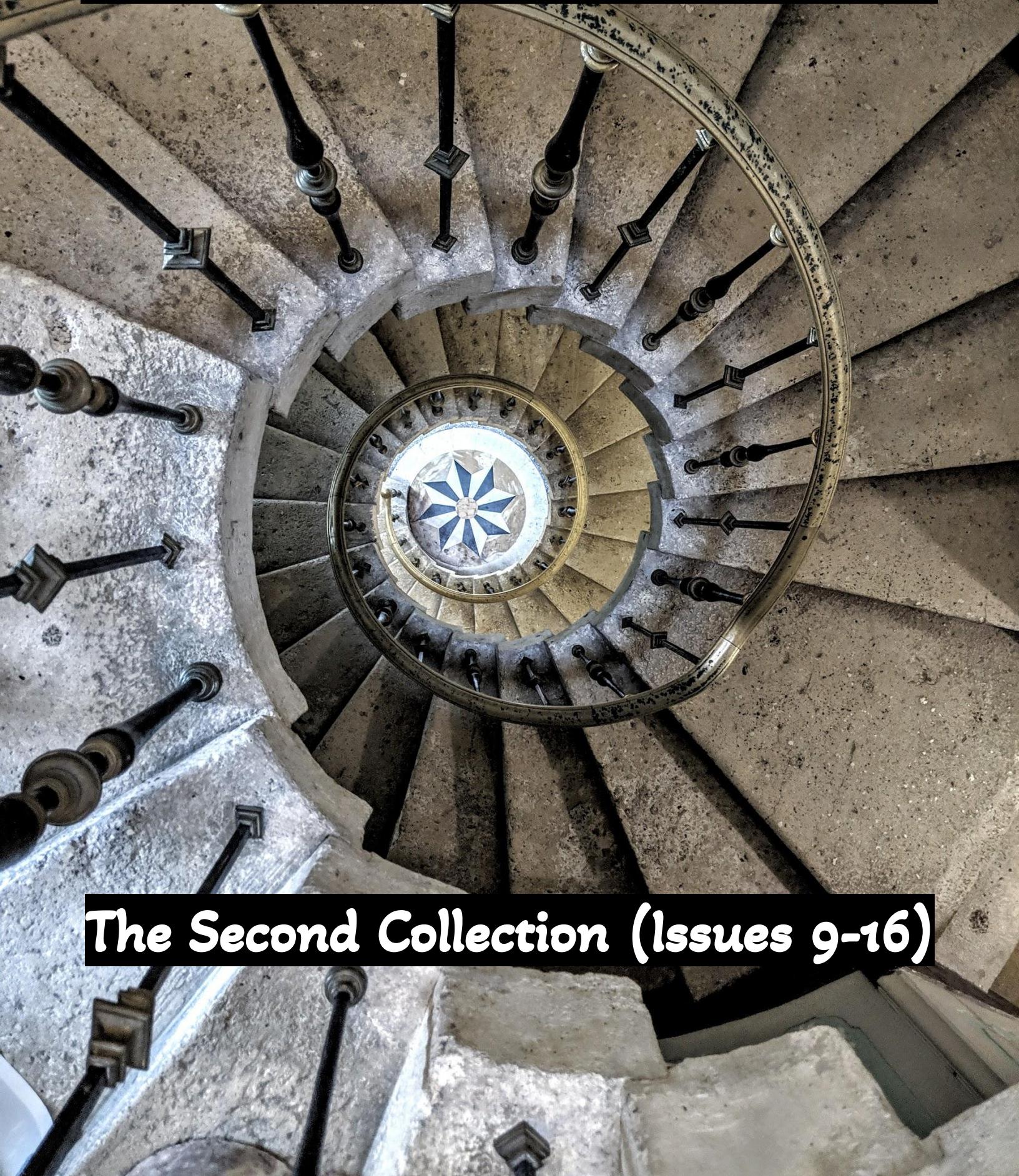


The Sensationalist, Volume II:



The Second Collection (Issues 9-16)

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The Sensationalist: #9

“You worship what you need; you need the game”



Charles Clarence Hays 3: In Requiem Rake

Life is but a race against time
Within a cave of your own mind
Lost searching for the light
Left crying in the night
Trying to sleep as your cold anxieties
Drip but even then, in the dead of night
you will soon find rest
And eventually the drips will crystallize
And all but stop
Creating stalactite and stalagmite
Beautiful remnants of those dark
Hopeless nights when it seemed relief
Would never come, but in time it did
And those carvings on the wall turn from
Fresh wounds to scars that have set
The art of memory and the building
Of time. As life moves on by.
And even when the drips don't stop
And relief is miles away, no single step
Is beyond your power
So my son just continue on your way
And one day
The rain will cease
Giving way to a new sunny day
Please... never give up on the way

Opting Out of the U.S. Tax System

Henry Levitt

I'm a walking political policy think tank. And I don't mean this to brag; I would be hard pressed to point to a week in which I don't come up with at least one new policy idea. However, most of my policies are infeasible, unpopular, or downright idiotic--except this one. This policy is a triumph for both libertarians and people sick of self proclaimed libertarians' incessant and unsuccessful mating call of "taxation is theft". I call it, "Opting Out of the U.S. Tax System".

Abstract: This policy, Opting Out of the US Tax System, would give every U.S. adult citizen, earning under a certain income threshold, the option to not pay any taxes on the federal, state, and local level. However, individuals who choose to do this will not receive any free or discounted government services or benefits. Instead they must pay the "market price" or calculated price in full for each service. They do, however, receive the benefit of choosing which services they want.

Technicalities: Individuals who opt out must earn below a certain income threshold. This is for two reasons. Firstly, higher earners naturally owe more to the government and their fellow citizens for providing the stability necessary, largely through economic means, to be as prosperous as they are. Secondly, it is infeasible that the government would collect enough tax revenue to operate if the top 10% of earners, and especially the top 1%, did not pay taxes (though it is debatable whether the latter group currently pays enough). A fair threshold is one standard deviation or less of the average income in the opter's state of residence.

Another technicality I would like to make clear is that only individuals can opt out of taxes, not businesses, companies, corporations, organizations, etc.

Finally, when an individual chooses to opt out of taxes, he or she does not have to pay any tax at all with exception to inheritance and gift tax unless both individuals (or decedent) chose to opt out in the fiscal year in which the gift or inheritance occurred. There will also be something called a "regulatory fee" which resembles sales tax, though there are key differences that will be discussed later. But of course, there will be no income or property tax.

The monies collected through services discussed below will be shared (where applicable) between the levels of government.

Now let's get into the weeds... First I will start with a discussion regarding specifics and logistics of the most common services, then I will open the discussion to some more niche services provided by the government.

Roads: The right to use roads will likely be the most common subscription service, as such, the logistics regarding their use ought to be robust and equitable. Firstly, an opting individual will be required to pay one price to use all roads--there will be no "plans" delineating between regions of road use or divisions between federal, state, and municipal roads. This is because Americans' tax

dollars go towards funding all U.S. roads directly or indirectly and any plan to divide the roads one opts to pay for will be unnecessarily complex. Besides, almost all roads are connected to one another. The type of vehicle or vehicles one has registered will be a determining factor for the subscription fee because larger, heavier vehicles naturally cause more wear on roads. Ideally, the subscription price for the road service will be as close to the per capita rate for total governmental road expenditures. There are indubitably many other factors which will necessarily make a difference, but the goal is to prevent both government profit and deficit while maintaining a notion of equity.

There also ought to be an established system in which one can prove their payment (such as license tags and database information), as well as a fine for individuals who opted out of the tax system yet continue to use services they did not pay for.

Public Schools: This will be another extremely common service that opting individuals can choose to pay for. The pricing for this is much more straight-forward. It will simply be the school district's total operating costs divided by the number of students it services. This will be the yearly tuition per child.

Emergency Services: Emergency services are an interesting topic because it is where this policy is pushed to its extreme. Naturally, a government ought to strive to protect its citizens' safety. Therefore with this policy, which may dissuade tax-free individuals from calling emergency services in a crisis or even take extreme measures themselves, there exists a contradiction in interests. However, I will be taking the approach to this issue that even a benevolent government does not owe its non-tax paying citizens anything. To bring this back to the policy itself, opting individuals must choose either to pay a yearly subscription to emergency services--almost like an insurance measure--or pay the calculated hourly price for emergency services when the assistance is requested. For criminal matters especially, there does arise the issue of further expenses accumulated beyond police intervention, such as court operating costs, inmate housing in prison, all the involved salaries etc. These expenses, and many others that I will call "systems and safety" do not have a direct translation to subscription services that do not resemble a form of tax. However, I will discuss a solution below.

Systems and Safety: Because this policy aims to appease the "taxation is theft" crowd, I will give one alternative solution to a mandatory "systems and safety" fee. Before I do so, I would like to illustrate the many government services that fall under this category. Firstly, the department of defense, national guards, homeland security, FBI, CIA, TSA, and the list goes on. Next is court fees, litigator salaries, judge salaries, prison costs, etc. Also within the mix are regulatory agencies that protect broad public health, economic health, and land management. Of course there are many other governmental bureaucracies that naturally fall into the "systems and safety" category; I have only scratched the surface here. However, to reconcile these costly programs without jumping straight to a tax, a mandatory number of government work hours can be instituted. This would mean that opting individuals would be legally required to help out some government institution, without pay, in order to fulfill the "systems and safety" requirement. This would prevent deficits from accumulating

and allow right-leaning libertarians to keep all their precious dollars and become involved in the community.

Social Services: Social service subscriptions will mirror that of the above policies in which an individual can choose to pay into the social service coffers, for example, in order to receive the benefit, albeit many years down the road. However, there is one difference. Once an individual opts out, they cannot buy back in unless they pay all the missing dues in the years since opting out. When an individual opts out, though, they receive the total capital they paid into the program, but no safety net.

Regulatory Fee: As there are many government institutions that protect the consumer (namely the FDA and Federal Trade Commission), there is a fee attached to products for the labor involved in regulation. Products which are affected by such agencies, which is most, will carry a per cent fee based on the type of product purchased. This is not a sales tax but instead a recuperation of costs for the consumer protection that certain agencies provide.

Other: Of course there are a whole host of other government programs that are either free or reduced cost for tax paying citizens. This includes libraries, public parks, the DMV, healthcare, UPS, public transit, and the list can go on and on. Within the opting out plan, all the services provided will be assessed for their true cost per capita of users. It is this cost that opting individuals will have the option to pay if they desire such a service. There are certain programs that would not fit under the current paying paradigm proposed in this policy, however, I am confident that there exists a solution to circumvent taxation while also allowing the government to recoup its costs.

Within this plan, individuals will finally be required to pay no tax if they so choose, and can instead determine which government programs and services they require. And there will always be the free market as another option to government-sponsored services. Some will be able to save marginal amounts of money. Others will be content with the political morality they gained. And still others will finally realize the foolishness of the stance “taxation is theft”. But with the policy of “Opting Out of the U.S. Tax System”, U.S. citizens will finally have the option to be completely economically free. And with this, I finally hope to silence the insufferable complaints of self-proclaimed “libertarians” who truly do not understand a lick of political theory.

Ode to an Ignorance Rose

Henry Levitt

Growing faithfully upon the vine,
The safe haven from your apathetic foes
Like a nursery, youth's timeless shrine,
I beg you, shrivel, my Ignorance Rose.

Tormentor! Tormentor! To death I say!
... O' but how sensual your nose,
March to the gallows with your bouquet!
Alas, please stay, O' my Ignorance Rose.

Your blood red beauty opines for naught.
In that blissful stupor illusion shows
unto blind eyes. And your love wrought
glowing iron to a ring, my Ignorance Rose.

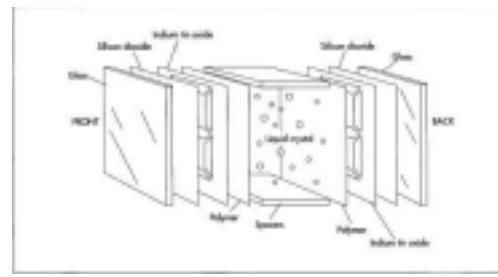
Like a solitary migratory bird
I am condemned to flit with meager, lonely repose
And with naivete that is laughably absurd,
I pray you relinquish your grip O' my Ignorance Rose.



Liquid-Crystal displays

Leo Santisi

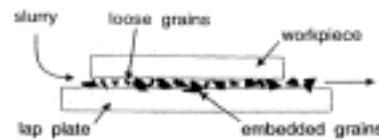
Liquid-Crystal displays are electronic display devices that utilize the light-modulating properties of liquid crystals combined with polarized filters in order to produce electronically manipulated imagery.



There are 5 major stages to LCD production and assembly.

1. Glass substrates

- Two glass substrates are cut to size, polished, and washed.
- Cutting can be done by using a diamond saw or scribe, and polishing involves a process called lapping, in which the glass is held against a rotating wheel that has abrasive particles embedded in it.
- After being washed and dried, the substrates are coated with a layer of silicon dioxide.
- The silicon dioxide prevents ions on the glass sheets from touching any moisture, which would alter the electric field pattern and liquid crystal alignment and therefore prevent the product from functioning as intended.



Lapping involves the cutting and shearing action of loose abrasive particles and the fine grinding of abrasive particles embedded in the lap plate.

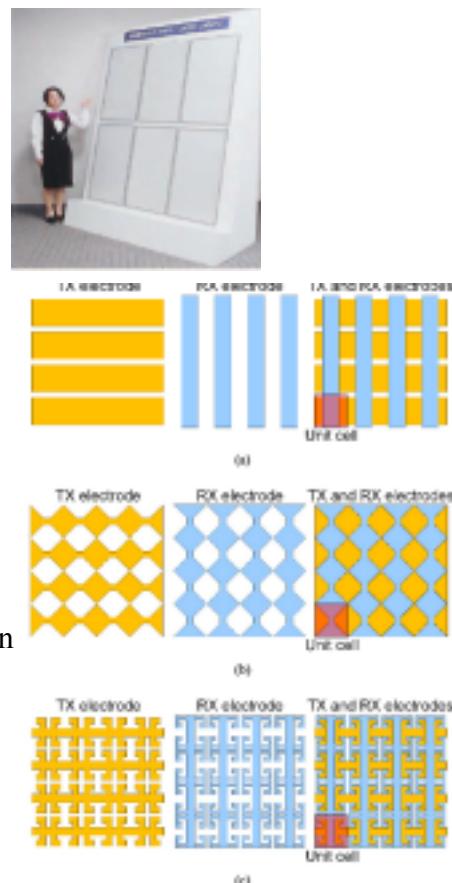


Fig. 7 Three views of the TX, RX and TX and RX electrodes in the

2. Electrode pattern

- An electrode pattern then must be “etched” onto the surface of the substrates. These electrodes are instrumental to the function of the display.
- They are applied by coating both front and rear glass surfaces with a very thin layer of indium tin oxide, and then chemically “scraping” away the areas of indium tin oxide that are not desired by using a manufactured mask.
 - There are other methods to accomplish this, but the indium tin oxide application is the most widely used.
- Regardless of the method, the patterns on the two substrates are designed to overlap only in specific places, so that no electrodes show up unintentionally.

3. Polymer Application

- A uniform layer of polymer is then layered onto the glass substrates and is cured, allowing the material to set. The surface is rubbed in a uniform direction in order to ensure the LCDs are all oriented the same way, ensuring proper function.

4. Sealant Application & Liquid Crystal Injection

- A sealing resin is applied onto the substrates.
- The liquid crystal material is then injected into the small space between the two glass substrates.
 - Since proper thickness is crucial for cell operation LCD manufacturers sometimes need to put appropriately sized glass fibers or beads in the liquid crystal material that help hold the cell at the proper thickness while the sealant material is setting.
- To make the LCDs more visible, polarized filters are added.

Manufacturers glue the polarizers to the glass and cover it with a plastic protective film to let it settle. Manufacturers also make reflective polarizers, also used in LCDs, by using simple foil reflectors.



5. Assembly

- After the polarizers are attached, all that's left for the product to do is to let it age, and let all of the applied substances settle. When the LCD assembly is finally done, it is mounted to the circuit boards that contain control and drive electronics. These electronics will obviously vary depending on the device.
- Some devices that utilize Liquid-Crystal Displays are:
 - Fax machines
 - Computer monitors
 - Wristwatches



Walking the Dogs

Connie Mindell

Smell every grass blade
Sniff every leaf
Then there is the pit stop
For a needed relief



Keynes was an Evil Man & Economic Theory Based on Keynesian Model

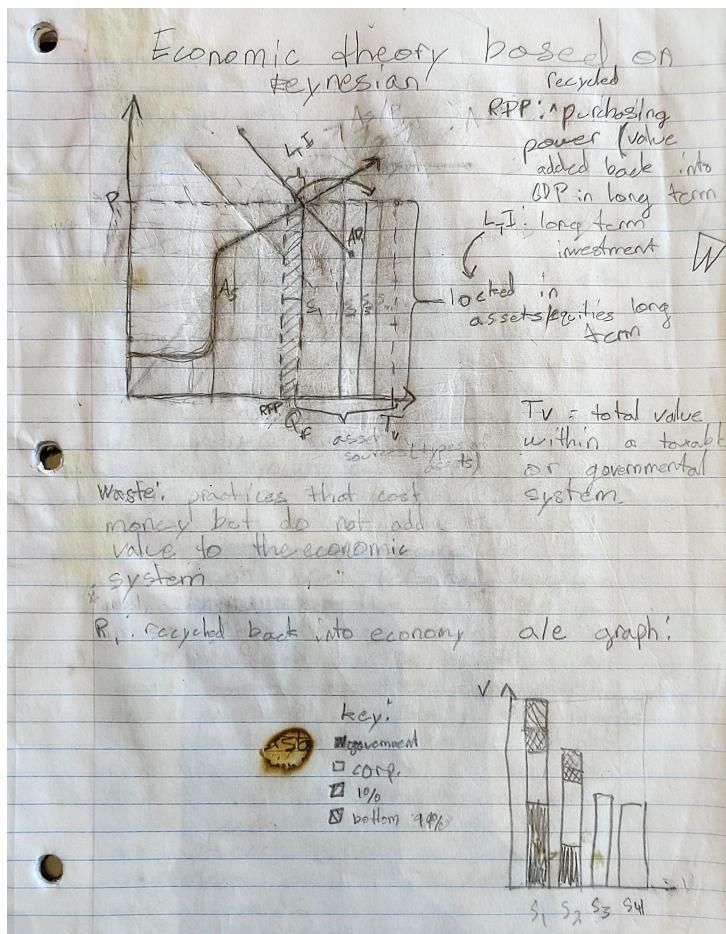
Henry Levitt

Two days ago (November 7th) I was passing by an open space right after class when I heard the most exciting thing--a preacher yelling at us depraved and condemned college students for sinning and stuff. For those who don't know, arguing with religious zealots is my favorite after-class pastime. I do it religiously, nay, with an almost physical compulsion, when the opportunity arises. Usually I will have some topic in mind to engage these lovable figures with, but on Monday, I felt the urge to go straight for the jugular. I asked said preacher how he can prove his argument isn't circular (of course an impossible task). After engaging in mild anti-question-begging, I dismantled his argument until he exposed the metaphorical chinks in his biblical armor that I was looking for. The claim, in so many words, was that the Bible is the true word of God because a character in it declared it to be so. Instead of accepting his truth like you may expect from me, I declared myself to be the second coming of Christ and the notebook in my backpack was the new New Testament. And how did I know it was true? Because I, the son of God, declared it to be so.

The Sensationalist, Vol. II

An adjunct preacher (a secondary preacher who approached during the heated debate) wanted to take a look at the new word of God that I proposed, and curiously, the biggest issue he had with my notebook was that I included a farcical economic model based on the Keynes model within it--not the fact that I had just declared to be the literal son of God. And the biggest issue herein was that Keynes was apparently an evil man--again, not that I had claimed to be the second coming of Christ or had random bullshit in my Bible...

So as two preachers began yelling at me about esoteric economic theories, I came to realize that Keynes was far more evil than your common homosexual--he's the devil reincarnated! Who knew extremist protestants held such refined animosity towards 20th century economists? Naturally they must support communism as opposed to modern capitalism, right?...it turns out, there actually is one man more evil than Keynes. His name starts with an M and rhymes with "parks". Unbeknownst to me he ate, or possibly still eats babies. It wasn't clear as to whether they believe Marx to be alive currently or not. Anyway, here's the economic theory from my Bible:



Disclaimer: I'm still trying to decipher this chart. I wrote it late at night during one of my characteristic topic binges I often partake in while high on THC and bored. This, you guessed it, was an economics binge.

"Ho-hum...ho-hum. Ho-hom,
ho-hom. Ho-hummmmm"

The Sensationalist: #10

"Join the polycule of life!"



Sonnet III (Pain or Apathy)

Henry Levitt

Bearing that contrived mortal burden

Plunges my mind through arctic ice.

Ticking clocks now cease their spin,

When pain and apathy entice.

Free falling faithlessly cuts all ties

To paralyzing paradigms,

But fills my head with morbid lies

Equal to drowning pantomimes.

Blinding headlights may choose my fate,

And sobering pain if life prevails...

The light draws no closer in wait,

So this is what living entails:

To Be is suffering and pain,

In which beauty will always reign.

Sanction Letter

On October 18, 2022, I was found responsible for Code of Conduct Violation /10. Use of Prohibited Items/i. Combustibles and other flammable items, for a handheld lighter. During the room check on October 18, RA Shrijani found a handheld lighter on my desk, which my roommate Edwin confirmed was my desk since I was not present in the room at the time. I then received an email to report to The Office of Residential Education to have a meeting regarding the incident. In my hearing with Resident Director Ms. Hernandez on October 24, I confirmed that this was indeed my lighter. We discussed how lighters are prohibited according to the Student Handbook and that I should not be in possession of one while on campus. We also briefly discussed the Boland Hall Fire at Seton Hall University, which I have researched and will outline further on. Following this meeting, I received an email from Ms. Hernandez on October 25, outlining how I now have a warning status that will be complete by Tuesday, November 8. I was also asked to write and submit a 2-3 page reflection paper outlining what I have learned.

At the time of the incident, I was not aware that a handheld lighter was a prohibited item, but I now know that they are not allowed and I have since discarded the item. I have learned that I need to pay more attention to the Student Handbook and policies and to be cautious to make sure I am not in possession of any prohibited items. In fact, since the incident, I have taken a detailed look at the Student Handbook to re-familiarize myself with Stevens' core values, policies and practices, student affairs, and Student Code of Conduct. I have re-familiarized myself with Section 10 of the Student Code of Conduct: Use of and Possession of Prohibited Items. I have looked through and understood what items are permitted and what is prohibited on campus. Finally, I have confirmed that I am not in possession of anything on this list, and also that my roommate is not in possession of anything on this prohibited items list.

In Ms. Hernandez' email I was asked to research the Boland Hall Fire at Seton Hall University and reflect on how the use of prohibited items can largely impact the greater community. The Boland Hall Fire was a fatal fire in a freshman residence hall at Seton Hall University. Three students died, and 58 were injured making it one of the deadliest fires in a college campus in US history. The fire began when two students who

were intoxicated decided to play a prank and set fire to a paper banner. The two students left the paper smoldering before going back to their rooms, and the fire quickly spread, eventually burning the whole building to the ground and causing severe injuries, and as mentioned, three deaths. The two students who started the fire were sentenced to five years imprisonment in 2007.

Combustible items were at Seton Hall University, as they are at Stevens, prohibited, and for good reason. Although I would never play around with fire indoors, or leave paper smoldering anywhere, the Boland Hall Fire is extremely important to remember and think about. What could happen if my lighter were discovered by untrustworthy or intoxicated individuals? What could happen if, malicious or pranking intent aside, a simple accident happened leading to a dangerous fire? The use of prohibited items does not simply affect me, the individual. There are also larger problems that my carelessness could have led to that I am now aware of, and even after researching the fire, still thinking about. It is up to all of us at Stevens to follow the Student Handbook properly, not just for our own safety and health, but for the safety and health of all Stevens students, faculty, workers, and more. In the future, I will be sure that every item I am in possession of is permitted by the Stevens Student Handbook, and if I am not sure, I will double check the handbook to confirm any confusions I may have. I also now know that I can reach out to my Resident Director Ms. Hernandez if I have any questions on the subject.

Signed,

James Hooker



PHOEBE LEVITT

Honors Reflective Essay

Henry Levitt

It has been just about three months since I started attending the University of Georgia, and in some ways, I have grown in my time here, and in other ways I have stagnated. Because the Honors College is a “look to the bright side” and “slap a band-aid on it” institution, I will only focus on the growth—though I do not even think the growth and “eye-opening knowledge” is wholly positive. Also, I need to fill this space with seven hundred and fifty words, so there will be a lot of nonsense and filler within this essay.

The first piece of filler information that I will delve too deep into, is what I have learned within the Honors College as it relates to the ethos of the University of Georgia as a whole. Well, thus far, the assignments within the Introduction to Honors Seminar class can be categorized into two divisions. Yet all have the similarity of being busy work and an abject waste of my precious time here on this planet. Before I go into the categorizations, I think it is time for my first filler tangent. Philosophers from the Stoics to Hindus to absurdists, along with thinkers of every creed and era in between, have all agreed that the most precious thing we have, and will always have, is time. We will never be able to get any of our time back, nor will we be able to slow it down. And so, when the Honors College wastes my time with pointless pre-professional assignments and tells me that “this is the way the world is” and that I must subscribe to the absurd time-wasting that will be intrinsic in any job I will have for the rest of my life, it is naturally disheartening for an eighteen-year-old to hear. More than disheartening even, it is depressing. I just graduated high school and am excited to forge my own way when the Honors College begins to prod me towards a corporate soul-sucking job under the guise of “practice for the future”. Well, this course did not give me practice. It gave me a jaded view of the future and it gave me very little hope that I will accomplish the goals I want to. The other category that I mentioned above attempts to inform me about all the initiatives I can take part in from study abroad to CURO, but it goes too far in its scope when it requires me to conduct pointless research that will not help me in any way.

Now back to how the information in the former category has affected me and will continue to do so. The information I have learned has made me jaded and hopeless. Instead of doing assignments in any of my classes for the benefits I will get from them, I now do it so that I can graduate with satisfactory grades and obtain my degree. The Honors College has taught me that this is all that matters to get a job. In fact, they taught me that the seven seconds a recruiter looks at my resume is all that matters. So, I should practically be on my knees kissing the boots of Jere Morehead for teaching me how to pass the first test to get a job.

I believe that I satisfactorily answered the first question of what I learned and how my worldview was shaped. Now onto the next question. I need to spend the next 200 words speaking about how my future plans will impact me as a person in the future. A question that begs the impossible. Oh, how I do love this very important reflective essay. This is truly helping me reflect on myself in an introspective way. Oh, what would I have done without it!

That is enough of that for now. A plan that was the future and now is the present is my participation in the Philosophy Club. I actually started this before my journaling assignment and pretended that this would be something that I wanted to join in the future because I needed material to write about. I am not sure what the Honors Program's obsession with future growth and academic trajectory is, though I can make assumptions that I may perhaps expound upon later. Regardless, the Philosophy Club provides me with a group of people that I can discuss subjects that would be deemed a pointless waste of time by the administration of this University, and so, it is a fresh breath of air.

Now I must talk about how I envision the Philosophy Club to shape my future and everything else that hinges upon that. If I am being honest, thinking about the future like this helps no one. It gives me severe anxiety, so I try to avoid it at all costs. And hypothetically if I did think about it, it would only set me up for disappointment. Usually, I would pretend to think about the future and write acceptable nonsense that no one will read, but this time I refuse. I will not sacrifice my mental health for a grade that goes nowhere. I will not

sacrifice my mental health, my soul, to make money and give the Honors College good looking numbers to parade around in front of investors and prospective students. But Philosophy Club! My future! It looks great!

In conclusion, I applaud the Honors College's incredible ability to waste my time. And even though all these assignments came close to crushing my soul and hope for the future, they failed to succeed. I am not a pre-professional tool, nor will I ever be. I can say one thing, I will succeed my way. Thank you for reading my screed. I hope I receive at least fifty percent, though if I'm being honest, I do not really care.

Wrath of Zeus Eco-Terrorism Ploy

Henry Levitt

Imagine having the power of Zeus; the ability to smite an enemy with a rod of pure energy from thousands of feet above the Earth. Well, experiments by the University of Florida prompted me to realize this as a real possibility. What I mean to say is that us mortals have the power to summon lightning bolts anywhere we please. Now for reasons surrounding legal concerns I will not be creating a "guide" but instead I will pose a hypothetical situation in which a foe of oil conglomerates may smite a natural gas rig using this technique. Of course I do not condone or encourage the use of destructive tactics--this is merely a fictional story and an educational piece.

~

Let's say a natural gas company scores a drilling grant on pristine land in a rural Pennsylvania town. Once the extraction begins, nearby residential wells are inundated with drilling chemical concoctions and crude propane. Within just a few weeks, the contaminant leaching has become so bad that the once lush rivers are veritable cesspools--and the town does nothing. This scenario is not too hard to imagine, as it is the same story that has played out again and again above the Marcellus Shale located in northern Appalachia.

Unfortunately for this gas company, it has awakened a sleeping giant: an eco vigilante...and she's out for justice.

One stormy night, she sneaks into the fracking compound with an Estes Rocket and stand, a long spool of thin copper wire, and a radio signal launcher. She ties one end of the spool of wire to her target (most likely a gas storage container or rig) and the other to the rocket. Wasting no time she sets the rocket on the stand and turns on the radio controller. Then she runs out of the compound until she is a safe distance away and pushes the magic button. She watches as the rocket shoots into the sky with jarring speed only to be met with pure plasma and electricity at the zenith of its arc. She blinks and hears an explosion rupture one tank...and another...and another. Even the deluge cannot stop the ferocity of the infernos that have set fire to this forsaken fracking faction.

Though she has the urge to visit the site the next day (an urge every arsonist may experience) she knows not to make the rookie mistake and instead watches the local news program reporting on what they think is an unpreventable "tragedy". A manager of the site may even voice his confusion in a live interview: "I don't understand why the lightning struck the storage container when there's a lightning rod not even 200 feet away!"

Obviously this is quite the setback, yet not enough to stop the operation completely. But perhaps if a pattern continues, there may be some pseudo-religious, if not economic reasons, to abandon the project. Regardless, our vigilante will unfortunately always be able to find more targets that deserve the wrath of Zeus.

Music of the #10: Pointless Pants Project

"What's life for if not for fucking around?"

The Sensationalist: #11

"The first question an ego asks: what am I?"

Willy Wonka is a Pedophile

Ellis Zuse

Last night, I took edibles (sorry Nancy Reagan, I do drugs) and went with my go-to high activity: watching an old kids movie. The chosen film for the night was *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. As the opening credits rolled, I waited for the nostalgia to wash over me. This was a story that had been ubiquitous throughout my childhood, and I was far from alone in this regard. But the comforting memories from my childhood never came. The movie hit totally different from how I remember it. Contrary to the joy and wonder I anticipated, I felt scared and creeped out. I assumed it was simply a side effect of the \$5/mg “top of the line” weed the Rabbi’s 8th grade son Shlomo sold to me during Chabad’s anti-semitism town hall, but this morning I had an epiphany. The edibles were not the problem. In fact, they were the only thing that allowed me to see that *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is a story not about a young boy’s journey through a mystical candy factory, but rather a deranged billionaire’s attempt to bang some kids. Yes, Willy Wonka is a fucking pedophile.

First, let’s examine Wonka’s reasoning for luring five “lucky” kids into his chocolate factory. He claims that the golden tickets and exclusive tour are all part of a scheme for him to find a child uncorrupted by greed to take over the factory and carry on his company. Willy Wonka, a moral businessman right? No chance. The movie makes it very clear that as a business owner, Wonka cares only about his bottom line. When other companies started copying his products, did he welcome the competition and attempt to innovate better than them? No, instead he did his best 80s US economy impression, firing his entire domestic workforce and replacing them with cheap overseas labor. While I’m at it, I should mention it’s a little fucked up that Willy Wonka traveled deep into the jungle, rounded up as many brown men as he could find, and brought them back to his maximum security chocolate plant to work literally 24/7. They might sing and dance really well, but the Oompa Loompas are about as free as Kunta Kinte. All in all, Willy Wonka is a ruthless colonizer and capitalist that does not give a shit about leaving his business in honest hands. I wouldn’t be surprised if he had already started selling off chunks of equity to the Saudis.

The only poor business decision Wonka makes is pouring massive amounts of capital into making his factory a wonderland. Instead of opting for a cost effective, brass tacks manufacturing plant, the complex is complete with an edible forest, chocolate river, incredible decor at every turn,

and more. What would be the point of paying for all of this? Does it make his mass produced sweets taste better? Is he trying to give his slaves a comfortable environment to work in? There's only one answer: he's giving those kids a reason to never leave. Willy Wonka's sexual yearning for children is even more disturbing when you consider how he "preps" the golden ticket winners for his liking during. Augustus Gloop is covered in chocolate after nearly drowning in the river, Violet Beauregarde is turned into a giant blueberry, Mike Teavie is stretched into an incredibly tall stick figure, and Veruca Salt is attacked by squirrels. Wonka doesn't just have a fetish for cute kids like Charlie Bucket, he wants kids that are wearing chocolate blackface, kids that are mega plus-sized, anorexic, and disheveled from animal maulings.

The character of Willy Wonka is one that seems all too familiar. A famous, lonely older man invites a bunch of kids over to his amusement park of a house? It all feels very *Leaving Neverland* to me. Go search up a picture of Johnny Depp's Willy Wonka - one could say he's a dead ringer for Michael Jackson in his white phase. All that's missing is a bad nose job and some wild sleeping meds.



A Response to the Ass Wiping Technique...

My bowels are moved to add to the discussion of the recent article, "The Sensationalist, Volume 1, Issue 4, "New, Revolutionary Ass-Wiping Technique".

First of all, to all the Bumfodders out there who are truly concerned about wasting water, be advised that the actual process of manufacturing paper consumes **copious** amounts of water. It takes 37 gallons of water to produce just one roll of toilet paper! Additionally, the environmental impact is devastating. Paper production contributes to deforestation, uses tremendous amounts of energy, emits considerable quantities of volatile chemical compounds into the air, and discharges significant waste water (from the pulping and bleaching process). Finally, paper accounts for over a quarter of total waste at landfills. (Note to all the Google jockeys: be wary of industry or chamber of commerce type search results telling you how benign paper production is - they're all a bunch of lying assholes).

To all the scat cat water conservationists out there. If you truly want to put your money where your anus is, then stop using toilet paper entirely. Use any kind of dried leaves (not poison ivy), cornhusks, cardboard tubes, Russian roubles, used coffee filters (we can talk about the benefits of coffee enemas next time), or moss - be creative!

Whatever material you use to wipe your bunghole, I would suggest the folding technique in tandem with the suggested dabbing technique. Always fold after the first wipe and then wipe again. This effectively doubles your wiping efficiency. To those with deft fingers and dainty bowel movements, you may be able to get even more folds out of your wipes.

Finally to all the stool fools out there worried about poor hygiene from the author's toilet water dipping suggestion. I suggest that the greater concern should be not employing the oft-disregarded directional wiping technique known as front to back, particularly if you are a woman or a hermaphrodite. Let's avoid unnecessary odors, UTI's and other pathogenic bacterial infections.

DON'T FORGET! Always wash your hands!

Respectfully,
Gary Masa

The Four Archetypes of Motivation

Henry Levitt

The following four archetypes were developed by myself, and refined through many conversations with my close friend, Ellis Zusel. Inspired by Carl Jung's archetypes, these four aim to describe the main internal motivations of a person. Below I will give a brief explanation and discussion of the ethos, goals, and attributes of each of the archetypes.

Soldier: It's hard to know which archetype is most common, but if I had to guess, it would probably be the soldier. The soldier is driven by other's admiration and being recognized for his greatness. Paramount to the soldier is his honor--this is that he will go to war for, and hence why I entitled this archetype "the soldier". The strongest attributes of this archetype are determination and confidence.

Farmer: What drives the farmer is his desire for stability. He wishes to achieve modest prosperity and to live comfortably. The biggest internal force is his will for contentment. The farmer is often loyal, conscientious, and willing to put in hard work for a rewarding payoff. Overall, practicality and humility are the farmer's strongest attributes.

Revolutionary: A cause is always necessary to the revolutionary; she lives to effect change. The revolutionary is strong headed and outspoken. She is driven by her will to mold the world into a better place. As such, the revolutionary is motivated to develop original ideas and fight for them. The strongest attributes of the revolutionary are independence and raw passion.

Wanderer: The wanderer's main focus is seeking out new experiences. They live to feel all that life has to offer. Accordingly, freedom is crucial to a wanderer's actualization of motivation. They cannot be pinned down with responsibility and will often fly away from negative environments. They tend to be extremely resourceful and cunning when it comes to achieving personal desires. The strongest attributes are openness and compassion.

You will likely find that you are a mix of two or more of these archetypes, often with a more dominant one. Though do not discount your other motivational archetypes. By identifying your archetype you can find the most effective way to be productive and live contentedly. This may mean a shift in your goals or the way you think about them in order to align with your motivational drives. It's important to keep in mind that any goal is compatible with any archetype. The soldier, farmer, revolutionary, and wanderer seek only to explain **why** a person would be compelled to attempt a task.

Body Dysmorphia

U. Jeong

I'm stuck in a fun house
Feeling distorted
I can't trust what I see
But I just can't help myself
I critique and I body shame
Oh why do I have to be me

My Reality made of shards
My vision of mirrors
Where all I can see are my flaws
I try to run from it I try to escape
But every turn is my reflection
Oh why am I such a lost cause

Shift shaper syndrome
Body dysmorphia
Call it what you will
My prison of mirrors
My prison of myself
Why do I hate myself still

I'm stuck at this fun house
But it isn't fun anymore
Surrounded by flawed me's
Mirror mirror on the wall
Who's the fairest of them all
I wish that it was me

"Does anyone know what anything is anymore?"

The Sensationalist: #12

"Are you having phun?"

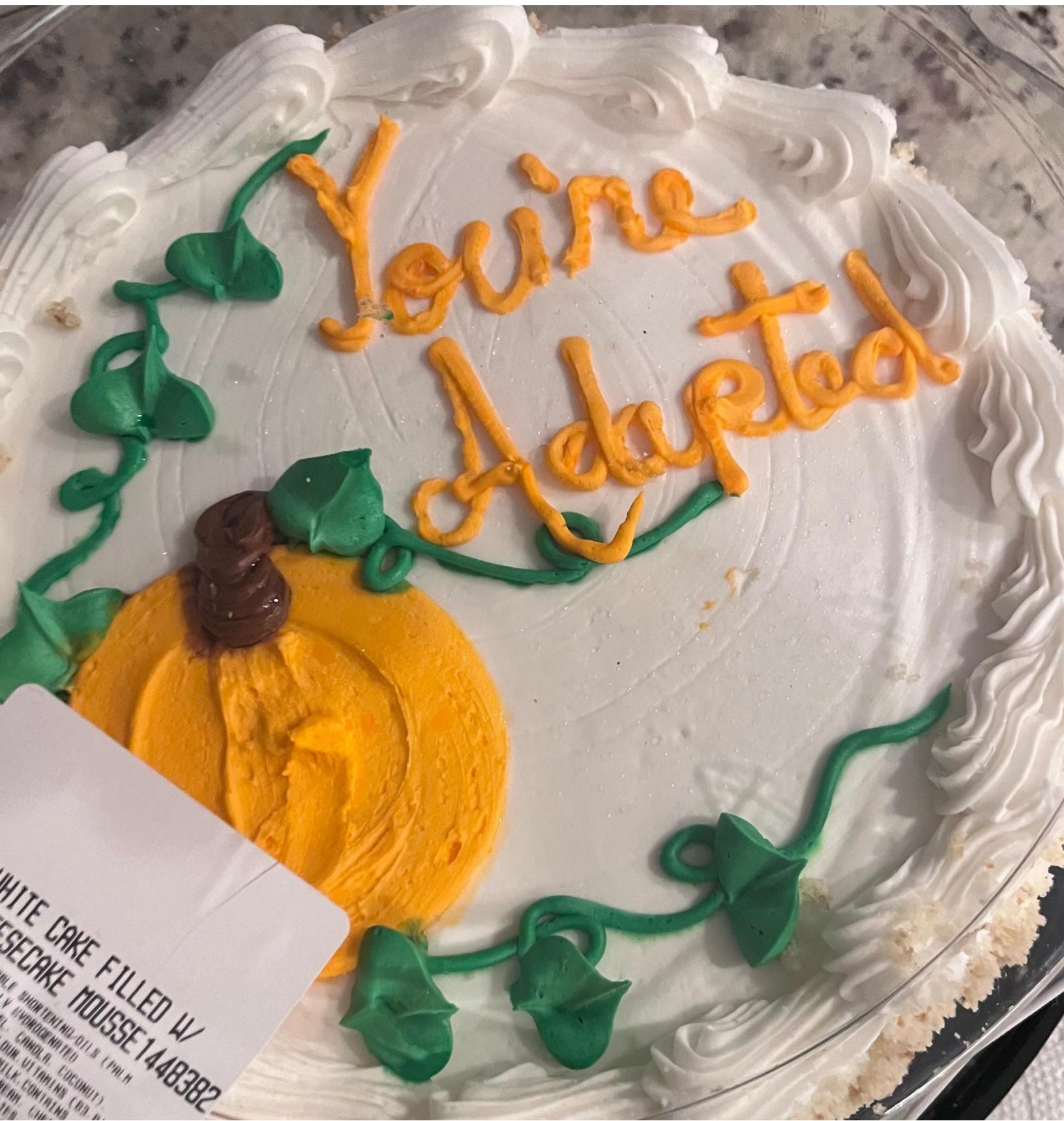
Reality Considered: The Faux Experience Rake

I spend my days biding by, simply lying in my sty—my misshapen throne. I watch my T.V. alone to get my constant dopamine flow. Everything else I've begun to loathe. It's all work compared to unfettered pleasure. Yet deep down I wonder, what is life if lived through the eyes of another, willfully shackled to the confines of a convex lens and some cathode ray tubes.

Strictly speaking, we're all living in the past. An event happens, a distortion of particles, oscillating at different speeds, dispersing photons and phonons that we then perceive. The stimuli we receive are then taken to the brain to be heard and seen, an abstraction into electrical pulses in nerves and neurons, to then be encoded by the brain, not unlike a machine. Yet within all of the vibrations, we too vibrate, occupying a specific place in spacetime—our frame of reference. It makes you question the meaning of reality and life. What's the difference between T.V. and 'real' life, when we get the same stimuli. When VR can provide the same photons and phonons to a different place in space and time—an entanglement of types—if we are prisoners to what we observe, a wave function in superposition beyond our purview, who's to say what's real or fake?

Preachers, teachers, and politicians tell us what to think. Manufacturing a reality and then, by the nature of their seduction, we provide our consent, willfully suspending all sense of reason or disbelief.

We blindly follow, as slaves behind a king, and they tell us we're free—but that requires a fee.



Leo Santisi

Perfectly Imperfect; the Meaning Behind the Oxymoron

Lily Montgomery

Perfectly Imperfect; those two words never made sense to me. I've always been a rule follower. I was a high schooler who worked a job, did sports, got good grades, and never got into trouble. I strived to be the perfect daughter, friend, and girlfriend. The idea of breaking a rule was horrendous, up until the spring break when I learned that life was about more than being perfect. My family attended a family retreat for the Jewish holiday of Passover. At the retreat, I met a group of teenagers I instantly connected with, particularly a boy named Aaron. He was different from my friends back home, unafraid to break rules, and looking for an adventure. Normally, I wouldn't have talked to people like him, but something about stepping out of my comfort zone intrigued me.

Throughout the 10 day retreat we made a bucket list: jumping off the waterfall, going for a hike, stargazing, and last of all, climbing on the roof of the building by the dock and jumping into the lake. I was hesitant about the last item, afraid of getting caught or getting in trouble. Additionally, it was 45 degrees outside, so the water could be cold. I wasn't sure until the last night of the retreat, when we were walking by the lake. I realized I was going to regret not doing it, more than any consequence. 2am came, and the two of us scaled the roof. On top of the roof, we were greeted by a spectacular view of mountains and stars. It was at that moment I realized I had never felt more alive. Suddenly, I wasn't afraid anymore, he had helped me discover there was more to happiness than being perfect. I reached out my hand to him; "lets jump"

From that moment onward jumping was what I did. Rather than letting myself be defined by perfection, I let myself breath, and live. I chose to be true to who I was, rather than hide under the guise of being perfect. I learned that the recipe to being happy wasn't being perfect, or never making mistakes. Instead, it's learning how to embrace the mistakes and flaws, and do what you love. This experience was how I discovered my love of poetry, and to live my life without holding myself to impossible standards or flawlessness.

There is no perfect formula for writing a poem, not an outline or a correct answer. Poetry's nature intimidated me, and made me pause before the pencil hit the paper. I let myself write, let myself scratch the imperfect thoughts from my head onto paper, but never shared my work. With poetry, the beauty is in the imperfection, hidden inside experiences and emotions that aren't conventional or flawless. That spring gave me the clarity I needed to become a writer, and helped me let go of the fear I'd always carried. That jump wasn't a jump into a lake; it was a jump into my life.

The summer of 2019 I published my first work of poetry online. It was a poem called *Revelations*, written about seeing the harsh truth of the world as one matures. I was elated to have the

world see my work, and overwhelmingly flattered by the positive feedback I received. I began publishing my work on online forums, and connecting with other poets. For years I had been scared of sharing my writing, scared of people judging my innermost thoughts. Sharing my work turned out to be the most freeing experience of my life, and helped me discover my voice and speak my thoughts. Through publishing poetry I've learned how to express myself, connect with others, and most importantly, embrace my flaws. Perfectly Imperfect; I think I finally understand those words. Authentic beauty comes from blemishes and mistakes. Embracing every part of ourselves is how true happiness and perfection is attained.

10 Stoner Commandments

By God

1. Thou shalt contribute when possible.
2. Thou shalt pass the dutchie to the left hand side.
3. Thou shalt appreciate the herb.
4. Thou shalt never collect fees from a friend.
5. Thou shalt be prepared with sustenance.
6. Thou shalt not bogart.
7. Thou shalt bless the holy day.
8. Thou shalt keep thy glass pieces clean.
9. Thou shalt sacrifice thy tolerance regularly.
10. Thou shalt preserve thy kief.

Are You Addicted to TikTok?

Henry Levitt

How about you fucking read? Reading a book is basically the same thing as TikTok--you spend 30 seconds to a minute on a page, then you go to the next one. The biggest difference is that **reading isn't a goddamn waste of time**. Oh, and you "scroll" horizontally instead of vertically, but I'm sure you can get over that.

Now I hear a lot of **people defending the app by saying they learn** a lot from the videos. I'm sure that could be the case (because we all know the videos are fact-checked and posted by experts) **but have you ever read a fucking book?** There's actually this **category called "non-fiction" that's based on facts**. You also get to choose what you learn, believe it or not.

Here's another pro-tip: If your brain's attention span has been corroded by enormous quantities of 15-second garbage, you can actually read something called **an article. They're short and can be about anything**. It's especially popular to write articles about current events. You should try reading one sometime so I don't have to fucking explain that climate change is real and screwing up our future on this planet.

And if you're incapable of reading an article, **at least try reading the headline**. I swear, it's usually no more than 10 words.

Another bonus: **books won't steal your personal information** and give it to the Chinese government.

Finally, **no one is going to be impressed that you spent 12 hours a week staring at dancing videos** like a brain dead slug. However, read *Crime and Punishment*, and I guarantee that you'll impress your friends.

Because I am a kind person who is aware of your severe mental deficits, **I decided to bold the important parts** so you can get back to TikTok and stop wasting time reading.

Forearm is the Cleavage of a Man

Ellis Zusel

Any college girl getting ready for a big night on the town knows one thing: cleavage is key. Suppose “Courtney” is set on wearing her Harry Styles concert shirt (it’s unclear why anyone would make this choice, but bear with me). The shirt fits nicely with a rubber band tied around the bunched up excess fabric at the base of the shirt, but something is missing. Something round, something bulbous, something every man walks the earth in search of after his breastfeeding days are over. You guessed it... boob. She takes the shirt and cuts a V out of the front neck, revealing a fantastic view of what my 5 year old self referred to as the “drag line”. The shirt is perfect now. Her friends think she looks great. The guys think she looks better. No one is wondering why the fuck she chose to wear a concert t-shirt out to the bars. In fact, no one even notices Harry Styles at all...because, using the power of cleavage, Courtney has changed the conversation and created a brand new thing.

This hypothetical scenario is hardly interesting or unique, as it’s a song that has been played over and over again - the missionary of girls’ fashion moves, one could say. What is interesting, however, is what men can learn from this age-old trick. To be clear, men don’t have boobs, with the exception of Chris Christie and pre-2002 Al Roker. Wearing a V-neck to show “male cleavage” is only gonna make you look like a washed up perfume model - stick to crews, boys. But there is another body part that every man can use to have the “Courtney Effect”: forearm. I present my thesis, that forearm is the cleavage of a man.

Try it in your home right now. Take out the lamest top you can find in your dresser. It’s probably something you got for free at a charity event. Perhaps a St. Judes sweatshirt or Autism Speaks fleece? We all have something like that. Put it on normally and it looks terrible. It’s baggy and doesn’t lay right. Also, why the fuck are you wearing something you should’ve given to Goodwill the first chance you had? It’s ok, don’t run to the Salvation Army yet. Instead, push each sleeve three quarters of the way from your wrist to elbow, revealing some phenomenal forearm. You look incredible now. Your St. Judes merch just became the best article of clothing you own. Whatever late stage leukemia that child on the back of your sweatshirt was suffering from, you cured it. Unleashing the forearm has sent a ripple through the cosmos that will forever put humanity on a path towards peace and love. And you can now go to the bars in your Nephew’s Bar Mitzvah giveaway and pick up the hottest chick there. To all the guys out there, next time you see

a girl wearing a revealing shirt, definitely look down. But don't look down at her chest. Look down at your forearms, to make sure you've come to play like a pro.

phun* noun

1. that which provides philosophical amusement;

i. sharing phun on Tuesday evening

a) a time of pondering

ii. having phun

phun adjective

2. creating understandings, ideas, or thoughts;

i. a phun conversation

a) philosophically lively

ii. always phun with us

*Word originally coined for the UGA Philosophy Student Association

-Henry Levitt



COPY

COPY

COPY

**Here are my two God-awful stand-up jokes. May everyone pray that I never get the opportunity to perform them. -XOXO, Henry

You know, Michael Jackson looked really fucking weird.

This guy looked absolutely bizarre for a good portion of his life.

And even though most people would have mistaken him for an alien, he could have gotten with any woman at that time.

...or man

...or child.

...and he did!

-

I'm really not worried about ever acting on my intrusive thoughts.

That's because I get them every time I go to a bar--and I never act on them.

Yeah, they're usually about talking to a girl...

Photo by Leo Santisi





Writing a
2,000 word Cognitive
Science
paper that's due
in less than a week



Writing a
fairy tale
about a pickle
and onion
that's twice as long

“Bask in all the sensations”

The Sensationalist: #13

"Vices are an escape from our problems; problems are an escape from the present"

SONNET IV: PERSONAL MESSIAH

HENRY LEVITT

Listen child, for we are wretched
From birth to the grave. And there's ONE,
A SOUL descended; God-fetched,
Who's PROPHESIED to bow to none.

Us mortals pray for deliverance
From burning heat and freezing rain,
Destructive vice AND pestilence,
Crushing burdens and crippling pain.

Yet one WILL LEAD with staff in hand
And rise from nothing, unforeseen:
For it is YOU who makes the stand
AGAINST all the FOES who lie between
Liberation. Trust the being
That your consciousness is freeing.

Shut The Fuck Up, Loser

Thaddeus Basil Smith

Life is horrid.
That's what everyone
tries to convince me.
*I do not know
anymore
of who I am,
so they will
make my decisions
I believe,
yes,
life is horrid,
and I want to show
how everyone has made me feel
since I have grown.*
*I will make life horrid
for all those who
have ruined it for me,
and I hope they truly feel
how bad life can be.*

“VMS”

Leo Santisi



The Sensational Times

New Archeological Research Shows Humans Evolved to Sit in Front of Glowing Rectangles for Hours at a Time

Henry Levitt

Dakar, Senegal, December 13th - A growing body of archaeological evidence compiled by the Institute of a Virtual Future for Humanity suggests that humans may have evolved over 200,000 years to sit in front of glowing rectangles for 6-10 hours a day. At the Institute's most recent dig, a hunter-gatherer burial site outside Dakar, Senegal dating back 50,000 years, unpaid interns found blueprints to a primitive computer. While there is no evidence that the computer was ever built, the discovery has shifted the current paradigm in the field.

Dr. Biggabaugh, a highly published anthropology researcher currently completing his 17th dissertation at Harvard University, explains how the new findings fit into the current understanding. “You see, before the team unearthed the blueprints, the earliest evidence of humans realizing their peak physiological purpose of stagnating in virtual isolation in front of glowing rectangles of various sizes, or GROVS for short, dates back to a 30,000 year old cave painting in modern day Algeria.” The PhD candidate continued, “This finding is truly groundbreaking in its scope as it dispels counterarguments from critics who claim that the computer was a post-industrial conception.”

The idea that humans were built to be physically isolated and sitting for many hours of the day, or the “glowing rectangle theory” (GRT), has been controversial in academia for a number of years. Opponents of the theory point to the existence of legs, a need for socialization, and adverse health effects correlated with stagnation as their primary points of contention. When asked if these arguments weaken the GRT stance, evolutionary anthropologist and current marketing director at Dell, Dr. Posner responded, “Well that’s a stupid question. You should be asking how people would feel if they didn’t have access to their glowing rectangles.”

Dr. Posner makes a statistically valid point. A survey conducted in 2021 by Facebook resident conspiracy theorist JFK Jr. found that “at least 100% of respondents” used GROVS “at or around the time of completing the survey”. Kennedy Jr. also found that nine out of ten respondents agreed that GROVS “are a necessary part of human life”. Finally, he reported that a majority of respondents believe “man evolved alongside glowing screens with the help of God”. The Times did not receive a

response after reaching out to Mr. Kennedy Jr. regarding his conflicting viewpoints on evolution and creationism. Regardless, the data creates a straightforward conclusion: man cannot live without glowing rectangles.

Dr. Posner argues that these results indicate that man has always existed alongside at least the idea of such rectangles. She continued her point, “Based on the current data, it’s clear that when humans have access to glowing rectangles, they will stagnate in front of them for hours a day. Therefore, given our evolutionary affinity to GROVS, it’s truly astounding that some anthropologists still do not accept the glowing rectangle theory.”

~

As a strong proponent of science, the Times implores its readers to consider advances made by the Institute of a Virtual Future for Humanity. GRT deniers pose a dangerous threat to the future of industrial society and therefore the Times cannot condone such false beliefs.

The 72nd Floor

Frankie Vinehardt III

It will be on the 72nd floor that I will reside. My office will be large - not grand - furnished with mahogany bookshelves and a desk slightly too large for the room. Within the shelves will be entombed a collection of monochrome burgundy spines that I will never touch. My secretary is to dust these tomes twice a day when delivering my meals. I will dine at the hours of 10 am and 8 pm - on the dot. For I will require that daily my life be anchored by at least two reminders of the reality of my condition. I will wear suits, beige, and smoke an old calabash that will emanate putrid vitality of my thoughts as long as I am still living. And I will write. I will write every day. I will write until my body rejects my mind and what remains of my sanity is mere scraps of a once eccentric man - and then I will write some more. Occasionally I will stand by my window looking out on the poor souls who will never experience true love - no, love past love, love to the point of destruction. Every day as I fill pages upon pages with scrawlings of a mad man, I will lose myself slightly more in the art of existing. One day, I will finally forget I exist at all - save for the words I leave behind.

Fiend

(n): a person who is excessively fond of or addicted to something

I'm a fiend for your smile
I'm a fiend for your touch
I'm a fiend for your attention
I'm a fiend for your love
You're my choice of drug
The one I use to get high
But when I come crashing down
My legs give out and I cry
You're an addiction I can't give up
You're a drug I can't let go
I try to ignore you
Even though I love you so

You're my light in the darkness
The moon to my sun
All I want is for you to notice me
All I want is for you to be the one
But the highs and lows
The ups and downs
Do nothing for me
But leave me on the ground
So shoot me another needle
Give me another dose
Just so I can be
Comatose

- L.K. McDonald

“Crumbs”

Leo Santisi



When Darkness Brings Light

Henry Levitt

Sitting on the darkening beach, guitar in hand, I pluck the notes to “Dust in the Wind” by Kansas--one of the first songs I ever learned. As I face towards the ocean sunset, back to the boardwalk, I have other thoughts on my mind: never in my life have I beheld the sight of a truly dark night sky with its atavistic whorls of constellations and a clear view of the galaxy.

*Darkness falls upon the meadow, owls call from ‘cross the hollow--
Milky Ways of Odyssies, Orion’s belt and Heracles,
Looking skyward I was not misled,
Letting all but go unsaid;
Bading fate, “go ahead”*

Perhaps I will have to enjoy the sunset for now...which is not a difficult task. With its pastel azures, muted siennas, and subtle corals, the sunset seems to dye the wisps of clouds a shade of salmon. Then, as the sun finally dips below the horizon, the artificial lamplight floods the sandy beach.

*A stranger calls from out the dark, “Shooting stars will heed their arc,”
“Stranger”, says he unto me, “the nighttime sky sets you free,”
Sitting with a stoic face:
“Sometimes we forget our place,”
Answers, I, “a true disgrace.”*

The lamplight does illuminate my way walking along the beach, but it also obscures what humans have relied on for countless generations. Once upon a time we used the stars for navigation, for keeping time, for stories. But our industrialized world has blotted out the universe with its city lights that shine from sundown to sunup.

*Vast expanses of the sky, passing slowly by and by,
Stellar views to dwarf the Earth, divine musings of worldly dearth;
Life appears the worth of naught,
This advice the heavens hath brought,
“Stranger please, recall this thought.”*

Kicking the warm sand, I watch as the grains catch the cool zephyr for a few seconds and settle back to a place of rest. The sand does not see its place among the millions of billions of identical grains on the beach. Perhaps we, too, do not see our place in the universe. Life moves too fast. Modern society has prevented us from looking up at the starry night sky and seeing the vast cosmos. It has prevented us from putting everything into perspective and seeing our true insignificance. But one day, *one day*, I will make the journey to a truly dark field, untainted by the petty qualms and distractions of life, and finally see where I belong.

What Are We?

01. What are “we”?

- a. I mean the part of us we’re aware of--
 - i. The part that unquestionably *exists*.
- b. Maybe you want to call it the “self”,
- c. or maybe the consciousness.

02. Regardless of its name, what is it?

- a. What is it made of?
- b. The only thing I know that exists internally is my current thought,
 - i. because I am aware of it right now.
- c. So then it must be my thought.
 - i. And I perceive continuity in thought from moment to moment.
- d. So then it must be thought flow.

03. But what causes a person’s specific thought flow?

- a. ...Nature and nurture of course.
 - i. There’s too much evidence that we reflect our biology,
 - ii. and there’s too much evidence that we reflect our experiences.
- b. We can talk about biology later.
 - i. And there we will have the big question:
 - ii. Does consciousness transcend biology?
- c. But for now,

04. What are experiences made of?

- a. They’re made of our external perceptions--that is, interacting with the world.
- b. For us to perceive, to ruminate, and everything in between, that world creates the “content”.
- c. Many people like to call this the “subconscious”.
 - i. It’s the immediate judgements attached to everything,
 - ii. that we learn over time;
 - iii. through experience.
 - iv. “Memes” if you will.
- d. Our memes and the ever-changing content shapes what we think about.
- e. It allows biology to do its “magic”.

05. And what does biology do to create us?

- a. Our brains have capabilities and functions.
- b. These will automatically happen when exposed to content that activates it.
- c. For example:
 - i. making memories (events)
 - ii. sexual arousal (biological attraction/libido)
 - iii. feeling emotions (exciting events)
 - iv. language (if you believe Chomsky)
 - v. reasoning (event patterns)
 - vi. higher order reasoning (conscious mind using memetic building blocks)

06. So does that mean “we” exist entirely inside our biology?

- a. Kind of.
 - b. If content didn't exist we may not either.
 - c. If existence didn't exist, we certainly wouldn't.
 - d. So you cannot assign a tangibility to consciousness.
07. Now to answer how existence and content exist...
- a. I don't know.
 - i. We know they exist (because we do).
08. But the mechanisms that cause them?
09. Let alone why it exists in the first place?

Your guess is as good as mine.

-Henry Levitt

“Humanity is a terminal condition”

The Sensationalist: #14

"Stop thinking at the hand"



The Antithesis of Creation

Hope Nathanson

I am suffering from stagnation
And it is no fault but my own
When granted an unscheduled moment
I have found that my brain would rather consume
IMAGES than EXPERIENCES
My brain would rather watch a cute girl knit a cute sweater
Than touch a spool of yarn
My brain would rather watch a strong man get stronger
Than strengthen myself
My brain would rather watch someone review a book
Than turn a page
Until today, my brain would have rather read The Sensationalist
But my heart wants to write for it



Evan Bellusci

Limerick Fun!
Henry Levitt

#1

There once was a boy with a magazine,
He wrote with the help of caffeine.
With many late nights,
And countless kilobytes,
It finally materialized on screen.

#2

Remember to praise the cheese,
For the tongue it always does please.
Whether cooked or baked,
Or melted or flaked,
It's blessed to cure any disease.

#3

"Hi, would you care for a beignet?

I have three I must give away.

For if I do not,

They'll sit and rot,

And that will be very not slay."



"We Find Ourselves"

James Hooker

Album of which the above art represents:

We Find Ourselves

Predatory Business Practice

This following narrative is about a local business that employs some... let's say questionable practices. I will refrain from naming the restaurant, though if you live in my little hamlet of Ridgefield, CT it is likely you have made the same observation.

Earlier this week I hit the gym in the late afternoon with my gym buddy and close friend Evan, and craved some protein after the sesh. Naturally we chose to go to this (unnamed) restaurant as it is known for its burgers and quick service. As I'm ordering a double with swiss I notice the same pattern that has been omnipresent in the eatery since it opened: predatory business practices.

When I say predatory I'm not talking cutthroat capitalist will-steal-insulin from a child dying of ketoacidosis, I'm talking about sexually predatory in nature. You see, all the employees that are visible to the customer are female and under the age of 25. I have never, in all my years of patronizing this restaurant, interacted with a male employee or a woman past the age of approximately mid-twenties. This is a complete outlier when compared to all other eateries and places of business within my town--it has practically become the brand. I have physically existed within this premises on over 100 unique occasions for a total or no less than 30 hours, and yet still have not observed a male on the company's payroll. You may be thinking that there is some youth women empowerment movement driving this, but, to date, there still seems to be no signs of such.

Furthermore, and here's the kicker, they *always* wear tight-fitting pants as if it's some kind of dress code. I'm not saying that women can't wear yoga pants--quite the opposite, in fact: I encourage anyone to wear whatever they please. But, when 100% of the employee observations include this apparel that happens to reveal the body's physique more clearly, one begins to wonder.

And for the record, the owner in question is a middle-aged "gentle"-man who (and I don't like stereotyping) looks like a creep. My theory is as follows: the owner has a certain sexual affinity to much younger, and often underaged, women in tight-fitting pants.

I really do not think that my theory is much of a stretch, either--all my empirical data suggests it! I also believe that this appearance has become so ingrained within the brand that no one thinks twice about what is truly an odd and perhaps perverted practice. My point in writing this is to stir up some suppressed thoughts about this restaurant and ensure that I'm not really going crazy. Anyways,

Until next time,
Henry L.

Top-Secret Chocolate Chip Cookie Recipe

Henry Levitt

The following is my top-secret, highly tested cookie recipe that I am making available to the public. This was a very tough decision for me, but I believe that all human beings should have the opportunity to try out this incredible recipe.

Mix 1/2 cup browned butter, 1/2 cup granulated sugar, 3/4 cup brown sugar, and 1 teaspoon of salt in a large bowl. Wait for mixture to cool then add 1 egg, 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, and 1/2 teaspoon baking soda. Mix until well Incorporated. Fold in 1 1/4 cups flour. Do not over mix. Fold in 4 oz or 1/2 cup each of chocolate chunks and chocolate chips (two different kinds of chocolate is best). Preheat the oven to 350 and refrigerate the dough for at least 30 minutes. Place 12 golf ball sized lumps of dough on lined baking sheets. Make sure to allow 2 inches of space between every cookie. Bake for 10-13 minutes. Do not let the cookies brown. Remove and let sit undisturbed for at least 10 minutes. Enjoy!



*Not an image of the cookies



*Also not an image of the cookies

“You can't have two pickle spears! That's ridiculous! You couldn't even handle that much pickle.”⁹⁹

The Sensationalist: #15

“Performance art is a vanishing art”

Step Out

Henry Levitt

Locked inside this concrete box, a mental paradigm of sorts, we watch our own lives pass by from the tiny window. The minuscule opening, the size of a piece of letter paper, sometimes as small as a postage stamp, and even if you're lucky, usually no larger than an unfurled hand towel, restricts what we see, what we experience, what we *feel*. Day in and day out we live vicariously through the figures we see dancing or feasting in the window, knowing that every joyous moment is a fleeting reminder of the existential drudgery that exists within our monotone, gray cube.

From inside our prisons, we all wish for a larger window; perhaps, we believe, that with a slightly wider opening we will absorb more of the sensations of those figures that we watch so closely. And so, we clamor to obtain files and hammers, electric saws and jackhammers, wrecking balls and bulldozers to expand that measly window.

We scramble over each other, miserable sunlight deprived bodies, fighting inside our self-created, contrived, constricting, constructs containing ideals for climbing hierarchies that exist so long as we yield them credence. It constitutes nothing short of mass hysteria--and we all know it.

And for those of us who are embarrassed to admit it out loud, our grand desire still burns an inferno in our souls: One day, we will be on the other side of that tiny opening, dancing, laughing, feasting, and loving. A parallel-structured manifesto: love to live, don't pay to live; do everything for its own sake alone.

Alas, such is easier said (and to say it is no easy feat when onlookers will grimace and turn their backs as if dreamers are some sort of societal pariah) than done. But to step out, to deny the existence of the prison, is wholly possible. Nothing beyond nature truly exists.

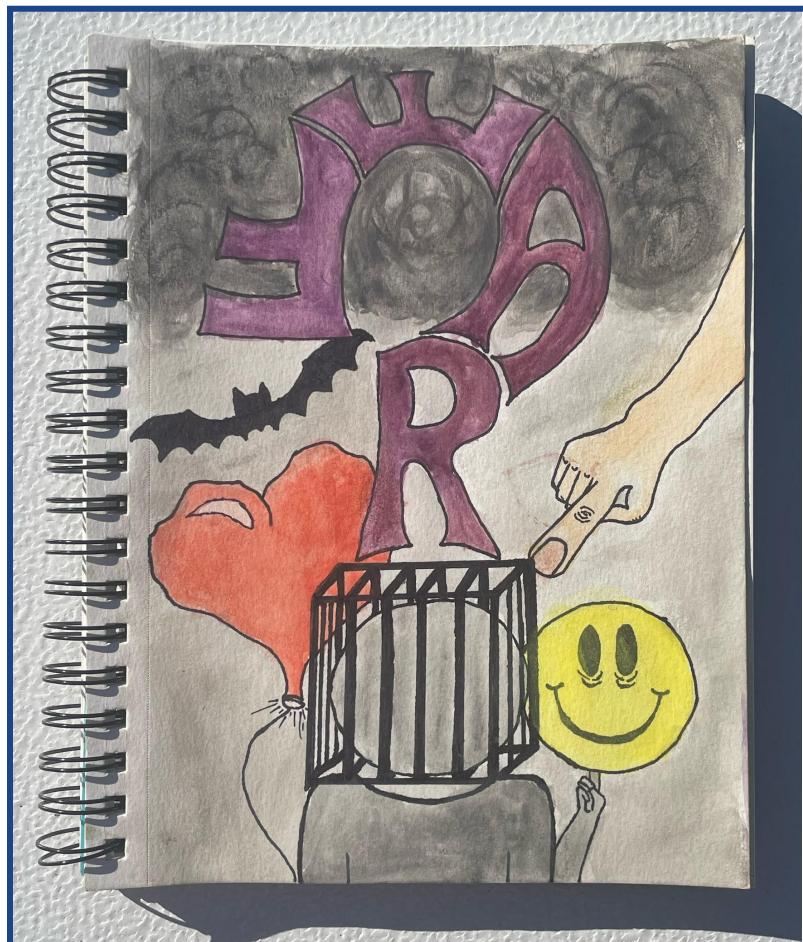
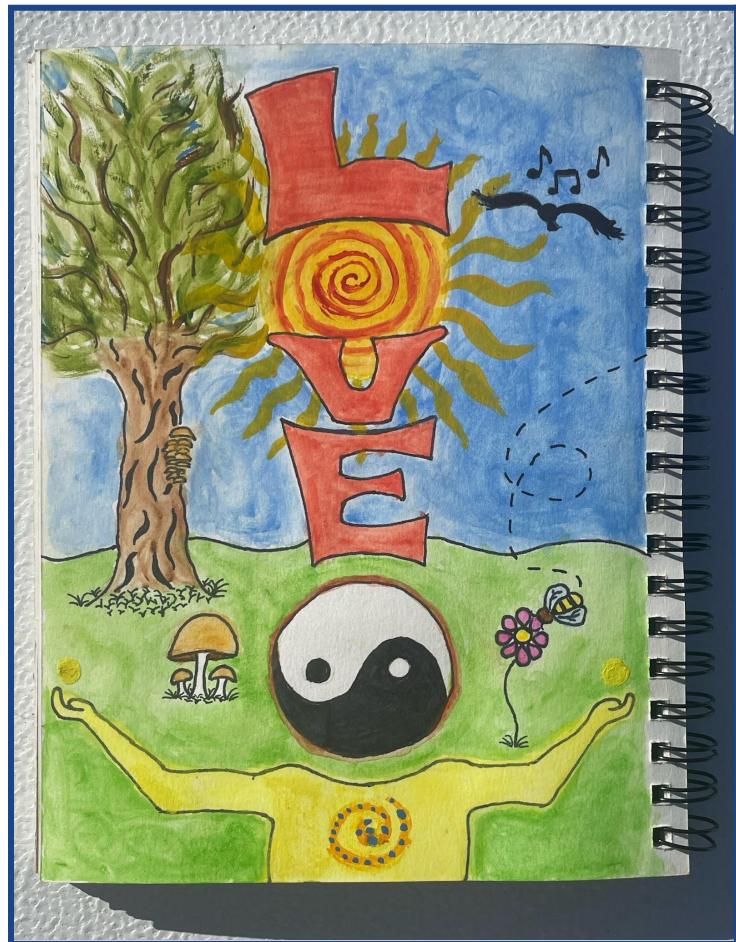
And when enough brave souls liberate their minds and exist for existence alone, I pray they take pity on us entrapped people and crumble the walls of every single concrete box.

For a system can only be changed from the perspective of one who has stepped out.

Fun Facts About the Platypus (Video)

LOVE>FEAR

TEO SALAZAR



Oh tell me, Nostradamus, will OJ ever admit to the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson?

~

Frankie, Frankie, Frankie...I see into the future that on his deathbed, Mr. Simpson will reveal that it was he who stabbed his ex-wife to death!

Evan

Bellusci



What Comes After the Steam Engine?

Henry Levitt

In 1698, though there is speculation as to whether the ancient Greeks were 2 millennium ahead of the British, the humble steam engine was invented. But humble it was not. The steam engine transformed the planet and the lives of all its inhabitants--both present and future. And even though the steam engine is over 324 years old (and counting!) it still remains the king of energy generation.

Practically all commercial-level electricity generation operations rely on substances with varying levels of environmental harm to heat steam in order to spin a turbine, which in turn creates electricity. One would think, with one being me, that we would have discovered a better method of energy generation. Maybe blasting ions through a membrane, or separating electrons from their respective atoms with anti-matter. Perhaps we can harness the power of prayer to a God of electricity. But it is disappointing, insulting even, that a piece of shit from sixteen-ninety-fucking-eight is the best we can do. If we are wreaking havoc on the Earth, can we at least do it in style? Or in a higher tech way?

So that begs the question, what comes after the steam engine? Because I know very little about cutting-edge energy generation methods, I will make a broader prediction that does not hinge on such knowledge. So what comes next? I predict three distinct outcomes.

- 1) We do not evolve technologically past the steam engine and humanity languishes in the stubborn foulness of stupidity while slowly circling the toilet bowl of demise until our virtual extinction before the year of 2500.
- 2) The second option is that we find a new energy generation method which will cause a subsequent technological revolution that will only further rip humanity out of our corporeal existence.
- 3) Option three is similar to the first in that we reached our technological pinnacle in 1698, but instead of circling the toilet bowl of demise, there is only a mass die-off and the remnants of this broken species will balance life in an abject wasteland.

While it is possible for humans to be Earth's steward and a shepherd of all its life, I do not hold enough faith in our species to believe that.

The Fox and the Grapes

L.K. McDonald

*The Fox and the grapes
The golden apple
The forbidden fruit
Wanting what I can't have
Has me always in pursuit*

*The faster I run
The farther it gets
Left in the smoke
Of snubbed out cigarettes*

*Light me on fire
Throw me a flame
Turn me into a martyr
I'll gladly take the blame*

*On my tiptoes to reach
My greatest desire
But little did I know
That you were a liar*

*I keep trying to open up
I keep trying to love hard
But all it leaves me
Is with a bunch of scars*

*Try to keep my head up
Try to keep my hopes high
But the longer I wait
The more I cry*

*Scared to lose my emotions
Scared to lose me
If I am not a lover
Who am I supposed to be?*

THIS IS WHY THE WORLD IS ENDING



Pedestrian Shame

Henry Levitt

On the thick gray sidewalk
Where the concrete meets asphalt
A man trips on the curb

Getting to Know Yourself

Henry Levitt

The only way
to learn
about
yourself,

is by not being
who you think
you
are.

“Half the fun of having things is giving them away”

The Sensationalist: #16

"Are you on penance-core TikTok, broh?"

On Brunch

Henry Levitt

I am writing this to defend myself in lucid and absolute terms against two certain individuals who criticized my definition of this meal while I was enjoying a 3 pm avocado toast. And while I was not able to construct a coherent argument then, I have done much reflecting and I am finally ready to present my view to the critics, along with refutations to objections that I anticipate.

The classical definition of brunch, or brunch purism, is a meal between the hours of approximately 10 am and 2 pm consisting of an amalgam of breakfast and lunch foods, usually served on weekends. And while I do concede that this definition incorporates one avenue of brunch, I argue that it is much too narrow as a definition and does not encompass the true ethos of the meal. My thesis (known as brunch transcendentalism) is that brunch is an idea that has few criteria for its time of commencement and contents and instead hinges on the context and manner in which the meal is intended to be enjoyed. To be more specific: brunch is a leisurely meal where the emphasis is not on the rapid satiation of the carnal desire. Instead, both the sustenance and period of time ought to be relished in a relaxed social setting with little to no time constraints to allow for rejuvenation; it complements the rest after periods of stress and/or activity (i.e., a long week, a night out, etc.). Naturally, the food must align with this goal, hence why breakfast foods are great options, though the food can consist of almost anything that maintains the ethos of brunch (more on this later). In essence, brunch is a special event. It transcends the eating itself and represents an event designed to facilitate dawdling⁴.

I do understand my purist opponents' confusion on this considering a weekend meal in the late morning to early afternoon usually provides an exemplar excuse for this activity of leisure. However, there is a reason for the frequent alignment between the true brunch ethos and its classical definition. I will explain through objections and refutations why this is the case while supporting brunch transcendentalism. Before that however, I will include a brief discussion on the genesis of this meal and its evolution from the original definition, to the classical definition, and finally to its true definition.

The word brunch, and arguably the idea, too, was conceived by British writer Guy Beringher in an 1895 article and represents a stroke of genius within the Western dining canon. I recommend everyone read his article which I will include at the end of this essay. It is

⁴ concise definition: a leisurely, social meal after a period of rest consisting of foods designed to be consumed slowly

worth mentioning that Beringher's original definition differs slightly from the purist interpretation due to the commercialization of dining, but also crucially outlines the purpose of such a meal, "Brunch, on the contrary, is cheerful, sociable, and inciting. It is talk compelling. It puts you in a good temper; it makes you satisfied with yourself and fellow beings. It sweeps away the worries and cobwebs of the week." This excerpt flawlessly encompasses the metaphysical aspect of the ethos of brunch. Beringher also states that brunch is inherently a Sunday meal. And while the "purest" form of brunch may follow the Sunday midday format, it is far from the only way to enjoy brunch.

Sunday inherency will be the first objection that I take aim at. Sunday is the most popular brunch day only because it is the primary day devoted to rest within Western culture. This means that Sunday most easily facilitates brunch transcendentalism, though any day can do so long as a state of leisure and cheeriness (with little time constraints) can be obtained.

The next objection, and perhaps the most vehement of my critics, is that brunch must occur at a specific time of day. Their strongest, and perhaps most compelling argument is that the word "brunch" is a portmanteau formed through the combination of "breakfast" and "lunch". This, they would exclaim, must mean that the meal, too, must fall between or within the period of time of these two meals. However, I push back against this with an observation that on days with few to no required tasks, the usual schedule of rest and meal times disintegrates in favor of an organic eating schema where words like "breakfast", "lunch", and "dinner" are mere suggestions or approximations rather than stringent categories. And it is only on these idle days can brunch truly occur. Because the categories of meals have dissolved, a more accurate way to define brunch is necessary, hence the new ethos of brunch that I have presented. Furthermore, in our modern society, there are even fewer universal requirements of hours one must be awake due to the nature of certain occupations and preferences; there is more temporal variation afforded to days of leisure. Finally, consistent with my definition, so long as a period of inactivity precedes brunch, which can occur at virtually any time, the meal is capable of mirroring the classical definition in spirit--which is the only distinction that matters.

The last objection I will be addressing deals with the type of food present at brunch. Brunch Purists will contend, again due to the constituents of the word in question, that brunch ought to be an amalgam of the two meals. However, congruent with the true definition of brunch, I maintain that the food ought not to be of a specific variety or group, but instead it must be capable of a leisurely consumption. Food enjoyed at room temperature or within an acceptable deviation warmer or cooler thereof represent the best candidates. Furthermore, multiple courses of relatively lavish and lighter fare is ideal for achieving extraordinary

enjoyment and sociability of the meal. This is why mixtures between breakfast and lunch often comprise the greatest category of brunch foods, though any combination of foods that enable the previously-described, leisured and gregarious environment will do.

Now that I have satisfactorily quelled the most potent objections, I invite my adversaries to raise any more issues they may have with my description of the true brunch ethos.

I want to finish this dispute by asserting that I am unequivocally a champion of brunch. I believe that it is unparalleled and ought to be appreciated at least once a week for optimal physical and mental health. Brunch transcends all arbitrary boundaries we create and affords a vital period of dawdling and renewal that is essential to the human experience. Brunch purism, as opposed to brunch transcendentalism (of which I am a proud member), does not allow for the true, unadulterated enjoyment and fulfillment of the meal. Purists deny and deprive us of this exceptional event through whimsical technicalities they impose on our collective brunch indulgence. For this reason, and all those previously presented, I urge all to become brunch transcendentalists and preserve this last bastion of mealtime merriment.

[Guy Beringher Brunch Article](#)

“Can’t Get It Out of My Head” - Phoebe Levitt



City at Night

Thaddeus Basil Smith

Hold fast,
the neon daydream
of American culture.
When will we ever learn
that violence
does not create equals?
Never.

I have seen
the minds of rabid
learners and creators
destroyed
by the ever present ping
of America's pin.
What do we call ourselves
wrapped in false silks
stolen from other peoples?
An amalgam.
A mosaic.
We do not have an identity
that is not already created
by someone else.
I wonder if we ever will.
Until then,
I will flounder
and fumble,
until I have learned
that which a hero deserves.

The American Dream.
What a mission.
Who knows
who can screw others over
through omission,
submission to our system,
or psychiatric care?
I wonder if there are
other things out there.
Who knows?
Not the complacent.
For our type is the lonely,
sullen,
hopeless,
and ever present,
Americant.
Grieve those who
with silver tongue deceive
the great order
to which we adhere.
Those who dream
of high peaks,
and lower lows;
of dusky sights,
no one knows.
When will we learn?

Football-Fan Conversion Therapy Camp

(Rejected by the UGA Campus Newspaper *Red & Black*)

I want to preface this article with the fact that I almost did not write it due to concerns for my personal welfare. However, my fear of being locked in a pillory in front of the Athens Ben and Jerry's was assuaged when I realized that the Red and Black is frequented (though frequent may be the wrong word) chiefly by relocated alumni and equally football-apathetic students as me...

This editorial comes fast on the heels of our National Championship Win and is therefore its least or most salient--I'll let you be the judge of that. Despite the publication date of this article, I lament my apathy towards football all year round. And against my best efforts, including choosing to enroll at the University with the top football program in the nation and residing in a town where fall weekends practically revolve around the sport, I have found that I still can not give a single shit about football--not one. This has been extremely disheartening to me in my college career as my peers all seem to revel in game-day exuberance.

Recently I have come to a conclusion: I cannot learn to care about football by myself. I cannot learn to love waiting in lines for hours only to wait more in a giant metal bowl underneath the scorching sun while surrounded by hordes of sweaty college students. And when the game finally starts, I find it difficult, nay impossible, to care enough about strong men running at each other and inflicting traumatic brain injuries on one another in order to stop a weirdly shaped brown ball from moving down the field enough to stay for an entire four quarters. I actually think it's a miracle that I've managed to find enough will to stand for close to four hours and watch something so immensely unentertaining. So, I've decided I need help--namely from a football-fan conversion therapy camp to ignite my love for the sport.

Unfortunately football-fan conversion therapy camps have come under fire in recent years with some state legislatures even going so far as to ban the practice altogether. This is likely due to the severe psychological distress they impart on non-sport-minded folk. Furthermore, there is little evidence to suggest that such camps are even capable of achieving their purported goal; resistance to sport-viewing hysteria may actually be an unchanging character trait. Nevertheless, I intend to enroll in the conversion camp so that my stubborn identity as a non-football fan is crushed like a graham cracker in the hands of a rambunctious four year-old. I hope that a burly caricature of a middle school gym coach pulverizes my partiality to pedagogical pursuits and instills in me a certain reverence for gridlines, goalposts, and game managers.

Yes, I know that football-fan conversion therapy camps are an extreme measure to cure my problem, but it is the last resort. I cannot continue living in shame caused by my sheer boredom by the game of football. I have been ostracized for far too long. Something must change.

At the camp, I will apply myself in every activity until not even a semblance of my past non-football fan self remains. When I return, I hope to take delight in watching Bulldogs football alongside all of you readers.

There is quite a difficult path ahead of me, but I am determined to succeed in converting my identity. I would like to thank everyone for their continued support in helping me care about football. The next time you hear from me I will be a changed man.

Sincerely,
Henry Levitt

Two poems about the intuitive heart

James Hooker

?/?/2022

Trust the gut of the universe:
It knows all because
it has consumed all
Everything beyond the veil
is also veil
Until you focus
on the intuitive heart inside
And watch it get ripped apart
Just to lay open-
Trials by fire.

//?//?//22

Ah...so
So here we are:
Empty of our separation
All ears for the lover
Listening close to the pitter-patters of the intuitive heart
Swaying this way or that, gently tugging, an open brochure
Read the fine print closely
All the instructions are there:
How to find a home inside
How to hear what it is
This body must do
While I'm sitting here
Just sitting, so lovely
And watching the dance go on, the wheels turning
The old man's hands withered and decaying
just as they should be.
Driving the car to go visit friends and also destroy innocent lives
in places that just so happen to be rich with oil
Man of oil-
He has many faces and limbs. And all of us,
Lost children
Running straight into his open, loving arms to horrible endings.
Every possible pain
every possible scrutinization
are all ours to share.

Rust

L.K. McDonald

The ashes of the aftermath float in the wind
The smell of smoke surrounds the air
The crying and wailing of the ones left behind
The loss and grief everywhere
The red rust on the metal left standing
Just like the rust on my heart
My soul yearns for inner peace
But I don't know where to start
The oxygen has touched my iron heart
The rust slowly takes hold
It slowly spreads to my entire being
And I didn't know it be this cold
The sirens off in the distance
As my empty eyes view this ravaged land
My hollowed body yearns for existence
But I know that it isn't planned
My destiny lies in being wasted
My destiny lies in being numb
Slowly left to rust and rot
And it's a destiny I can't get away from

Remembering Sardinia

Frankie Vinehardt III

I remember my first summer in Sardinia...As we approached the rocky shoreline, the aggressive mediterranean sun washed out the colors from normally radiant tufts of evergreen growth, royally blue waves, and heroic pillars of dolomite, uncut and proud. It was this introduction to the beautiful isle that always stuck with me in the following summers since that majestic experience. Life in Sardinia always felt softened, washed out. Not without emotion, but always tempered. Contentment was ever-present and depression far removed, unlike the subliminal backbone that seemed ubiquitous within my life back home. Sardinia never changed. It has felt nostalgic since I saw the island for the first time. The seagulls never fail to swoop in flashes of white and gray toward the barnacle-encrusted bow. And just like the seagulls were filled with this joy by the island, I too was filled with a lighthearted emotion and the urge to meander through the rocky coastline or plunge into the exhilaratingly cool lagoons. Life felt drained of the darkness, of the vibrance of the real world. There were no worries in Sardinia.

“The enlightened man will never surrender his knowledge no matter how much suffering it has brought him”⁹⁹

The following two projects include reprints from The Sensationalist, Volume I.

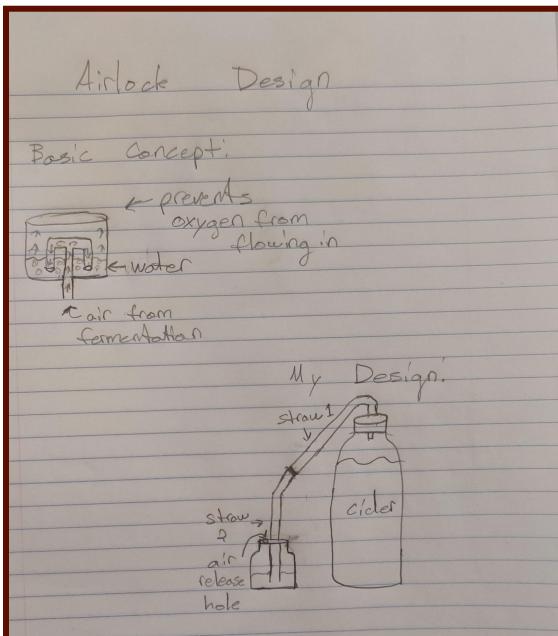
The Meadery

Hear ye, hear ye, brethren and kin. The honey harvest this season has been fruitful and we must put the excess to good use! Friar John has suggested that mead ought to be produced from the clover honey. Due to his exceedingly wise suggestion, I have decided to convert a portion of the ale brewhouse into a meadery. And though I do not currently have any tools for brewing such a delicate beverage, I will devise a course of action to enable such production.

Necessary materials:

- Growler (jug)
- Airlock
- Yeast
- Honey, 2-3 pounds
- Potable water
- Mulling spices
- Fruit

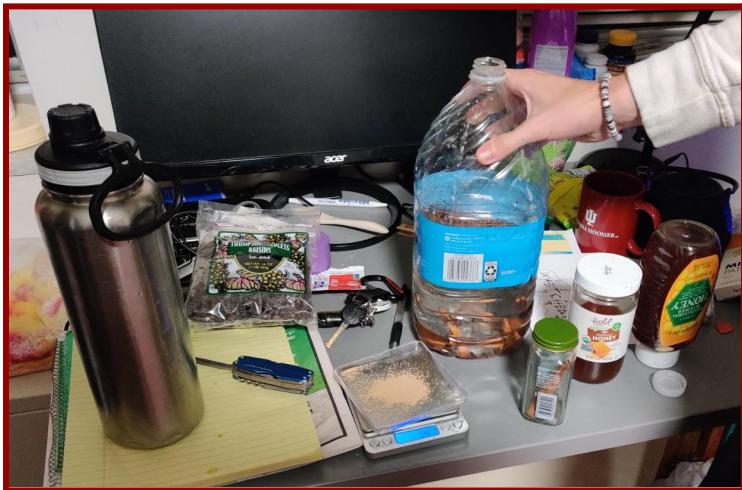
Firstly, an airlock is needed to facilitate alcoholic fermentation. I do not have one of these and so I must create one myself. Because there is a significant time and cost factor to this project, I will first



test the makeshift airlock with spiced cider I purchased from Trader Joe so as to not waste the precious honey. I obtained yeast from the local market and cinnamon sticks from the traveling Bowman known as "Target". Here are some drawings of the design and setup.

The Meadery

The makeshift airlock was a veritable success! The cider is currently fermenting and bubbling with great vitality. Given the efficacy of the airlock design, I began fermenting the mead using the same airlock design as detailed last week. Here are some images of the mead-mulling process and an explanation of each step and the ingredients used.



2) In this image (right) you can observe my brewing assistant, Isaac, puring clover honey into the heated water. In all, just over two pounds, or 34 ounces, of honey were dissolved in the growler. Directly after this, the yeast was shaken in and the airlock fastened as seen below.

1) In this photo-realistic drawing (left) you can see that approximately 1.5 grams of yeast have been weighed out and the mulling spices (consisting of cloves and cinnamon) have been added to the growler. One lemon was also added after this image was drawn.



3) The drawing to the left illustrates the finished fermenting apparatus of the mead one-gallon growler in comparison to the half gallon jug used for the cider. The mead will ferment for five weeks and the cider two more.

The Meadery, Final Update

After a long three and a half fortnights, I finally uncorked the nectar. Billowing from the growler was a pleasant autumnal aroma complete with a crisp nose. This was my first hint that the mulling spices achieved their purported goal. The honey wine was surprisingly clear for a beverage that was fermented using bread yeast. Naturally, I poured myself a tasting glass to ensure that the product was top quality.

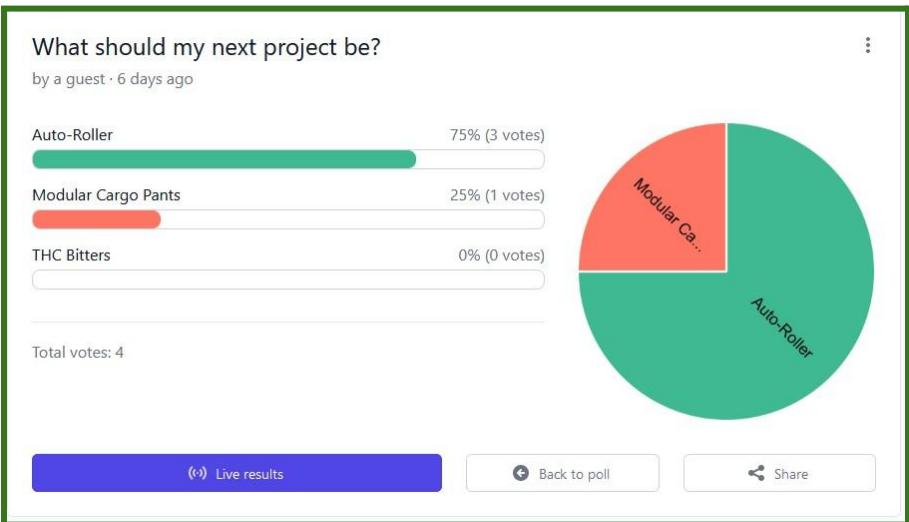
~

On first taste I noticed an open palette with blossoming clove and cinnamon flavors. Underneath the spices was a thin, sweet and summer berry taste that I assume came from the clover honey. Much to my merriment, there was not even a semblance of plastic flavor. However, my tongue did start tingling and my gums began to go numb. I attribute this to the incredibly high quantity of cloves used. Friar John later explained to me that cloves emit a certain oil that causes oral numbness. After trying the mead he proclaimed it “the best tasting analgesic there is” and recommended that I make the elixir available to the village dentist. Here are some final images of the endeavor and the feast over which it was served.



THE POINTLESS PANTS PROJECT (P.P.P.)

Last week I asked you, the reader, to vote on my next project. As you can see, the results are overwhelmingly in favor of the automatic joint roller. However, this will not be my next project. You see, democracy doesn't really exist. It's just a fickle agreement between the entities in power and the people who they pretend to represent. And because I am the one in power and pretend to represent your interests, I also get to snatch that democratic "power" away from you like a racoon snatches handfuls of bird seed from a bird feeder and shoves it in its unrelenting maw. Though I will not be doing the latter, I am in fact in possession of a sizable amount of bird seed.



I have decided that my next project will be modular cargo pants or "The Pointless Pants Project" (P.P.P. for short). By the end of the project, I will have constructed a pair of pants with velcro strips running horizontally and vertically enabling specially constructed pockets to attach in a variety of places. Essentially, the user will be able to choose between different types of pockets and place them anywhere they please.

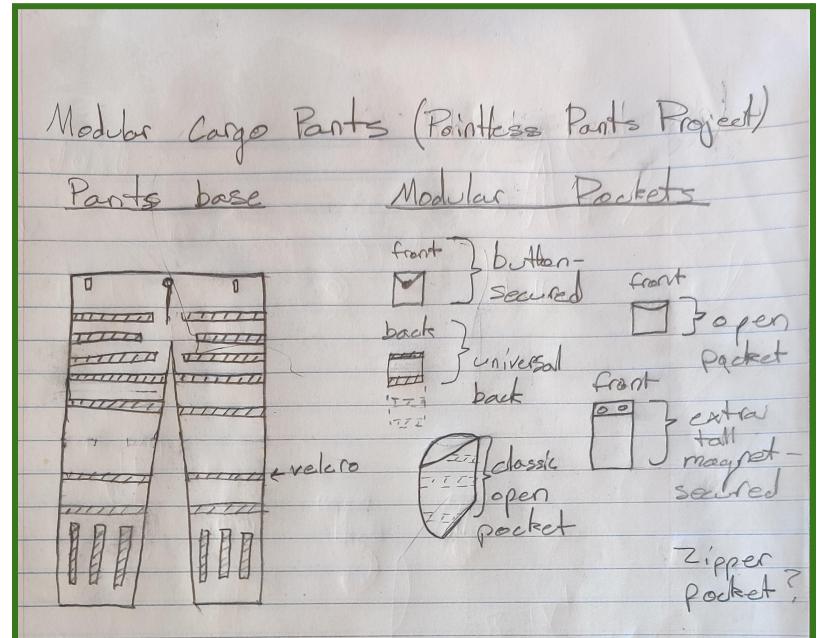
The user can construct different, unrecognizable styles everyday and never be called out for wearing the same pants two...or three...or four days in a row. The real utility, though, is when many people are all wearing modular cargo pants. Users can swap pockets (and their contents) with ease. Instead of emptying the contents of the pants, they can simply trade one pocket, perhaps containing radish seeds, for another pocket, maybe containing ginkgo nuts (the possibilities are endless!).

You may be thinking, "this is the opposite of pointless!" and "this is the best idea I've ever heard!" But before I can accept your praise (thank you!) I must reveal something about this project: only one pair of pants will ever be produced. Not only that, but I will also be patenting the idea so that modular cargo pants cannot legally be produced for 20 years. This is to ensure that the pants remain pointless perpetually perhaps provoking prodigious profit. In

all seriousness though, I want to ensure the pants remain pointless to always remind me that not everything must have a purpose, a sort of *memento iocosi* if you will.

I will also be partaking in a fashion show on November 13th in which I will strut down the runway wearing a pair of P.P.s and another confidential outfit...

Here is a rough sketch of the P.P.P.:
I will have to learn how to use a sewing machine, construct each pocket, attach velcro, etc. but I'm willing to do it all!



THE POINTLESS PANTS PROJECT (P.P.P.) UPDATE

Unfortunately, no progress (that I am at liberty to divulge) has been made this week. P.P.P. is still in the same stage as the last issue, however, the secret outfit is almost finished. I would like to share that the correct date for the fashion show is November 18th. Original music will also be made for this event.

THE POINTLESS PANTS PROJECT (P.P.P.) UPDAtE

This was a week of procurement, so to speak. I purchased heavy duty velcro, found scrap fabric, and located a sewing machine that I am free to use at certain times. While I am disappointed with my sluggish progress, the impetus of finally having the necessary materials is enough to get me to actually start working, and failing (a lot).

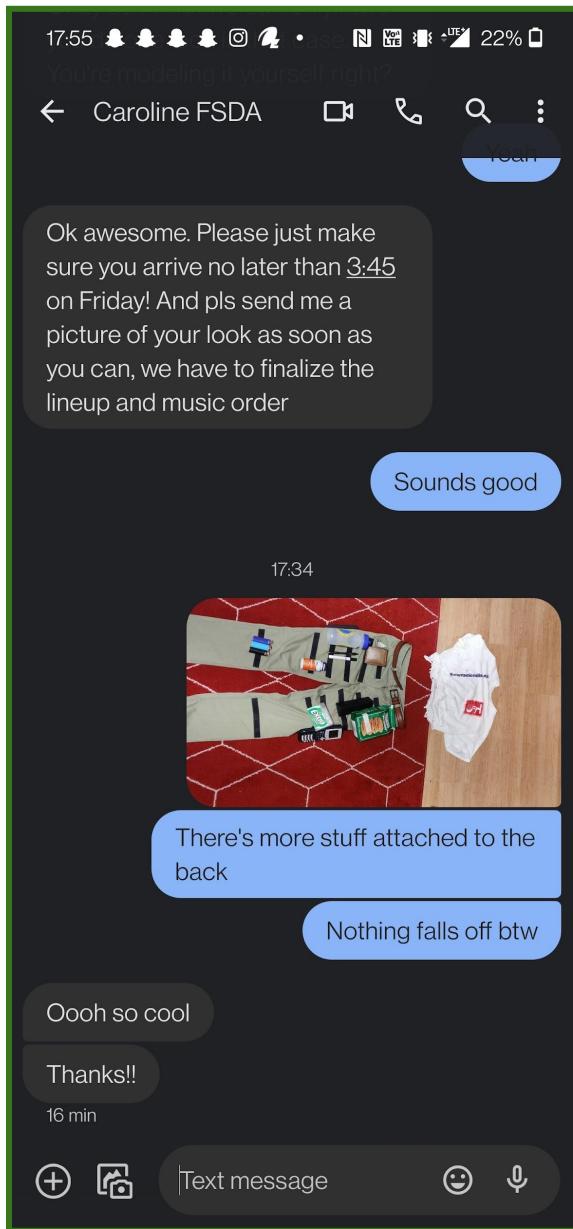
THE POINTLESS PANTS PROJECT (P.P.P.) UPDATE

The Pointless Pants are done! Well...kinda. My daily schedule consisting of incredibly important activities (i.e., tree climbing, attending classes, arguing with preachers, etc.) has caused the project to morph slightly into a form that perhaps exceeds the original idea in its level of pointlessness. Instead of sewing many pockets, which I may still do over Thanksgiving break when I borrow my sister's sewing machine, I decided to stick velcro to items one would plausibly store in said (nonexistent) pockets. Now the pant's user can stick almost anything to his or her lower extremities without any cloth intermediaries. Below you will find a few ideas out of the literally infinite possibilities.



I am still partaking in the fashion show this Friday, though I had to jettison the "secret" look due to the constraint of only being able to model one outfit. So I combined the top half of that secret look with the Pointless Pants to create something glorious yet foul, holy yet cursed, pointless yet...no it's still pointless.

As of yet I have not decided on a name for this combined look. If you have any ideas, please reach out to me (203 800 5800) before Friday.
-XOXO Henry



P.S. I will shave my belly hair before the show.

THE POINTLESS PANTS PROJECT (P.P.P.) UPDATE

Two Fridays ago I played my ridiculous role in the FSDA fashion show. The theme was “Wonderland: the Land of Dreams”. And while my costume was not ethereal or elegant, it sure was surreal. The bizarre nature of my look lended more than a hint of absurdity that seems to be woven into every one of my dreams.

Even more surreal than the Pointless Pants was the activity of strutting down the runway...which I did with uncharacteristic attitude and enthusiasm. As a picture is worth a thousand words, I will hold off describing the scene and instead release a series of curated photos that convey the mood of the evening. I had hoped that the photographers would be finished uploading and sorting the images by this week, but it seems that the deadline for that is December 2nd. Once these unique assortments of pixels are within my (virtual) possession, I will release a final addendum to this update immediately.

THE POINTLESS PANTS PROJECT (P.P.P.) FINAL UPDATE

With this final update I can put the Pointless Pants Project to rest in the annals of history within *The Sensationalist* vault. Here are the much-awaited pictures of me on the runway (I'm basically Zoolander). I also included some of my favorite outfits at the end.



Also worth mentioning: both the bandaids and gum came in handy during the show. I have included a secret bonus video [here](#).

The Sensationalist, Vol. II



Triple Decker King Sized Joint

Ben Wiener

November 20th, 10:00 PM:

As a young whippersnapper, I was quite the cannabis fanatic. Now, two years later, I still am...it seems not much has changed, but I digress. Two years ago on my quest to get higher than the local crackheads, I decided to take three normal sized joints and roll them all up into a triple barrel shotgun shell.

Now, as a mature adult, I made the responsible decision to one up myself and defeat the final boss...I will be attempting the same challenge but with three king sized joints to up the ante. My original triple roll had a total of 1.5 grams of weed, but let's be honest...that's pussy shit. I rolled up my joints with a total of 2.5 grams of weed along with some rolling tobacco 'cuz fuck it, why not? All the joints wrapped up together weigh in at 5.35 grams. Shit's fucked. I will write back after I'm done smoking.



November 20th, 10:50 PM:

I've never seen someone hotbox an outdoor patio, but I managed to do it. Massive fucking clouds of smoke were consumed, and it was definitely a different feeling.

Now to move on to how I feel...I'm going to be honest right now, I don't think I've ever been this fucked up. I physically cannot move anything but my fingers and it's taking me about a minute to type each word. I'm all sorts of fucked up and honestly, 10/10 experience, would do it again. But I definitely will need at least a day after I smoke to completely recuperate from this.

THE ENERGY DRINK EXPERIMENT

Much like the purpose of the Stanford Prison Experiment, my goal is to test the limits of an organism in a highly contrived, very unscientific way. Instead of holding 24 male college students captive in a basement and subjecting them to inhuman treatment, I will be watering basil seedlings with different energy drinks. I aim to forever avoid drinking the beverages that kill the basil plants.

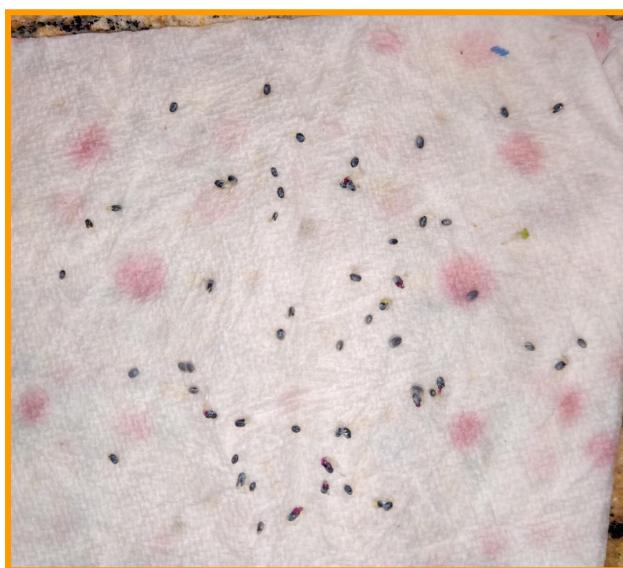
Though I am not a basil plant (as some avid readers may know) I still believe the results will lend important insights into acceptable and unacceptable beverages for one's health. I will be using Reign "Total Body Fuel" because it is the primary energy drink I default to when I want to get the shits. If any readers have other suggestions please text me at 203-800-5800 by next Wednesday (12/21/22).

THE ENERGY DRINK EXPERIMENT

One week has elapsed since the inception of the "Energy Drink Experiment", and I have come bearing updates. Firstly, the basil sprouts have been placed in rock wool and will remain there for the remainder of the remaining experiments, and in which their remains may possibly remain for the remainder of time.

Secondly, the three energy drinks have been chosen: Reign energy, Java Monster (per Hope's suggestion), and the classic and humble Red Bull. I will also include a control of water and may test out coffee or tea as well.

The basil seedling-torture will begin once >90% of the seedlings present two leaves. Finally, here are images of the set up with some additional information.



- 1) Large genetic sampling in the basil which was definitely intentional and not because they were the only seeds I have.
- 2) I have absolutely know idea where the pink is from on the paper towel I germinated on.
- 3) Takeout containers with loose fitting lids and rockwool.

THE ENERGY DRINK EXPERIMENT

Regarding the energy drink experiment: I took pity on the little seedlings and pardoned them from this horrible fate of being doused in caffeine-steeped acidic beverages. It pains me to say that I also neglected the little plants and found them one day shriveled and brown--presumably from the lack of water they received. However, even from the worst catastrophes there is always something to learn.

I learned that plants need water to live. This likely means that we, too, need water to survive. And while it is unknown whether the energy drinks would have allowed the plants to thrive, I think it is safe to say that plain water is a vital source of life for basil plants. Though we are not basil plants, I think we can all take away from this experiment that if you forget to drink water for long enough, you too will shrivel up and turn brown.

The Pickle Prince and the Tomato Tyrant

Henry Levitt



nce upon a time in the Kosher Dill Province of the Hamburger Kingdom lived a young Pickle Prince. Now approaching marrying age, the Pickle Prince desired to venture outside his province for the first time and explore the vast lands of the Hamburger Kingdom.

So, the prince went before his father, the legendary Pickle Lord, and made his request: "Father, my entire life I have lived within the confines of the Kosher Dill Province--I desire to see

the world. As I am fully pickled, and soon ready to marry, I am here to ask your permission to travel across the kingdom to look for a suitable wife." The Pickle Lord's mouth twisted into a frown as he listened to the Pickle Prince's request. For the lord had already arranged his son's marriage to the Gherkin Princess from the neighboring province.

"Son," the great pickle responded, "We have known since before you were picked off the vine that you are to marry the Gherkin Princess. You may not leave the province until after the union is blessed by the Cucumber Clergy."

The now despondent prince lowered his head and trudged out of the throne hall defeated. He climbed the steps to his chamber trying his hardest to stifle the sobs that were welling up inside his chest. Once in his room he collapsed on his bed and released the most pitiful wails you have ever heard. “I’m trapped here forever!” cried the Pickle Prince, “I will never find true love!”

Some time passed and there was a cautious knock on the door. Without waiting for a response, the door cracked open and revealed a bulbous, translucent shape...

“Mr Onion!” the prince exclaimed. “I’ve never been so happy to see you.” The allium shuffled into the room and hopped on the edge of the bed. The pickle explained his dilemma to his squire and closest friend.

After hearing about the dismal state of affairs, Mr. Onion, with his usual mischief, began scheming an escape plan for the two. They spent hours formulating a foolproof plot and constructing elaborate disguises. At midnight the two would meet at the stable just outside the castle and set off on their adventure. Mr. Onion left Pickle Prince’s chamber to ready his own disguise.

The long hours of the night stretched on and on for the Pickle Prince as he eagerly awaited the clock to strike half past the 11th hour. As the time for escape drew nearer, the prince began to grow anxious. He began to doubt whether he and Mr. Onion were capable of pulling off such a plan and fleeing the Province without being caught. Finally the hour arrived and he quickly donned the beggar’s rags and slipped out of the castle using the secret shute.

Heart pounding, the Pickle Prince hopped from shadow to shadow to evade the guards. Soon, the only obstacle standing in his way was the grand gates. The prince waited for what felt like an eternity. He almost gave up hope when he heard the grinding of metal on stone. The guards were opening the gates for the night merchant to deliver fresh vinegar for the Pickle Lord’s morning bath. At

once the young pickle slipped out and was almost free...

Mr. Onion, dressed as a barber complete with an exquisite (and unfortunately fake) mustache, had been waiting for the prince when the false beggar sauntered in. “Where were you?” exclaimed the Onion, “I was worried the guards found you out!”

“Nevermind that now Mr. Onion, we must mount our steeds and get out of this god-forsaken province.” With that, the two loaded their packs onto their horses and were off.

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It was not until noon the next day that the Pickle Lord found his son’s farewell note, and by then, the Pickle Prince and Mr. Onion were already nearing the extremities of the Kosher Dill Province. At once, the Lord sent his fastest riders to scour the entire area--but luckily, the duo had already been prepared.

“Your Pickleness, we are nearing the Asparagus Forest,” said Mr. Onion “We are almost safe from the Pickle Lord’s reach.” After riding a few more miles, the repair came unto a vast, dark forest. Enormous stalks of asparagus stretched into the sky and blotted out the sun from underneath the canopy. The sight made the Pickle Prince uneasy, but he knew it was the only place that his father’s riders would not dare search. The two tried to stifle their fears and forget about the legends of the infamous forest, for they knew that continuing forth was their only option.

The pair rode into the forest and continued until they became tired; it is impossible to tell the time of the day from within the forest. On they trudged for what must have been days. They kept moving until the rations grew scarce as their hope.

“We’ll never make it out of here, Mr. Onion,” lamented the prince.

Mr Onion replied equally distraught, “we cannot go much longer at this rate. I miss the sun, I miss home!”

Pickle Prince rallied his spirits and declared, “Enough of this self-pity nonsense! We left home

with a purpose and I will die before giving up!" With that, the two mounted their horses and continued onwards with a newfound vigor. Lo and behold, the Asparagus Forest was nearing its end. The bristles began to thin yet the forest did not brighten.

Finally Mr. Onion saw it. "The stars!" he said in a faraway, awestruck tone. The pickle and onion walked a few more steps until the night sky opened up over them. The Pickle Prince had never seen such beauty; an uncountable number of scintillating dots were strewn over the midnight canvas. Overwhelmed with joy, Mr. Onion hopped off his horse and frolicked through flower fields following footpaths falling beneath the formidable firmament. It only seemed fitting to the Pickle Prince that they make camp here and bask all night long in their freedom under the stars.

In the morning the two were awoken by children's joyous screeches and laughter. On the other side of the meadow were a half dozen cherry tomatoes rolling and somersaulting down a modest hillside. "We must be near civilization," thought the Pickle Prince. The two quickly packed their bags and moved towards the hillside to ask the young tomatoes where they lived. But by the time the Pickle Prince submitted the hill, he needed not ask such a question: on the other side of the hill was a wide, bricken road leading to an enormous wrought iron gate standing between equally massive slabs of unhewn, yet polished, marble. Marching in what looked like a parade to the inexperienced pickle, was an endless procession of tomato merchants hauling carts filled to the brim with every commodity one can envision. The Pickle Prince and Mr. Onion stared in awe at the sight before gallowing down the steep embankment and falling in line next to one plump tomato hauling a wagon filled with the softest robes. Mr. Onion could not resist a good deal and haggled with the unamused tomato all the way into the gates of the city.

The view from within the city was even more heavenly than its gates. Stretching on as far as the eye could see was a labyrinth of stalls, carts,

wagons, goods, ornaments, delicacies, hawkers, and buskers. Packed shoulder to shoulder were countless tomatoes of every color, shape, size, and persuasion.

The Pickle Prince and Mr. Onion looked on in astonishment--never in their lives had they seen so much prosperity in one place. Moving with the flow of the crowd they noticed the goods become ever more luxurious and the surrounding buildings become taller and more elegant. Then they saw it: rising out of an enormous plateau was a castle built of the purest marble and richest onyx. Now pushing through the crowd, the Pickle Prince, followed closely behind by Mr. Onion, made their way to the royal courtyard just before the palace.

"Do you notice something strange?" asked Mr. Onion. The pickle looked around then he saw it: "All the yellow tomatoes are shackled and performing grueling physical labor..." His face twisted into a look of shock and august, "They're enslaved!"

Such a concept was foreign and exceedingly vile to the pure-hearted Kosher Dill Province natives. They walked around the square observing the foul practice and adjacent customs. Though the maltreatment of Tomatokind made the Pickle Prince uneasy, he knew that the two had no choice but to stay in the city to recuperate and resupply. The pickle gave the onion a fistfull of precious spices to buy food and find lodging.

"Meet at Plum Tomato Pub at sundown," agreed the pair. With that, Mr. Onion went to run errands. The Pickle Prince remained in the square to learn more about this fascinating dominion. He walked around the courtyard and even talked to everyone from merchants to nobles. He learned that he was currently in Sauce City, the capital of the Tomato Territories. The Pickle Prince soon learned that the Tomato Territories were the most prosperous region west of the Asparagus Forest in the vast Hamburger Kingdom. Yet, as the afternoon dragged on, the prince was no closer to understanding the customs of the tomatoes.

The Pickle Prince sat on a bench in the grand square deep in thought. He did not notice the convoy of well-outfitted guards making their way down the palace steps. But then, an ethereal sight roused him from his ponderings. In the middle of the convoy, adorned in the finest corn silks and rare seeds, was an angelic plum tomato--the storied Plum Princess. The two locked eyes. Within that fleeting moment, eyes reflecting their souls, the two young royals shared their happiness, sadness, deepest desires, most magnificent dreams, and their limitless and unconditional love. Passion bubbled up in the Pickle Prince like the purest mountain spring. It was love at first sight. He knew he could not let this divine opportunity pass him by.

Weaving throughout the crowd, the prince drew closer and closer to the royal guards. Finally the only thing between him and the princess was one brawny tomato outfitted in shining silver armor.

"Princess!" shouted the pickle, "Princess! Princess!" The guards tightened around the fair plum tomato. However the princess, with her eternal and unyielding grace, whispered a few words into the head guard's ear. Instantaneously the guards melted away and the Plum Princess stepped forward. She slowly walked towards the pickle looking him directly in the eyes with the kindest expression on her face. She gently touched his forearm sending waves of warmth and affection through his abdomen.

As midnight quickly approached, the Pickle Prince and his cunning companion looked for a secluded table in Dillseed Den. They moved towards the back of a tavern and Mr. Onion noticed a cloaked figure slowly moving towards them. What was peculiar was that the figure did not take steps but instead seemed to float above the ground. The pair became anxious about their unknown company as the clock had not struck twelve yet. So they settle down at a barrel in the back, out of view of the cloaked figure. But as they went to take a seat, the entity was already waiting for them.

The princess brought her supple lips to his ear and said softly. "You are the one who will save me and my kingdom. I will explain at midnight in Dillseed Den." Drawing away, she mouthed silently, "Be there." Prior to Pickle Prince's processing of what passed, Plum Princess parted promptly, perhaps permanently presumed Pickle Prince, into the pack of persons.

The prince looked around anxiously, but she was already gone. A crowd began forming at the steps of the palace and a large, robed figure came forth. The Pickle Prince knew immediately who it was: the Tomato Tyrant. He was just as imposing and vile as the legends said. In front of the figure was a yellow tomato--a slave--shackled to wooden blocks on the ground. The tyrant stepped up to the yellow tomato and yelled unintelligible, brutish words. He beckoned to a guard who rushed over and handed the Tomato Tyrant a massive whip. Without wasting an instant, the tyrant lacerated the skin of the slave several times. The poor tomato cried out as his innards poured from his gashes. He wailed in pain until he took his last breath. The Tomato Tyrant stepped forward looking at his handiwork with a sadistic grin. At his feet was a deflated and disfigured mass of skin and seeds. The tyrant was just as horrible in real life as in the stories...

"Who are you?" exclaimed our hero prepared to take on a hostile foe. Fortunately, the shadow was not an enemy: she threw back the cloak and the allium and pickle stared in awe. "I had no idea..." said the Pickle, for it was the princess herself!

"I apologize for my secretive appearance, but my father doesn't let me past the palace gates without a royal escort. How do you like the tavern, by the way? I thought you would feel at home among the spices."

The Pickle Prince explained his travels in great detail to the princess before finally asking her what she meant about saving her people.

“When I was picked off the vine by my parents, they brought me to a magic-woman, the fabled garlic witch of the northern woods, to bless me. However, the witch, upon seeing me, sensed a great energy. She dismissed my parents and read my prophecy: She said that I would one day liberate my people with the help of a foreigner who was born from acid...and...and...” The Princess seemed anxious and did not finish her thought.

“And you think that’s me,” said the Pickle Prince in shock. The Plum Princess nodded bashfully knowing what such a task would entail. “What did the witch mean by saying ‘liberate your people’?” asked the prince.

The princess, tears beginning to form in her eyes, answered, “A long time ago, the elite yellow minority ruled the Tomato Territories and subjugated all other colors of tomatoes. They ensured that all tomatoes, with emphasis on the red majority, would forever live in squalor. However, one day the red tomatoes rebelled. A war party, led by my father, slaughtered thousands of yellow tomatoes indiscriminately and enslaved the rest. Ever since then, slavery of the yellow-kind had been integral to our economy and culture. It hurts so much to watch every day, and it is what I fear I will one day inherit,” the Princess, now weeping, was almost inconsolable. The royal pickle took the princess in his pungent embrace and held her until she calmed.

“Princess, I will do whatever it takes to rid your kingdom of this horrible plague that has befallen your people,” declared the Pickle Prince with great resolve. The tomato looked the pickle in the eyes with a stoic expression, understanding that the prince had made his decision.

“Tomorrow,” said the Plum Princess, “You are to tell my father in his royal court that you intend to take my stem in marriage. He will challenge you to retrieve a golden ring from the bottom of an enormous jar of sauce...but I must tell you, no one has ever succeeded...”

T

he Tomato Tyrant's maniacal laughter echoed in the Pickle Prince's ears. He had known asking for the Plum Princess' hand in marriage was foolish, as Mr. Onion had lamented all the way to the royal court, but he did not expect to be laughed out of the throne hall. Nevertheless, The Tyrant ordered his servants to retrieve the Great Jar and the tallest ladder they could find. Naive youth drowning in

The preserved cucumber rolled his eyes and began his ascent skyward. As the figures below became smaller and the insufferable mocks of the Tomato Tyrant and his circle of peach-kissers grew fainter, the Prince could finally concentrate on his mission. Finally, when he mounted the top of the prodigious jar, he was shocked by the horribly grotesque site that befell his eyes. Half submerged in the top layer of sauce, a full garden of produce princes lay decomposing. The acidity of the sauce had disintegrated limbs and stems and created a twisted mass of vegetable carcasses. "Goddamn that tomato's a charmer!" the Pickle exclaimed to himself.

Without a second thought, the duty-bound pickle confronted his reality and accepted any fate that would follow. He took a deep breath and plunged stem-first into the chunky cess-pit. The crowd below gasped with morose amazement.

Within the sauce, the pickle felt at home for the first time since leaving his beloved Kosher Dill province. It had been too long since he swam in his acid-acuzzi. While most other vegetables cannot stand the acidity of tomato sauce or being submerged in liquid for that long, the Pickle Prince wasn't bothered in the slightest; he had been born from acid. Furthermore, the silence was a nice relief from Mr. Onion's endless tirades on the arbitrarily constructed vegetable hierarchy.

As the minutes passed on the outside of the jar, the Plum Princess and Mr. Onion began to grow

acidic tomato innards was the Tyrant's favorite sporting event, after all.

The Pickle Prince prepared to climb the ladder and brought Mr. Onion in for what could be their last embrace. The Tomato Tyrant sauntered over and taunted the young pickle, "Hey garlic-brain! You really think you're going to live? Har-Har-Har. Remember, all you have to do is bring up the gold ring...oh, and say hi to my daughter's other suitors before you drown up there!"

worried. It shouldn't take this long to retrieve the ring, they whispered amongst each other. As more time passed, rumblings of the Pickle Prince's ultimate fate began to circulate around the crowd.

"I think he got lost in the sauce," whispered some plump nobility.

"Just like all the others...what a horrible fate!" responded a purple heirloom of noble lineage.

"The sauce took another life today,"

Ten minutes had passed and there was still no sign of the prince. The Tomato Tyrant was itching to claim another victory for himself and his enormous jar of sauce (consisting of what was once his political enemies). His plumpness shoved tomatoes away and waddled to the front of the jar. Raising his staff in the air he declared in ecstasy, "The Pickle Prince has been lost in the sauce!" With the exclamation the tyrant brought the staff down hard, causing a rumble to reverberate throughout the entire square.

The Pickle prince felt the thump and thought it wise that he start hurrying up with his challenge. He had been blindly scouring the bottom of the jar for five minutes looking for that god-forsaken ring in vain. While maneuvering to the last unchecked quadrant, he bumped into spherical shape, or corpse rather. At first frightened, the pickle prince examined this victim further. The body was vaguely yellow and presented a sense of derelict greatness. Then, as he moved closer, he saw it--the ring. On the right thumb of this nightshade was a golden

ring, scintillating even in the almost pitchblack depths of the jar. Quickly, the prince slipped the ring off the tomato's dead hand. As the Pickle Prince prepared to commence his upward journey he felt another piece of metal, this time much larger, on the tomato's head. It was a crown. A realization reverberated through the Pickle Prince immediately--this wasn't an ordinary old tomato...

Chaos was building in the court. The tyrant's loyalists rejoiced in song and dance while the Plum Princess and Mr. Onion wept unending saltwater springs. Speciously believing that the jar remained undefeated, spectators began to leave. But then, in a marvelous display of power, the Pickle Prince emerged from the sauce and sent a shower of chunky remains down on the crowd. The Tomato Tyrant was flabbergasted.

Wearing the crown of the previous sovereign and presenting the magnificent golden ring, the prince stood victorious on the top of the jar. Much to the Tyrant's dismay, the pickle had survived. And to add insult to injury, he had recovered the crown of the Tyrant's once-bitter enemy.

The spectators went wild. The hopeless Princess and dejected allium couldn't believe their eyes--their friend had beaten the Tyrant's challenge after all.

Pushing to the front of the crowd and trampling a few green tomatoes, the Tyrant attempted to void the Pickle Prince's success: "You may have found the ring, but you were still deemed lost in the sauce! No victory for you," he boomed. Rage swelled up in the prince and he began to yell down at the deceitful tyrant a myriad of colorful words and phrases. The crowd made a ruckus. Evidently they supported the Pickle Prince in his claim to victory.

To appease his subjects, the Tyrant declared that there must be another challenge to determine the Pickle's worthiness. One challenge of finding a silly ring was much too simple to deem the outsider noble enough to marry the Tyrant's daughter.

After a prolonged huddle with his advisors, the Tyrant presented the Pickle Prince with his next

challenge, "You will go to the plains of Rho and slaughter the great beast of the dragon fruit. You will prove your exploit by bringing back a scale. Only then will you be worthy of marrying my daughter."

Despite the Plum Princess' and Mr. Onion's objections, the Pickle Prince was determined to leave that night before sundown. Supplies were readied and the two foreigners were led to the city gates. The Pickle Prince embraced the Plum Princess and gave a most heartfelt farewell. While the Princess believed the Prince would return, the Pickle privately doubted his abilities to slay the prodigious dragon fruit.

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Now our story takes us to the unforgiving Parsley Peaks were the Pickle Prince and Mr. Onion were fighting for their lives.

"Mr. Onion, I don't think we'll make it this time," cried a very cold Pickle. Mr. Onion's morale had run out weeks ago while navigating the endless mountains that separated the Hamburger Kingdom from the Lost Lands. With one final prayer the two collapsed into the deep snow and succumbed to what they believed to be their fate.

However, the next morning the sun's strong rays melted most of the snow and revealed a very cold, albeit alive, pickle and onion. "Mr Onion," The Pickle Prince groaned, "We're alive,"

"I can see the plains now, hallelujah!" For the first time since crossing the mountain peaks into the Lost Lands, the two were able to see the plains of Rho. Without tempest clouds, they were even able to make out dozens of dragon fruits grazing in the endless flower field.

The journey down, now with complete visibility, took no longer than a few hours and afforded the pair time to warm up after a chilling few days. They finally came into the field and promptly rolled around in the alpine valley vegetation. It had been weeks since they saw the color green (other than the Pickle Prince's

complexion, that is). Mr. Onion set up camp while the Pickle Prince went off to study one of the dragon fruits. The plan was to slay the beast on the morrow and climb the mountain while the weather was still clear...

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He didn't know how, but the Pickle Prince suddenly found himself dazed and flat on the ground while Mr. Onion's terrified squeals sounded above him. He looked up and saw a monstrous and grotesque creature above him--it was a dragon fruit.

The fruit, about five pickles in length and two tall, had 13 enormous, magenta scales protecting its elliptical body. Inside its mouth were two huge canines anchored into the bottom jaw and a multitude of sharp teeth protruding from every angle. The beast was swinging a tail that ended in a dense cudgel.

The Pickle Prince remembered instantly his mission, and rose to his feet. He realized he had just been knocked to the ground by the scaly ball on the tail. As he circled the best, sword in hand, he looked for an opening, a chink in the armor. Within the blink of an eye the beast swung around and sent the Pickle flying straight up into the air with a perfectly placed strike right to his abdomen. Once again the Pickle Prince landed hard on the ground and almost forgot about his discovery from the previous evening: dragon fruit have a chink in their armor just behind the scale on the back of their head. Until that moment, the Prince had been unsure as to how he would maneuver his sword into that exact point, but with his last blow to the chest, he had an idea.

Getting up once more, the Pickle Prince now yelled taunts at the dragon fruit, much to Mr. Onion's dismay. Just as the Pickle expected, the fruit spun around with enormous force and lightning speed and sent his little green body somersaulting high into the air. This time, though, the Pickle Prince controlled his fall. Coming down with enormous force, the Prince brandished his weapon and stabilized his trajectory. To the observer it

looked as if the sword plunged, with a flailing pickle attached, straight into the back of the neck of the beast. The action was so perfect--an act of destiny.

The dragon fruit's eyes grew wide with shock. The beast then released a deafening roar before falling lifeless on its side. The Pickle Prince was dumbfounded by the success of his foolish plan. He stood with a blank expression next to the corpse of the beast while Mr. Onion gave the Pickle Prince a tight hug.

"You did it! Now you can marry the Plum Princess and save the Tomato Territories," shouted Mr. Onion with exuberance.

"I-I guess I did. I did! I did it! I slayed the beast!" exclaimed the Prince now fully realizing the consequences of his action. Quickly the pair sliced off the green tips of two scales from the dragon fruit as well as the mace on the end of its tail. Though heavy, the Pickle Prince desired a souvenir from his daring journey.

As luck would have it, the skies remained clear for the whole duration of the trek through the mountains. The two made it to the outskirts of the Tomato Territories in a fraction of the time of the journey to the plains of Rho.

As the heroes came through the gates, they were greeted by delighted tomatoes. They marched straight to the royal court of the Tomato Tyrant to present the scale tips.

"Your plumpness," called out the Pickle Prince. The Tomato Tyrant turned to see his adversary. "I have done what you asked and slayed the magnificent beast of the dragon fruit, sire. Here are not one, but two scale tips from the beast. As you can see, the dragon fruit is enormous." The Plum Princess ran through the palace to the royal court. Her eyes welled up with tears of happiness upon seeing her favorite Pickle for the first time in two months. The Tomato Tyrant, though, was not so happy.

He was frankly shocked by the Pickle's success, given the challenge was meant to be an exercise in futility that he hoped would end in

death. Quickly, he brainstormed a way out of his promise to the young Prince. The Tomato Tyrant began, “Oh little Pickle, but you have failed. I asked for you to bring a scale from the dragon fruit, which everyone knows is pink. But what have you brought me? A green horn?”

“Oh, please!” begged the Pickle Prince, “Allow me to demonstr-”

“You have done enough! If you truly desire to win my daughter’s hand in marriage, you will complete one last task. This time there is no way you can cheat...” Stated the Tomato Tyrant, clearly enraged.

Once again, the Pickle Prince was confronted with the reality of leaving the city and the Plum Princess behind once more to perform some impossible task. This time, the Tomato Tyrant concocted the most treacherous and time consuming challenge: the Pickle Prince was to build a covered path through the vinegar geyser field. Speciously, the tunnel would provide an important trading route to the Melon Colonies. However, the Tomato Tyrant chose this task knowing that six tomato construction teams had been all but evaporated by the geysers; there was no way the Pickle would survive. Yet the young Prince continued forth.

~

Almost a year had passed and the Pickle Prince was still toiling away in the geyser fields. He had almost finished his project. A white washed tunnel, made of salt cubes left over from evaporated hot springs, meandered through the three mile stretch of the wasteland. Mr. Onion has been boiled and pickled by the geysers at that point. He always wore shades, even at night, and referred to everyone as “dude” or “dudette”.

Finally, the Pickle Prince and Onion Dude, as he was thenceforth called, finished their challenge. They marveled at their work--an enormous tunnel that stretched over the geyser field as far as the eye could see.

When the two returned to the city, there was a different feeling in the air. The inhabitants seemed more unsure of themselves but lighter at the same time. One year and three months had passed since the Pickle Prince last met with the Tomato Tyrant and he was looking forward to this final showdown. As he approached the court, something seemed off. There was none of the usual business and neither the Tomato Tyrant nor the Plum Princess was anywhere to be found.

At long last, a group of robed figures came from out a dark hall and approached the Pickle Prince--it was the grand counsel. “Pickle Prince, we must have a word with you,” they all said in unison. “We regret to inform you that the Tomato Tyrant choked to death on a stem last week. His funeral is being held today. Please attend.”

The Pickle Prince was taken aback, “My greenness! That is horrible! May I ask who will succeed him?”

“Well,” began the counsel, “As it seems you have completed the final challenge, and the Tomato Tyrant cannot give you more, the throne will naturally pass to you and your prospective wife, the Plum Princess.”

The Pickle Prince’s eyes lit up. It was finally the end of his impossible tasks!

~

“Dudette, do you take this dude as your husband in plumpness and withering, in love, in all that great stuff, until the end and stuff?” asked the ordained Onion Dude.

“I do,” responded the Plum Princess. “What happened to him?” she whispered to the Pickle Prince, receiving a smirk and a shrug.

“You may kiss the dudette!”

~

The now Plum Queen and Pickle King decreed all the yellow-kind free and led the Tomato Territories in harmony, health, and love forever after.

Dedication: To Creation Without Direction

I want to preface this by saying I wish all the contributors and readers of this Collection were at one large table feasting and letting the merriment flow freely late into the night. As this is not a possibility, I ask that you please imagine the following text is a speech given at this fictitious and wonderful event. I have just tapped my salad fork to my wine glass three times:

~

"Achhhem. My fellow indulgers in artistic pursuits: thank you for being here tonight for the release of the second volume of The Sensationalist. I am so grateful for the interest each and every one of you has shown in this creation without direction. Thank you for celebrating this event with me.

The Sensationalist still exists within this inexplicable void that is us artists without a community. Of people longing to enjoy pure creation with no ulterior motives or expectations. Creativity without direction allows us to bring into the world a certain rawness that may be rough around the edges and unrefined, and cannot exist anywhere else than within our eccentric group on the pages of a massive Google Document. Our rawness, our realness, is a testament to the necessity of creation for its own sake.

I want to thank all the contributors who have had faith enough in themselves to join me in this project. You have created something larger than yourself. Thank you Ellis Zusel, Ben Weiner, Aura Avrunin, Phoebe Levitt, Hope Nathanson, Teo Salazar, Thaddeus Smith, L.K. McDonald, James Hooker, Evan Bellusci, Leo Santisi, Gary Masa, Avery Cauchon, and Rake.

Please continue creating in the future, the world needs you now more than ever. Challenge yourself to never have a direction and just see where you go. Remember to occasionally look back at the footprints you leave behind and share in the sensations that moved you so to create your art.

Thank you everyone for sharing this incredible experience with me tonight."

Postscript: A Letter to a Cynical Old Man

27 January 2023

Dear Henry,

If you so happen to become a cynical old man, indulge once more in the musings of your youth.

I know I am a mere 19 years old and I have seen little of the world and even less of her people. I'm well aware that I am naive and innocent. I have so much more to learn and experience. I have not faced loss, true love, real responsibility, or periods of extreme stress. I have not been taken advantage of, misled, or lied to. I have not felt indescribable shame, regret, or remorse. I have not experienced unrelenting heartbreak or the weight of wasted decades. I stand optimistic and unbroken...

So much has happened in your life. Beautiful things, ugly things, joy beyond words and unimaginable suffering. At times, everything has been against you and yet you still prevailed, despite wanting to end it all suddenly and forever. You still carry those scars on your psyche. Now you cling to cynicism like a life-preserver in the endless ocean of disillusionment.

And yet, you were once me. You were once optimistic and unbroken...

Whatever the world did to you, whatever you did to yourself, whatever you did to others, it is forgiven. That stubborn ego that has been protecting you from pain all these years can be shed like dandelion fuzz in the wind. Cynicism is not knowledge or wisdom. You punish no one but yourself, and you do not deserve punishment. Let that life preserver go and bask in the endless ocean of human experience. Simply be.

Be Impressionable. Be Curious. Be Happy. Be Naive. There is still so much beauty out there.

And in the case that you gave up cynicism long ago and have found inner peace:
Thank you.

Love always,
Henry

**This has been The Sensationalist,
Volume II:
The Second Collection (9-16)**