

THE SENSATIONALIST: #24

1/8/24

“Oh to be a child during the reign of man!”



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DANDELIONS

Henry Levitt

Do stare--even for a moment
At a golden face of Earth.
New, bright collars bloom
Denying grayness, before birth.
Elusive gnarls of grass and roots
Layer upon your formless friends.
Inconceivable ambitions grow
On tombs from seasons' ends. So
Nothing more, you'll be than
Simple flowers upon forgotten
graves.



All of Time-Being is in a Blade of Grass

Henry Levitt

What if the entire universe were a blade of grass? A single, green thread bending under its weight into an arch, encompassing itself, itself everything. Would existence be so different? Perhaps the universe is infinite, perhaps it is not, and yet, it is still everything. If everything were just one blade of grass, the universe would still be everything. By nature of existence, this blade of grass is, it be-s. Then what allows it to be?

The Time-Being.

The time-being is the inseparability of time, that illusion of temporal chronology we know no other name for, and being, the ineffable phenomena verifiable by experience only. The time-being is all of being and all of time. Without the time-being there would be no present moment--and what is there beyond the present? If the present were to collapse inwards on itself, if the balloon of experience were to pop and implode, there would be nothing but a vacuum consuming everything, or rather, being could not be suspended in time as there is no time for being.

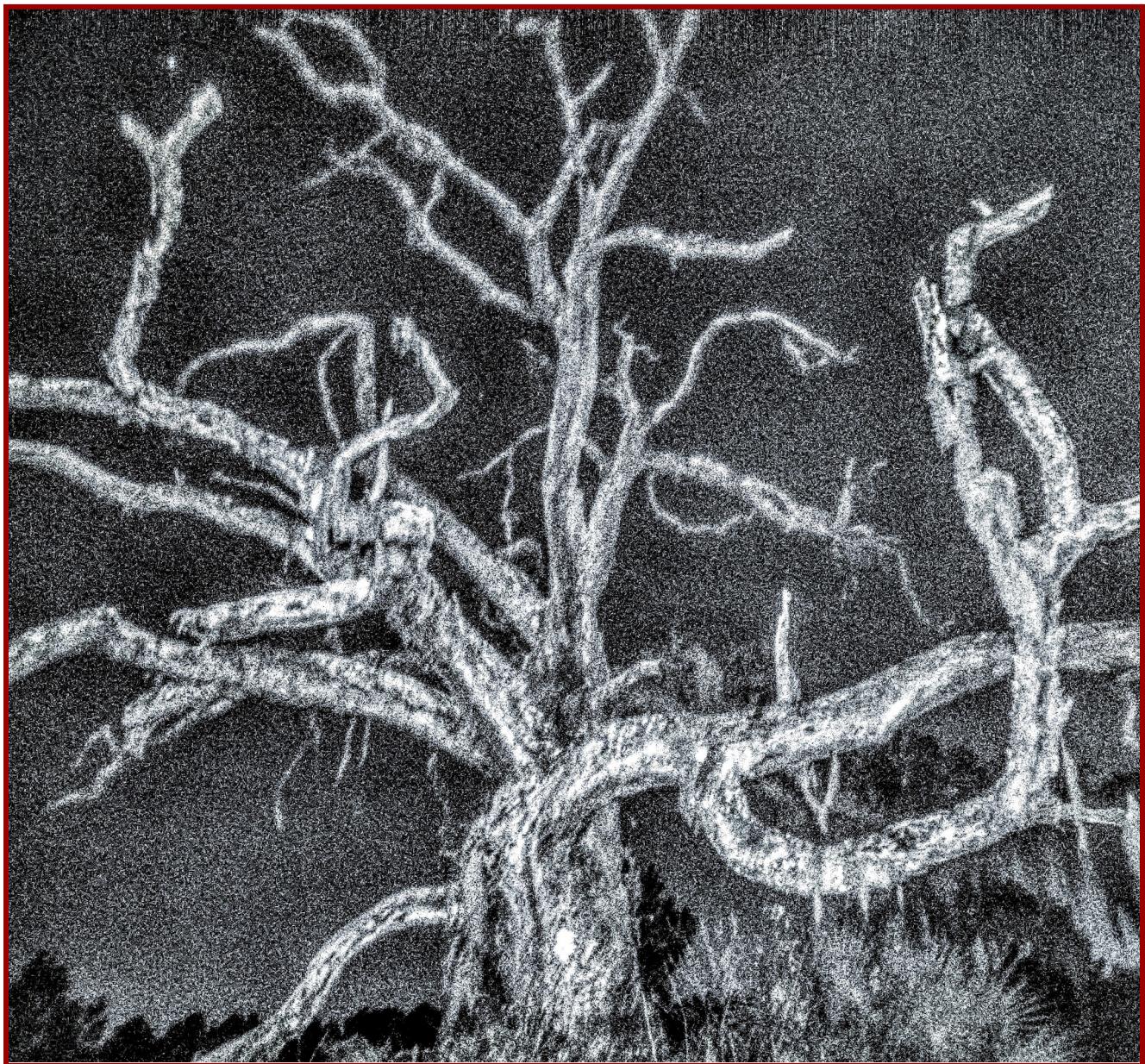
How can things exist beyond a blade of grass and yet the blade of grass still be everything? Because the blade of grass could not exist without the time-being, and nor could anything else, it by itself is everything. If the blade of grass exists, all of time-being exists as well.

Imagine a balloon as time--it is the present moment. Anything within the balloon exists, it is actively being. This balloon is of infinite volume, anything may occupy the balloon. Therefore it makes no difference to the balloon--to the time-being--whether a single blade of grass or thousands of galaxies bounce around the latex walls, it must still be inflated for anything to be.

So stare at a single blade of grass. Watch the breeze rustle the green thread. See that it may only exist because the time-being is inflated. The time being is equally within everything and yet fully within everything.

It is like the reflection of the moon in a lake, a puddle, or a bead of dew. Even in the smallest drop, the entire moon shines in its full form. Even in the single blade of grass the entire time-being reflects.

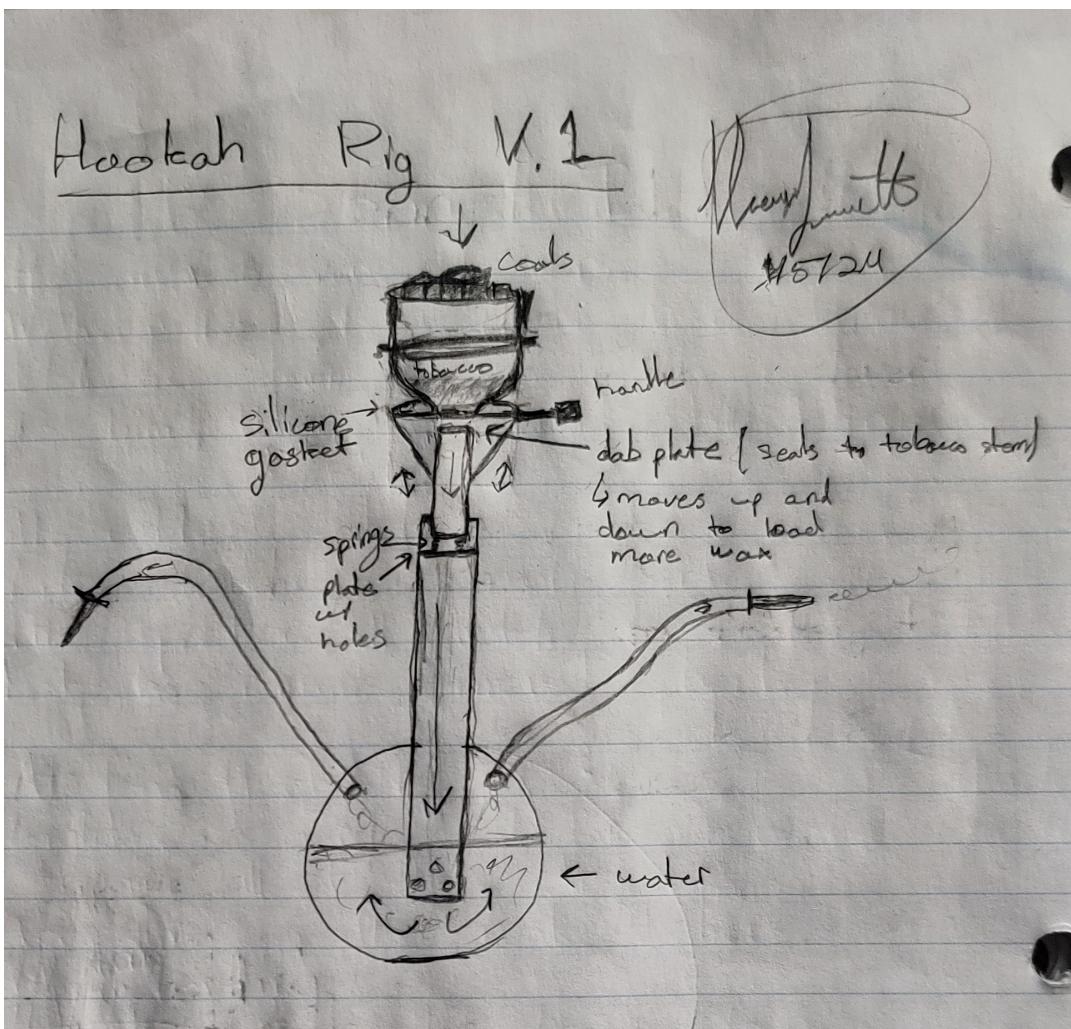
In this way, a single blade of grass can be all of time being because it exists. And by itself it proves that all of time-being exists. For all of time-being is in the blade of grass, and the blade of grass is all of time-being.



Hookah Rig!

Henry Levitt

The following is an idea for an invention I have no desire or capacity to prototype, construct, or publicize, so I will allow any person to claim this idea as their own provided they implement it in a Miami nightclub intended for the super-elite. The idea, in its simplest and only form, is the melding of a hookah and a dab rig. I am confident there are better ways to deliver nicotine and THC to the lungs and bloodstream, but again, I have no desire to prototype this and test it. Here is a sketch of what I imagine the design to be:



It has just been brought to my attention that the "hookah rig" is over-engineered and pointless given that hashish can be and is mixed into shisha (herbal) or tobacco for the same effects that I intended with this design. Some dubious sources even claim that the hookah was invented in the first place to smoke a hash and tobacco blend in 16th century India. Alas, if a Miami nightclub owner wants to implement this design, they still have my blessing.

Slow and Boring!

By Lance Elliott

In a world overwhelmed with too much information, we come to realize that we are rife with misinformation. What's worse, while people can acknowledge that misinformation is a real problem, many don't think it's a serious problem for them. If you see a new trend on TikTok, like waving your hands to attract squirrels, you might think, 'That seems silly, but there's no harm in trying it.' Whether it's true or false doesn't matter; the idea itself has consumed a small bit of your cognitive capacity. You might forever wonder if there was some truth to attracting squirrels by waving your arms. Now, multiply this by the amount of media you consume, and you might begin to understand the real problem. It's no wonder that people are increasingly suffering from existential dread. The only sound advice, though seemingly mundane, is to learn to filter the information you're being fed. Here are some insights I've learned in my life so far.

Everyone has only half an idea of what they're doing or what's going on.

Most importantly, don't assume that one person has all the answers. We instinctively seek out role models, whether they're our parents, a successful entrepreneur, or an influencer. We often simplify our goals and purpose to mimic those we idolize, believing they have it all figured out. However, as you grow older and gain more wisdom, you realize that everyone is struggling to find meaning and purpose. Your role models have their own role models, and so on. Role models are valuable, but it's essential to seek wisdom from a variety of sources, note the contradictions between them, and form your own thoughts.

Pay to read traditional media

Traditional media, like established reputable journals, are the backbone of our democracy. Reputable journals can express more nuance in a news article than a 20-minute video. Publications like The Atlantic, The New Yorker, The New York Times, and others deliver informative articles. In contrast, platforms like TikTok, YouTube, or free journals such as The Daily Wire, The Huffington Post, CNN, Fox News, etc., make money from your views, not from how well they inform you. Subscription-based media, however, are incentivized to maintain your yearly subscription through the quality of their content over time. While they can be pricey, subscribing to 2-3 of them and reading an article daily will make you more informed than 99% of people.

Read Substacks

Substack is a novel media platform that allows people to write about anything. This freedom has its drawbacks, as evidenced by reports of white supremacists publishing their own articles. However, it also offers a wealth of good information that might not be suitable for traditional media platforms. Many individuals, including professors, have made a name for themselves on Substack or use it as a resource. You can't go wrong by googling the top 10 Substacks and giving them a read.

Glossary of Pseudophilosophy: Part I

Ann Gnon

December 10, 2023

Introduction

In this document, I will present a list of ideas, terms, and phrases I believe constitute pseudophilosophy. But first, we need to define “pseudophilosophy”.

As I define it, and as the name implies, pseudophilosophy is simply fake philosophy. It is fake, vacuous knowledge masquerading as deep philosophical wisdom.

But how do you know whether a given piece of information is fake? Well, I can give you an argument that it is, and maybe that argument will appeal to you (or maybe it will not). So, that is exactly what I will do. :-)

Panpsychism and “Reality is mind”

Panpsychism is the view that the mind is the fundamental substance of reality. Advocates of Panpsychism often purport that it can solve philosophical problems such as [the hard problem of consciousness](#).

But it can do no such thing. Positing consciousness as the fundamental substance of reality does not explain the existence of consciousness, it merely assumes it. It moves the hard problem from the individual to reality itself.

Furthermore, the belief that everything has a mind has no empirical content. It does not predict or explain anything about reality. If a rock had a mind, would that predict anything differently about how a rock would behave? No.

Panpsychism is speculation at best and vacuous at worst. It is not actual wisdom. Next!

“Materialism”

Often, this term is used as a pejorative on the internet, but its actual meaning and implications are examined less frequently.

Here is the definition of “materialism” according to Google:

ma·te·ri·al·ism (noun): the doctrine that nothing exists except matter and its movements and modifications.

So, materialism is the belief that nothing but matter and motion exist.

If that’s what materialism is, then materialism is silly. For example, the laws of physics exist, but the laws of physics are not made of matter or motion.

I don’t think anyone (even people who would call themselves materialists) actually believes matter and motion are all that exists. Someone could confuse themselves into thinking that is what they believe, but “materialism” itself as it is typically defined should be discarded as absurd.

There are terms which express a related belief that are more nuanced. I generally prefer the term “physicalism”.

Pantheism aka “God is the universe”

A common belief among people who are “spiritual but not religious”, pantheism is a philosophical position that defines God as the universe.

But what does “God” actually mean? In ordinary language, (a) God is a being with agency and awareness. He/She can act. He/She has knowledge. This applies to essentially all monotheistic and polytheistic religions.

But there is no reason to believe the universe can act. God and the universe are fundamentally different concepts in ordinary language. Neither can be redefined to mean the other without giving a definition that is plainly false.

Or, you could say, if God and the universe are identical, then “God’s will” is just a confusing way to say “causality” or “physics”. There is no need to redefine these terms. Belief in pantheism obliterates any ordinary God concept and, in my opinion, most pantheists are merely atheists who don’t want to be atheists.

“There is no free will, this discussion is pointless”

Imagine three administrators A, B, and C having a discussion about whether to implement policy X at a school.

Person C chimes in and says:

There is no free will, so this discussion is pointless. We don’t really have a choice. *smirk*

What is Person C trying to say?

Is C saying the three of them should end the discussion? That would be a choice.

Is C saying the three of them don’t have the power to implement X? They are school administrators.

Whether X ends up getting implemented at the school is highly dependent on the discussion. C's comment would make more sense if they were discussing something impossible, like changing the orbit of the Earth, but that would not be due to a lack of will, but a lack of power. Typically, we are discussing things relevant to us – things we have the power to affect through conscious action.

The problem of free will arises out of thinking of yourself as a mechanism. You adopt a detached, scientific perspective on yourself and see yourself as just a bunch of neurons firing in a deterministic manner. That makes your choices seem arbitrary and absurd.

But what makes a choice a choice is that it depends on you. It depends on your conscious processes generating an intention, which then generates an action. You determine your choices, but you don't fully determine you.

Determinism and free-will are not incompatible. They are inextricably linked. If choices were uncaused, then they would not be choices.

Really, C is not trying to enlighten A and B with some profound philosophical knowledge. He is trying to derail the discussion and signal his intellectual superiority.

"Marsha the Martyr"

Andrew Reeves

[Two coworkers at a seafood restaurant in Boston]

Jerry: The filet of sole looks good. What are you going to have?

Marsha: Oh, I'm not getting anything.

Jerry: Aren't you hungry?

Marsha: Yes, but I refuse to eat more than the starving Palestinian children.

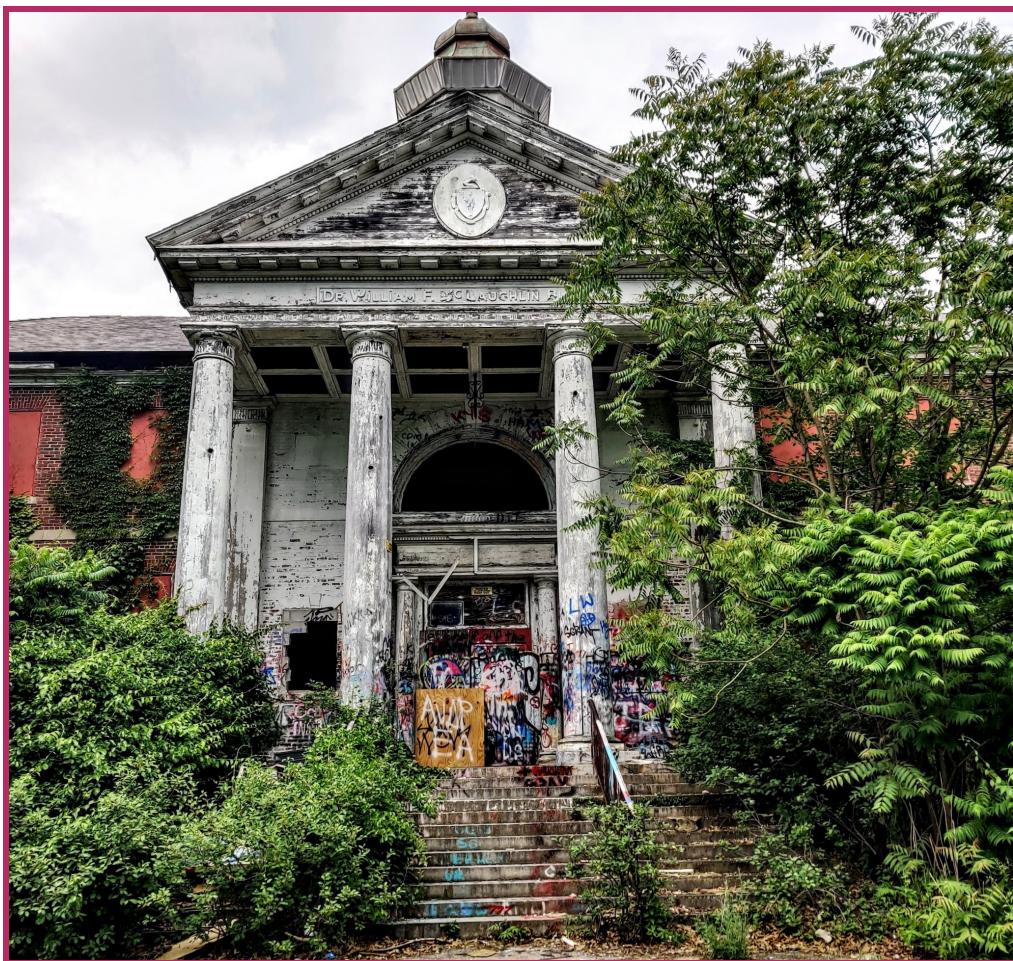
Jerry: Marsha, Why would you do that?

Marsha: [gasp] We need to stand in solidarity with those suffering !

Jerry: But-but why did you come out to lunch with me if you're not eating anything?

Marsha: Oh, Jerry, it's because I stand in solidarity with you, too.

A Call to Toaster Inc.



THIS HAS BEEN THE SENSATIONALIST: #24

“Eat your idols”