great scientists, many withering themselves, could get close to figuring out the mechanism behind the virus, let alone a cure. As the situation became more hopeless, living skeletons willingly festered and withered in enormous pits until the last disfigured being drew his final breath and entered into the endless void.

The broken remnants of civilization, overwhelmed with grief, and unable to cope with the pain festered in misery. Many choose to leave the world or with guns and bombs blamed others for their deep sorrows. A fragment of civilization was left. With their understanding of the terminality of their species, they wanted to leave mausoleums memorializing the horrible ethos of their evolutionary branch. Throughout the world the remaining men constructed enormous monuments to the pain, absurdity and agonizing beauty that was mankind's existence. When the men finally died out, struggling the whole way, they left behind warnings, or rather shrines, of their existential dread.

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## THIS HAS BEEN THE SENSATIONALIST: #18

"The best <insert here> is the one having the most fun"