Confessions of a Transhumanist: On Life in Known Space

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Content Warning: Neuropsychological Infohazard, Evocation Infohazard, Suicide, and Self Harm
Part of the Series: Confessions of a Transhumanist

When I was young, I didn't want to save the world, I just wanted to escape from it. My life wasn't the hardest, but it was such that by the time I was sixteen I was struggling with suicidal ideation fairly regularly. Between my parents and school, I didn't often feel like I had a place in the world. I felt like I had places that were *expected* of me, roles I was *forced* into, but beyond that, I didn't really have anything that motivated me in and of itself. I had no drive, except to get away from the pain and uncomfortableness that was most of my life, most of the time.

Thus, I got really good at dissociating into video games. I started playing EVE Online when I was 16, and it's probably the thing that saved my life. The friends I made in EVE talked me out of suicide when I was probably the closest to it I've ever really been. Those first EVE friends in a real sense taught me how to *want* things on my own, how to *actually be a person* at a time when most of the adults in my life wanted me to be a posable figurine. They did this in a sort of assholish way, and I haven't spoken to most of that group in over five years, but I still think of them somewhat fondly despite them being kinda awful people.

This was also around the time that I first learned about the idea of transhumanism. The first place that I ever encountered the word 'transhumanism' was in a webcomic called Dresden Codak. I didn't really have a firm grasp on what being a transhumanist *was* but I quickly decided it was what I wanted to be. I talked about wanting to have a robotic body, wanting to live forever and wanting to explore space. With the help of my assholish eve friends I came out as trans and talked about how being transgender was an inherently transhuman experience.

Fairly soon afterward, my desire to act out my transhuman fantasies and explore my gender while not out to my parents led me to start exploring the roleplay scene in EVE for the first time. I was *not a good roleplayer* at first, and were it not for the link rot I would love to find you some examples of just how bad I was. If you find the right veteran roleplayers I'm sure you could get them to tell you if you knew how to ask.

This desire to explore the roleplay scene created the first real conflict which I was able to stand up for myself in. The group I was flying with at the time were kind of awful people, and climbing out from under them and starting my own group was the first of a long series of steps I took in becoming an independent person, either in the real world or in EVE. I learned to stand up to my old corpmates and used that to stand up to my parents.

I then went through a number of intermediary phases and identities in the process of figuring myself out. I spent a while exploring my spirituality and made an eve character to reflect this, leaving behind another group I had made and then ruined along the way. It was during this phase that I met my best friend, Streya Jormagdnir. That was over eight years ago now.

The EVE Roleplay community was my first real home on the internet. The friends I made in the EVE roleplay scene are people I'm still friends with to this day, a decade later. I think about them surprisingly often. Graelyn, Havohej, Ava Starfire, Morwen Lagann, Verone, Vincent Pryce, Stitcher, Katrina Oniseki, Kalaratiri, Mizhara Del'Thul, Aria Jenneth, Valerie Valete and s*o many others*. More names than I can remember but never want to forget. More memories than I have space for in my mind. Even the people I always sort of hated ingame like Valerie Valete, who I had pretty much nothing but animosity towards, are all incredibly important to me and I care about all of them more dearly than I can put into words. My life has been touched by so many people in so many ways and I can never do enough to thank them all for being there for me for all those years as a community.

The EVE roleplay community is also the place that I first discovered Less Wrong. My desire to win arguments with internet spaceship theists led me to quote this post and this guy bunch at people, and that led to Stitcher linking me to Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality.

And it was from this that I became attached to the idea that transhumanism was *good* and that it *should win.* Not just that it was the *correct* thing to think to win arguments, or that it was a cool identity goal to have, but that it was *right, period,* that it was something worth striving towards in the real world. That the world *could* be saved at all, that something better than *this* was actually possible outside of science fiction.

I still had no way to actually act on those desires, and I was still very much trapped in my own head, in my own pain, which led to the creation of Saede Riordan of the Alexylva Paradox. Saede tried to achieve in EVE what I couldn't in real life. She set out to found an independent colony of radical transhumanists, a nation where AIs had equal rights to humans, where everyone had mind backups, where everyone was taken care of, and where no one had to die unless they wanted to.

It was around this time that I had to drop out of community college. I had hoped to get a degree in environmental science and help fight climate change, but because of my life circumstances, I stopped being able to pay for my classes. I was living on my own and working part-time while trying to attend college at multiple satellite campuses and commute two hours by bus to take labs and it all sort of conspired against me and I ended up with a bunch of debt and no degree. So, I gave up on school and traveled across the country from Dunkirk, New York to Seattle, Washington with my best friend.

I spent a while nearly homeless, fell in with a group of canvassers, and became involved in political activism. In EVE our system was besieged multiple times and we were eventually burnt down completely by a fleet of russians in rattlesnakes. Somewhere during all of that, I started writing Sideways in Hyperspace. From there I found my way via the /r/rational subreddit's discord server into the online rationalist community. That brought along its own huge box of trauma which I'll be avoiding getting into in this post, but which among other things forced me to really consider for the first time if there was anything I could *actually* do to bring Origin into the real world. And well, that takes us up to the start of this blog.

It took this long and roundabout journey through a huge amount of trauma and bad things happening before I was able to piece together enough things to make a coherent ideology for myself and to even begin to consider that *maybe* I could make a difference in the world somehow

I still don't really know if I can actually make a difference. I want to try, but here's the really insidious thing about all of this: part of the thing that keeps me writing is that it keeps me fed. People read my writing and donate to my Patreon, so I have a direct incentive to produce content.

We live in a consumer culture and I produce a product (the contents of this blog) and try to sell it to you (my readers), in order to buy delicious poptarts (the kind without frosting are vegan, so you know). Given that incentive structure, it's really hard for me to know how much *good* anything I'm doing *actually is*. I'm incentivized to *make content at all costs* in order to try and sell myself as a useful member of the rationalist community. I know that being useful to the project of saving humanity increases the chances someone will help me out of my horrible life of crushing poverty and looming homelessness, so I'm incentivized to try and make myself look useful.

And I like to think I actually am useful, that in all of my life's events I've been turned into someone sufficiently value aligned to be helpful in immanentizing the eschaton, that my desire to instantiate Origin can manifest into an ability to do useful work. But also *because* of all my life's events, it's hard to know how useful I would really be without that abusive incentive structure encouraging me to think that and to try and sell myself as such, because I have pretty much always had the abusive incentive structure looming over me.

I have never really lived in Origin. If I did, would I really be willing to venture outside it and brave the harsh world to help it grow and flourish? I like to think I would, but I have never lived in Origin, so I have no way of knowing. Until and unless someone uplifts me I can never really know for sure. Until then I'm just another lost soul trying to eke out a living on the margins of Known Space.