**1)**

**This is Your Brain. This is Your Brain on Covid.**

In about 30 seconds, you’re going to call me an “alarmist,” or say that I’m “exaggerating.” In about 60 seconds, your stomach is going to lurch, and you’re going to feel slightly ill. Don’t worry about it— I got you.

In the coming weeks and months, a new variant of Covid is going to emer — oh, why bother.

**There are three kinds of people in the world right now.**Those who know it, and accept the basic facts of viral evolution, [that it could very well be worse](https://eand.co/if-you-thought-covid-was-over-congratulations-youre-an-idiot-3ee89501df92?source=your_stories_page----------------------------------------) — that’s a small minority of us, fools who believe in a little thing called “science.” There are those who don’t know it — they’re the hopeless kinds of idiots, given the fact that we’re now years into a pandemic. Then there are those who know it, but deny it — they’re the aggressive kind of idiot, who’ll tell you, flat-out, angrily…

Not to wear a mask.

Not to social distance — they’ll get right up in your face and shout it at you.

Not to worry, not to care…

Because don’t you know —[Covid is like the flu](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiWxObz0On2AhXIQkEAHXZ6BNUQFnoECAcQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Feand.co%2Fis-omicron-just-covid-evolving-to-become-the-common-cold-15e4ed5e6d8e&usg=AOvVaw3KBk7p-NKnqJxQ6skhzDRB).

This kind of idiot…well, what is there to even say. Have you run into such a person? There you are, minding your own business, wearing a mask, keeping your distance — and before you know it, some enraged buffoon is launching flecks of spittle at you, shouting at you to take it off. What is this, Naked and Afraid?

[Covid is not the flu.](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiWxObz0On2AhXIQkEAHXZ6BNUQFnoECAcQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Feand.co%2Fis-omicron-just-covid-evolving-to-become-the-common-cold-15e4ed5e6d8e&usg=AOvVaw3KBk7p-NKnqJxQ6skhzDRB) You are quite right to wear a mask and keep your distance. 30 seconds up. Go ahead, call me an alarmist. Get it out of your system.

Done? Good. My turn. Now I’m going to make your stomach lurch.

**Covid isn’t like the flu in one very obvious way — it’s a Coronavirus.**Coronaviruses are [masters of mutation](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwi02cmS0en2AhXUmFwKHQWbC38QFnoECAUQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nytimes.com%2F2021%2F02%2F05%2Fhealth%2Fcovid-variants-genome-recombination.html&usg=AOvVaw1OvlNOAuR7LMi4ibsjyIva), and some of them, like SARS and MERS, are fantastically deadly. [Recombine Omicron with those](https://eand.co/is-the-pandemic-really-over-130402f7b378?source=your_stories_page----------------------------------------) — and bang, it’s lights out. Forget it — the idiots don’t care and never will. Sorry — one last try, for old time’s sake.

We’re just beginning to understand something even beyond that, though. The effects of Covid over the long term, which aren’t “Long Covid.” “Long Covid” is a set of symptoms which afflict people in whom Covid seems to turn chronic. The long term effects of Covid mean something very, very different: what happens to seemingly normal people who “get it”, “recover”, and then.

Then what, exactly? Well, like I said, that’s what we’re just beginning to understand.

**And the effects are alarming**. Uh oh. I said it! Someone, find a stake, and burn me. Or maybe, I don’t know, prepare yourself, because, like I said, your gut is about go numb.

“[Thanks to a new study from the UK](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiylqyN2-n2AhVPh1wKHXK9CTAQFnoECAQQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.forbes.com%2Fsites%2Fwilliamhaseltine%2F2022%2F03%2F21%2Fa-case-of-shrunken-brains-how-covid-19-may-damage-brain-cells%2F&usg=AOvVaw2poXM8PYFat_6dtD63pujq) we are now beginning to uncover the effects of SARS-CoV-2 infections in the brain. Comparing brain volume before and after individuals were exposed to SARS-CoV-2, this study documents significant cortical gray matter loss, equivalent to nearly 10 years of aging.“

Did you get that? Let me try that again, for the idiots.

“**Significant cortical gray matter loss, equivalent to nearly 10 years of aging.**“

The bolding’s mine. Alarming is probably an understatement. You probably want to know the methodology of that study. Sure, here you go: “[Douaud et al had unique access to an extensive biomedical database](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34189535/" \t "_blank), called the UK BioBank. The UK BioBank provided pre-pandemic brain scans from 785 individuals that were used as a baseline for normal size and structure relative to each participant. About three years later, in May 2021, the same population of participants returned for new brain scans. From the total cohort, 401 individuals were infected with Covid-19 between scans and the remaining served recruited as controls.”

See that? That’s good experimental design. Pioneering, in fact. They studied brain scans three years apart — pre and post pandemic. And the results are both grim and shocking. Cortical loss equivalent to ten years of aging.

It’s not so bad, maybe, some scientists originally hypothesised. It was probably just the portions of the brain responsible for your sense of smell. And who needs that, amirite? Hey, did someone forget to take the trash out again? Meanwhile, there’s a family of badgers the size of mountain goats living in the garage.

But it didn’t turn out to be that funny at all. “Surprisingly, Douaud et al. also found additional abnormalities in regions not normally associated with the sense of smell. In particular, they observed r**educed gray matter volume in some regions of the limbic system, involving several structures important for producing behavioral and emotional responses**. T**he largest differences, ranging from 0.2% to 2% reductions, were seen in the left parahippocampal gyrus and the entorhinal cortex. These regions play an important role in the hippocampal memory system, so gray matter loss could signify future memory impairments**.”

So here we are. Let me try to sum it all up as concisely as I can.

**The backwards idiots who surround the tiny minority of the rest of us who are left sane, screaming at us to take off our masks, believe the fairy tale peddled by irresponsible leaders, including the very public health agencies designed to protect us, that all this has become “the flu”…and that fairy tale dooms all of us to get a disease…which can take a baseball bat to your brain and age it by ten years…and that’s just getting it once…to get that disease…over and over again…forever.**

Maybe we don’t even need Covid to do us brain damage. Because right about now, we’re acting, as societies, like we never had ones to begin with.

Umair  
March 2022

2)

# Evolving the Facebook News Feed to Serve You Better

Starting late last year, we set out to explore how we could make News Feed more readable, conversational, and easier to navigate. As you might imagine, designing for a community that connects two billion people can pose some unique challenges.

As managers of two teams of designers that bring News Feed to life each day, we are sensitive to the fact that any changes we make can resonate across the entire Facebook experience. In speaking with people who use Facebook around the world, we’ve heard that they felt News Feed had become cluttered and hard to navigate. Solving this problem meant evolving the News Feed design system, a significant challenge for a highly-optimized product. Small changes, like a few extra pixels of padding or the tint of a button, can have large and unexpected repercussions.

## Improving readability on News Feed

Our design and research teams are in continuing dialog with real users, every day. Consistently, our audience lets us know what they care about most:

1. The **content** itself, such as a shared photo
2. The person **who**is sharing the content
3. How they can leave **feedback** (like a comment or reaction) to what they were seeing

With feedback from real users in mind, we took a look at the anatomy of our most common story types. The idea was to break things down into their atomic parts, and make certain the design choices we’d made in the past served the needs of our audience right now.

We asked ourselves if we were meeting three key objectives:

*How might we improve News Feed to be easier to read and distinguish key areas of content?*

*How might we make the content itself more engaging and immersive?*

*How might we make it easier to leave feedback?*

These questions drove our exploration and experimentation in a design sprint, a week of coordinated brainstorming and prototyping of new ideas, across two teams of designers, researchers and content strategists. The sprint artifacts helped shape what became a north star for the future of News Feed.

3)

# Why Everyone Should Watch Less News

# How To Read More Books — A Lot More

When you read a lot of books people inevitably assume you speed read. In fact, that’s probably the most common email I get. They want to know my trick for reading so fast. They see all the [books I recommend every month](https://ryanholiday.net/reading-newsletter/) in my reading newsletter and assume I must have some secret. So they ask me to teach them how to speed read.

That’s when I tell them I don’t have a secret. Even though I read hundreds of books every single year, I actually read quite slow. In fact, I read deliberately slow, [so that I can take notes (and then whenever I finish a book, I go back through and transcribe these notes](http://thoughtcatalog.com/2013/read-to-lead-how-to-digest-books-above-your-level/) for my version of a [commonplace book](http://thoughtcatalog.com/2013/how-and-why-to-keep-a-commonplace-book/).

So where do I get the time? (Well for starters I don’t waste any of it asking dumb questions).

Look, where do you get the time to eat three meals a day? How do you have time to do all that sleeping? How do you manage to spend all those hours with your kids or wife or a girlfriend or boyfriend?

You don’t get that time anywhere, do you? You just make it because it’s really important. It’s a non-negotiable part of your life.

I think there are three main barriers that hold people back from making this happen and I want to disassemble them right now so you can start reading way, way more.

# Time

The key to reading lots of book begins with stop thinking of it as some activity that you do. Reading must become as natural as eating and breathing to you. It’s not something you do because you feel like it, but because it’s a reflex, a default.

Carry a book with you at all times. Every time you get a second, crack it open. Don’t install games on your phone–that’s time you could be reading. When you’re eating, read. When you’re on the train, in the waiting room, at the office–read. It’s work, really important work. Don’t let anyone ever let you feel like it’s not.

Do you know how much time you waste during the day? Conference calls, meetings, TV shows that you don’t really like but watch anyway. Well, if you can make time for that you can make time for reading. (Or better, just swap those activities for books)

# Money

If I had to steal books to support my reading habit, I would. Thankfully you can buy some of the best literature ever published for pennies on Amazon.

But forget money entirely when it comes to books. Reading is not a luxury. It’s not something you splurge on. It’s a necessity.

As Erasmus, the 16th century scholar once put it, “When I get a little money I buy books; and if any is left I buy food and clothes.”

On top of that, books are an investment. I hear from people all the time who tell me they plan to buy this book or that book. Plan? Just buy it. I promised myself a long time ago that if I saw a book that interested me I’d never let time or money or anything else prevent me from having it. Not money, not time, not my own laziness. Don’t wait around for some book you want to read to come out in paperback–trying to save $2 or $3 is the wrong mindset. If it’s a book you’ll read, then read it now, not in a year.

(One related note: I do a lot of work in libraries but they are not where I get my books. To me reading is not like watching a mindless movie you forget when you finished. You should be keeping the books [you read for reference and for re-reading](http://thoughtcatalog.com/2013/read-to-lead-how-to-digest-books-above-your-level/). If you are OK giving the books back after two weeks you might want to examine what you are reading).

4)

# The Facts are True, the News is Fake

# How to Disagree with Yourself

In the summer of 2009, I partook of a an hour long discussion with David Cameron, who was in the running for, and later became, the U.K. Prime Minister. The discussion was about how to make society robust, even immune to Black Swans, what structure was needed for both decentralization and accountability, and how the system should be built, that sort of thing. It was an interesting fifty-nine minutes around the topics of the Incerto and I felt great communicating all the points in bulk for the first time. The room in the elegant Royal Society for the Arts was full of journalists. I subsequently went to a Chinese restaurant in (London’s) Soho to celebrate with a few people when I received a phone call by a horrified friend. All London newspapers were calling me a “climate denier”, portraying me as someone part of a large anti-environment conspiracy.

The entire fifty-nine minutes were summarized by the press and reported from a tangential comment that lasted twenty seconds taken in reverse. Someone who didn’t attend the conference would have been under the impression that that was the whole conversation.

It turned out that I presented my version of the [precautionary principle](http://www.fooledbyrandomness.com/PrecautionaryPrinciple.html) during the conversation, worth restating here. It asserted that one does not need complex models as a justification to avoid a certain action. If we don’t understand something and it has a systemic effect, just avoid it. Models are error prone, something I knew well with finance; most risks only appear in analyses after harm is done. The burden is on those who pollute –or introduce new substances in larger than usual quantities –to show their lack of risk. In fact the more uncertainty about the models, the more conservative one should be. Ironically the same newspapers had lauded The Black Swan in which this very point was fleshed out very clearly.

I managed to defend myself by making a lot of noise, and with explicit legal threats, forced every newspaper to publish my correction. Even then someone at The Guardian tried (unsuccessfully) to tone down my letter by showing that it was some type of disagreement with what I said, not a correction of their misrepresentation. In other words I was disagreeing with myself.

But if I eventually cleared my ideas, thanks to my bully pulpit, other can’t do the same. The London newspapers were actively misrepresenting something to their own public. Someone who read the paper was mistaking the journalist for an intermediary between himself or herself and the product, the piece of news.

[Note Jim Pickard from the FT]

5)

# 99 Good News Stories You Probably Didn’t Hear About in 2018

For the last 12 months, the global media has been focused on a lot of bad news. But there were other things happening out there too: conservation successes, huge wins for global health, more peace and tolerance, less war and violence, rising living standards, some big clean energy milestones, and a quiet turning of the tide in the fight against plastic. Stories of human progress, that didn’t make it into the evening broadcasts, or onto your social media feeds.

1. The Kofan people of Sinangoe, in the Ecuadorian Amazon, won a landmark legal battle to protect the headwaters of the Aguarico River, nullifying 52 mining concessions and freeing up more than 32,000 hectares of primary rainforest. [Amazon Frontlines](https://www.amazonfrontlines.org/chronicles/sinangoe-victory/)

2. Following China’s ban on ivory last year, 90% of Chinese support it, ivory demand has dropped by almost half, and poaching rates [are falling](https://www.news.com.au/technology/environment/conservation/china-has-banned-ivory-but-has-the-african-elephant-poaching-crisis-actually-been-stemmed/news-story/b086f6a0e61acfcc15abeed18f899136) in places like Kenya. [WWF](https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/what-impact-chinas-ivory-ban)

3. The population of wild tigers in Nepal was found to have nearly doubled in the last nine years, thanks to efforts by conservationists and increased funding for protected areas. [Independent](https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/tigers-nepal-double-wwf-conservation-big-cats-wildlife-trade-a8551271.html)

4. Deforestation in Indonesia fell by 60%, as a result of a ban on clearing peatlands, new educational campaigns and better law enforcement. [Ecowatch](https://www.ecowatch.com/indonesia-deforestation-2595918463.html" \t "_blank)

5. The United Nations said that the ozone hole would be fully healed over the Arctic and the northern hemisphere by the 2030s, and in the rest of the world by 2060. [Gizmodo](https://earther.gizmodo.com/the-ozone-hole-could-heal-in-our-lifetimes-un-reports-1830260403?IR=T)

6. $10 billion (the largest amount ever for ocean conservation) was committed in Bali this year for the protection of 14 million square kilometres of the world’s oceans. [MongaBay](https://news.mongabay.com/2018/10/10bn-pledged-in-new-commitments-to-protect-the-worlds-oceans/" \t "_blank)

7. In California, the world’s smallest fox was removed from the Endangered Species List, the fastest recovery of any mammal under the Endangered Species Act. [Conservaca](https://www.conserveca.org/campaign/endangered-island-foxes-break-record-for-fast-recovery" \t "_blank)

8. In 2018, after more than ten years of debate, 140 nations agreed to begin negotiations on a historic “Paris Agreement for the Ocean,” the first-ever international treaty to stop overfishing and protect life in the high seas. [National Geographic](https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/12/un-high-seas-conservation-treaty-ocean-protection-spd/)

9. Niger revealed that thousands of local farmers have planted more than 200 million trees in the last three decades, the largest positive transformation of the environment in African history. [Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/16/regreening-niger-how-magical-gaos-transformed-land)

10. Spain said it would create a new marine wildlife reserve for the migrations of whales and dolphins in the Mediterranean and will prohibit all future fossil fuels exploration in the area. [Associated Press](https://apnews.com/2b464606b9ac42e8b88718a89908a780?utm_source=The+Crunch&utm_campaign=52c3667cdd-THE_CRUNCH_55_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_aa18ea5b4e-52c3667cdd-)

6)

# I trained fake news detection AI with >95% accuracy, and almost went crazy

tl;dr — We made a fake news detector with above a 95% accuracy (on a validation set) that uses machine learning and Natural Language Processing that you can download [here](https://goo.gl/2cvBmp). In the real world, the accuracy might be lower, especially as time goes on and the way articles are written changes.

With so many advances in Natural Language Processing and machine learning, I thought maybe, just maybe, I could make a model that could flag news content as fake, and perhaps take a bite out of the devastating [consequences of the proliferation of fake news](http://theconversation.com/the-real-consequences-of-fake-news-81179).

Arguably the hardest part of making your own machine learning model is gathering the training data. It took me days and days to gather pictures of every [NBA player in the 2017/2018 season to train a facial recognition model](https://towardsdatascience.com/5-things-i-learned-training-an-ai-model-on-every-nba-player-32d906b28688). Little did I know that I’d be diving into a painful, months-long process that exposed some truly dark and disturbing things still being propagated as news and real information.

# Defining fake news

My first obstacle was unexpected. After doing some research into fake news, I very quickly discovered that there are many different categories misinformation can fall into. There are articles that are blatantly false, articles that provide a truthful event but then make some false interpretations, articles that are pseudoscientific, articles that are really just opinion pieces disguised as news, articles that are satirical, and articles that are comprised of mostly tweets and quotes from other people. I Googled around and found some people trying to categorize websites into groups like ‘satire’, ‘fake’, ‘misleading’, etc.

I thought that was as good as place to start as any, so I went ahead and began visiting these domains to try and hunt for some examples. Almost immediately I found a problem. Some websites that were marked as ‘fake’ or ‘misleading’ sometimes had truthful articles. So I knew that there would be no way to scrape them without doing a sanity check.

Then I started asking myself if my model should take satire and opinion pieces into account, and if so, should they be considered fake, real, or put into their own category?

# Sentiment Analysis

After about a week of staring at fake news sites, I started to wonder if I was already over-complicating the problem. Maybe I just needed to use some existing machine learning models on sentiment analysis, and see if there was a pattern? I decided to build a quick little tool that used a web scraper to scrape article titles, descriptions, authors, and content and post the results to a sentiment analysis model. I used [Textbox](https://goo.gl/2cvBmp), which was convenient because it ran locally to my machine and returned results quickly.

[Textbox](https://goo.gl/2cvBmp) returns a sentiment score which you can interpret as either positive or negative. I then built a crappy little algorithm to add weights to the sentiments of the different types of text I was extracting (title, content, author etc.) and added it all together to see if I could come up with a global score.

It worked pretty well at first, but after about the 7th or 8th article I tried, it started to fall down. To make a long story short, it was nowhere close to the fake news detecting system I wanted to build.

7)

# Breaking news

Many investors in BTC dread the month of September.

*Why?*

Because even during the bullish years of 2017 and 2020, there were market corrections of — 8.25% and — 7.53% respectively, in September.

So, September will be a prohibited month for many bullish investors. However, experienced investors know that historical performance is not a precursor for future predictions. This year is set to witness an explosive revolution of DeFi, all thanks to KeplerSwap.

This project is about to take over the DeFi sector with its ground-breaking concepts. Whether Bitcoin likes September or not, KeplerSwap will show users through tremendous energy how the new DeFi 2.0 ecosystem can shatter all expectations.

We have all deduced from the KeplerSwap weekly report of last week that the team has continued to hold multiple AMA Events and will carry out additional AMAs over the next 2–3 weeks.

The first token to go live at KeplerSwap will be SDS (Seeds token), which will create numerous cryptographic market opportunities for the ecological environment.

In the early days of UniSwap, UNI was a huge success as an initial token, contributing significantly to the development of DEX in DeFi 1.0.

Now that UNI has accomplished its mission, all this will not be simply repeated in the next DeFi 2.0 ecology as more significant changes are taking place for a vibrant and promising ecology… Keplerswap is undoubtedly the most exciting project in DeFi!

***Does anyone remember UNI’s performance over the past year?***

From the initial $0.48 to today’s $22, or even up to $40; this huge increase is unimaginable. If you continue to have confidence in UNI, I believe that the DeFi 1.0 sector will continue to rise, driven by DeFi2.0.

Let’s assume that after a month of KeplerSwap going live; how much will SDS cost down the line; three months from now, six months from now, a year from now?

This is certainly something to look forward to!

Why are the stars of KeplerSwap SDS so bright?

KeplerSwap is a professional decentralized trading platform on the Binance Smart Chain; it is the first decentralized exchange under DeFi 2.0 structure. This stems from its extremely well-developed application ecology. Besides having full access to DeFi 1.0 services, according to the KeplerSwap Whitepaper, an owner of SDS can participate in features, which include:

- Governance tokens;

- Liquidity market-making;

- LUCKYPOOL rewards;

- Intelligent aggregation;

- Creating SPACE and voting;

- Obtain airdrops;

- And other redeeming benefits (refer to the Whitepaper)