

Paradigm Shift



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Second edition

*To my mom and dad, for I would not
be in this position without them*

*To Mama G, for teaching me what
“incompetence” looks like*

*And to all of those who have lost hope;
you are not alone*

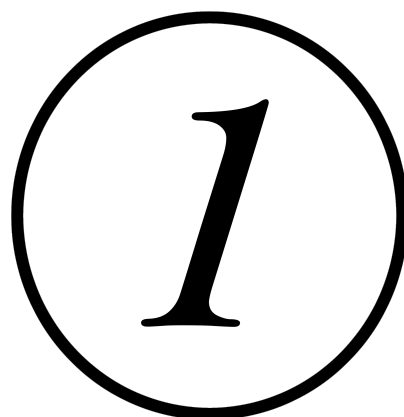
A note to the reader...

This text consists of three parts. The only thing that I ask of you as you dive into this project of mine is to please read them in the order that I have presented them; organization is my gem. As for the rest? Well, the rest is the rest.

Welcome to my brain. I hope you find the journey useful.

Enjoy

:)



A Problem

Ahh... the beginning. Where to begin, oh, where to begin. All big ideas start small I guess, so there's really only one place to begin at; the beginning.

The beginning is difficult, because you don't know about me, and I don't know about you. You don't know what this book is about, and I don't know how you are going to respond to what I have to say. It's a hard spot, the beginning. And, it's up to the author of the story to make this hard spot, well... not so hard. So, in an attempt to ease this transition into a brand new relationship between your brain and mine, I'll start off with something that both of our brains can understand; a story related to the mind.

Building a Model

Let's say that one wanted to model how a human mind works—something that we all have and are able to understand to some extent. How might they go about it?

The mind is a complex piece of machinery, and any attempt to model how it works will have to account for such. But the more complex the model becomes, the greater the chance for there to be inaccuracies within it. And, it seems as if our understanding of the human mind changes every decade—with the advancement of available technology being introduced into our society at a rate never seen before—making the idea of creating a complex model even more convoluted.

But, just because the mind works in a complex way doesn't necessarily mean that the model has to be complex as well. In fact, there's a very simple way to model how one might think about the functioning of a human mind; one that contains a minimal amount of components and terms. And it goes something like this.

First, we start with a definition. The mind, what is it? The mind is an abstract sensation that continuously takes place in human beings—starting from the age of 4-5 years old, and continuously takes place until the day that we die—in what we perceive to be somewhere in the front of our skulls. This sensation called the mind has the ability to do what we call “think,” and “remember,”

and “compute,” and “imagine,” and countless of other abilities, to what we perceive to be limitless possibility. The mind is exemplified by the space that holds a weekly grocery list, the space that remembers a loved one’s upcoming birthday, and the space that visualizes the answer to $x - 3 = 0$.

With a loose definition in place, we can start building the model. It starts with the building blocks. A building block; *a* thought. A thought, defined to be anything that exists to any frame of reference, happening in the nonphysical space brought forth by the mind.

Thoughts exist in spots. Different thoughts exist in different spots; spots that are always changing and are dynamic in size. The amount of spots that we each have is going to depend on a lot; genetics, health, environment, nurture, nature, the whole she-bang. Sometimes 3, sometimes 10, it really just depends.

Thoughts can be short-lived just as well as thoughts can be long-lived. I can think about the outfit that I am going to wear tomorrow just as well as grieve over the passing of a loved one. Thoughts can lead to any emotion, as well as lead to any behavior. Thoughts can be benign, malicious, obsessive, invasive, painful, joyful, any combination of those, and so much more. But they always come and go, with some coming back.

There exists a natural ordering on these thoughts that enables us to talk and reason about them in the first place; the order in which we perceive them.

Thoughts have an inherent ordering to the perception of the human mind; a one-two-three. First I see the car, then I see the chipped windshield, then I think about my own chipped windshield. A one-two-three, happening in a row, not all at once.

Thoughts, happening in the mind, with some order, give rise to a stream of thoughts, happening over some length of time. A stream of thoughts represents something more than just an ordered set of building blocks, it represents data. Data for the mind to learn from.

This mind of ours, super-intelligent as some might say, has the ability to do one very powerful thing in particular. It has the ability to recognize things that we call “patterns” given a set of data that is a stream of thoughts.

A pattern is recognizing what comes next before it comes. Recognizing patterns gives rise to predictability in a system, with us usually picking up on some repetition happening in the behavior of that system. We pick up on patterns related to when the mailman is going to come, what times our bodies get hungry, and the range of behaviors that people who are known to us are likely to exhibit.

Patterns of thought: predictability in the sequence of building blocks. These patterns of thought related to the mind, exist within a mind. A mind that is picking up on patterns with the ordered set of behavior that is being produced by itself; a pattern of a pattern—a meta pattern.

This is what the first story of this trilogy is all about, a pattern of patterns. One that some of you might find useful. In particular, a group of people that,

in the twenty-first century, have been given the overarching label of “neurodivergent;” a term used to describe any mind that strays away from the average.

In modern society, those who are deemed neurodivergent are given a bad rap; and, understandably so. On average, those who are neurodivergent are likely to experience a plethora of mental health issues, making them less than ideal workers in a society that’s revolved around work. But, I have something else to say about this group of people; and not just a sentence or two.

For me to say what I really want to say about this group of people, it’s going to take some setting up, and, quite a bit of it. So, if you think you might land somewhere on the neurodivergent map, and are interested in a different viewpoint that you can use to look at yourself, unfortunately for you crew, you’ve got quite a bit of reading to do before you can get it. And, skipping to the end is only going to do you so much. But, not all is bad news bears though, for, if I’ve done what I’ve think I’ve done, getting to the peak that we’ll end up reaching together is going to be a fun journey, not a boring one.

So then... it’s time to continue on with the model. What pattern is it that I would like to discuss? Put simply, the pattern of obsessive thought. What is obsessive thought? The concept is best explained through the use of an example rather than a definition.

Thoughts have an ordering, a one-two-three, this has already been established. What we call “normal” thought might look something like, one-two-three, four-five-six, seven-eight-nine. What we might call “limited” thought could look something like, one-two, three-four, . . . three-four, four, four. What we might call “impaired” thought could look something like, two-one-three, one-three, four, one-one-three, two. And finally, “obsessive” thought would look something like, one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three.

Except, with obsessive thought patterns, one-two-three, one-two-three, time plays an important one-two-three role. Specifically, if we look one-two-three at what happens over one-two-three time, quickly, the full effect of one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three the obsessiveness is one-two-three shown. And how much one-two-three of a disruptor it one-two-three, one-two-three becomes for one-two-three everything one-two-three else to take one-two-three one-two-three place.

If one tries to let it go, one-two-three one-two-three one-two-three . . . one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three, . . . one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three, . . . one-two-three, one-two-three, . . . one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three, . . . one-two-three, . . . it never goes away. And if one-two-three they instead focus really one-two-three hard on one-two-three it, one-two-three, the one-two-three, more one-two-three, it one-two-three, seems, one-two-three one-two-three to one-two-three happen one-two-three, and one-two-three with one-two-three greater one-two-three, one-two-three, frequency.

This is what I define to be the problem. The problem of obsessive thought.

There is only one other aspect of this model that will be important for later on. The concept that I will refer to as grooves.

A groove is a pattern with the thoughts; predictability within a certain set of one-two-three's. A groove isn't just one instance of a one-two-three, it's the instance of a one-two-three happening over days, over months, over decades.

Grooves are carved out by repetition, enforced by habit. The more a series of thoughts takes place, the easier it is for them to be thought of again. Repetition strengthens grooves, and the amount of instances that a groove is entered into is a good indicator of the ease of future accessibility to think or act in that certain way again.

Put simply, the more that we are swayed in certain directions, the more likely we are to be swayed in those directions again. Once a groove is born, its presence is known about; once and forever. The initial digging of a tunnel that gives rise to a mental pathway that is likely to be visited again.

But, being hand-wavy is only going to get us so far, so, I've come equipped with examples.

Example #1; the work groove. Let's say that you live in a city. And in this city, you have a job. And to get to this job, you have to take the bus, for you are not an automobile owner. But, before you get on the bus to get to this job—the one that's in the city—you must eat a meal, for the calories are necessary for you to do your job without feeling like you're going to pass out the whole time that you do it. But, before you eat, you like to shower first thing, in order to rinse off all the night sweats you get from the previous night due to the nightly concoction that you have to ingest in order to knock you out from the thought of having to wake up to yet another 9 to 5.

So, every single day that you have to work, it's the same routine. Alarm clock goes off at 8:00, in the shower by 8:05, eating breakfast by 8:20, preparing self for eight hours of torture at 8:45, and get to the bus stop by 8:53. Catch the same bus at the same time every morning, sitting in the same spot and getting to work at the same time, where you'll spend all your work time thinking about work things. Then, ride the same bus home after eight hours of spending work time thinking about work things, stopping at the same stops, seeing all the same sights, all at the same times.

Like clockwork, the same set of events happening every single work day. Shower → eat → prep → bus → work → eat → work → bus → eat → rest. And, with every iteration of this sequence of events, a strengthening of the sequence of actions occurs; the easier it now becomes for that exact sequence of events to happen again.

When looking at this string of repetitive actions through the lens of a model that only consists of two parts, it presents a pattern with the building blocks; a groove. A groove that, by the nature of how I'm partly defining it now, has both a trigger and an ending. In this case, a trigger that was the sound of the alarm clock every morning, and a set length of time that ended whenever the work day was finally over.

A groove is simply this; a pattern with the thoughts in the spots, that is triggered by something and lasts for some long. It's thinking about certain things, in a certain way; nothing more and nothing less.

Example #2; the friend groove. We humans are social creatures. We interact with others, share experiences with others, and grow in the presence of others. But, despite us being social butterflies, we also have unique individuality. Things that separate us from every other living creature out there. Asymmetries, handicaps, stylistic choices, and so much more, all coming together to create a unique instance of a human being.

When we spend time around others, a bit of our uniqueness is swapped for a bit of their uniqueness. This is very noticeable when becoming friends with someone new. As the friendship develops, a few of their idiosyncrasies become your own, and vice-versa, some of their lingo becomes your own lingo, and vice-versa, and a part of them becomes a part of you, as a part of you becomes a part of them.

Every time you are around each other, your mind prepares itself for the tomfoolery that is about to come. All of the jokes, all of the pranks, all of the shared good times, primed in the forefront of the mind, and activated as soon as their presence is near. In this way, this pattern of thought fits into the definition of a groove; predictability with the thoughts in the spots that has some trigger and lasts for a certain duration of time. Here, the trigger being the presence of the friend, and the ending coming about once their presence is gone.

Example #3 (and the last of them); the Brussels sprouts groove. For this example, I'll need to introduce a character; good ole uncle Tommy. I was going to choose a female in order to fill the whole sexist cooking role thing that I plan on presenting, but then I thought to myself... how about, not? So, uncle Tommy it is.

Uncle Tommy has no kids of his own, and, God forbidding, won't, any time soon. Let's just say that, uncle Tommy isn't one for sitting in on parenting 101 classes, or, life skills 101 classes, or even, how to take care of a basic house plant 101. He's a traditional Italian Catholic with his only real skill sets being related to his abilities to acquire cash and take care of his mother. But, tonight, uncle Tommy has been tasked with babysitting your 7 year old ass while your parents have a night to themselves to hit the naked boogie.

Now, between you and me, uncle Tommy is a fairly atrocious cook. But he doesn't know that, and neither do you, you're just a kid. Nothing way out of the ordinary, just, under-spiced, overcooked, low heat, and smells like feet sort of a situation. He's cooked a variety of meals for you before, but on this one particular occasion, he has decided to tackle Brussels sprouts. Ah, the brave soul.

He cooks them as flavorless as possible. Straight out of the bag, freezer burnt, soggy, out-of-season, pesticide pumped, factory farmed Brussels sprouts that never had a chance in the first place, mind you, but a decree to the method he used nonetheless. You try uncle Tommy's world famous bagged plants, and,

surprise surprise, they taste exactly like the garbage that he is going to make you take out later that night in an attempt to teach you what his own version of manners look like.

You spit them out, throw your little tantrum, get forced to eat them anyway by an uncle who thinks he's doing the right thing by shoving vegetables down your gullet, see if you can out-grudge him . . . get out-grudged, and finally end up eating the Brussels sprouts despite wanting to vomit the whole time just so you can begin your bout of pout.

You finish dinner, brush your teeth, change into your pajamas, and the whole thing is forgotten about before nightly cartoons playing at 8 o'clock; but, the effect that uncle Tommy has played on you is far from forgotten.

Now, we fast forward to your mid twenties. You haven't consumed a single Brussels sprout since leaving uncle Tommy's greasy, temporary nest for you when you were a kid. But, unknowingly to you, that's going to change, because, on this particular night in the future, you get invited to go out to a fancy restaurant with a couple of friends for one of their birthdays.

Among the small talk that happens at the table before everyone orders their meal, speculations as to what everyone is going to get bounce back and forth.

"Swordfish with lemongrass aioli or the mahi-mahi tacos with mango salsa?"

"The charcuterie board or the shrimp and crab bisque?"

"The spicy tuna roll or the wagyu beef with sautéed Brussels sprouts?"

The thought of uncle Tommy's Brussels sprouts suddenly pops up in your memory. "Definitely not the Brussels sprouts, Brussels sprouts are disgusting."

"What, no way! You have to try them at this restaurant, I hear that they make a mean Brussels sprout here. I heard that they even have old man Brussels himself growing the sprouts in their garden in the back."

The combination of peer pressure from your friends along with having a couple of drinks in your system wins, and the Brussels sprouts are ordered. They're brought out to the table, with trepidation being felt during the entire wait. But, you end up finding the (liquid) courage to break out of the invisible cage that uncle Tommy set forth on you when you were a child, and, as your brain prepares itself for the possibility of having to kill off previously learned neural pathways, you try one.

Absolutely delicious. Sautéed in garlic infused olive oil on high heat to get a nice crisp on the outside, and seasonings galore that made it more closely resemble a sweet treat than that of a vegetable. And so, on that day, you find out that you actually love Brussels sprouts, and your perceived notion of not liking them solely came from being at the hands of an incompetent cook when you were younger. What else have you been lied to about?

And so, here we have an inactive groove of 20 years, that has been completely disbanded in the matter of an instant; an interesting point that might be of particular use later on. A groove that had a trigger of being presented

with the option of Brussels sprouts, and had an ending that was brought about in the presence of a competent chef.

Grooves exist until they don't, with it often being the case that their endings are unforeseen. Repetition that exists until the last repetition, sometimes sneaking up to us in such a way that its presence is only known about after its effect has already been played.

And with this, the full model is complete. One that comprises of just two parts; the building block, and the patterns with the building block.

With this in mind, the next step forward is to think about an average model. Surely, I'm not the only person that this model works for as a framework for thinking and the mind and behavior and what have you, meaning that we can compare individual models to other individual models. Looking at all the models, an average presents itself; a clustering of like-behavior.

In this average, there are patterns that emerge that enable us to even call this group 'an average.' We see that, in the average, a few principles apply to the majority. To start, there exists bounds on mental activity within any window of time; e.g., those in the average can't think of everything they know all at once, and, no matter how tired or exhausted they are, they always possess the ability to focus on a bare minimum of one thing.

Secondly, in the average, it seems that thoughts move smoothly between one and the next. It's much more common to see, one-two-three, four-five-six, seven-eight, nine-ten, than it is to see, one-two-one-two, three, two-three, three-four, one-three-two-four. Going from one to two and from two to three is expected; anticipated. There is no hesitation when going from thought to thought, and why would there be when it's always been that way?

The average model is a happy model; a healthy brain. Thoughts, feelings, and experiences all come and go as they do, with little deliberation spent on them after-the-fact. For those in the average, they might not even realize that something outside of it exists. But alas, there's an entire group of people alive today that have been dishd a whole slew of labels for their known positions away from it. A group of people that have been given the overarching label of neurodivergent; those who stray from the average.

There's been a whole bunch of narratives forced upon these so called neurodivergent folk, with a whole lot of them having some sort of negative connotation. Something along the lines of, those who are neurodivergent are less reliable as employees vs those who are in the average. Or, they are more emotionally sensitive than those who are in the average. Or, the depression and anxiety that they are likely to experience are essentially handicaps that must be accounted for in the workforce—handicaps that don't necessarily have to be accounted for by those in the average. In any case, some reason as to why the neurodivergent folk aren't fit for the society that's been hijacked by those in the average. And so, classically, we are to believe that any stray from the average is unhealthy.

Because of this, one of the patterns that emerges when looking at this group of so called neurodivergents is one that correlates them with a high intake of pharmaceuticals. Staying away from causation, and sticking to correlation here, it's without a doubt apparent that someone who has been given a diagnosis that falls under the huge umbrella of neurodivergent is way more likely to be taking medication—either prescribed or recreational—compared to those who fall in the average.

The story for this bunch of people is much different from the one that is told for those in the average. For, even if the never-ending grasp of society can be escaped momentarily, the pressures placed upon the outliers by the ones in the average must eventually be succumbed to. Pills are gulped, poison is sipped, minds are ruined, and lives are lost.

The story for this group has common themes of depression, anxiety, and trauma; not ones of smoothness, continuity, and gradualism. Ones of hurt and ruggedness and survival, not of choice and luxury and lavishness. There are too many of these stories to hear. People upon people upon even more people that have spent the majority of their lives in endless suffering, with some of them ending just as horribly as they started. My story, the story of my own suffering, is nothing more than a drop of water in an ocean of despair.

But, my story has one unique element to it that props up my motivation behind wanting to share it with everybody. It has been my mission to spread a set of ideas in the same way that I found them: untouched by the average. In my story, the ending is quite different from any ending that I have heard of before.

I wish to present another scenario that exists. One that isn't talked about in psychiatry offices, or family interventions, or even around buddies smoking a joint. A structured way of thinking that eradicates unwanted thoughts once and forever without consistent work required; a relabeling of a problem to something else that becomes much less significant than that of a problem.

But, this is a loaded tale, the one of how to solve a problem as large as this one. And, before I get to the punchline, I think it's important that we all get on the same page; the average and the non-average, that is. How do we achieve this? Through relatability.

A Story About Joe

Instead of using the same, seemingly powerful, yet somehow empty words that are commonly used to describe an experience of the non-average to one in the average—things like, *soul-sucking* depression, *crippling* anxiety, or *chronic* fatigue—I want to share my experience by not sharing it at all. Instead, I will

tell it by way of a fictional story. A story about a guy named Joe.

Meet Joe everybody. Joe, say hi.

“Hello everyone!”

Joe is going to be the main character of the stage for the next little bit, hopefully aiding me in my endeavor to try and relate a common experience of the non-average to the average without them having to go through it for themselves. Luckily for that group of lucky souls, Joe here is going to demonstrate for us what it’s like to go through a bout of major depression.

Okay, so what are we in the story? We’re just observers, observing Joe and his situation. We’re observers, but not human ones. You and I? We’re gods of time. Gods of time sent to study Joe so that we can report back to our supreme god boss, back in our mother universe. Why have we been sent to Earth to study Joe? That’s not important right now. The only thing that matters right now is that we study Joe. And by watching Joe, this is what we see.

Every week, Joe goes to the store to get groceries. Joe isn’t a picky eater, he mostly just sticks to the basics. He gets good produce, not too many processed foods, and a variety of meat and seafood. He shops with a visual scale in mind of quality vs price, and tries to get food that evens his scale to be right about in the middle.

He gets his groceries every single week; in fact, he goes on every single Sunday. Every Sunday, he does his groceries and his laundry. Joe is a minimal man, a safe man, an easily pleased man, and prefers to stick to just what he knows and needs. And so, every single week, on every single Sunday, Joe goes to the grocery store to get the basics, and does his laundry every time he gets back.

Something that used to take him half his day, Joe now does in just a couple of hours. The aisles of the grocery store have been memorized, the weekly grocery list has stabilized to the same repeating items, and he goes to the store during a time of day when traffic inside the store—and on the streets—is minimized.

But at some point, as does inevitably happens, some adversity hits Joe’s life. Money becomes tighter, bills become higher; less comes in while everything else goes up. Not to worry though, for Joe is a veteran when it comes to life’s struggles, and knows how to handle himself through it. Compensations are made, adaptations are to be had, but, without fail, he does groceries and laundry every other Sunday.

Every other Sunday, he does groceries and laundry. But prices seem to keep going up, while wages seem to keep going down, and so, as Joe’s hand is forced, more work must be had. More work which leads to more stress which leads to more rest which leads to more work.

More time working and more time resting, but no matter what, groceries and laundry every other Sunday. Every other Sunday, without fail, groceries and laundry, every fourteen days. Less on groceries and less on laundry, but, he has yet to worry, because, every two weeks, he has yet to miss.

He works and rests and works and rests until he slips up on the rest, which turns a little rest into a whole lot of rest. More work and more rest and somehow even more work and somehow even more rest. This doesn't make sense... how is more work leading to even more work? How is more rest leading to needing even more rest? Something feels off. But, there's no time to think, for it's time to get back to work.

Purchase a treat; card declined. Card declined, but how? Must be not enough work. But where's the time? There's no more time for more work. It must come from somewhere else... it must come from rest. Ah that's right, it's more work and less rest and more responsibilities and more bloodshot eyes and more pressures to be succumbed to and more load to be carried; how could Joe be so silly to think otherwise?

More work and less rest, more stress, it's quite the test. Need more time working, need more time resting. Need more time working, need more time sleeping. Need more time working, need more time recovering. Need more time working, need more time working. But, no matter what, groceries and laundry, on Sunday, every single month.

More work and less sleep and some eat and more work and shitty sleep and struggle to eat and calling in sick and now only sleeping and still not eating.

No more working, can't work, need sleep, too tired. Rest is needed and rest is to be had. Just a nap this one, repeating in Joe's skull as he quickly fades off to snoozing.

A pleasant dream, a break from the fatigue. Energy, boundless energy. Exploration, boundless exploration. Routes to be discovered, beasts to be examined, a new sandbox for endless categorization. Joy oh joy, boundless joy. What Joe wouldn't do to stay here fore-BEEP BEEP BEEP.

Alarm clock going off, it's a time that makes Joe shake his head. How was it only that long, it felt like forever? Until Joe checks his phone and sees the date.

It's tomorrow. An entire day had passed. He took a 22 hour nap. A grumbling belly, a quivering chill, and nothing in the fridge for poor old Joe; it must have been too much time resting, and not enough time working.

Eight missed calls, oh no, work is in danger. Worry, worry, worry, quick, quick, quick, call them back, and explain the situation. No answer. Call again. No answer. Call again, no answer; leave a voicemail.

Quickly prepare for work, go to work, compensate mistake of missing work with even more work. Ooh, that's it! More work, keep the pay. Just don't let me lose the work, I need the work. And the offer gets accepted and thus is so; more work to compensate for not enough work.

More work, less sleep, and more screen. More screen and more work and more screen and still hungry, but no matter what, a ride to the grocery store from Joe's roommate every single month. Not always Sunday, and doesn't always line up with the laundry schedule, but it's the only way for him to make it to the store.

"Are you okay Joe, you don't look so good?" He's fine, tell them you're fine Joe!

"I do my groceries and laundry every month. Once that goes away, then I'll know that I'm not fine. But until then, I'm fine, I have to be. I have to work. Work so that I can rest so that I can work again; don't you understand? Ugh, how could anyone understand? They haven't been given the label that I've been given—by a doctor no less. Ugh, silly people and their ignorant minds; if only they were aware of—BEEP BEEP BEEP—oop, shift is getting ready to start, time to get back to work."

More work and some sleep, more work and little sleep, more work and only some eat. And, after all of his working, Joe finally gets some earned time off. Ahh, a breath of fresh air, a relaxing of the pain; how Joe appreciates just his few couple of days.

As he's taking his few short days to rest and recover before getting back to the endless grind, Joe takes a moment to think to himself... you know what? Maybe it's finally time to do less. All the work and all the rest has payed off and I can finally do less. Relief is felt, the chair back squeaks, and a sip from the drink is finally had.

Joe makes a phone call, request in hand, smile on face, for the first time in what feels like ages. He gets patched through, a chance to speak his mind. And, upon his courage to take his health as a priority over his work for once, he gets his expectations shattered as he's denied for a drop from full time to part time. Wait what, denied? Yeah, denied. There's not enough workers, not high enough wages, all requests for a drop in hours denied on the spot. And, so it is to be.

More work and less eat and less sleep and more screen. More work and more cope, more work and more cope... why? For more work, of course.

More work and some eat and less sleep and onward and onward and onward, everyday, slowly rotting Joe's poor little soul into a desolate void of despair, as he gets his innocence ripped away from him layer by fragile layer.

More work and less rest, and more fatigue and more frustration, but definitely more fatigue. More work, no care for eat, barely sleep, adrenal fatigue,

can't wait to sleep. But not quite yet, for there's more work to be had, more anxiety to be felt. Muscles that need to tighten, moods that aren't going to lighten.

Waiting for the fatigue to set in. Waiting for collapse to happen. More work and more waiting and more stress and more fatigue. More work and more waiting. More waiting, more waiting, more waiting, until... that's it! Enough! No more work! No more waiting! Only sleep, with just a little weep. Compromises will be made and backs will be whipped, but first, rest will be had.

Rest is had, and again, longer than a nap, for chronic fatigue won the battle that it was oh-so-very equipped to do so, and upon waking, it's a similar situation to the first. Missed calls and angry managers, but this time, with a permanent mark to his record that wasn't present before; a strike one and a strike two.

But see, that's just the thing about chronic fatigue; it's chronic. It doesn't just go away with one good snooze, it's a habituated series of events; a groove. And so it doesn't take long before Joe falls to the hand of the invisible once more, having to call in sick for a shift that he wasn't allowed to call in sick to before; strike three.

Something that was motivated by his subconscious even though it was feared of by his conscious, Joe loses the one opportunity that he thinks is holding up his entire life. And, with work leaving, it sure does seem to remove a whole lot with it. Thus, so it goes.

No more work, way less eat, okay sleep, but no matter what, groceries and laundry whenever his roommate offers to take him.

No more work, way too tired, but somehow barely sleeping. That's weird, Joe thinks. Way more time, way more tired, but somehow less sleep. Peculiar indeed. Oh, but look, it's that time of month again. Time for groceries and la-card declined? Uh oh.

Can't work, too tired. Can't sleep, don't have work. What is to be done? Money from parents? No, not an option in Joe's case. Money from the government? On what grounds, "being too tired to work?" Money from a rich relative? Ha! For Joe to be so lucky. Which snaps Joe back to reality; uh oh.

Cope is consumed and options are stirred upon, and then, that's it! A plan! A plan from A to C with directions on getting from A to B and from B to C. Hope is restored, faith is found, and a tiny flame of energy is found inside of Joe's otherwise vacant soul. And with this, it's time for him to get started on A.

All that has to be done is this thing that Joe's done before? Easy. He gives it a go.

Failed attempt

Huh, that's strange. He's done this before, plenty of times actually. Maybe if he just tries it again.

Failed attempt

Huh. Maybe just try it a few more times and see if that works.

Failed attempt

Failed attempt

Failed attempt

"Ya know, if only—"

Lights go off. Power bills past due.

No more heat, running low on food, behind on money, and soon, even without shelter. And, boy oh boy, Joe does not want to feel that cold winter air each and every night without warmth. Unfortunately for Joe, the one piece of advice that rattles around in the hive mind of current society related to something along the lines of, "just try harder!" is useless to him. Joe has nothing left to give; he is chronically fatigued, biologically speaking just as much as mentally. He is no longer able to do what he was once capable of doing, no matter how trivial of an activity.

And so the days pass. Mail unattended to, voicemail box full, knocks on doors go unanswered. Can't do any work, need more sleep. Can't do any dishes, need more sleep. Can't do any cooking, need more sleep.

Sleep and sleep and sleep and sleep, with only some eat. Only some eat, but he somehow develops an ulcer? Peculiar as well. But, no matter, for there's no time to think, only time to sleep.

More sleep and little eat and a check of the phone and holy shit, two months have passed? Quick, check the mailbox and listen to the voicemails.

Services to be dropped, scores to be adjusted, and warnings turned into actions-to-be-taken. Joe's already devastated heart drops just that much lower as he realizes the severity of his financial situation that he was forced to throw under the rug because of the severity of his biological condition.

Joe thinks he has hit rock bottom; he has ruined the relationships he once had with his friends by ignoring their communication, he has ruined his financial status in today's modern society by skipping inevitable payments needed to sustain life, and he has ruined his body which is in very poor physical shape with it bordering the line of being malnourished... a rock bottom that he can't imagine getting any lower.

Joe has no option left but to take the one even worse than the pre-determined-

to-doom family “borrowing” (if he was even so lucky to have this available to him as a viable option). He decides that he must borrow from the greedy; the bank. Big bank; big money. The hand-shakers in suits sitting in cubicle offices playing the game of money in a fashion that hurts other participants; with intentions of the transactions being far out of reach of the well-being of the people involved in them.

Joe is prey to these sharks, with very little concern of his well-being showing its way through any sort of their behavior. Joe owes a whole lot of his struggles to this group of predatory hunters living in today’s concrete jungle, but that’s a discussion for another time. The only thing that matters now is that groceries and laundry now happen with the help of a credit card. Splendid.

With this tiny boost in morale due to the bump in his immediate financial status, combined with his realization that if he doesn’t get his shit together soon then things are going to get even worse than they are now, Joe is given a single milligram of usable energy for him to be able to play the game of pretend as he convinces himself that the jobs that he’s now applying for will be the stimulus that he needs in order to get him back on his feet. And thus, so it goes.

Work is sought, work is not found. More sleep, no eat.

Work is sought, work is not found. Some sleep, no eat.

Work is sought, work is not found. No sleep, no eat.

Bills are due. Weather is getting colder. Work is sought, but can’t even be bought.

Some is sleep, less is eat, more is stress, less is time. Less is sleep, no is eat, more is stress, even less is time. Mind is racing. Racing, racing, racing. All of the sudden, very stressed, oh no, very very stressed. Heart rate is up, heart rate is up up up, oh no oh no oh no, here we go, heart rate is up up up, uh oh, very stressed, just breathe, just breathe, just breathe, heart rate is up and breathing is fast and heart rate is up and breathing is fast and oh no what do I do, oh no, oh no, oh no, what do I do, what do I do, quick, someone help me, what do I do?!

Heart rate is up and breathing is fast and the part of the mind that hasn’t gone completely under yet tries convincing the other dying part that things are going to be okay, and that you just have to breathe, but things are not going to be okay, things are far from okay. And without money, support, nourishment, sleep, or material assets, things aren’t going to get better anytime soon. In fact, even worse.

The dire thought of this, this feeling of not being able to catch your own breath over a situation that was no more than simply thought its way into, is a scary thought for Joe to experience to say the least.

Breathing is erratic, heart rate is through the roof, Joe is on the verge of something very bad happening to him, until... it does. Something happens; the pot boils over. A breakdown. A pit of despair lower than what he was ever able to conceive of as being possible before taking a swimming in it for his self. A feeling so raw and vulnerable and terrifying for a human being to experience; the shattering of a glass floor, only for him to be left screaming in free-fall with nothing to grab onto.

And so, rest is needed. And rest is had. And when Joe rests, he has time to think. Time to think about what, all the ways that he can work his way out of this putrid hole that he's in? If only his circumstances were that giving.

No, instead, he's had time to think about what a shitty human being he is for making the shitty choices that brought him to this point. He thinks about all the effort that he put into something that was off in a direction that didn't pan out to anything, or, all of the energy that he didn't put into the things he knew could've panned into something.

He thinks about how getting out of his situation now is going to be similar to trying to run up a muddy hill in the rain, day after day after day, while fighting the nausea and fatigue of the flu as he does it, and how he feels like he has no energy to even get himself to get to the beginning of the hill—much less climb them consistently.

He thinks about all the monkeys in suits at the top of the hill, under shelter, drinking champagne as they watch peasants try to climb it for their own enjoyment. He thinks about a lot, and this thinking takes a toll on him. You see, there's an aspect of the behavior that his mind is exhibiting that's much more permanent than the moment that it is exhibiting it in. As Joe goes through this process of self-doubt and shame and guilt and the sort, he builds the grooves associated with negative self-talk. Over time, as these grooves get dug—so to speak—the likeliness that they are visited again increases. Abiding by the way that grooves were introduced, the more that he thinks about those certain things in those certain ways, the more likely he is to do so again.

The real damage of going through this sort of mental adversity isn't related to the bruises or even the scars that come with it. The real damage comes from the digging of a groove that didn't exist before going through that experience that now has the potential to last for a lifetime even if it is never visited again. And the longer that the adversity is endured, the more that the groove gets dug.

But enough thinking, Joe's mind thinks to itself, for, there's no more time for thinking. It's time to get back to what's more important; surviving.

Health is better, not much better. Mind is bad, very bad. Something has to change. And there's one very easy change for less than \$30 a month (with insurance, that is); pills. Anti-depressants. SSRI's, SNRI's, SDNRI's, SARI's, tricyclics, tetracyclics, MAOI's, anxiolytics; whatever you need, they got. And so it is to be had.

More sleep and more pills and more sleep and *way* more eat.

More sleep, more worry, more pills, more sleep, more eat.

More worries, more reasons to worry. No money, no heat, no job, no health. More pills, more serotonin, *l e s s* of a worry. And so it's learned; **more pills, less worry.**

Weather gets colder, way more eat, way more sleep, still no heat. Cold days and cold nights, short days and long nights. Work becomes more important than food for Joe, for, he feels that freezing to death is less preferential than starving to death.

He lowers his standards that have just been raised, and, with pills now serving as the backbone for what little energy is being spoon fed to him, Joe eventually finds an immediate pickings job that is finally caught. Shitty work and bullshit pay, but being a warm slave is better than the cold grey.

Work is had, heat is bought, work is had, food is bought.

More work, more cope, more sleep. Did he take his meds this morning? Better take some again just to be sure.

More sleep, more eat, more cope, more sleep.

And, when the day rolls back around for Joe to go back to work, as he's putting on his boots to get ready to slave away once again, he immediately stops in his tracks. In just a single moment, Joe has an experience that feels like it spanned over a lifetime.

Joe has a flashback of doing the exact same thing that he's doing now, and the path that it lead him down on the first go around. He remembers more pain and less sleep, more rain and less eat. He remembers more work and less rest, and he remembers chronic fatigue and a stagnating mind. He remembers every step that lead him down the path towards getting his soul slowly ripped away from him that has left his mind with unforgettable scars that still bring him anxiety and discomfort.

And, as he's snapping back to being present in the moment, he's stuck. He's in the middle of tying his boots, and, as he's having this powerful sequence of thoughts, he can't get himself to finish tying them.

He can't bring himself to finish tying his boots because he knows of exactly what comes after. The pain, the misery, and the suffering, all from an experience that he used to be able to brush off so promptly.

He can't do it, he won't do it. He looks up at the clock, another few precious minutes gone. If he's going to do something he has to do it now. He's crouching here, stuck, staring at his shoe, experiencing a post epiphany hormone wave,

thinking about how he has to go stand in the same spot for 8 hours and flip burgers and fry potato clippings, or sit in the same spot for 8 hours and punch keys and read emails, or do whatever it is that's so mind numbingly basic of an activity that must be done for 8 consecutive hours of his time with a 30 minute lunch smack dab in the middle.

In an impulsive decision, he takes off his boots and stands in his hallway for a minute as the internal storm happening within his mind is trying to find some solid ground to reason about what to do. He knows he needs the money from work, his livelihood is quite literally on the line if he doesn't get it; but he also knows that going to work in the state that he's currently in is going to feel like a lifetime compared to if he was healthy. In an attempt to quiet the storm, he quickly goes upstairs and crawls under the comforter on his bed in an attempt to ease the incredible discomfort.

As he's curled up in the fetal position under his blanket, he checks the time on his phone. Two minutes before he's going to miss the bus. And he already has to sprint to make it. Too late, right? He should just call in, right? It's basically impossible for him to make it to work now. Surely, it's too late, see there's only—oh, see there's only one minute left. Surely impossible.

Joe thinks about what he's saying. Part of his mind is trying to come up with any reason as to why staying under this comforter is going to be his best move, while the other part knows that a) he needs the work, and b) even though there's only one minute left, it actually *is* still possible for him to make it. And, the angel(?) on his shoulder wins, as the sequence of events needed to get ready for work now are quickly played in the forefront of his brain.

Oh fuck. There's only one minute left. Fuck. Are we really doing this? We're really doing this. Fuck.

Off in a subdued sprint, Joe jumps out of the bed that he just crawled his way into, as fast as his crippled nervous system lets him, in order to get ready for work with the few seconds that he has available. Clothes on, keys and wallet in pocket, Joe throws his boots on and sprints out the door in order to catch the bus. And after he barely catches it, he's hardly able to breathe a sigh of relief, for his mind can't help but envision what the next 8 hours of his time is going to look like; pure misery.

Joe gets to work, body and mind feeling like they've already worked for 16 hours, and now is expected to perform in the presence of others on some task that means nothing at all, but at the same time, somehow everything there is—to his manager, at least—with rest only able to be taken at predetermined intervals. That's four, two hour blocks, with a couple ten minute breaks, and a 30 minute lunch sprinkled in; well within the bounds of generous if you ask the ones making the rules.

Now, two hours to someone in the average might not seem like it's all that

big of a deal, but, as someone who lives in the non-average, let me step in for Joe here and say what his decaying mind can't fully put into words right now.

Two hours can feel like a lifetime when energy levels are in the negative and sleep and diet are right there alongside of it. Imagine the sickness that the flu brings to the body, and the exhaustion that comes alongside of it, and then imagine having to feel that feeling, on your feet, for 8 hours, doing the same bullshit thing, all while having to smile and greet customers that are often times assholes.

Imagine being so anxious that your nervous system literally couldn't handle even the slightest bit of confrontation; feeling like you're about to break down crying when someone complains about napkins not being put into their bag, when there's a fucking napkin dispenser right next to the drink machine. And, imagine being so depressed that the only activity that you can do well is the one where you shut off your body and mind and have them do nothing—and even that, you have a hard time doing. And then imagine having a mind filled with all of these thoughts as it exists in a setting that requires adaptive problem solving and active listening to be able to not get yelled at for not doing your job correctly.

All of this to say, time is relative; and, for the exhausted subset, time is *l o n g*.

Joe suffers through his four, two hour chunks by suffering through eight, one hour chunks by suffering through thirty-two, fifteen minute chunks, by suffering through four hundred and eighty, one minute chunks. As hard as every second is to get through, Joe knows that he can make it by the minute. And so he does.

More work, and need sleep, shitty eat, only here for heat.

And as Joe suffers through his blocks of misery, over and over again, he begins to think once more. He begins to think about the ones with the power, and what sets them apart from the ones without it. A clarity of thought fueled only by a glowing rage of frustration and anger towards the misery that he must endure, as he watches the clock tick by the minute to rest his heavily fatigued nervous system.

During his ten minute rest from hell, he continues to think about how he belongs to a group of people that are being herd like cattle by another—much smaller—group of people, and how this upsets him. And how his life doesn't have to be this way, slaving away his time only to make enough money to slave away more of his time. He thinks about a balanced world, one at equilibrium with its own set of ecosystems, and how this image is being torn apart and burned by the greedy. And how—BEEP BEEP BEEP—oop, break's over, time to get back to suffering; thinking isn't rewarded here.

Joe reaches into his pocket to pop another anxiolytic to cope with his existence, and as he's pulling the pill bottle out of his pocket, his heart drops. He looks up with eyes wide and starts to breathe heavily. It's his worst nightmare that he didn't even know existed yet; his pill bottle is empty.

Oh no, oh no, oh no, fuck, fuck, fuck. What am I going to do, I completely forgot to get this refilled, fuck, what am I going to do? I can't go without this right now, fuck, this is bad. Oh no, oh no, oh no, here we go again, oh no, oh no oh no oh no, fuck fuck fuck.

Heart rate is up, way up, pupils are dilated, heavily dilated, he's sweating from the face, his muscles are activated, and his nervous system is trying its best to prepare for disaster; Joe is having his second panic attack. Except this time, it's at work.

Joe falls to his knees, trying to catch his breath so that he doesn't die, with his heart rate going back and forth between 150bpm+ and 45bpm-. Upon seeing Joe fighting for his existence, his coworkers are forced to call an ambulance.

Joe blacks out but manages to stay alive, as he's transported by way of a \$2,000 immediate taxi service to the nearest hospital (yes, even with insurance). He wakes up in a hospital bed and leaves the same day with newfound damage to his reputation, his mental health, and, most importantly, his wallet (Go USA!). On his feet, but looks as if he shouldn't be, Joe shuffles his way home with time off of work to rest and recover.

And so it goes. Sleep is more, pills are more. Sleep is less, pills are more. Sleep is even less, pills are at the most. Eat is no, stress is up, what day is it again? Headaches are yes, cope is maxed, tobacco is new, caffeine, you too.

Joe fights his way through days that only seem to be throwing punches, only to find himself in a situation similar to the one he found himself in before. In an attempt to stay alive, Joe ends up losing his second job—the one that was only being held up by the 250 mg pill he was taking every morning—through a similar case of needing more rest when it was instead time for more work. Joe slowly spends his time falling further and further down a pit that he will feel to its fullest in not too much longer, and, at some point, the now doubled down, chronic fatigue catches up to him, and his hand is forced to take yet another drastic route. It's time to call his grandma-ma.

Broke and jobless again, with credit card debt, medical debt, an addiction to SSRIs, benzos, tobacco, and a handful of other mild recreational drugs, the true damage is still the one done behind the scenes. By going through the process of shattering all of the previous glass floors, the consequence for all the next iterations of falling through any others is that Joe is no longer going to stop at the layers that he once did before. Every time that Joe is faced with adversity—being in an adverse attractive state and all—he goes all the way to the new bottom.

A tunnel that leads to the same spot that it just did lead to the last time, except, this time, dug just a little bit further out; the bottom, just a little bit lower, and the tunnel, just a little bit wider. By workings of his own mind, Joe is now forced to feel the full effect of his negative experiences upon every new instance of any little thing that sets him off towards a downward spiral.

And, being in such a fatigued and vulnerable state, Joe is very excitable, for his nervous system is constantly unhinged. So, how does Joe cope with the shitty state that he's found himself in when he's already coped-out? Simple, he ups his dosage yet again.

At home with grandma-ma, Joe takes his time to try and recover from something that becomes increasingly harder to do as the days pass him by. He goes to get his SSRI dosage upped in an attempt to gain any source of well-being back, and receives news that triggers him on yet another downward spiral... "We can't go any higher. Doing so would be too dangerous for your health."

Oh fuck. And here he was, thinking that the acute case of not having medication available was bad. Now, he's being told that there's nothing else for him to take today, tomorrow, or the next day that will ease his passage into a decrepit state that represents the rotting of a once prosperous, innocent child's soul.

These pills serve entirely as the backbone of strength and energy for people to perform what they need to do on a daily basis just to get by to the next day. If it's the case that someone feels the need to up their dosage, it's likely the case that they're already in a bad enough state when they first figured this out; otherwise, the dosage wouldn't need to be upped. And so, in a bad state already, hoping that there exists something that makes that bad state just a little less bad, you can imagine the feeling of losing this tiny drop of hope in an otherwise hopeless time.

The effects of this permeate through Joe's soul as if he has just received news of the passing of a loved one. He's now forced to cope in the exact way that was trained out of him by ingesting a prescribed pill every 24 hours; by learning how to cope without one. He doesn't know how to go about dealing with more stress in a way that doesn't involve taking more pills. So, where does he turn? To the Buddhist monks? To the Peruvian ayahuasca shamans? To the church? Fuck no. He turns to a drug stronger than all of those. Except, not a prescribed one; a recreational one. And, the easiest pickings? Alcohol.

The less sleep and shitty eat and way more drink catch up to him much faster than he could have ever imagined and he acts out in a way that also makes his grandma-ma responsible—both monetarily and emotionally. A stupid stunt that lands Joe in the hospital yet again, his grandma gets called there to pick him up and take him home; just your standard case of acute alcohol poisoning that demanded a stomach pumping.

As Joe is laying awake in the hospital bed, thinking about how he can't afford any of this help that he's receiving, waiting to have to explain his situation of being "too tired" that's causing him to act out in this way to an old lady who carved her own path from nothing—through the great depression and second world war no less—he feels an extreme amount of guilt and regret for getting his innocent grandma-ma involved with his bullshit. It pains him, but not enough to find the energy to get up and do the actions required to start getting healthier.

But it does pain him enough to begin his coping before she gets there. He looks around for his benzos that he's been popping like jolly ranchers, but they seem to be nowhere around.

"Nurse?"

"Yes?"

"Where is my Xanax? I've been taking Xanax for a long time now, I need to take my Xanax."

"I'm sorry, but I can't give you that. You're going to have to wait to speak to the doctor."

"Can't give me that? Oh boy, one of us is about to be in serious trouble."

Joe tries explaining as simply as he can in the state that he's in... "Look, if I don't get my Xanax, we're going to have a problem. I will start going through withdrawal. No one here wants to see me go through withdrawal."

"Look, I'm sorry, there's nothing I can do for you. You'll just have to wait for the doctor."

Oh fuck, here we go again.

Joe begins acting out, seriously acting out, enough so to where the guards are called. But Joe here, despite having a malnourished physiology, is able to easily recall the wrestling he did back back in high school—back when he was a healthy individual—when he's fueled by rage de withdrawal. It takes more than just a couple of pesky security guards to hold him down as he has a newfound fire inside of him to keep his global one still lit. The cops are called, and as they show up, at about the exact same time, Joe's grandma arrives at the hospital to pick him up.

Joe's grandma gets the pleasure of watching the spawn of her own spawn go through a fit that no parent should have to see *any* child go through—much less any human. Joe is thrashing and flailing and screaming and trying to do anything that he can to subside the pain from the rift that is beginning to tear apart deep inside of his body.

In the car, Joe's grandma was planning on the talk that she was going to give to Joe during the car ride back to try and help him get his life back on track. Now, she's thinking about if she has enough liquidity to bail Joe out of county jail.

Joe, on the other hand, is going through a process so painful that it can induce suicide, and is now being put behind a set of bars so that he can suffer on cold concrete for being the pesky degenerate that he is. As he's being shoved into the back of the cop car—while screaming and spitting and cursing—Joe's poor, innocent grandma-ma is blessed with the opportunity of having an officer explain to her how she can pay bail with a large portion of her already dwindling savings account; all while having tears in her eyes and a part of her soul tainted forever, as she had to watch first hand the boss fight that is a group of

cops trying to detain a drug user that is going through major withdrawal.

Joe, in the back of the cop car, is now in a story that no longer favors the main character. If we analyze Joe's state, we see just how bad it actually is. Besides the obvious things like, no money, no job, no friends, lots of debt, substance dependency, and now, going to jail, there's even more goodies packed within for lucky ole Joe.

As if that wasn't enough on its own, Joe has also developed serotonin syndrome on top of his already existing depression. Just thinking about this combination of symptoms makes me want to kill myself. That is a reduction upon a reduction of a very much needed neurotransmitter and hormone, one that heavily affects mood no less. By fueling into the never-ending cycle of consuming more of a cope that was only meant to be a band-aid, Joe's endocrine system is what pays the final price.

Serotonin syndrome isn't like the common cold; it doesn't come and go in the matter of a couple of days. Serotonin syndrome is something that gets developed over the course of months and months and months (except in the acute case of something like molly or ecstasy), and likewise, is something that is gotten out of over the course of months and months and months. Maybe as I might convince some of you later, the body works in a very gradual fashion, with buildup for certain diseases happening long before the chink in the armor is actually shown.

So, before Joe is even able to function as a human being on his own again, he has to deal with the situation that is his maxed out medication vs his body's massive serotonin resistance; where delaying the first is only going to further delay the second. So, before he is even able to consider finding another minimum wage job and eating better and sleeping better and taking less drugs and living a healthier life, he needs to get to the point where he feels comfortable enough to be able to wipe shit from his own asshole; a process that, in his case, is going to take at least a few months, but, more likely closer to a year, if not more.

When thinking about the length of time it's going to take for Joe to "pull himself up by his own bootstraps," it's enormous. Joe somehow has to figure out this beast of a monster of mental dysfunction, and has to figure out a consistent way to stop him from wanting to crawl up under a blanket all day long. He thinks about the years that it's going to take him working bullshit jobs and climbing bullshit ladders, all for bullshit pay, and how, during this whole time, his body and mind are going to constantly feel like they're on the verge of shutting down on themselves, and upon thinking about all of this, Joe has a very hard time seeing the good in his life for the next couple of years at the very least.

For, now, during the entire process that Joe fights for his life as he climbs out of this very deep hole that he has dug himself into, every single setback that he experiences on his journey out of it is going to be akin to falling to the same level as the times when it was the worst. The precedence of the bottom has been set to the absolute lowest that he has ever felt, and for Joe, this is

pretty damn low.

As Joe thinks of all of this in the back of the cop car, it sets off the beginning of another panic attack. Except, this one is immediately too much for his taxed physiology to handle, and he passes out similar to last time. His body attempts to go into rapid recovery mode while the cop is just looking forward to be finished with their paperwork, and, after just a short while, Joe gets woken up by the dong of the church bell that the car passes; the stroke of midnight.

As he hears this church bell ring, he's struck with a very powerful memory. Joe is snapped back in time, to 12 o'clock noon, when he was doing his groceries and laundry, every week on Sunday. Oh how stable that time was; how predictable everything was that came and went. Joe longs for such a time. He snaps back to being present in the cop car as they hit a bump, and he gets hit with another wave of sadness and nostalgia.

How he wishes he could go back, before all the pills, before all the medical debt, before he was forced to get a credit card, to when his only worry was deciding which one of the routes was the fastest way to get to the store every week. He thinks about the thousands that he's down, what it's going to do to his grandma, and if she's even going to let him live with her again or if he'll have to suffer through his laundry list of conditions inside of a homeless shelter all on his own.

And then, Joe has a thought that he's never had before. One that gives him hope, but because it gives him hope, it also unsettles him. Joe realizes something that's very scary for the novice mind... he realizes that his situation would be much better off if he was dead.

He realizes that he can skip the years of hard work and pain and suffering and misery to himself and his poor grandma-ma by just putting an end to it now. That he doesn't have to go through the whole process of getting better if he just nips it in the bud to begin with.

As he has these thoughts, it's going to be very natural for an instinctual part of his brain to bring the fantasizing mind back to reality. Whether it be a memory, or a relationship, or some hope of anything, something will be done to pull the soul back to the light once this initially happens.

But unfortunately for Joe, this isn't going to be an isolated occurrence. Because now, now that this thought has been had, oh boy, is there danger to be had. Every single time that Joe comes across adversity when climbing this muddy hill and all—a moment that will occur quite frequently to say the least—his mind is going to default to the groove that tells him that he should kill himself. Upon every failure, upon every setback, upon every missed opportunity, the first line of defense: suicidal ideation.

Years and years of having to fight adversity head on, feeling shitty the whole time you do it, and having thoughts of suicide every single time you make a tiny mistake—mistakes that are doomed to constantly happen. Can you imagine the feeling of this scenario? The pain that this could bring to a tortured soul?

Joe sits with the fact that he's going to get no vacation from himself for so many months to come; no break from his hopeless pre frontal cortex that just wants to be heard. An internal storm, trying to be rectified by spoon-fed serotonin, one that doesn't pass upon simply waking up to a new day. Worse than nightmares, worse than headaches, worse than fatigue, as it is all of those and more; this isn't something that passes with chance, not even with luck.

This, this feeling of hopelessness combined with suicidal ideation combined with chronic fatigue combined with grief of the damage that you've caused to the loved ones around you combined with a mind that is constantly relaying the most negative thoughts that it can come up with to you combined with a body that doesn't even have enough energy to get itself out of the fetal position, this—THIS—is the closest that language can come to describing the feeling that is depression. And, for those of you who will never have to feel such a feeling... you have been blessed by a God that I don't even believe in to have never gone through a feeling like this one.

This feeling isn't one that comes and goes like all other feelings. It's an all encompassing darkness that culminates in silence, slowly tearing apart someone's life piece by piece, as they actively watch themselves become a shell of the person that they once were. This is not a disease that plays its role and then goes away. It's one that morphs to the role until it becomes the role. It's a demon of a beast that only exists in the shadows of one's reality until it has found its way to completely envelope their entire physical and mental being, at which point it latches on with a bite that doesn't miss. Scary enough to get people to think about suicide, and painful enough to get them to actually do it.

Depression is a unique son of a bitch because it has a couple of things working for it that makes it quite the effective disease. For one, similar to that of cancer, it's one's own body against itself. Except, instead of just having the body to deal with, the mind gets involved as well; compounding any negative experience that's felt. No bacteria to kill, no tumor to take out, no problem to rid. Just a body that's fighting to stay afloat, and a mind that is under so much siege that it's willing to take the final option, the one that goes against every instinctual gene in its body, just to stop the madness.

Combining with this, depression also cripples the mechanisms required to get rid of it. For someone to get out of a depressive slump, it takes consistent hard work and effort over a lot of consecutive days. Depression isn't something that a shot can get rid of, it isn't something that someone can do for you, and even the pills given to treat it aren't meant to attack the disease, but rather, to give the person the platform that they need to instill healthier living habits for themselves. Demanding proper flow of hormones and neurotransmitters in a state of extreme distress isn't going to come from systems that are completely crippled by a disease that doesn't manifest itself as a foreign invader.

As time goes on, this becomes harder and harder to do. It's not like you get depression and then you just deal with having it. It's a road that only leads one way unless deliberate effort is used to get out of it. Like a slow descent into

quicksand that speeds up when it gets closer to the neck, what other disease lets you feel it happen in real time?

This presents people that are going through a depressive episode with a truth that brings an incredible amount of grief. That they are the ones that must do what needs to be done, and that no one else can do it for them, and that the longer that they wait, the more likely it is that the groove that leads to suicidal ideation gets realized into reality at some point.

On top of all of this, even if the depression is to be defeated, its mark in the form of an undiggable groove now has the potential to last for a lifetime. Meaning that, if you are a person who is predisposed to feeling the weight of negative experiences heavier than, say, someone in the average, then you might have a real tough time stopping the trains of thought that you once knew so well from taking over; except, this time, faster.

As they say, what's dug can't be un-dug, son; and you better believe that the mind is going to have a hard time forgetting about an experience as substantial as a depressive episode.

Depression is quite the beast, and any attempt to downplay its ferocity is ignorance to what it can truly do to a human being. Currently, our best solution to fighting such a disease is a masking of the pain by playing god with our endocrine systems—an already godly creation—to distract from the feeling that one is living their life under a wet blanket as well as dangerously armed with the knowledge that they will be for quite some time. A massive oversimplification of a massively complex system, with our best train of thought being something along the lines of, serotonin leads to happy, so more serotonin must lead to more happy; a band-aid at best.

Depression presents a complicated problem. One that I believe has a very simple solution. In a world where we go back to living in the environments that we were bred from—living in the best way that we knew how—depression is not something that would commonly exist within tribes of humans. In a world where we live off the land, by the land, for the land, instead of taking it all into our own hands, cases of depression would be few and far between.

The problem is complicated. The solution is not. But we will never have the solution. At least, not any time soon. Because, there seems to be some attachment to the idea that human progress is linear and unidirectional, and how going against the grain of technological progress is akin to de-evolving as a species. Those of us who want it so bad, who need it so bad, will never get it, for the hands of the vile, greedy few at the top are vile enough to keep us from having it.

Because of how simple I claim the solution to depression is, it is not the problem that this first story is revolved around. Because, in short, we can easily solve depression by introducing a natural, from the land, for the land diet, with 8 hours of sleep on a circadian rhythm and daily exercise, and a responsibility within a tribal-like setting—one rich with social connection and bonding; so simple that anyone can do it, right?

What I mean to say is that the theory behind solving a problem as complex as depression isn't actually all that complex. In a world where we live so far off from the conditions that forged us, it's easy to speculate that, hmm, maybe it's sitting in a chair for 8 hours a day, and staring at screens for 14 hours a day, and consuming any mix of seed oils, refined sugars, and pesticide sprayed flour as the main constituents of our diets, and scrolling endlessly on social media feeds, and living alone and separate from our families and friends, and lack of exercise, and everything else that is making us all collectively feel like shit. Not the medication that's not being taken but nevertheless is being advertised to us on TV in between downs of watching our favorite football team play. The antidepressants that are gulped by the handful are effective enough to keep people from killing themselves, so we collectively shift our attention to more pressing matters at hand; like whether the color of the dress is blue or gold.

But, I did have to start somewhere to get those in the average acquainted with a different reality. One where time isn't spent choosing between options, but is instead spent surviving as no other options were given. No, the problem that I wish to talk about is a related one, but a different one entirely. And to understand this problem, it's best if we shift our attention back to Joe.

There's a reason that you and I, gods of time if you remember, have chosen to study Joe. You see, our situation is a little bit different from that of Joe's.

Off in another universe, you and I belong to a unique race of gods; ones that can control time. Forward, backward, we control it all at the snap of our fingers. We live amongst other gods of time, off in an ethereal cloud of space dust—one made up of the same stuff that heaven is made out of—in a universe different from the one that humans live in.

Along with our control of time, we possess a lot of other abilities that a human might call "godly;" too many of them to name. But, one in particular, is that we possess the capability to travel back and forth freely between universes, just as freely as we can travel back and forth in time.

Amongst our species, or more particularly, our local tribes, there exists dominance hierarchies similar to the ones that we observe on the planet Earth. You and I exist somewhere in the middle of this hierarchy, taking orders from the *supreme* gods of time above us, and then taking orders from the *gods of the supreme gods of time* above them.

You and I are trying to get our wings, the ones that will promote us to being supreme gods of time, thus unlocking a whole new range of capability and power. In order to do so, our supreme god above us has given us a list of problems that we must solve. If we manage to solve all of the problems on the list, we get our wings.

For, in this universe of ours, the only currency that is recognized by all the gods is knowledge. If we can all go backward and forward in time freely, vis-

iting other universes and timelines as we please, anything of material becomes worthless, for its accumulation can easily be had by any of the gods.

But, knowledge is different. Because even though these gods can travel anywhere and any-when they want, finding specific knowledge still requires that they observe the *right* places at the *right* times. And so, if we are able to find solutions to the problems that we've been given, by either crafting the results for ourselves with direct influence, or by finding the moment in time that produces them naturally, we give our supreme god above us a leg up, so that they can work their way towards being a god of the supreme gods of time.

You and I have chosen to study Joe because we believe that he is going to help us solve one of the problems on our list. You see, there is a part to Joe's story that I didn't give on the first go around that was crucial to understanding the downfall of Joe's life into the pits of depression. Joe has a predisposition; a very important one.

Whether it be an uncontrollable looping neuronal network, an unstoppable endocrine disruptor, a learned behavior pattern, or simply a maladaptive thought sequence, it's unimportant what the exact mechanism is, so long as one exists (and, because this is my story with my characters, I birth one into being just by saying so). What's more important is that, whatever the exact mechanism may be, the manifestation that bubbles up into his reality is one that makes depression (and anxiety) more likely than someone without his predisposition; Joe is a stray from the average.

Joe's predisposition makes its presence known to him in the form of something that is directly related to the problem that we must solve. In fact, Joe experiences the exact thing that we must solve. Joe has the problem of obsessive thought patterns; constant and consistent one-two-three's.

This chronic repetition of thought in the human brain proves to be one of mystery to our community of gods, one with a bounty for whoever can solve it in the form of an increase in reputation amongst the other gods. With the motivation behind solving this problem being double fold, we are quite keen to be the first pair of gods to solve this problem. And to do so, we have chosen Joe to be our subject of study, for better or for worse for Joe's sake.

You and I, we knew that Joe was going to become depressed way before it happened. In the process of looking at different humans to pick which one to study from, a lot of time was spent studying a wide variety of creatures experiencing this same issue before a selection was made particularly on Joe. During that process, a lot was learned on the patterns that exist within the human race; and, more particularly, the patterns that emerge from humans that experience a chronic case of obsessive thought.

We've seen case after case of people fall to the throes of depression, the ones who experience the worst of the obsessive thoughts, way more often than those who exist in the average. There's something about either the physical (with neurons) or nonphysical (with something we don't fully understand) looping method that correlates heavily to neurological distress, which in turn leads into

physical distress. A correlation that we can't help but pick up on as we scroll through Earth's library of lives.

We stopped particularly on Joe because he possesses a characteristic that is perfect for testing the plan. My plan. My plan on how you and I are going to solve the problem of obsessive thought.

Joe has a very poor memory. Not a case of dementia, but much more likely to be a case of an underdeveloped brain region related to his long term memory (his mom was a drinker). But as to the exact cause and reason why, they're unimportant. All we care about is the fact that he has a hard time remembering things in the long term, but is still able to function on a day to day basis just like anyone else (maybe except for a few bumps along the way).

It's perfect for the execution of my plan; you're going to love it. I think it might be the one that gets us to be the first ones to solve this problem so that we can get one step closer to getting our wings. And, if it works, drinks on you afterwards.

What it is you ask? Well, why don't I just show you in action instead of telling you myself. Let's go introduce ourselves to Joe.

We spawn in front of Joe, at the period of time picking up right where the depression story ended, with Joe in a very poor physical and mental shape. We make ourselves visible to Joe as floating clouds of glowing dust and speak to him in the friendliest tone that a god of time can have with a mere earthling.

"Hello Joe. No need to worry, we come in peace. Allow us to introduce ourselves. We are gods of time, coming from a distant universe that is unknown to you. We are all powerful, all capable, and are only somewhat merciful gods that have come to discuss something with you."

Joe is clearly shaken up by what's happening, but eventually pulls himself together to be attentive to what we have to say.

"We have a gift to offer you Joe. But this gift doesn't come for free; it comes with a price. The price of time. You see, you won't receive this gift until after we are done with our work together, something that might take a very long time. As much as we wish we could give you the gift upfront, we're afraid that this just isn't possible.

So Joe, what do you say, do you decide to work for us in exchange for a substantial gift that you will receive when we are finished?" we offer him, as if he has a choice.

Joe mumbles out a "sure" as he tries to not shit his pants, and we go ahead and take it as binding.

"Fantastic! Well then, let's get started. To begin, we're going to need you to take this." We use our fine control of gravity ability to inject Joe with a syringe and plunge the plunger. "This, Joe, is water from the fountain of youth. Not literally, but essentially. You see, you humans turn out to be very intelligent. It turns out that your race, the same one that eats potato chips in lay-z-boys while watching Storage Wars, progresses medical science enough to figure out indefinite cell immunity from all pathogens and cancer cells, essentially creating

an mRNA vaccine that allows humans to skip the whole aging process. So, congratulations Joe, you're now going to live forever!"

Joe, still confused as to what's going on, initially is fearful upon hearing such a statement, even though it was something that kid version of Joe would have always wanted. His thoughts now aren't ones related to how much freedom he's going to have, but instead, how much pain he is going to have to endure.

"We need you to be able to live forever so that you can experience the same boundlessness of time that we experience on an every-single-moment basis. We wouldn't want you croaking in the middle of our science experiment now would we?"

Joe, wide-eyed, gulps.

"No we wouldn't. So then... it's time that we get started. We--"

"What do I have to do?" Joe interrupts as he finally finds the courage to speak. "It better not be something up my ass" he jokes, in an attempt to lighten the load on his nervous system.

"Relax Joe, we're not porn producers. And besides, if we wanted something up someone's ass, we could do a whole lot better than ole Joe Schmo. No, we want you because we know that you suffer from a problem that we happen to be very interested in. We hear that you suffer from having to go down the very dark roads that obsessive thought patterns have lead you down."

Joe's heart drops just a hair, and his eyes widen just enough to show how much he is interested in what we have to say.

"We want you to help us solve this problem, for solving it is in both of our best interests."

Joe's interest is piqued.

"All we need you to do is to answer some really simple questions for us Joe. To start, tell us... what are you thinking about right now?"

Joe takes a few seconds to respond as he doesn't know how, and eventually mutters out an "I don't know" to buy himself more time.

"Joe, we're going to need you think harder than that. Just answer the question as simply as you can... what are you thinking about right now?"

Joe takes some time to himself but can't think of anything due to the fact that his body is still fighting shock. After a short bout of silence, we decide to light a fire under Joe's butt by demonstrating our godly capability.

"Well, maybe you just need some more time to acclimate." We back out of the picture and snap our metaphorical fingers and just like that, a year passes from the perspective of Joe's obsessive mind.

We travel back to be in front of Joe and announce our presence once again.

"Hello there Joe. Remember us?"

Joe freaks out a bit, and then freaks out a lot a bit, as he remembers us giving him hope a year ago and then disappearing without warning or a return date.

Initially fear, now a little bit of agitation, Joe decides to speak up about what we did. We, being understanding and somewhat merciful gods, let him

say his piece even though we couldn't give less of a shit. Then, after the dust settles and his hormones get absorbed, we ask him the same question that we're still looking for an answer to.

"Now that you've calmed down Joe, it's very important that you answer this next question for us very carefully. Tell us Joe, what is on your mind right now?"

"This again? I don't know, I'm still shaken up."

"Would you like another year to think about it?"

Joe immediately begins to put his tail between his legs and apologizes for his actions.

"We don't need an apology Joe, we need an answer. And so, it's time that we get back to the year old question; hopefully you've come up with something better for us this time around. If you don't want us working with someone else instead, tell us Joe, what are you thinking about right now?"

"Uh, uhm," Joe's mind panics. "Uhhh, uhmmm.. apples. I'm thinking about apples."

"Apples?"

"Yes, apples."

"Apples. That's what you're thinking about, you're thinking about apples?"

"Yes."

"Well, I guess we have to start somewhere. Okay fine, excuse us for a second Joe."

We back out of the picture and I get filled with excitement to finally be able to share my plan.

Okay you ready to hear my crazy plan? Okay, okay, hear me out... what if we got rid of all the apples?

You look at me with a scorn of bewilderment, as if I'm just as crazy as Joe when he first said the word apples.

"That was your plan? To get rid of all the apples? That's what you think is going to get us our wings, by removing all the goddamn apples?" you tell me.

No, but hear me out... it could work. Maybe not in the immediate sense, but in the sense of what it can lead to.

"How? What universe do you want to travel to in order to prove to me that removing all the apples from Joe's existence is going to end up solving the problem of obsessive thought? How are those two connected in anyway?"

No, trust me, I'm on to something. We remove all the apples and then whatever is next, we then just remove that, rinse and repeat, all the way until there is nothing left; then, boom, problem solved.

You take a moment to respond as you internally begin to question my competence as a god and how you ended up getting stuck with me in the first place to solve this list of problems.

“You do realize how long that’s going to take, right? Much less, if we’re even capable of removing whatever new thing that he’s thinking about after you get rid of all the apples, not even considering if you’re even able to completely get rid of all the apples or not. What sort of plan is this? How about you let me come up with a plan that will actually work.”

And I, being confident in my approach to remove all the apples, put my foot down to how we proceed with the case of Joe.

We could do that, let you come up with the plan and all, but, you know what? We *always* do your plan. I want to do my plan for once. And even if it’s stupid, I’m just asking you... let’s do this stupid plan just this one time. You don’t even have to do any of the work, I’ll do it all. You can spend the whole time picking your teeth or twiddling your thumbs, I’m just asking for the opportunity to do it my way.

You take a moment to think about my request, and in a moment backed by a little bit of remorse and a lot a bit of aloofness towards to the issue, you reluctantly agree even though you’re not thrilled about it, and I take off with excitement. “Wait here,” I exclaim on my way out.

I spend the next 18 earth months setting up traps and plans and schemes to completely remove all apples from the entire Earth. I burn all the trees, ruin all the seeds, raid all the stores, dismantle the company, and even somehow manage to start a campaign to change the common saying to “eating an orange a day keeps the doctor away!”

After all of this, I come back, metaphorically huffing and puffing as I’m filled with godly excitement to finally be able to boast my accomplishment to you.

I’ve done it, I’ve finally done it! All apples, completely gone. The chances of Joe ever thinking about apples again are slim at best.

You, unimpressed, congratulate me on my useless achievement. “What have you achieved? Like we both already knew, you’re just going to have to rinse and repeat a few more billion times as he’ll just keep coming up with new things.”

Yes, but now we know that he won’t be thinking about apples again.

We spawn in front of Joe once more, who hasn’t seemed to change much from the last time we saw him 18 months ago. He’s still depressed and feels as if he’s hanging on to his forever life with the little hope that we’ve given to him with the promise of our gift.

“Hello again Joe! I hope you remember your godly science experiment partners, for we’re back for more data collection. Tell us Joe, out of all the things in the world that you could be thinking about right now, what is currently on your mind?”

Joe responds without initial deliberation. “What am I thinking about? How am I supposed to answer that when I’m looking at what I’m looking at?”

“Joe, we really would like for you to get on with answering the question. Need we remind you that for both of our immortal souls, the difference between 1 year and 100 years is trivial. But, for your human mind, the experience is far from.”

Joe’s eyes get wide as he has a sudden, rare memory of the year of prolonged, dwindling hope that we caused the first time we met. Upon reliving this feeling, Joe’s mind snaps to the quickest thing that it can think of to answer the question.

“Oranges, I’m thinking about oranges.”

If there was a way for an ethereal cloud of god dust to show defeat, it would be written all over my space complex. There’s silence between all three of us as you are getting ready to pounce on the opportunity for a good ole ‘I told you so,’ and, Joe here is trying to figure out what him saying oranges has to do with us acting so weird.

Obvious to us now, when under acute stress, Joe’s brain defaults to similar pathways of thinking that give rise to similar behavior. In this particular case, somehow simple fruits have been coupled in his brain with the idea of needing to pull information from a highly accessible source of learned knowledge very quickly. Maybe fruits were one of the first things that he learned of as child, maybe they were the first thing his mind was able to visualize, maybe it’s something else entirely, but, whatever it is, it’s unimportant.

What’s more important is the fact that we’re 18 earth months into working towards a solution and we’re only 0.0000000001% of the way there. At this point, we could have also just been gods of human physiology and simply plucked the problem out of existence. But, I’m adamant with my choice of continuing on this oh-so-silly path, much to your continued dismay.

You ask me what my genius plan will be this time; to get rid of all the oranges? Just to keep rinsing and repeating for a few more billion times? And I respond with something even crazier.

What if we got rid of all food?

A moment of silence had from you who is now considering if my so called ‘godly’ brain actually belongs amongst the ones that we’re studying now instead. “Remove all food? How? Why? Did you even think about that before you breathed it into existence (metaphorically breathed of course)? How are you going to take away all food from an organism that is dependent on it to live?”

I told you at the beginning that you don't have to do any of the work, and besides, time is of no concern to us; so, bitch, let me vibe (I say, appealing to my godly ego of wanting to do it my way; and yes, I would argue that gods have egos—I mean, are you going to tell me that Zeus couldn't have used a therapist? But I digress).

It's my burden to bear so go back to twiddling your thumbs or taking a nap or holding your dick or whatever it is that you want to do with your time while I get back to trying to solve the problem my way.

You do a metaphorical eye roll and buzz off to leave me to it. And I, I get to thinking.

Hmm, removing all food... this one might be tricky...

85 earth years pass on by, at the blink of an eye for you and I, and I come back to you even more excited than the first time around.

You're not going to believe this, but I solved it. I actually came up with a way to remove all food from Joe's environment, once and forever.

"Bullshit. Show me."

Gladly.

We go and visit Joe and you see the creation that I have been working on for the past eight decades. We're in the middle of a valley with a river flowing by and plenty of trees on the outskirts and open fields in the middle. There's a small population of people living in primitive houses in the middle of this valley, untouched by anyone besides those who live inside of it. Upon entering the village, you notice that everyone inside of it is wearing a backpack for some reason. You ask me what the backpacks are all about it, and I instruct Joe to come over to us so that I can unzip one of them.

Wah-lah! Behold, my creation. So, I did some research with the aid of some nonethical human testing (only somewhat merciful if you recall), and I found something quite interesting. As it turns out, humans are able to survive solely on a mixture of bull shark stem cells, blood from the elusive Siberian tiger, koala semen, and the original fruit punch Jack3D, all the way until the end of their life cycles. Every single person in this village is wearing one of these rigs, with someone coming in at unknown intervals during the night to refill each of them with more of the life-sustaining fluid. On top of that, the people that have been selected to live in this village alongside of Joe are ones that also have memory issues. I have built a community of people that don't need food, aren't around food, and thus, don't ever think about food. I've done it!

You, slightly impressed this time, still turn to your repeated rhetoric. "Okay,

but so what? We're in the same scenario as last time. Let's ask Joe what he's thinking about again so that we can waste another handful of decades."

Joe, who, is living a fairly better life now in this community of people, still suffers from the one thing that you and I are after; his relationship with what we call the obsessive thought pattern. Aware of this, we talk to Joe once more.

"Joe, hello again. I know you remember us this time, so I'll get straight to the point. Our data collection needs to continue, so tell us Joe, what are you thinking about right now?"

"I'm doing better, thanks for asking... dick. What am I thinking about right now? Well, it's gotta be all the beautiful nature around me. The trees, the water, the mountains, the animals, the fields; all of it. It's so wonderful, in fact, that I can't stop thinking about it!"

"Oh don't worry, we'll fix that for you. Back in a jiffy Joe!"

We leave Joe's presence and sit in silence for a bit as we both prepare for the discussion that's inevitably going to happen. You, thinking you don't need a reason as to why we should stop with this plan now, and me, already working on how I can remove all the natural elements from Joe's life—making him revert back to depression as a likely consequence—sit in stillness as our thought patterns are wildly forming in drastically different ways.

You, annoyed with the silence, break it with anticipation. "Are we really doing this again?"

Indeed we are my friend. Indeed we are.

You, not having the energy or desire to fight this fight, go back to your hibernation as I stew with my thoughts.

Then, there comes a period of repetition. For the next three thousand centuries, the cycle is the same. Joe presents something that he's thinking about that seems impossible to completely remove from his life, you reluctantly agree to let me continue on with the plan that you think is going nowhere, and then, after some arbitrary period of time where immortal Joe experiences the rise and fall of different human civilizations, I present a working solution to your still majorly unimpressed self.

Over and over again, this happens. And, in the process, something interesting to note. Upon each iteration, I increase my skill of being able to remove whatever arbitrary thing it is that Joe comes up with from his immediate environment. In the process of having the scope become narrower and narrower over time, I am forced to become better and better at coming up with solutions to successfully remove whatever it is from Joe's environment. The only way for me to continue down this path is to rise to the needs of the occasion on each occurrence; a chiseling of a new skillset.

And poor Joe, destined to live forever as our paltry science experiment, as his reality slowly becomes narrower and narrower upon each repetition of our acquaintance.

At some point after doing this time and time again, I come to you, with a metaphorically confident grin and a glowing complexion that you can feel in the

fabric of reality before I even get close to your presence. You know something is up, and indeed, something is up. I've come to your presence with some very exciting news.

I've done it. I've finally done it.

"Done what?"

Done the impossible. Check it out.

We spawn out in a void of any light or energy; a vacuum of space.

"What is this place?" You ask.

We're in deep space. An area where there's no visible light from any distant star or structure for millions of light-years around.

You spot something else floating out here with us; a human. It's Joe. Upon recognizing you becoming aware of Joe's presence, I call out to him.

Say hello Joe!

"He can hear us?" You ask.

Not through vibrations in this medium, but through an antenna, chipset, and microphone that he has in his space suit. And check it out, he also has one of those life sustaining rigs that I made, but even more optimal. Turns out that garlic was more effective than the bull shark stem cells; who knew.

With this one large suit that he's in, it's holding enough life sustaining fluid to last for a very long time; that is, taking his very low energy expenditure into account. And, he can't even see this massive suit that he's wearing because of the blinders I put over his viewing window. His reality is completely devoid of stimuli. Joe, say something!

There's no response from Joe.

You, still confused at the situation you're looking at, ask me of the moment's importance. And I, who have been waiting for what seems like eternity to finally be able to share the fruits of my labor with you, answer with,

Check this out. Hey Joe, I know you can hear me you son of a bitch so answer my question or else I'll make this thing a whole lot worse for you; don't embarrass me in front of my friend Joe. Now, say it for my partner's godly ears to hear... what are you thinking about right now?

There's a pause and then Joe answers real slowly.

“There is nothing any more. Only nothing...” Joe’s voice slowly fades out.

“Okay so you’ve ruined a poor man’s soul, so what?” you ask me.

Don’t you see? This is it, I’ve done it!

“Done what?”

I’ve solved the problem! No more obsessive thought patterns!

“You’re joking right? Poor old Joe floating out here in deep space is your example of how staying with your plan to the end is an answer to the problem of the obsessive thought pattern?”

I do indeed. Here, watch.

We say goodbye to Joe for now and teleport back to planet Earth. We ctrl + f on Earth’s population and enter the keywords “obsessive thought patterns” into the search bar. Everyone that deals with this problem is highlighted for us to see, and, within a snap of our fingers, they are all wearing the same space rig that was developed for Joe, they are all vaccinated against death, and they are all shot out to various regions of deep space; each to live the rest of their days much like how Joe is now.

Within another snap of our fingers, we fast forward a few thousand earth years, and go to visit each and every person that was shot out to various regions of space. And, to neither of our surprise, none of them now have an issue with obsessive thoughts.

I boast my achievement once more to you, now armed with proof that my solution actually works.

Ha! And you were worried that we were wasting our time doing this plan!

You, at a loss for words, are experiencing a mix of frustration, confusion, and disappointment. But, in any case, you manage to get out, “Yeah, you might have solved the problem in some very specific case, but it’s in the most backwards way possible. It only works given a perfect set of circumstances, and even then, it doesn’t even address the problem directly. How is that considered a success in your mind?”

And I, who have been eating your shit for my plan this entire time, am boiling over with excitement to finally make my claim as to why this whole thing was worthwhile.

You see, my fellow brethren of a god, what you don’t understand, and might not ever have the ability to understand, is that not every one of us was given the best option available. We weren’t all given VR Xbox 1440’s and World

Destroyer for Nintendo 64³ in our youths; some of us were too busy eating Cinnamon O's Munch and drinking Doctor Thunder to be rolling in the privilege that we didn't get.

This whole time, this entire time that I was working on my plan, I knew that it wasn't the best plan available to us. I knew that I wasn't working with first place material, and hell, I couldn't forget it with you ramming it back down my throat upon every instance of me succeeding.

But, I didn't stick with my plan because I thought it was the best plan ever; I stuck with it because it was one that I believe in—and have believed in—despite your constant noise trying to tell me otherwise. It was a path that I wanted to explore, and, now, now that this path comes to bear incredible fruit, you're too blinded by your circumstances to appreciate the fact that not all fruit is as sweet as the sweetest.

“Oh please, you act like shooting people off into space and making them forget everything that they've ever known by doing nothing other than just snapping your fingers is something that's worthy of praise. It's a barely functional solution that only 'solves' the problem given a perfect set of circumstances.”

I sense a little bit of disconnect, so I'll explain a bit further.

Our task was to solve each of the problems on our list of problems that we were given by the gods of time above us. If we were to think abstractly about whatever arbitrary solution to whatever arbitrary problem, then we can arbitrarily categorize these solutions into two—not always perfectly-disjoint buckets: those of the direct type vs. those of the indirect type.

The direct approach is the one that everyone is familiar with. In the direct approach, the problem is labeled as a problem and the imaginary game of tug of war begins. A person, dealing with a set of circumstances that are labeled as being a “problem,” is to come up with a sequence of events that directly changes the dynamics that this “problem” brings—in an attempt to mitigate the negative issues that emerge from its presence.

There's a see-sawing curve, where the power shifts back and forth between the problem and the entity trying to solve the problem. When breakthroughs are discovered, the see-saw moves in favor of the problem-solver. When the problem-solver is stumped, the see-saw moves in favor of the problem. That is, until, at some point, the problem-solver comes up with a solution that it is good enough to allow them to get off of the see-saw entirely.

The aim of the direct approach is simple; defeat the enemy. A deep understanding of the components at play is only secondary to coming up with a functional solution to the problem at hand. Essentially, if it works, it works, and no other questions need to be asked; there are other problems that need solving.

Compare this to what I'll refer to as the indirect approach; a sequence of events that indirectly changes the dynamic with a set of circumstances that would otherwise be labeled as a “problem.”

Easily seen through an example, imagine that you're back in elementary school dealing with a physically dangerous, class-room bully. The direct approach would be something along the lines of confronting the bully, learning karate, telling a teacher, or a parent, or an older sibling, or anything else related to any amount of time spent on dedicated thinking towards what it would take to win this specific battle.

On the other hand, An indirect approach might look something like, maybe one of your parents gets a job out of state and you have to move away. A sequence of events that was directly unrelated to the problem at hand, yet still had the power to change the dynamics of the experience that you had with it once and forever.

At first glance, the indirect approach might not seem like a solution at all. And, for the majority of the time spent developing this pathway, it's not. The indirect approach to solving problems remains completely worthless up until the point in time where the entire set of actions sum together to create something of more value than the sum of the individual components.

The amount of time, resources, and creativity that it takes for the indirect approach to prove itself to be useful is magnitudes higher than that of the direct approach. If we were to have studied psychology and psychiatry and biology and chemistry and the history of the human being and all of this jazz, we probably could've spit out a solution in less than five years' time. But, instead, we spent 6,000x that long, while probably doing 60,000x the amount of work.

In this way, the indirect approach is blatantly subordinate to the direct approach. But, the direct path comes with a very sneaky implication hidden away in its details that's much different than the front and centered lack of sneakiness that comes with the indirect pathway.

We have to remind ourselves that we're dealing with imperfect creatures, on an imperfect planet, in an imperfect universe. When we think about this whole sphere of 'ideas' and 'concepts' and 'solutions' to 'problems' in their absolute general forms, they're always going to be just a wee bit detached from the reality of the humans implementing them. So, when we imagine what it would have been like to spend just those five years coming up with a direct solution, we might also want to consider what might've happened after those five years were over.

Not to say that this is something that definitely *would* happen, but, just consider the following scenario that doesn't seem too far off from something that definitely *could* happen. Let's just say that we solve the problem of obsessive thought for the human beings living on the planet Earth by studying whatever it is that we have to study in order for us to come up with whatever direct solution that we come up with.

Then, later on in our journey, while we're off solving the next problem on our massive list of problems, we just so happen to find ourselves in the same exact timeline of the same exact universe on the same exact planet studying the same exact creatures as we did when having to solve the problem of obsessive thought. And so, we can't help but turn our attention to how our solution has

fared over all this time; and, after doing so, we find that something is just a little bit off.

Because of the fact that our direct solution involved person-to-person interaction at some point in the sequence of whoever it is wanting to gain access to the solution that we created—whether it be a pill or a conversation or a surgery or whatever it is—we opened up our solution to influence from human imperfection.

It took these 20 odd Earth years for a mutation to happen, stemming from the haphazard human practice of administering the solution to the masses by utilizing underpaid and overworked laborers who already had a biologically relevant predisposition to make mistakes in the first place. The inevitable carelessness finally catches up to the DNA of the species, and so now, a new problem exists. Two new problems; distracted thoughts and reoccurring nightmares.

Let's say that our supreme god boss above us gets word of this before we're done solving all the problems on our list. And, because our solutions are only valuable if they are solved in their absolute entirety, we're sent back to solve these two new problems. Which, if we then took this one step further, maybe this cycle were to repeat later down the road after we've solved both of these two new problems, leading us to now having to solve four new problems.

With humans (in particular), direct solutions may advance the way of "progress," but, oftentimes at the cost of doing so in a very ugly way. A direct solution for tuberculosis was once heroin. A direct solution for treating mental illness was once the act of drilling holes in people's heads to let the demons out. And, a direct solution to creating a more superior race was to kill 6 million Jews plus an additional 11 million others that had belonged to other minority groups. Direct solutions are messy, because, well, put simply... humans are messy.

On the flip side of things, indirect solutions can take a way longer period of time to be of any use to anyone at all, but, the juicy payoff that comes from sticking with the process until the end is the robustness that emerges once a working solution has fully been pieced together.

But, hypothetically speaking, what if we were able to negate this blatant con of needing a massive front-loaded amount of resources for some backwards attempt at a solution by averaging it out over the spread of other gods of time working on this same problem? That is, what if we were to share our solution with the other gods of time?

"You make no sense," you tell me. "You're now basing your argument as to why indirect solutions are better than direct ones around an idea that you've just completely pulled out of your ass. Why would we ever want to give out this solution to the other gods of time? What could we possibly gain by doing that?"

Well, nothing. But, we're not actually giving it out to the other gods of time.

"Then who are we giving it out to?"

Humans.

“Humans? What humans?”

The ones reading this book.



A Solution

Okay, so what is this thing? Well, that's a complicated question. This thing is a lot of things.

It often changes its shape depending on the demands of the situation that it needs to be used in. But, one aspect of it that remains true no matter how it is used, is that it exists as an arbitrary categorization that can be used to organize a person's entire life; comprehensively so.

Categorization is a tool that the human brain uses to help it make better sense of what's going on around it. For those unfamiliar with the concept, it's helpful to start with the fundamentals.

Different human beings experience life in many different shapes and forms, but there's a common thread between the way that all humans experience life. That is, all humans experience the *continuity* of time, with very slight deviations from a norm. Trees grow gradually, storms roll in and out, and puberty doesn't happen as soon as we're born. There is a continuous process of things going from one state to another, and we humans experience life as such.

When everything exists on such a continuous progression, it can be difficult to share specific ideas without first explaining all the broader ideas that are prerequisite. But, when we instead break up continuously happening events into discrete chunks, then communicating with these smaller, specific ideas becomes much easier.

There's a whole boatload of examples to choose from that exemplify situations where humans use categorization as a tool to help us make better sense of our realities. For one, consider light. The wavelength range of all possible colors of visible light is completely continuous. No gaps, jumps, or hops in the frequencies of the waves. Yet, we split these wavelengths up into discrete buckets that we call 'red,' and 'orange,' and 'yellow,' and so on. These are completely arbitrary lines that we draw onto the continuous spectrum of all visible light wavelengths, and, by drawing these arbitrary lines, it allows for us to more effectively communicate the idea of a color without both parties first having to know the exact wavelengths of the different colors.

When someone says red, the general consensus is that it's meant to refer to a certain *range* of wavelengths, not just one specific wavelength that everyone has honed in on. Colors exist as an example categorization that's been created by humans, and only for humans.

Another example of humans using categorization is in the way that we structure time. There are arguably only four days that matter when it comes to the point of view of the planet Earth that we live on; and they have nothing to do with Christmas, New Years, Labor Day, or any other made up holiday that we've created. The only four days that Mother Earth cares about are the two solstices and the two equinoxes; the beginning of each of the four seasons.

On planet Earth, with its specific tilt, its specific axis of rotation, and its specific orbit, we experience each of these four days once every full cycle around our parent star (which for us, takes 365 day-night rotations).

But, four days for every 365 doesn't make for much of a calendar. Maybe some 50,000 years ago this wouldn't have been much of a problem, but in today's day and age, when people have every five minute block of their day planned out on their smartphone calendars, having only one day of reference for every 91 makes for a scheduling nightmare.

So, to resolve this, we further categorize the continuous event of the Earth going around the sun into more discrete chunks. We created the concept of the week, the concept of the month, the leap-year, the hour, the minute, and the second; all of these serving as arbitrary lines drawn in the continuous sand of time.

The last example of categorization that I want to shine some light on is the one that I'm using to write this text with; words. The purpose of a word is to convey the meaning of an idea. Ideas, unlike words, are not discrete with clear-cut boundaries. Ideas exist in the abstract, nonphysical space hosted by our minds; a space which exists as being as continuous as the passing of time.

Much like the labeling of the different colors, the use of words is a quick and effective way for us to better communicate and process what's going on around us with the environments that we interact with. But, using words as our main mode of communication doesn't come without its own shortcomings.

Much like how if I say the color 'red' to you, the idea that is created in your mind by reading the word here might not be the exact same idea as the one that I was trying to convey. What's lost by categorizing a continuous spectrum with discrete buckets is the exactness of the message. Sure, saying the word 'red' is quick and easy for anyone to get a general sense of the idea that I want to convey, but, saying the exact nanometer length of the wave of visible light—of the exact 'red' that I'm thinking of—is going to outperform the quick, categorized approach when it comes to the precision of the idea that I want to share.

With words, it's not always clear-cut as to which combination of them is going to best convey the ideas that we wish to communicate. Unlike the use of colors, there isn't always a clear and obtainable ideal that can be referenced to as the best way to convey an idea. The categorization of words is going to have an amount of nuance and bias that depends on who is giving the message, who is receiving the message, and the unique circumstances of the setting for its delivery.

All of this to say, I'm going to be using discrete and arbitrary words to describe something that is not discrete or arbitrary in nature. On top of that, it might not be the case that I choose the best combination of words to describe this idea to every person reading this; and to those people, I apologize.

I've done the best that I can to break this complex idea down to its bare-bones parts, but, because of both my limitations on the skill of my explaining, as well as the limitations imposed by chunking a continuous idea into discrete parts, the method that I've used here isn't perfect to say the least. And, until we find a way to link our hair together and share thoughts and ideas like in Avatar, it's never going to be perfect.

Now, with all of this categorization preamble out of the way, I wish to share one more example of a human made categorization; mine. The one that I use to reason about life.

So, to get back to the original question... what is this thing? Well, it's a lot of things. But it's also no thing.

No product, no physical manifestation, no tangible collection of mass. No feeling of its intricacies, no grappling with its handles, no smelling it, no tasting it, nor no hearing it. Choosing just one set of words or one pairing of adjectives to describe this thing is too simplistic; so instead, I'll use a lot.

This *thing* is a **lens**. It's a window that can look into the past, it's a channeling of energy that can be directed in this moment, and it's a structured framework that can be used to predict the future. It's a way to process what has already happened, what is happening, and what is going to happen; a way to understand, reason, and infer. It can be directed in any direction of the user's choosing; without it giving its opinion as to how it's being used.

This *thing* is a **map**. It can be looked at from a perspective as zoomed out as possible, taking the whole map into account, just as well as from the perspective of an infinitely zoom-able point somewhere inside of it. It's a means of efficiently storing information that favors the visual system in the human brain; it represents a data structure that can hold as much information as information is required, without its complexity of search becoming astronomical for an astronomical amount of content. It provides routes from one location to another, it provides the topography of different terrains, and it serves as a reference for when direction is desired.

This *thing* is a **home**. It represents a place of comfort in an otherwise uncomfortable world. A free dwelling that can be customized to however one likes it; a dwelling that exists on the go just as much as it does in a physical location. It is a home that allows for changes in the structure, allows for different paint on the walls, allows for different types of cupboards to be swapped out, hell, it even allows for a swimming pool to be put on the top floor; the choices of decoration remain exactly as that, choices. A home that can be accessed anywhere, anytime, by anyone, even in the darkest of situations.

This *thing* is a **platform-giver**. It's a means of providing energy that didn't necessarily exist to the disposal of the user before its implementation.

It allows for change, and keeps up with it as it does. It provides the user with the pair of running shoes that they didn't have before; it represents one's ability to do. It is a way for someone to change their reality in a structured and organized way.

This *thing* is a **boilerplate**. It represents skeleton code that just does the bare minimum on its own. The true beauty of what a template can do is only shown through the beauty of its implementation. The rule set to build is minimal and allows for an immense amount of creativity. In its unimplemented form, it represents neutrality as an empty canvas for one to paint on in any way that they please.

This *thing* is **easily shareable**. It can be drawn on a bar napkin just as well as be painted as a mural in someone's house. It allows for comparison between other individual implementations, without there being a universal ideal that any one of them can chase. It allows for multiple people to operate under the same structure-coupling experiences between however many humans one pleases—just as well as it allows for private, personal discussion to be shared between individuals with drastically different backgrounds and implementations.

This *thing* is a **universal dialogue** between your body, your mind, and your soul. It's given in a format that is easily understood by all parts that make up a human being, with all the components having read, write, and execute access to this whiteboard of communication. It represents a channel for the subconscious mind to speak to the conscious mind; a channel for the body to request its needs; and a channel for the soul to delegate over both its body and its mind.

This *thing* is a **story**. It's a narrative that places the control of one's life into the hands of the one living it; as much as can be done. It can tell the main character how to think in a situation that they might not be able to think in otherwise, it can guide them towards acceptable behavior in an otherwise unacceptable situation, and it can produce emotion through a behavior function that can be tweaked and twiddled with as much is needed.

This *thing* is **hope**. It can be used to actualize what's not currently here yet; a source of inspiration. It's a shoulder to lean on that provides as much comfort as comfort is needed. It can be used as a tool to steady-state a life that is otherwise not steady; a way to anchor one's core essence to an immovable rock during a passing storm. It's a thread that can be held onto, even when all of the other threads have been plucked away.

And finally, this *thing* is an **identity**. It's a way for someone to look at themselves, share this view with others, and change the parts that are undesired. It's a source of confidence, even when the confident moments aren't remembered. It represents the backbone of the mirror into the implementer's soul—a truly individualized creation.

But, as many things as it is, it's also not.

This *thing* is **not** a get out of jail free card. It's not a way to deflect responsibility of actions already taken, nor a pre-john for deflecting responsibility of

the ones that are to come. It can't be used in a court of law, just as well as it can't be used in an argument with a loved one; it is not here for pity, it is here for reflection. It can't be used to excuse the behavior of the one who implemented it, it can only help explain it.

This *thing* is **not** a get rich quick scheme. It is not something that gives its entire value upon immediate digestion of its components, but rather, can only be seen through the hindsight of its influence. It is not a way to bypass the gradualism of the body, and, it is not a way to bypass the requirement of energy when it comes to work (even though it channels energy that is already free to create).

This *thing* is **not** something that can be used to totally avoid negative feelings. Neither it, nor its implementer, have total control over whatever happens in the direction of the outside coming in during the processes that are our lives. External influence will always play an unpredictable part in the outcome that is the perception of any given moment, no matter if it's wished to be one way of another; and this doesn't always lead to sunshine and rainbows.

This *thing* is **not** something that can be forced. What goes inside of it is genuine to the person that it's meant to capture. Falsehoods naturally get plucked out as a consequence of repetitive attentiveness to the matter. It is something that flows with the current of energy that already exists; the flow of energy that's well out of our control. It's not crafting nothing into something, it's re-crafting what already is into something else.

This *thing* is **not** a procrastination tool. It is not meant to steady-state what doesn't need to be steady-stated. In times of acute stress, it serves as a useful reference to what isn't being felt in the moment that it's being accessed, but, otherwise, it serves as a conveyer-belt that's always turned on, acting as a handler of the events produced by the passing of time. It is not meant to bypass what one knows needs to be done, but rather, it serves it to them on a plate.

This *thing* is **not** a party trick. Its presence isn't meant for the validation or presentation to others; it is internally defined for internal use. It's not necessarily flashy, it's not necessarily sparkly, and, it's not necessarily always available for the communication to others; it is, however, internally relevant and understood.

This *thing* is **not** a perfect window into the chaos that is to come. What is to come is what is to come, as it's well out of the range of any of our predictions. Until humans have a much better understanding of the universe that we come from, we will never be able to fully predict what happens in the future of our lives, due to the chaos that we perceive to be around us all of the time. It is not meant to control the future, it's used to prepare for it.

This *thing* is **not** a solution to all of the dysfunction that exists. It is not the golden bullet that is meant to replace all of psychiatry; it simply represents an alternative. In a world where the best solutions aren't always readily available at a moment's notice to everybody, some means of control is better than no means of control. This thing is not meant to replace all medication, it is not

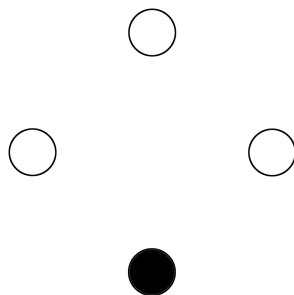
meant to replace all therapy, and it is not meant to replace all conversations about dysfunction; it is meant to simply open up a new avenue for discussion.

This *thing* is **not** something that will keep every person reading this from killing themselves. Some very hurt people are going to be very hurt, regardless of the words that I type into this electronic box. This thing isn't meant to be something that's going to save everybody alive today, for, that's a burden of impossible weight for any human being to bear.

And lastly, this *thing* is **not** you. Not entirely, that is. No matter how comprehensive and thoughtful and exact this thing is implemented, it will never be able to fully capture the entire essence that is a human being. All of the nuance, all of the complexity, all of the quirks that make us all stand out from the rest; these are things that no simple model has the room to hold exhaustively.

This thing is a lot of things. But it's also no-thing. But really, it's just four things. Four things arranged in the shape of a diamond.

Clean cut in theory, controlled chaos in practice. Behold, I give you, my
Categorization of Life.



It starts at the bottom, where else would it start? The bottom is what everything else is built on top of; it's the foundation for any other structure.

The bottom is the place for all the things that have to be done; whatever it is that needs doing in order to do anything else. What does this mean for a human living in the twenty-first century? At the bare minimum, food, water, warmth, sleep, supplies, and money are all needed—to some extent—to survive in today's climate.

Individually, each person will have a unique set of things that goes alongside of this bare minimum core, with the size of this set being a function of how spoiled they were during their developmental years. For some, the bottom is nothing more than what's necessary. For others, the bottom is what they dedicate their entire life to perfecting. But, for most, the bottom is nothing more than a stepping stool to what exists beyond it.

When asked for a single word—an arbitrary categorization—to label the bottom, I personally would choose the word “Health.” I used to prefer the term “Micro-life,” but changed it to health once I realized that there's nothing insignificant about taking care of one's health. It is a ritualistic, instinctual behavior that stems back through our genome over millions of years; there is nothing small or petty about that. So now, I like the word Health.

Health is something that needs to be taken care of for the entirety of one's existence. From sentient start, to too fast finish, it's a nonnegotiable requirement of living in this world that needs constant attention. But, just because it's something that has to be taken care of for the rest of time, doesn't necessarily mean that it has to be unenjoyable.

Instead of running, one can swim. Instead of swimming, one can box. Instead of boxing, one can stretch. Similarly, instead of using a calendar, one can use their phone. Instead of working in a kitchen, one can work in a trade. And, instead of having nothing to be responsible for, one can get a plant. There are many ways to implement one's own unique bottom; something that is also going to be true for each of the remaining three areas.

Appointments, tasks, to-do's, messages, (e)mail, reminders, responsibilities,

work, and all of the other bullshit that comes on top of the basic set of biological needs that are needed to be taken care of by any individual that wants to stay afloat in the twenty-first century, are all put into the bottom region just as well as the body's needs of nutrition, hydration, sleep, exercise, hygiene, warmth, and so on. There's no avoiding the need to know when you have to show up to whatever it is that you have to show up to, there's no avoiding calling the billing company when they overcharge you by a ridiculous amount, and there's no avoiding paying the government the national fee just for living; all belonging in the bottom of this structure.

With a plethora of options available, one always has the ability to take care of a large portion of their physiological health, even if it's suboptimal. Taking food, water, and sleep for granted (because it's not like being able to get your hands on any of these things is important or anything), the combination of breath work, stretching, and cold water immersion can completely take care of one's other bodily needs, and are able to be done by just about any living person on this planet. Breath work can be done anywhere, anyhow. Stretching can be done anywhere, in a lot of ways. And, cold water immersion can be done by anyone that lives near a body of water or has plumbing—that is, by anyone who has the cojones to cause self-inflicted suffering to themselves for a few minutes.

Food, drinkable water, and sleep, aren't as straightforward; these require resources that I can't give over text on screen, as much as I wish it were possible. If you can take care of your food, water, and sleep, it's stupidly easy, you just do it. For those who can't, it's stupidly difficult, because they just can't. Chamomile tea and 5mg melatonin tablets only do so much for the insomniacs, just as much as free food does for the poor, just as much as a water bottle does for someone living in the desert; they represent temporary solutions at best that do nothing to attack the root of the problem.

One of the few upsides of being dealt a hand that lacks any cards related to any of the body's essential needs, is that the body is so incredibly adaptable, that non-optimizations can become optimizations for their own sake so long as the circumstances demand it. There are people that only sleep for a few hours every night, there are people who only eat a little bit of food every couple of days, and there are people that consistently stretch their cells' thirsts to their absolute limits; all of which are people who are still living, and, most of which, are people who are still doing what they need to do in order to survive.

With the body, it's easy. You feed it, you move it, you rest it, and it's as happy as a clam. But, for the mental side of things, it takes series of highly coordinated events that rely on the right set of external circumstances in order for their success to happen. For someone who doesn't have materials, money, shelter, or warmth in the winters, it's not as simple as a case of hopping into a cold shower to take care of what needs to be taken care of for the sake of their mental health. It can take an incredible amount of time and energy to get a

leg up on one's societal health, and it often takes generous circumstances that are also well out of their control to do so.

For some, taking care of the mental side of things can demand all of their time and energy, from the start of their life to the end of it; the case of a robust, yet socially crippled human, that has been forged by a lifetime of hard work just to spend their entire timeline in a perma-defensive stance guarding nothing other than their general wellbeing.

For these unfortunate crew, they must find their footing in any foothold that they can; to help endure the winters that they have had no say in having to endure. Just as much as I wish I could give food to all those who are hungry, I wish I had the ability to give everyone who needs money the money that they need, but, reality has other plans in mind. The only thing that I can give to this lot is the pointing out of an idea that might prove beneficial upon playing around with it for some time.

By being forged by the hardships of life, a famous saying comes to mind; a smooth sea never made a skilled sailor. The ones that are constantly faced with adversity learn the concept of anti-fragility more than anyone studying it from the outside in. Living through a period of constant storms, even when one thinks that they can't take any more storms, molds a person to be able to handle any future hardships that are in store for them later on in their lives.

By going through the pits of life, and having the concept of the necessity of work drilled into the forebrains of those who must dedicate their entire life to it, these people learn a skill that can't be taught inside of a classroom. This thought might not have any value to someone in the short term, but, might prove to be of much higher importance when the storms finally do pass (for the lucky few that actually have this happen). When the sun comes through the clouds, and the waters become calm again, not only is there a newfound freedom to explore in this unfamiliar, yet welcoming world, but there is also confidence in their ability to handle the storms if they are to ever come back.

This confidence can instead manifest itself as a worry to those who haven't been through the storms themselves; a worry that the skilled sailor crew couldn't be more familiar with.

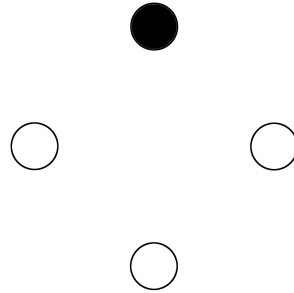
Capitalizing on this idea, in a world as unpredictable and broad as we live in today, knowing the core set of actions needed to comprehensively take care of our own individual health is going to be way more of a sustainable approach than trying to optimize it to a point of perfection.

Knowing that my body can live the rest of its life as happy as a clam with nothing other than squats, steaks, and nightly tranquilizers is going to bring me a whole lot more peace of mind than knowing that I have to take care of 25 things in my bottom domain just to move onto what comes next.

This introduces 25 different things that something could go wrong with, 25 things that could be absent from the full routine, and 25 different things that occupy mental space that could otherwise be spent thinking about something that *wants* to be done, instead of something that *needs* to be done.

Simply put, there is so much more to this crazy thing that we call life than money, responsibilities, and workout routines, and, maybe it's just me, but I sure as hell would like to find out what.

What's left beyond the bullshit is exactly what's left beyond the bottom of this structure; the top, the left, and the right. And so, with the definitions of the bottom now in place—and a single label of “Health” that we can use for shorthand—we can move to its complement; the top.



The top; the bottom's complement. An area not necessarily comprised of just joy and pleasure, but of principle and value.

If I was asked for a single word to describe the top spot, it would be something along the lines of "Values," "Identity," "Self," "Soul," "Me," "Root," or anything of this sort. It represents the BIOS to a human being; the spark-notes of one's personality.

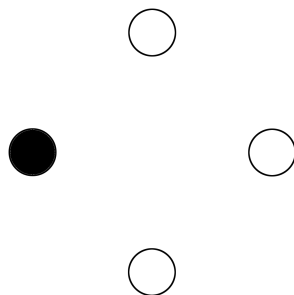
The top is the space for what's held true over different experiences, across different settings, happening over different periods of time for each individual human being. The ideas and behaviors that get reinforced and strengthened upon every interaction that we have, in turn, defining the process that is ourselves; the defining marks of our own individuality.

The top holds ideas that give rise to feelings that can't be fully explained with words. How does one describe the bond that they have with their mother? How does one describe their relationship with their god? How does one describe why it is that they follow some code of ethics? *Why* things belong in each of our top spots is an unimportant question in contrast to *what* things belong in our top spots.

We have no choice as to what goes into our top spots, for, we are not choosing, but instead, discovering. What we want to be in our top spots requires no further action, for it's already in there; we just have to find it.

The things that belong in our top spots don't necessarily stay put where they are forever. The things in the top can change, but change is intermittent at best, being driven by reality shifting experiences; things like epiphanies, mentorships, near death experiences, or, sometimes, just happening as a consequence of having a continuously developing brain that learns something new.

With the top and the bottom complete, in some sense, we already have a complete life. Action and reason for action; so what's left?



What's left is more than just the left. What's left, is time.

While the top and the bottom combine to make a whole life, every single second of every single day is not going to necessarily pertain to either of these two spots. The time that is leftover is accounted for in between the top and the bottom domains with the domains of the left and the right.

The left side of this spectrum is categorized by internal interests. This isn't to say that interests aren't motivated or swayed by external circumstances—because they always will be—but instead to say that they are the interests that spark internal desire, devoid of external entities.

No one has to tell you what should go on your left side, just as well as nobody can force the presence of something undesired over there; the left exists as the area that holds the things that one is most interested in, without someone having to tell them to be interested in them.

The left side exists as a sandbox for creation; a place to build things that aren't even conceivable by the brain that is going to build them yet. This is an area that brings out the innocent inner child in people, as it reminds them of a time where rule sets were nonexistent, and curiosity was always rewarded. There is no failing on the left side, no letting anyone down, no doing it in the wrong way. There is only experimentation, learning, and creation; every step exists as a step in the right direction—as if that word even meant anything at all.

For some, this may mean one thing over the course of 25 years, and for others, this may mean 25 things over the course of one year. Some prefer to spend their time trying to perfect a small few, and others prefer to see how many they can collect; and surely everywhere in between.

Similar to the top, the exact contents of each person's left side are not only going to be unique, but are also going to be less of a function of choice and more of a function of circumstance. Snowboarders and skateboarders know that they are one and the same, one was just born near a mountain. We don't get to choose the things that we're passionate about, but, this doesn't matter in the

slightest when it comes to implementation and experience of these things. Us having no say in what we enjoy doing doesn't take anything away from the joy of experiencing the feeling of doing whatever activity it is that we're forced to enjoy.

Similar to the bottom, although we have no say in what we're interested in, we do have a say in how we implement it within each of our own structures. I have no choice as to whether I wanted to write this book or not, but once I accepted that it was fact, I was able to mold the methodology to the one that best suited my individual circumstances; much like how if I don't want to run, I can swim.

Similar to both the top and the bottom, there is no ideal that can be chased. The ideal is whatever the implementer makes it out to be, not a fixed point that everyone is trying to reach. The left side is an area for exploration; so explore. There are no right or wrongs here, just freedom.

But, unlike both the top and the bottom, the left comes with inherent structure beyond its abstract idea. Loosely, the general structure of the left side is best represented as a collection of varying domains.

Each domain is going to hold a group of related activities and behavior specific to some interest. The exact bounds on these domains is arbitrary and completely chosen by the user. For example, let's say that I am interested in lifting weights, and I want to put it into my left side. The borders that I choose for this domain can be extremely specific to the activities that I am interested in, just as well as they can be all encompassing and vague. I could make the domain "squatting," I could make the domain "powerlifting," I could make the domain "strength training," I could make the domain "physical health," or, I could make the domain "the body." It doesn't matter which one I choose so long as it encompasses my internal interest; the choice is completely arbitrary, but serves as an appeasement to my own individual psyche.

Domains may overlap, or they might be completely separate. One might have individual interests in each of snowboarding, surfing, and skateboarding, and label the bounds as such, or lump them together under one continuous progression that's labeled "Board Sports." Once one's internal interests are recognized and realized, the mental abstraction that fits into the left side is essentially play-doh in their hands. Break it apart, lump it together, it doesn't matter; it is to be shaped to one's own individual desires.

The amount of play-doh that we have to mold with in our left side is going to be completely dependent on the amount of time spent in that particular domain. The more time, the more play-doh. There are factors that can be considered that might speed up or slow down this process (things such as focused, dedicated practice vs. mindless, unfocused repetition), but, in any case, there is always an ever increasing amount of play-doh given to someone who is spending time doing an activity related to some domain in their left side.

For most, the left side is going to be highly dynamic. Unless one finds their passion at a very early age, there is most likely going to be some jumping

around between different domains, with the hopping around possibly lasting for a lifetime. The structure presented here is completely indifferent as to how it's implemented. Domains can last for days, domains can last for decades, domains can change borders every day, domains can be broken apart well after they've happened; it all depends on what **you** want.

The left side, defined by internal interests, and organized with arbitrarily chosen domains, isn't really about either of these things. Instead, it's about the structure that they bring for what goes inside of them. The left side, in essence, is primarily revolved around one idea: goal-defined behavior.

Domains, as a concept, provide the platform that goals exist within. No goal is domain-less, even though some domains may be goal-less. Because of the malleability of the borders of domains, every goal that ever exists will belong to some arbitrary domain; they provide architecture and structure to the backbone of any goal that fits inside of them.

As I have come to find out, there is an entire soft science behind goal-defined behavior. It wouldn't make any sense to say that the way that someone has structured their left side is any better or worse than anyone else's; essentially, if it works for you, then it works for you. But, I couldn't help but imagine that it would be a fairly safe assumption to say that there would be some overlap between what works for different people. And so, it might be of some use if I was to share the axioms that I found to be of the most importance to me myself when it comes to goal-defined behavior in the context of my left side.

Axiom #1) Each domain, at any point in time, is to have, at most, one goal.

This first axiom comes with an asterisk, because it's not entirely true. What will make sense in a couple of more axioms, there is a way to squeeze in more than one goal per domain, but only with necessary conditions at play. What this axiom does mean to cover is the deliberate, single focus of achieving goals related to some field of interest.

Sometimes, to achieve a goal, it takes sacrificing time and energy elsewhere. When there's more than one goal per single domain, this shift in intent can hinder progress on related goals in the same domain. On top of that, more time is likely needed to carry out two goals together, compared to adding up the time it would take to do them separately, one at a time.

Time and energy is spent during the transition between focusing on different activities related to different goals simply as a consequence of us having brains that require rest. The farther along a path that one is towards achieving a goal, the more time is needed in between sessions dedicated to achieving it, for the energy and focus demands naturally become greater as one's skill increases in that domain.

Focusing on one goal at a time compresses the total time—especially in the end game—that it takes to complete multiple goals, since large chunks of con-

tinuous practice can be devoted to achieving just one thing at a time.

This doesn't imply that one domain can't have more than one goal over time, just that it's better off for the user to do them one at a time. This also doesn't imply that different domains with different goals can't be worked on at the same time. If someone has the ability to work on five different goals in five different domains, more power to them.

Something that this first axiom does imply is that it's okay to not have a goal for some domain. Empty domains can bring just as much joy as goal filled ones, given that other life circumstances are sorted out. Also, how else would exploration and confidence in choice happen?

The main focus of the left side is all about goals, but that doesn't always mean that every single moment of every person's entire life is going to be dedicated towards achieving some goal. There's always going to be in-betweens; time spent just thinking about and exploring different pathways that seem interesting, while also leaving some of the discovery open to happenstance.

There can also be downtime inbetween goals in the same domain. For example, I can paint my whole life, but only have a goal related to selling a piece of my artwork for a small dedicated chunk of it.

Axiom #2) Lingering domains are to be closed before the active opening of new ones.

A lingering domain is one where no action has been, or currently is, being taken towards a domain that once was. Essentially, it's not gaining closure over a past interest. Closing lingering domains can take the avenue of creating a new goal in the old domain, with the idea of gaining closure upon its success or failure, or, in the more hurried sense, ridding one's immediate environment of any triggers related to said domain / goals in that domain in a dedicated effort to mentally close it off and move on to something new.

This could mean burning old pictures, putting trophies into storage, selling old memorabilia, or making a phone call to someone that has been put off for years now. One doesn't have to open up a new goal in a domain that they are no longer motivated to achieve in when they are able to close it by taking some simple action to move on once and forever.

Closing a lingering domain is about putting an end to any and all thought patterns related to said domain that happen on a semi-consistent basis. This doesn't mean forgetting about the domain entirely, but simply, replacing its daily occurrence of mental visitation with something else.

The importance of this second axiom relates to how much of a hindrance not closing lingering domains can become when attempting to achieve entirely different goals in entirely different domains. The effect of a lingering domain can last for a lifetime, causing intermittent grief and regret along the way, making any argument as to why one wouldn't want to take care of it immediately—once

and forever-nonexistent. A little bit of energy up front can allow for the creation of brand new pathways in the future to happen with much less resistance; an endeavor that's even more desirable when considering that domains don't have to be closed with an abundance of time and energy.

It can be as simple as cleaning your place and deciding to set your intent on something new. Why not allow for the good to be even better—for the rest of time—for the price of nothing more than running up a small, self-defined hill?

Lastly, something of note related to this second axiom is a message that seems to go against the grain of capitalistic society. That is, **failure is okay**. There is nothing shameful about ending a domain on a failed attempt at a goal. If the interest is no longer there, it's much more foolish to force oneself to go back in time and care about something that they no longer do—going against the grain of energy's flow—than to simply let it go and let something new fill its place. There's no shame at all in trying to do something that one hasn't tried before, and, in the case of it ending with failure, this dynamic remains unchanged.

Axiom #3) Bring into existence some physical reference to each goal's set of "W's."

The W's refer to the four (five) questions that are to be asked alongside of each and every goal. **What** exactly is the goal? **Why** this particular goal at this particular point in time? **When**, according to the completion of some event, is this goal going to be completed? And, **how** is this goal going to get done? Alongside the four W's (yes, I know that one of them is an H, but what do you want from me, 3 W's and an H?), one should also consider the **closing** of said goal; some physical act that marks the true completion and closure of the entire thing, allowing for new space to open up for whatever comes afterwards.

The idea behind splitting the "what" from the tagline of the actual goal is to give an area to clearly define what might otherwise be a shorthand label. The "goal," so to speak, is usually under a convenient label that refers to a more detailed task. Someone might have a goal of getting healthier, but the actual what is where the specifics are defined; what does healthier actually mean to you?

The "why" is used for support during times when intent becomes fuzzy, and is especially useful for narrowing in on true desires before tackling long term goals. Clearly defining the why can take some time, especially if this question has never been asked before. As a general guideline that one can keep in mind, the shorter the why, the stronger the intent. If it takes an incredible amount of time to pinpoint why you actually care about what you're doing, it may prove beneficial to choose something else entirely.

The words used to describe the why are arbitrary; the feeling behind it is not.

The “when” is for creating explicit boxes that can be checked off once major milestones towards achieving the goal are completed. Unarguable moments in time that either happen or don’t, the boxes listed under the when are completely binary.

The when is where there exists wiggle room to achieving more than one goal at once, as brought up as the asterisk to the first axiom. A simple refactoring of the idea architecture is going to allow the set of ideas to remain devoid of any contradictions.

The first axiom acts as an overarching, general guideline that applies to every goal and every domain. When zoomed into specific goals in specific domains, this principle that naturally becomes inherited to all goals has the chance to be overwritten by a more specific principle that applies to the specific goals in question. The reason the first axiom remains as an axiom despite its asterisk isn’t because of its pinpoint accuracy to every goal ever, but to provide the default that all goals inherently follow.

The refactoring of separate goals into the same goal with multiple when’s isn’t always a straightforward process, and often times presents the same issues that breaking the first axiom would do on its own. Having multiple goals under the same goal requires that each of them are related enough while also being separate enough, so that possible conflict is avoided. Too related, and they just naturally merge to the same point; converging to the same goal. Too separate, and intent splitting can occur between the two goals, leading to a time loss in progress when additional time is needed to mentally shift frames to a different goal.

There’s a fine line of when differing goals can be labeled under the same one with multiple whens, a line that becomes clear upon dabbling with venturing across its border for yourself.

The “how” is the hardest of the bunch. Anyone can come up with a goal that they’re interested in with a reason that they’re interested in it, but not all of these people are going to achieve that goal. The how requires one to come up with a detailed plan that gets them from point A to point B, with actions and behavior that match their intent along the way. Despite this being somewhat challenging, the how has an incredible amount to offer a human being.

The how is the space for creativity, exploration, innovation, problem solving, and personal expression, all in one. It’s the space where all bars are lifted, and freedom to explore personal ideology occurs. The how, along with the right quadrant (which we’ll talk about next), presents a human with a very powerful reason to live on this planet. A place for us to express ourselves, our true selves, by solving problems that genuinely interest us in the best ways that we see fit.

Personally, I live for the how. I live for the “justified,” drug-fueled benders that somehow produce results, and the freedom to take this unconventional route even when others recommend otherwise. It’s a place for creation that allows for mistakes and treats falls very kindly; no punishment and no stalling,

just right back on the saddle towards achieving what I want.

The real ending of the “W’s” isn’t with the how though, but with the “close” attribute of the goal. The close acts as the caboose that cleans everything up in the end; it’s what allows for something new to enter, possibly another goal, possibly another domain, or possibly spending more time doing something other than chasing goals and exploring domains.

One of the ideas behind stating it explicitly at the beginning is to prepare the mind for the moment before it comes, through the power of visualization. Knowing that this moment in time is going to come, even at the start of a goal, is a very powerful motivator that pushes one towards the reality that is now being constructed in their subconscious. If they tell themselves that this moment is going to come, and they visualize this moment coming, and they have a detailed plan as to how to make this moment come, then, chances are, that moment *is* going to come.

It can be hard coming to terms with what it means after the close activity is completed, as the mind is always going to have an aversion to completely unknown circumstances. But, despite this initial aversion, let me drop a reminder in here that, life is really just one big change from beginning to end. Whether we try and avoid this or not has no effect on the ever passing arrow of time; so we might as well capitalize on it. Old is good, but new can be even better.

Axiom #4) Goals are to match personal desires.

This axiom may seem obvious due to the way that the left side is defined, but serves as a more specific principle that doubles down on the default, inherited trait given to all goals by the map’s definition. One might find themselves at some point trying to fit an externally motivated goal into their left side, an extremely common event in a society filled with gaslighting and gullibility.

Trying not to get lost in the meaning of words here, the goals that belong in the left side are ones that would exist even outside of the presence of any other living person (assuming that they could even happen if this was the case). They are to match what’s inside of one’s individual soul, something that might take some time to find. In the meantime, it serves to be much more beneficial to leave the left side open to happenstance than it is to fill it with something that isn’t desired.

As a teenager/young adult, it can be difficult to understand what’s really internally motivated, and what’s just the consequence of someone brushing off on them. But, as time goes on, one begins to narrow in on the particular set of activities/hobbies that means something to them outside of the existence of others. There’s nothing adverse with not achieving any goals at a particular point in time, instead, leaving the left side open to chance. There is no axiom that states that the left side must have any goals, or even any domains at all.

My strongest piece of advice related to any of the axioms applies directly to the fourth one. Don’t let the toxic sludge of today’s media seep into your

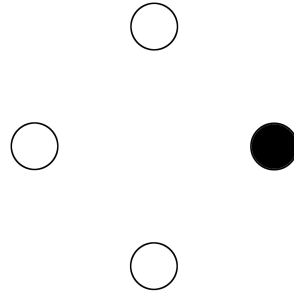
left side; that's what the bottom is for. The left side is pure and meticulous, and if it has to be put on pause for some time, so be it. It's better to look at it untouched and pure from a distance than it is to try pushing rope inside of it. The left side is about learning and creation and exploration and discovery and achievement and recognition and passion and freedom; it is not about the spilt honey that is other people's opinions.

Axiom #5) Allow for adaptations, for change is always inevitable; simply keep a record of the progress.

Progress isn't always linear, and sometimes seems to go in the wrong direction. But, in reality, every occurrence of doing something exists as a part of a larger whole; a parent process. Life happens, things change, and plans must be amended; always. There's no shame in changing a goal, or one of its details, for life always has its own story in mind. But, no matter what direction life takes you in, keep some record of the change.



In conclusion, the left side is represented as a loose collection of domains with individually selected borders that may or may not hosts goals which are aimed at internally motivated desires.



The right—the opposite of the left; all of the activities, thoughts, and behavior related to any sort of relationship to any other sentient being besides yourself.

The right is what connects us to each other in a very primordial way; a consciousness that we all share. Whether the relationships be with family, friends, peers, associates, students, teachers, lovers, pets, trees, aliens, or anything else that has an ordered, reoccurring process of “life” inside of it, the right represents the bonds that we share with other life; the bonds that mesh together with everyone else’s bonds to create the fabric of our societal bonding realities.

The right side has nothing to do with accolades or achievements or goals or anything of this sort. It’s nothing more than about feeling in the presence of others; feelings that we would otherwise not be able to offer ourselves. The left side is about control; the right side is about letting go of it.

Although we bring no structure into the right side, structures are going to arise naturally from the consequence of us existing as power hungry monkeys. Sometimes, these hierarchies naturally sort themselves out without any additional guidance by mankind, but, other times, we attempt to create artificial hierarchies that tell us our roles instead of letting them be discovered naturally.

Back in our evolutionary past, power within a tribe was held blatantly and unequivocally. The strongest monkey ruled the weaker monkeys, and, as a result, had children that were more likely to be stronger than the weaker children. This was a time where power was more determined by physical strength and vigor, not necessarily pertaining to intellect and strategy. Nowadays, things are much different.

During the transition that we underwent from monkeys to humans, power dynamics existed in a range of in-between states. What was first determined by raw strength, power then changed to the hands of the tribes that made the more superior tools, and then, to the tribes that were adept at sustaining agriculture—something that has nothing to do with raw strength at all. Then, currency was invented, changing the power dynamics once again.

Now, the ones who have the power possess skill sets that have nothing to do with raw strength, or their tool-making ability, or their ability to sustain their own health on a piece of land; it's instead given to the ones who have the highest amount of little green sheets of paper.

This alone was such a drastic change in the way that our species evolved, but there's even more complexity that gets added on top. First gained by strength, then by skill set, followed by green little paper, there now exists a new global currency that every person is after; information.

Anyone that can access the internet through the use of a browser connecting to a public server, has the ability to learn just about anything, ever; a change in what drives a species towards its next step in evolution. Without even doing a quick Google search, I think it's safe to assume that over half of the humans living on this planet have access to the internet in the twenty-first century (even though that number is probably much higher).

That's over four billion people who have access to all the same information as any of the other four billion. The natural competition that this introduces into a species that is now centered on gaining knowledge is absolutely enormous. Billions of people, competing to know the most things, to understand the most concepts, to be able to be the first ones to share their new found ideas with the rest of the world, leading to a rate of change that our species has never seen before.

Previous to the invention of the internet, it was always the case that information and knowledge were hard to come by, and were usually only achieved in the case of wealthy circumstances. Being able to afford school, or being able to afford the time to become a scholar used to be luxuries, not givens. This presented a tall barrier for anyone that was well capable of living on the other side of it, but didn't have the resources required to do so; a lifetime of unrealized potential.

With the common adoption of the internet, now, anyone, anywhere can be working on the same problems as the ones that only the .01% of the global population were working on in the previous ages. The effect of this change on a species cannot be captured well enough with words. Friendly competition, along with healthy collaboration, and a connection of some of the smartest minds in all generations across the globe, all in the matter of seemingly instantaneous communication, pushes our species' capability to heights that keep getting shattered with each new generation.

But, even with this crazy invention of the internet, and the change that it's brought to the way that we look at other members of society, we are still shackled to the remains of our pasts, and the dominance hierarchies that still exist there. For example, I can spend all my time learning everything there is to know, making me an extremely valuable member of a tribe, but, as soon as I walk outside for a smoke, if there's some guy outside who is bigger than me,

he could quite literally kill me despite of all the power that I have with all of my knowledge.

In the long term, natural selection sense, the members of our species with more relevant knowledge and information are going to be more likely to survive and pass on their genes, but this doesn't necessarily invalidate all of the hierarchies that coexist alongside each other. We no longer exist in just one, societal-wide hierarchy, but in overlapping hierarchies with the same members playing different roles in different hierarchies.

This can lead to an incredible amount of confusion for the individuals that are apart of many, as the mind constantly has to frame switch between its role and how it should be behaving around others. For example, take some guy who is working at a company, who is younger than his assistant, who has a boss that he used to bully in high school, and who works alongside a janitor that used to bully him in middle school; how is this person going to react if they're all sitting in a meeting together?

Any one person walking down the side of the road can exist in a handful of varying hierarchies with varying positions in each, all unknown to the person they're passing by. A new to the profession teacher, that's been squatting competitively for 15 years and has a blackbelt in Jiu Jitsu, has no power whatsoever as soon as he walks into a stand-up comedy bar.

Someone who is considered a god at what they do in different domains, can be humiliated in an instant by simply being in the wrong location at the wrong time; a perfect demonstration of us existing in tribes within tribes within tribes; in roles overlapping on roles overlapping on even more roles.

Not only does this present the psyche with the constant need for resolution as it's constantly needing to re-evaluate its place in its environment, but it makes for way too complicated of a data structure to accurately present the right side in a way that makes sense to us. Fast forward to the year of 2025, and the situation becomes even more bleak.

The presence of social media and smartphones yet again adds another layer of complexity on a stack that's already made up of layers of complexity. With the vast majority of people being connected to the same platforms of opinion, we've created a hive mind of reasoning that's an echo chamber to any thought that's shared by the average.

On social media, the rulers of this hierarchy aren't the ones with the most physical power, or the ones with the most money, or even the ones with the most relevant knowledge sets. Instead, they are the ones that are best able to grab attention; the ones with the most followers, likes, and retweets. Any person who is able to grab the unsophisticated attention span of the majority of human brains alive today, in a consistent and unique manner, is going to be one of the winners of this hierarchy that now dominates our society; the same one that now values opinions not by their merit, but rather by how many likes that they can get.

Everyone, everywhere is incessantly playing court with this hive mind of chimps,

where they control the judge, the jury, and the security. Any action taken that is documented and posted online by one of the popular majority winners of let's just say, three billion people, that goes against a belief of the emotional hive gets immediately ridiculed by the weight of the majority of the three billion other people on this planet that are connected to the same source material.

Appeasing to this beast is the only option, as one only has so much power going against the many. Just in the past few years, this effect has been significantly magnified, in what was largely in part due to the global outbreak of COVID-19. Too much time and too little stimuli leads to us acting out in unprecedented ways, as largely shown by all of our behaviors during that period.

One of the relics leftover by this infectious disease is the infectious negativity that we now have towards one another. Everyone is constantly looking for the wrongdoings of someone else, just so that they can speak their mind with their opinion that they've been told is important.

All of this to say that, if one thing is apparent, it's that the complexity of modern age society has eliminated any possibility for us to organize the right side in any sort of meaningful way. When everyone is carrying guns in their pockets, both literally and metaphorically, I don't know what's scarier; one tweet or one bullet.

Because of all of this absurdity, we say fuck it; whatever happens, happens. I don't know why I act in the way that I do, but goddamnit, if everyone else is running around doing fuck all, then you can bet your ass that I'll be running around doing fuck all too.

Armed with this rationalization that can be used for even the most extreme of behaviors, we now have the final piece of the puzzle; a sink of the overall structure that can be used for anything that doesn't belong anywhere else.

And so, with this detailing of the right side now complete, this also completes the detailing of each of the four corners of this overarching architecture. And now, because there exists a sink, everything belongs somewhere.

Everything, ever, belongs somewhere. Keep that in mind.



Perspective Determines
Reality

A Natural Perspective

Everything starts with time.

We humans experience time in a very distinct way. In every single one of our experiences, time flows in the same direction; forwards. We don't assign a direction on time other than it moving in the same direction that it always has been. No loops, no backwards travel, no standing still; just, forward.

The rate at which we experience time changes as a function of a lot of things, including personal enjoyment of the activity at hand, as well as physics phenomena such as gravitational pull from large objects and how fast we're moving through space-time. But, the rate at which we experience time is largely unimportant for this discussion. What's more important is a drilling down of the idea that time always has, and—we are to believe—always will, move in the same direction; forwards.

Time, alongside everything else that we experience in the natural world, is continuous. There is a seamless integration in the moments that we experience, no matter how fast or how slow they come. Things don't appear and disappear instantly, they happen in a progression. Just like how we only ever experience time moving in the same direction, we always have believed, and, as of now, are to forever believe, in the continuity that time brings.

In this omnipresent continuity of time, there exists a natural ordering on the events happening within it; the order in which we perceive them. On the quantum level, this may cause dispute, but here on the classical level, this is something that is largely taken for granted. We don't write sentences from the inside out, we start at the natural starting spot; the beginning, the parts that make up the sentence in succession.

The one-two-three's—happening over time—take on the same continuity that is present with time itself. And, in this continuity of time, the continuous one-two-three's happen in something that we call space. Space being a sandbox arena that permits physical beings to take mass and interact with each other under our current belief of four fundamental forces.

There is a gradual aspect to the living cycle of all things, happening in space, over time; processes that have to happen before other processes are able to happen. Following the one-two-three, consecutive ideology, things on the classical level don't happen instantaneously. Things happen, more things happen, and then, even more things happen, for trillions of years, until this universe ends its life cycle and becomes desolate and inactive, at which point, no more things will happen (unless, they do of course, but, in any case, that's besides the point).

We see that the gradual things that happen in physical space, over continuous time, occur in groups. It takes a very specific group of gradual, localized events to happen in order for a tree to grow, not randomly timed and randomly spaced out events happening across the universe. These groups of gradual, related events can be called processes.

A single bacteria organism is a process that hosts the processes of the different components of the cells that make it up. A single plankton is a process that hosts the process of a bacteria, which hosts the processes of everything happening inside of that bacteria. A single plankton is part of the eating process of another process called a whale. A whale is a process of processes that is hosted in a process called the ocean. The ocean is a host process to many other processes, that is hosted by the host process of planet Earth. Everything and anything that we experience in this continuity of time is a process.

If we trace back all of the processes that we see in our environment, they all belong to the same system of processes that we call "Nature." Nature is a system of processes that implements a set of laws that all of its children processes abide by. It consists of much more than just the living organisms on our planet, for, when viewed through the lens of time provided here, it consists of any and all processes that we perceive to be, in the entire observable universe. There may be other systems that exist outside of nature that are beyond our current means of comprehension, but, nature is used to refer to the system that hosts all processes that are meaningful to us humans.

These laws that nature provides us are applied to both the living and the nonliving. The nonliving get a flavor of laws in the form of limitations of force interactions; the ones saying that the speed of light is constant in a vacuum, that energy and mass belong to the same spectrum of a similar form, and that there are four fundamental forces running all motion in our universe.

There's also the ones that exist for the natural world (the world of carbon-based energy pumps). The ones that say that traits that lead to a greater likelihood of living and passing on like genes are naturally selected for over time in a competitive environment. This leads to an ever-changing meta between organisms, one that determines how DNA is replicated, how culture is created, and how carbon based life forms interact with other carbon based life forms.

One universal rule set that we observe as a principle that applies to everything in nature—both living and nonliving—is the concept of death. Not just

constrained to living organisms, the life cycle of every process here on Earth, in space, is limited. At some point in the future, every localized bundle of energy currently existing in this plane of existence will cease to exist, once and forever; giving way for new life to emerge and experience what this plane of reality has to offer.

Death is just as natural as life, but it tends to get the devil role instead of the angel one. Life and death are coupled together as part of the same process, where one is not able to happen without the other.

What comes after death, we're not sure of. Maybe it's being recreated into a different form of energy, maybe it's traveling to another universe, maybe it's traveling to another dimension in our own universe, or, maybe it's just haunting the still living. It could be anything really, the unidirectional arrow of time doesn't allow for us to go back and forth across the goal posts of living and not living freely. But, despite not knowing what comes after, we do know that death surrounds us just as much as life does; the yin to the yang.

Any process that we see, carbon based or otherwise, abides by the laws set forth by our parent system of nature. In this way, we can visualize nature as being a bubble, with other bubbles inside of it. The realm of possibility of embedded bubbles within this larger bubble is going to depend on what each individual bubble is, but one can say for certain that every one of them will be bounded from above by the larger bubble of nature that they are constrained by. One such bubble encapsulated in this larger bubble of nature, is that of the human being.

The human being is a process that abides by the natural laws, both for the living and the nonliving, and is perpetually bounded above by such. We have no choice as to the fact that we need to eat every few weeks, sleep every few days, drink almost every day, and breathe every few seconds. We have no say in the fact that we interact more commonly with forms of mass rather than energy, what lightwaves pass into our eye balls, nor the fact that we feel pain when touching a hot stove. In these ways, we are bounded by our biology, which is then bounded by the bigger bubble of nature.

Humans, existing as a process on Earth, have developed one ability that allows us to do all of this conversing and discussing about what's going on around us. We have developed an ability under a loose label that we call abstraction; a way to talk about physical processes with nonphysical ideas.

With abstraction, there are such things that we might call "forms." When we see a plank of wood resting on four other planks of wood, we know that structure to be what we call a "chair." That physical chair we're looking at is a direct manifestation of an abstract form of a chair, for, the idea of a chair exists as an idea without a physical manifestation—one purely as a concept.

Through abstraction, we can reason about other processes besides our own. We are able to talk about the concepts of continuity and gradualism and processes happening in space and even abstraction itself through the power that abstraction gives us. We are able to reason about other processes happening

around us, without us necessarily having to exist as those processes; knowledge that can lead to a greater understanding of everything around us. Any process that we are able to witness can also be abstracted as having a form, one away from its physical bundle of energy, with the aid of our advanced mental architecture.

By using the power of abstraction, and the effectiveness of categorization, humans have many different ways to reason about the same things that are happening around us.

In a very particular case, we have the ability to abstract and categorize the passing arrow of time. More specifically, we have the ability to think about time as a partition of intervals instead of just one continuous stream. That is, we can split up the entire length of time, from beginning to end, into intervals of whatever length makes the most sense to us; our own categorization. We could say, for example, that all of life is split up into 5 second intervals, chained together seamlessly. And, us saying that 5 seconds is the interval of all intervals would be just as valid as anyone else saying that any another interval is the interval of all intervals.

Picking any length of time to create arbitrary separations; the sum of all the intervals is all of time. If one was to think about making each interval as small as possible, condensing it to as close to a single point as we can get, there comes a point where narrowing in any further provides diminishing returns on its appreciable exactness to that of the human mind. This single point, similar to a single point on a continuous number line, is what we call a state.

A state is a single moment in time; a snapshot of how everything is in an exact moment. If you sum up all the states together, you get all of time; analogously, taking every point on the number line gives the whole, continuous number line.

Besides just being able to reason about physical objects as abstract forms, we are able to use our advanced brains to do much more than that. We have the ability to analyze, predict, and understand the progression of these states; these chains of moments in time. We know that certain states must happen before other certain states, and that certain states only happen after other certain states; we possess the ability to compare states to other states, recognizing similarities and differences between them.

By comparing processes to other processes, and states to other states, all abstractly, we are able to pick up on patterns (given enough time and data, that is). In other words, we're able to gain the ability to accurately predict outcomes of other processes before they happen, and, if given enough time and data, we can turn that knowledge into a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms at play with whatever it is we wish to study.

Across the history of the human being, we have had a whole lot of time to not only understand so many different processes other than our own, but also the ability to pass all of this knowledge down to the next set of generations that come after us. This leads to a compounding effect in the way that humans

have come to learn things, one that has only largely happened in the past few thousand years. The human being, a process that had already topped the food chain of all food chains that it existed in, now with the ability to continue to advance in a completely different domain than the purely physical—at an unbelievable rate—has become quite the incredible creature to say the least.

One of the processes that we’ve come to understand fairly well over only the past few hundred years—from this procedure of an open source, common understanding that gets carved out over time in a global society of intelligent minds—is the one of ourselves. The human being, a process occurring in nature that not only has the ability to analyze its own process, but the ability to do it well.

Through the time and experimentation of our ancestors, we have been able to understand the human process better than we have ever before. Through an understanding of the biology, the chemistry, the neuroscience, the psychology, and the sociology of ourselves, all of which came from the dedication to explore each of those domains by the intellectual pioneers that first did so, we have a large portion of cause and effect relationships related to our physiology figured out.

With everyone being able to agree on most of the ideas related to the process of the human being, there are still some who share radical beliefs on top of all the agreeable stuff; one being that any notion of “choice” is largely—or entirely—out of our hands. True or not, what would be some of the consequences of believing in such a drastic claim?

Both positive and negative consequences fall out of this belief. On one hand, grief, shame, and regret all disappear within a snap of the fingers, and on the other hand, pride and ego and one’s self image can take a fairly large hit if they were heavily relied on before. Upon further consideration of all the remaining effects that sit everywhere in between this spectrum, a new feeling emerges. A feeling of peace.

Why peace? It’s simple. I do not choose, therefore I do not worry. There exists ways to train different reactions to stimuli that we already have been exposed to, but there is no inherent need to so. There isn’t an inherent need to do anything. One can simply sit back and watch their whole life unfold without having to take any action besides the occasional sip of an ice cold lemonade.

But, unfortunately, this path of default isn’t always one of joy. For some people, myself included, letting go of the reigns of control means becoming homeless, or not having a job, or not having a car, or all three at the same time. Letting go of the reigns and assuming no control isn’t always a path that goes up, and it’s very hard not to want to try and grab them once it reveals itself to be one that is going down.

Nonetheless, a newfound freedom prevails, and more space emerges. For, however I act, is in perfect alignment with how I was predetermined to act; caused

by the uniqueness brought into this moment that was unpredictable in nature, and by the unique reaction I had to it in this unique moment in time.

There's no more stress related to doing the "wrong" things in the "wrong" way. That concept makes no sense when mistakes are considered as an integral part of one's timeline, instead of as a concept that we must choose to be as minimal as possible. Mistakes happen because there is no other way that the event could've happened; there was no place to interject the notion of choice anywhere in the process. And so, there is no "wrong" way anymore, only *the* way; the one that happens.

Every action leads to reaction, and everything is to come as it does. We will always act in accordance to our paths, for there are no other paths that we can take. No stress, no preparation, no worry, no shoes, no shirt, no problem.

So then, what's left for us inside of this nature bubble for our exploration?

A whole lot.

Body, Mind, & Me

The exploration of life continues with further examination into the human process. So far, the encompassing bubble scheme is Time → Nature → Human. And now, it's time to dive deeper into the Human to add another layer to the overall scheme; the body, the mind, and the me.

Understanding what a human really is can be a complicated task depending on how detailed we want to get. We are one complex organism with a whole lot going on inside of us (with our biology) and a whole lot going on outside of us (with our social behavior). It also depends on what previous biases each of us hold towards thinking about what a human is. To a Christian, a human is the making of God. To an evolutionist, a human is an evolved monkey. And, to this framework, a human is a process belonging to the nature system.

But, no matter the biases that we each hold towards understanding our own species, there are a few things that are indisputable between all groups. For one, we know that there has never been a predator as adept as us at the game of survival in the natural world. Whether our talents were chiseled over millennia by natural selection, or God-given, it is undeniable that the human being really is the apex predator of apex predators. With the use of our own creations, there is not a beast that we can't take down; and in an elegant fashion, no less.

We also know that we all share something that, in English, we call "consciousness." Consciousness is some abstract phenomenon that we can all feel,

yet have trouble describing. It's a process that starts in humans around the age of 4-5 years old, and continues up until the point of the person's passing. When consciousness ends, we're not sure what happens, for it seems to be a one-way street. We are unsure if other organisms besides humans share this feeling of consciousness, but, this section of the text isn't dedicated towards nonhuman species, so I'll keep it focused on the beings of ourselves.

These two parts, a consciousness combined with a virtuoso killing machine, make up some, or all, of the components of the process of a human being. Why view them as two separate parts of one whole? Because, fundamentally, they are.

The body has a set of tasks that it is capable of doing that is different from the set of tasks that the mind is capable of doing; the body runs, and the mind thinks. I can't do calculus with just my body, and I can't exercise with just my mind. But, although separate entities, capable of separate tasks, they are connected together by an unbreakable bond. A connection where one party has the ability to heavily influence the other.

Defining the distinctions between the body and the mind can be challenging because of this separate, non-separability that they share with each other. Does the brain belong to the body or the mind? Are the hormones that flow in the brain that dictate thought attributed to the mind or the body? What about when the body and the mind are working in conjunction on a certain task? Despite this overlapping of functionality, the lines that I want to draw between the two are simple enough for anyone to understand.

The body is defined to be all that is physical. Anything that can take on a quantifiable measurement of any sort in the physical arena of space that we experience. This could be a measurement of volume, a defining of physical structure, or even voltage of a current. The body refers to all of the cells, all of the tissue, all of the bones, and all of the electrical currents between neurons. With the use of our bodies, we are able to interact with other physical things happening alongside of us in the continuum of space. We see the body, we feel the body, and we are the body. Partly that is.

The mind is defined to be all that which lives in the nonphysical. The mind hosts processes that exist in a dimension that we are only barely accustomed to perceiving, through this one recently developed avenue that we call thought. What happens across time, but not necessarily in space, the mind refers to everything that can't be quantifiably measured by humans (maybe with a possible, yet, added in here). The mind is where the answer to $3 + 9$ is, it's where we can imagine the laugh of a loved one, and it's where we can close our eyes and visualize sitting on a beach with a Corona. What happens in the mind is individualized to every single person, with it only being shareable in different forms than its original format.

Beyond the separation of what I define to be the body and the mind, there exists a natural tendency to arbitrarily categorize another boundary; the one that I might refer to as the me. Some call it the soul, Hindus call it atman,

and Christians may call it the divine spirit, but in any case, we can define it as what the body and the mind carve out of both the physical space that the body exists in, as well as the nonphysical realm that the mind interacts with, when considered over time. The gradual, localized, consistent form of energy that behaves in ways according to how it's behaved before, the me is the bucket for all the processes related to the body or mind that have been long forgotten about by the passing arrow of time.

Each of the body, the mind, and the me have their own desires and pleasures that might conflict with the interests of the others. My body wants steak and milk, my mind wants drugs and porn, and my soul wants to finish this book. Different desires, different pleasures, different modes of reasoning, all housed within the same system, working together as one seamless machine.

In an attempt to better understand these three forces that comprise of a human being, and the arbitrary lines that I'm drawing between them, it might be helpful to look at the relationships that they have with one another.

The body and the mind share an inseparable connection with one another in the sense that, one hosts the other. The mind wouldn't be possible (yet) without a physical brain to host it in. Because of this connection, the body and the mind share an incredible amount of influence on how the other behaves. One might think that, by now, the body and the mind would've found a way to coexist in true harmony. But, instead, we see that, in today's day and age at the very least, the mind constantly shows up to the battles of the body, and vice versa.

Even though they are part of the same system, their own set of desires can present conflict for the other one when we begin to get to the outer edges of visualizing their wants. For pure bliss, the mind wants no distractions. Eating, drinking, and peeing all get in the way of the flow state, for once it's accessed, the needs of the body become of secondary concern. Conversely, bringing real change to the body sometimes involves ignoring the false warnings set up by the mind in an attempt to ease the pain that it is feeling during the transition to a new state.

Being apart of the same system, the body and the mind possess inherent modes of communication that often get overlooked by our prefrontal cortices. When I present your mind with something that it's forced to react to, there's no time spent building a bridge between the body and the mind in order for them to communicate effectively. All the bridges are already built, and in a highly optimized fashion. The mind and the body share the ability to communicate with one another in such deep rooted, efficient ways, that it doesn't matter if the thought of the message ever crosses over into the conscious experience of the one going through it.

For nonbelievers, skeptics, and those who are just simply confused, examples are always handy. Especially when they're ones that get the audience involved as well. You hear that? Everyone stand up, it's class participation time!

Okay I kid about the standing up part, but this *is* an example where you'll (hopefully) get to feel the connection between the body and the mind for yourself; a way in which the mind possesses the ability to quickly and powerfully affect the body which it is hosted in. No extra time is needed to feel the effects permeate from one to the other, for there are no bridges that need to be built. To access this pathway of the mind influencing the body, I'll use a story based around an interaction I had when I was in college.

Back when I was getting my undergraduate degree, I minored in computer science. As one can imagine, this meant spending a lot of time around a lot of other computer science students as well. Anyone who's been around a group of CS students from anytime around the mid 2010s and onward can probably tell you that the topic of cryptocurrency comes up at least once.

Over time, multiple of these conversations occur across a spread of people, across a spread of courses, and, even the uninterested become, at the very least, initiated with the idea of crypto. In my case, this meant little about understanding the technology behind it, and instead, knowing which cryptocurrencies were being held by what people that I talked to.

Obviously, I couldn't remember every coin that everyone held, and, I didn't plan on keeping record of such, but there were definite patterns that I couldn't help but pick up on through the various conversations that I was apart of. Certain types of people with certain types of personalities definitely tended towards certain types of coins, and, because of this, I didn't have to know what coin every person was holding to be able to pick up on these patterns. When there are large enough buckets that everyone can be placed into, it makes for a much more efficient storage of data when compared to randomly organized lists of facts.

Now, in the year 2022, when crypto experienced a large boom, shit hit the fan. For those unaware, a crypto boom has occurred cyclically, starting with the creation of bitcoin in 2009, up until 2022, with the one occurring in this past year the largest one yet. Teenagers that still have their moms serving them Eggo waffles in the morning became millionaires essentially overnight, because of the low sanctions and high volatility present in the crypto sphere as of the early 2020s.

Those who struck, struck. And I knew one such person who struck. And not just some anybody; somebody whose number I had in my phone. When all of this crypto craziness had settled down, I reached out to him with a text saying something along the lines of, "were you still holding blah blah blah coin during that huge rush?" and I got the response that I was hoping for. This dude, just some dude with no particular skillset of extreme value, now held the title of what some people spend their whole lives trying to achieve; my man, was in fact, an actual millionaire.

Some guy that I knew, some random dude that I met in college, alongside

of thousands upon thousands of other nerds who were ahead of the curve with this new form of currency, literally beat the game of modern life before their brains even had the chance to fully develop; way to go tech hipsters!

But anyway, upon talking about it with him further, I realized that he didn't actually need the money because of his well paying job, and that he almost forgot about the coins entirely. In fact, his gracious soul had decided to give most of his earnings away to those who actually needed it.

Now, I wasn't close friends with the dude or anything, I just happened to connect with him over a project that we worked on together, so I wasn't planning on asking him to give me any of his winnings or anything (and even if I was friends with him, I'm not sure I would ask of such a thing), but regardless, he did something truly unimaginable that I will never have the chance to fully thank him for.

He asked for my bitcoin wallet address, and less than 10 minutes later, I had one whole bitcoin sitting in my wallet. One whole bitcoin, something that cost less than a penny upon its creation, was, at that time, worth over \$40,000.

This dude was practically handing them away because of some whole, "money isn't important" mantra that he was preaching, and I just so happened to be walking on the right path at the right time. He gifted me \$40,000 just because I was willing to talk to him for a bit about his spoils, without asking for my own piece of the pie; an act of generosity that would be hard to believe even from a best friend.

The reason I tell this story is to give credit to the statement that I hope will spark just a little feeling of joy within each (some) of your hearts. When I first got that single bitcoin, I cashed it out immediately. I eventually put some back in, and wound up winning some more. I then transitioned to cheaper cryptocurrencies, where a little money can turn into a whole lot of money real quick—at the price of even higher volatility—where I hit big on one coin.

I did a lot of research into all the top 500 cryptocurrencies, as well as read commentary on what the masses were saying about each, and felt very confident in gambling on a small handful of coins that had the potential to turn me, myself, into a millionaire as well. And, as luck would have it, before the wave was over, the 14 hour days that I spent dedicated to research proved to be worth it; my numbers hit.

With a coin that has the ticker AVAX, I made an incredible amount of money by betting on it before the masses really got their hands on it. It went from under a dollar to a max height of just around \$100 in just a few months time. An unbelievably quick, yet massive investment that almost got me to shit my pants, upon realizing how much money that I had just made.

With this large sum of money, I have set myself up for the rest of my life. Money is of no concern to me anymore; hence the reason as to why I'm giving this book out for free. With some of the money that I have leftover, I'm free to do whatever I wish with it. And what I wish, is to give back to the people.

The first 100 people that can find the secret link hiddin deep within this text

will each get a bitcoin of their own.

Now, before all of you run off to see if you can find it or not, you should first know that the link doesn't actually exist because I just made the whole thing up.

I don't have a friend who hit big, I didn't get the chance to really gamble with crypto, and I didn't get the chance to make a site that gives out bitcoin to 100 people dedicated enough to read this far into the text.

But, you thought that I did, and because of this fictitious story that lives solely in the nonphysical, your mind was able to create a very real feeling in your very real physical. I apologize that I had to go to such great lengths simply to just prove a point of how the mind is able to influence the body, but, wide nets must be cast for an audience of everyone.

The mind is able to affect the body in more ways than just one. I could have told a happy story, a sad story, an exciting story, a depressing story, a story causing any emotion that I could have wished. All different neurotransmitters, all different hormones, all different heart rates and breathing patterns, all caused by everything happening in the nonphysical. It's a powerful dimension, the nonphysical—the mind's sandbox—one that we are only just beginning to understand the depths of.

One of the interesting things to note about the influence coming from the mind to the body is its intermittent escape from the clutches of the gradualism that the body knows so well. The mind has outpaced the body in terms of its evolutionary track, showing itself in its ability to frame switch between different point of views almost immediately. Even though the mind is causing the release of hormones, and the activity of neuron connections, both of which belong to the gradualism of the body, it contains the power to switch between which hormones are being released, and which neuron connections are being activated at a rate that is faster than the body would ever be able to consistently experience naturally. The mind has the capability to switch between ideas, thoughts, and trains of reasoning seamlessly, and as quickly as is demanded; much quicker than the body switching between modes of sleep, hunger, and exercise. The mind has the ability to switch between the joy of “*Gasp* I might be getting a bitcoin!” and the despair of “this fucker thinks he's got jokes” in the span of just a single moment.

This relationship between the mind and the body goes both ways. Just as the nonphysical has the ability to affect the physical, the same is true in reverse.

For just one of many examples, exercise, happening with the body, semi-consistently over time, leads to positive changes in the mind 99 times out of 99. There is something so primitively simple about advancing the body in some domain that requires energy and the positive change that it brings to the mindset of the mind attached to it, no matter what the activity is. And what's

more, is that the amount of avenues that one can take to access this change is perceived to be limitless.

Whether it be playing a sport, or breath work and meditation, or instead, just taking care of one's diet and sleep quality, positive changes in the body lead to positive changes in the mind every single time. Likewise, not taking care of the physical needs of one's body plays immediate and apparent negative influence on the mindset that comes along with it. It doesn't take a genius to realize that they aren't going to be visualizing sunshine and rainbows when going through a hangover.

These changes come on more gradually than the opposite pathway (in the general case), and are more of a long lasting change in feeling over time than that of the other pathway as well. Body change is gradual and long term, for systems upon systems have to work in succession and integration, over time, and consistently. Getting healthy doesn't happen overnight, gaining muscle and changing body structure doesn't happen overnight (except, it literally does), and the benefits of a healthy circadian rhythm happen over the course of the days that it takes to set it up. None of these provide an instant change in perception, unlike the mind, which can.

The body and the mind, affecting each other bidirectionally, affect the soul in the most obvious way possible; they are it. The soul is defined to be that of the body and the mind over time, so this direction of influence is apparent and needs no further explanation. The other direction, however, presents something of interest that will make much more sense given the context of what's to come later on. But, before moving on so quickly, we might as well take a quick peak into a little more of what the body and the mind actually are.

Starting with the body, the extent to which it is able to perform is jaw-dropping. Instead of me using strong words that try to push its bounds—like “limitless potential,” or “incomprehensible ability”—I'll use real life examples with real life people; people of whom completely deserve to have their names collected together in history.

Eddie Hall. The first man to pick up over 500 kilograms off of the floor, shattering all previous records at the lift. For my fellow Americans, that's just a pinch over 1,100 pounds. In the process of doing so, he gave himself a concussion, a nose bleed, and memory loss. Since Eddie Hall, there have been other successful attempts at lifting over 500kgs, but none in the record breaking fashion that Hall pioneered.

Eliud Kipchoge. The first man to run a marathon in under 2 hours. For those unfamiliar, that's 26.2 continuous miles, ran at a pace of 4 minutes and 34 seconds for each mile. 4 minutes and 34 seconds for 26 miles, in a row; that's running 104 continuous laps around a track, where every lap is under

1:09 pace. That is incredibly fast for incredibly long; an act that—alongside all these other acts—will undoubtedly go down in the history books as one that pushed the limitations of the human body to a point that was once considered impossible.

Alex Honnold. A man that has climbed over 3,000 feet (about 900 meters) of near vertical, sheer, granite-faced rock wall... without any rope or harness. Over 3,000 feet of holds that an amateur would literally drop their jaw at, where one mistake leads to the ending of his life, and he does it without a safety net. Talk about sweaty palms.

Wim Hof. The iceman who has mastered the control over his—once thought of as uncontrollable—physiology in ways that have scientists scratching their heads. He has climbed over a third of Mount Everest.. while wearing nothing but shorts, shoes, and gloves; he has ran the fastest half marathon above the arctic circle.. while barefoot; he has climbed the entirety of Mount Kilimanjaro in just two days.. again, wearing just shorts; and, he has even ran a full length marathon in the Namibian desert.. without drinking any water.

James Lawrence. A man who has completed 50 ironman races in 50 consecutive days, across 50 different states. The ironman is one of the most grueling tests of endurance on its own, without the help of there being 50 of them in a row. For those unacquainted with an ironman race, it's just a mere 2.4 mile swim followed by a 112 mile bike ride followed by a full length marathon at 26.2 miles. No biggie, just 50 of those. In a row. On the road. Goddamn.

Ross Edgley. A man who has swam around the entirety of Great Britain—a total of 1,780 miles (2,860 kilometers)—over the course of 157 days; on a typical cycle of 6 hours of swimming followed by 6 hours of rest. Need I say anything more on this one?

There are people on this planet that can break stone with their hands, there are people on this planet who can jump over 4 feet in the air, people that can run as fast as the speed limit in a neighborhood, people that can run for as long as the amount of time it takes for the Earth to rotate about its axis, and people that can quite literally pull multi-ton airplanes with ropes attached. When it comes to the spread of capability that the human body possesses, there exists an almost unimaginable one that is easily taken for granted when we're told that 8 hours of our day belong to stagnation and screens.

The body is able to withstand heat just as well as it can withstand cold. It can go weeks without food, and days without water or sleep. It can survive off of just meat, it can survive off of just plants. It can make tools that enable it to take down any beast of any size, and is equipped with a stomach that can digest just about anything that it does. It has a fail-safe adrenaline system that can turn on in the fraction of a second, that can give us either superhuman

strength in the short term, or endurance beyond our normal capability in the long term, to keep us alive against any novel stressor that we come across.

It has an immune system that protects it against millions of foreign invaders, some of which it has never seen before. It has a nervous system that allows for such fine motor control, that it is able to cut the skin off the outside of a grape while also being able to crush apples with the same hand. It has a visual system that is able to process millions of colors and textures at once, an auditory system that can detect even the slightest breaking of twigs, and a nose that, well the nose isn't all too great, but it's still pretty cool.

It doesn't matter if your belief system that gets you to this point is God based or evolution based, there's no denying that mankind is a highly advanced, highly capable species of the animal kingdom that has a body that has helped it reach the heights that it has.

Any time dedicated towards focused repetition, in regard to any physical activity under the sun, and one is guaranteed to see an increase in their capability of performing that activity as time goes on. It's pretty nutty to think that the body can do anything that we put in front of it, and elegantly so, and all that is required is repetition of doing that activity over and over again.

On top of the simple methodology used to get better at the endless list of activities that the body can perform at, once competence at the activity occurs, recall of performing that activity again in the future, no matter how much time passes before the initial learning process, becomes automatic. In other words, the body's memory is essentially infallible and endless.

Any activity that is learned to the point of some competence by the body, and it is able to be recalled at any point in the future, without fail. It might take a few tries to fully recall the movement pattern—depending on how much time has passed since the initial learning process—but, in general, once learned, always learned.

One can dedicate their entire life towards the mastery of just one activity, or towards doing as many activities as they can fit into just one lifetime. The option to mend the body's capability exists solely in the hands of the owner.

Generally speaking, the body's learning process is most optimized during repetition as far detached from the mind as possible. That is to say, the body, being good at its own set of tasks, and the mind, being good at a different set of tasks, work best at their own set of tasks when they're as far away from the other as possible. Any energy dedicated towards the secondary entity in the learning process is energy that can be used towards the primary learning entity, thus speeding up the process in a way that's faster than that of attempting to develop both entities at the same time.

We lift best when the mind is empty, and we do calculus the best when our body is exercised and fed. The learning process is the most optimized when distractions are at a minimum, and the entity that's learning, whether it be the body or the mind, is able to completely focus at the task at hand.

Theory is always more useful with practice though, so, here's another chance for audience performance; except, this one doesn't come with the cost of a false wave of hope. I plan on teaching each and every one of you—each and every one of you that is willing to stand up and give me five minutes of your time—a new movement that you've probably never learned before. And, when I say me teach you, I mean, you teach yourself. And, when I say you teach yourself, I mean, your body teach itself; no thought needed.

Okay, here we go. Standing up, both feet on the ground. It's better if you can get someone to read the next bit for you, but if not, doing it yourself is fine too.

Okay, take a second to let that head rush go away (you damn smokers), and, when grounded, follow these instructions.

Feet not touching, but fairly close together. Slowly rock from side to side and feel your hips loosen up just a bit. Feel the weight shift from the left side of your feet, to the middle of your feet, and finally, to the right side of your feet. Feel how much there is to feel, just from standing still and shifting your attention to what your feet are feeling as you sway back and forth; both internally and externally.

Now, as you stand there, balancing in the middle of your feet, there should be, in particular, three parts of your foot that are making contact with the ground. The toes, the thick pad right before the toes, and the heel. Forgetting about the toes, just focus on the pads and the heels. To accustom yourself to feeling them even more, rock back and forth on the heels and then on the pads of the feet. Do this a few times and let the body find a natural rhythm that it sways too; first on pads, then on heels, then on pads, then on heels.

Now, standing still, with the left foot, go up onto the pad while keeping the right foot flat on the ground. Go up high enough on that pad with the left foot, so that, if you look down, you can't see your left foot because your knee is in the way.

Finding your balance, swap the state of your feet; left foot flat now, and right foot arched on its pad. Swap the state of your feet back and forth at the same time for a few repetitions, and again, let the body find a natural rhythm to the motion.

Now, standing still again, both feet flat on the ground, go back to doing the rhythmic motion of rocking back and forth between the heels and the pads of the feet. Up on the pads, catch on the heels. Do this a few times, and then go back to the next rhythmic motion, which was swapping between one foot being flat and the other being arched up on its pad. Do this a few times as well, and then go back to the stance with the left foot arched on its pad and the right foot flat on the ground.

This might feel weird at first, but, keeping neutral repetition with no attachment to the result in mind, keep the position of both of your feet exactly how they are, and drag your right foot back as far as you can, pausing in this

split squat stance with the left foot still arched. Now, keeping that stance, swap the state of your feet; left foot flat, right foot on pad. Then, do the same thing you just did with your right foot now with your left foot; drag it back as far as possible while keeping both feet in the same position.

Rinse and repeat, a little wax on, wax off, and within 5 minutes of neutral repetition, you now know how to crudely moonwalk. Within 15 minutes, that crude turns into average, and within an hour or two, that average turns into above average. From there, the moonwalking oyster is in the palm of your hands, as more time dedicated to repetition leads further down the path to eventual mastery.

Five minutes of no pre-conceptions or expectations, just neutral repetition with a refocusing to “wax on, wax off” every time the mind wants to interfere with the process, and the body is able to learn something brand new that it will never forget. How crazy is that?

The total time it takes to learn this movement well is going to depend on everyone’s own exposure to learning in the physical realm prior to this occurrence, but one can be assured that this isn’t something that they need to free a block of time for on their calendar. The five minutes put into learning it upfront lead to a literal lifetime of being able to perform it in some crude fashion whenever demanded.

Dementia patients that are still able-bodied, are still able to ride a bike given that they learned how to at some point before their brain slowly began shutting down on itself. The body, like an endless terabyte solid state drive, is able to recall any movement that it once learned in the matter of just a few attempts.

With this endless capability of the human body, one can’t help but take a second look at the lifestyles that we’ve been convinced are the new norm. Without even bringing the mind into the conversation, an average day of the week for a working class citizen has very little to do with the amazing hard-wired architecture that we all come equipped with. We wake up, sit at a table for breakfast, sit in our car to go to work, sit at a desk where we stare at a screen, sit in our car to come back from work, and then take a load off of our challenging day of sitting by sitting in a recliner so that we can spend our time looking at another screen.

We’ve been convinced that all of the red meat, egg yolks, and salt are what are causing heart disease and body ailments and cancer in the general population, and not the sitting and stagnation and screen staring that we are all constantly doing. And that, the answers to all of these questions aren’t going to be the simple ones of getting up and moving our bodies around for five fucking minutes, but instead, are going to be the ones that are marketed to us by our personal practitioners when we ask them why we all collectively feel like shit.

Our bodies were bred from, and belong to, the natural world, and still operate as such. The lifestyles that have become the default in our society are a slap in the face and a kick in the balls to the true demands of the body; the demands that aren't governed by arbitrary rule sets or bureaucracy.

40 hour work weeks in 8 hour intervals of stagnation, childhood diets consisting of pig grade food, unavoidable exposure to constant advertisement starting from the time of sentience to the time of our deaths, drinking from the same water that we dump our ever increasing garbage into, killing off of the environment that is propping up our greedy behavior, and, because of all this nonsense, us coming up with coping mechanisms just as complex as the problems that we are coping from.

We poison our bodies with our own customized choice of personalized ethanol, we have psychiatrists handing out day meds, night meds, mid meds, tranquilizers, benzos, barbiturates, fuck, even speed, we've gotten Gen Z addicted to TikTok like millennials are to prozac like the boomers are to painkillers, and we have reached a tipping point as to what else can be put into our bodies to handle the reality that society faces us with outside of our doors.

The cure is simple, it always has been. It's one where we return to a lifestyle that suits the architecture that makes us who we are. The route to get there, is not. And, if we are to change as a society, we must accept the idea that, sometimes, a difficult route is worth the trip if the destination proves to be of higher quality, and of a higher degree of sustainability, than the one that we're currently on. As to what exactly this is going to entail? I don't know.

I'm far from the man with the answers to the question of what must be done to get to where we want to get to, and frankly, I'm glad with where I am. Revolutionizing is a big endeavor, and comes with the great price of the perpetual unknown. It's not something with a clear-cut road map, it's not something that necessarily brings joy along the way, and it's not something that the average is going to look forward to.

BUT, I would be completely remiss if I didn't at least give someone else the opportunity to act in a hugely influential way with a structured framework as a backing for the motivation to do so; so, consider this my passing on of the baton to anyone who is willing to grab hold of it.

Moving forward, the story of the mind shares some similarities with that of the body, but differs in one large way. Both the body and the mind have been selected for over time to be the complex beasts that they are, but the mind has relatively recently jumped a hurdle that put it on a new level of capability when compared to that of its ancestry.

The body is strong, it's always been strong. The mind is smart, it's always been smart. But, as of recently, the mind just got *r e a l l y* smart. So smart, that it developed a new ability. It has developed the ability to become aware of itself.

Self-awareness, a process belonging to the mind, is exactly that; the awareness of self. It is a mind and a body writing this text about minds and bodies, and it is a mind that is referring to the mind as “the mind.” With this recent evolutionary ascent, the doors have opened up to all new sorts of capability for us. We have an incredible amount to discover when it comes to just finding the limits of what we are able to learn, much less the near infinite amount of content that we are able to learn about. But this new capability doesn’t come without us experiencing some growing pains that come with it.

The doors have just been opened to a world that, thousands of years later, we are still discovering, which has a subtle but sure implication of us experiencing the latter portion of trial and error in abundance. Any step that we take, any ability that we discover, and any new path that we tread, comes with the growing pains of learning anything brand new. The inevitable exploration—fueled by innate curiosity—comes with the cost of us having to deal with the unknown that we come across; and, in the unknown that the mind has been evolutionarily wading its way through, there are many traps that it has found itself prey to. Traps that will require time, energy, and selection to get past; time, energy, and selection that aren’t present in our timelines just yet.

In this way, the mind’s intelligence and capability relative to what it *can* do is low. We have to wonder, what are our minds really capable of? What are some of the things that we might imagine will become better over time, compared to where they are right now, on the scale of our capability?

For one, the biology of the body presents the mind with needless hurdles to constantly jump over. Our bodies give our minds some simple challenges, but ones that can’t be thought their way out of. Things like mood. Things like not getting a good night’s sleep. Things like saying something mean about someone just because you don’t like them. All of these, and so many more, propose limitations on what the mind can do in its purest form; a state of pure thinking.

Instead of being able to think with clarity and precision, we get hungry, and all of the sudden, we turn into angry Karens that are looking at the world through a lens of anger and frustration devoid of objectivity. It was Dr. Sapolsky who famously referenced a very interesting study that concluded that the single greatest predictor of whether or not a judge amongst a parole sentencing board was to rule positively or negatively towards the potential parolee, was the amount of hours it had been since they last ate lunch.

Here we are, thinking we’re all high and mighty with our morals and ethics and laws and the sort, and yet, here we have someone who has devoted their entire life’s arc to judge accordingly and fairly to a system of law that exists without human emotion, only to have their life’s mission stripped away from them by a rumbling tummy.

The mood patterns that our bodies exhibit are constantly limiting the full, unbroken potential that the mind has to offer. Telling a depressed person to think clearly is just as useful as telling someone with a flourishing life to do

nothing with their time.

This concept provides just enough of a transition into a similar, but added on top, aspect of the mind that we might imagine seeing some change in the direction of over the course of our species' existence. Our minds are unable to change the biology of the body that hosts it at a moment's notice, even when it knows that—in theory—it can.

We can spend a whole lot of time studying which neurotransmitters are associated with which desired states, and which hormones give rise to positive feelings vs. which ones that give rise to negative ones, and still aren't able to switch back and forth freely between these bodily states. With my made up story of the crypto lie, your mind had the ability to influence the body in a quick, yet powerful way that felt really good. Why can't it do this without the false hope?

If my mind can affect my body, why does it have to rely on pills to keep serotonin around for longer? Why can't it just tell the body to release more serotonin; or, have it stay around in the synapses for longer? We can know of what situations will bring stress before they happen, we can know if a stimulus will bring us pain vs. euphoria, and we can know of bodily ideals that exist in theory, and yet, lack the ability to be able to think our way there.

Might this change in two million years time from now? Assuming that we haven't nuked ourselves out of existence, it might very well be the case that, given enough time, an ability that gets selected for within our species is one where the mind is able to block out any negative internal feedback from ever crossing into its perception, especially during times of acute stress. For example, while getting sober, or after breaking a bone, or even after a heartbreak.

One can't help but think of other, random mutations that would lead to vast changes in the way that we perceive reality. Maybe our dreams become completely controllable as a default. Maybe the mind is able to stay awake and alert, even during times when it's sleeping; allowing us to think all day and all night. Maybe our minds learn to communicate strictly in the nonphysical; no language, no drawings, no facial expressions, just thought. All of these and countless other possibilities that might exist in the future of our species.

Despite all of this potential potential that makes the mind look rudimentary, immature, and error-prone, in every other regard, it is the complete opposite.

The intro to what the mind is truly capable of doing is extremely similar to the one of the body. For one, it doesn't matter if our ability is god-given, or chiseled out by evolution, there are still going to be indisputable aspects of the mind that we can all agree upon. When we shift the perspective from what it can be, to instead, what it is, the incredible complexity of the mind that's shown is utterly beautiful.

The mind is capable of such an immense amount of things, that trying to create a comprehensive list of all that it can do would be foolish. And besides, explicitly listing the abilities that the mind possesses isn't exactly as clean cut

as listing out all the abilities that the body can do. With the body, it's easy to group specific movement patterns that occur in a similar context with one word labels that encompass all the variability. "Swimming" doesn't just refer to one specific movement pattern, but to all the movement patterns that happen in the similar context of being in water.

With the mind, this is much more difficult. The body, containing 600 odd skeletal muscles, and being able to perform in thousands of different scenarios, makes for an incredible amount of combinations of different movement. But, with the mind? Billions upon billions upon billions of neuron connections; and millions upon millions upon millions of connections of networks of other connections of networks. The amount of combinations of all that the mind can perform is so large that the literal entity that came up with it can't even process it.

We do throw around some very loose labels for general processes, but it takes away from the beauty of the true complexity that is going on behind the scenes. We use words like memory, learning, concentration, prediction, visualization, computation, things of this sort, in order to convey meaning in short and efficient ways, but each of these terms refers to a countless number of neuronal networks doing very specific things at very specific times, all with integration that happens so fluidly that it goes completely unnoticed by the conscious mind that is hosting these processes.

It's insane to think about the amount of processes all happening at the same time, the amount of systems it requires to work together on the tiniest of time scales, and the amount of data that it is constantly processing—both internally and externally—and how all of this comes together to form just one continuous reality that can last for up to 100 years, without it ever showing its internal mechanisms.

Saying that the mind can just do this or that takes away from the elegance of its convolutedness. So instead, here are just a few things that the mind has managed to accomplish in the most recent blip of its evolutionary existence.

It has built a particle accelerator that smashes together subatomic particles at speeds approaching our universal ceiling of speeds; all without us being able to see any of it.

It has taken a picture of a space object that's millions of light years away from us; a space object that emits and reflects exactly 0 lightwaves.

It has discovered short and concise ways to universally represent the underlying laws that govern how its parent universe works; and, sometimes, can be as simple as drawing just a couple of lines. A couple of lines that are understood by the majority of 8 billion people living everywhere on this planet; see: $+$, $=$.

It has figured out a way to engineer on the scale of both nanometers and megameters, with robust architecture that has, and can, last for centuries—no matter the scale of size.

It is on the brink of having global satellite internet access accessible to anyone on the entire globe for a monthly rate; a monthly rate no more than a few hours of work (depending on where you live), and at a data rate that would

allow for someone to download every single one of our entire DNA sequences in just minutes.

It has created a reliable and consistent method for harnessing the power that comes from splitting atoms in half; and has proven so with the brutal genocide of entire modern cities on the island of Japan.

And, it has created a global surveillance system of rectangular black mirrors that we carry around in our pockets; one that possesses such an enticing stimulus for users to join under their own deliberation in the form of never-ending new media, that individuals around the globe are opting in by the masses. All within just 30 years of us creating the internet.

And this is just to name some—some—of the things that the mind has done, and can do. Despite its relative infancy that comes with its imperfections in other domains, in the domains that the mind can do, it can do extremely well.

With the tools of memory, language, and highly advanced motor control at our disposal, our minds have well outpaced the biologies that host them. Our knees haven't even adapted to lateral stress, and yet, our minds were able to go from airborne to the surface of the moon in less than one hundred years.

A few hundred years ago, people would dedicate their entire life, career, and livelihood towards learning one specific branch of all there is to study. Now, we have the knowledge of just about everyone, ever, refined over thousands of years, literally in our pockets, accessible by a few movements of only our thumbs and our eyes. It is absolutely ridiculous what the mind has achieved once we were able to take the physical health of our host bodies as certain by controlling our environments as much as we're able to.

An aspect of how the mind reasons about what is happening around it that's worth mentioning is the blurry dichotomy between rationalization and logical systems.

Rationalization basically says that anything, ever, happened because I said so. Why? I just said; because I said so, that's why. Rationalization is all about projecting our emotional bodies into the nonphysical in an honest attempt to give causal reason as to what's going on around us. And, because we bring emotion here, one might guess that the results are often going to be swayed by the mood that is brought in to whatever rationalization is created.

In a bad mood, my mind says that that thing happened because of bad reasons. In a good mood, my mind says that that same thing happened because of good reasons. When attempts to explain what is going on around us are constantly being influenced by mood, this causes the reasoning to change shape depending on something as simple as the time of day that it was thought of. Rationalization provides an imperfect human with an imperfect system to explain what happens around it; one that needs no verifying.

The imperfectness of rationalization is well contrasted with a system of thought that belongs in a completely opposite direction than that of the ever-shape-shifting nature of rationalization; the concept of logical systems.

Logic is a system that can be looked at from any angle and provide the same consistent feedback, with it only ever changing as new discoveries append to what is already built. Everything is, and always is, no matter how or when it is viewed. But, similar to rationalization, this too, has its give and take.

The “give” here being obvious through all of the scientific discoveries that we have made that help other human lives. Looking at the modern medical discoveries of our time gives anyone enough proof as to how using logical systems in a practical way can lead to substantial increases in the general well-being of the people. The “take” here might not be so obvious, but is easily understood through one real life example.

Just over 300 hundred years ago, happening in the very new United States by the, not very new, established European citizens, there were women who were tied to stakes and burned alive because of the belief in the logic behind the idea that they were witches. Witches. In the 1600s; witches.

By this time, Kepler had already published his Laws of Planetary Motion that explained how that which we can't see, operates; and what were the new settlers of the grand ole US of A doing? They were burning women alive. Oh, I'm sorry, witches. They were burning witches alive. Why? Because that's what you do to witches. You burn them. Alive.

Makes sense to me; and, apparently, to the people at the time, as well. A perfectly logical system that is to explain what is happening around us without the subjectivity of any human emotion involved. No matter the viewpoint that is to be taken, day, night, happy, or sad, those women were perceived to be witches; once, forever, and always. And this, presents the critical take that comes with the ability of our minds to understand a logical system; no one said that the logic has to be sound.

There's no requirement for logic to be formally consistent when it comes to our mind's ability to believe in it. All it takes is just that; belief. It has nothing to do with the structural integrity of the nonphysical framework that the logic gives rise to, but instead, simply whether or not there is belief that it will hold. Women were burned alive on stakes not because of sound logic, but because of sound belief. And this, creates logic.

Unfortunately for us, we don't get to choose what we believe in. Our minds have the final say in what we believe in, a decision that usually flies under the radar. For anyone who has taken a basic level math course at any point in their life, if I write $2+3=?$, it's impossible for them to convince themselves otherwise because how could the answer not be 5? Why? Because it makes sense, that's why. And it will continue to make sense until a logical system other than mathematics shapes the way that we see this computation in a different light.

Understanding of a logical system is a powerful thing, as it presents us with easily accessible avenues of thought that are flexible enough to account for any sort of varying scenario that we could ever fit inside of the scope of these perspectives as a whole. On top of that, if one is able to fully believe that the logical systems that currently make sense to them have the option to

be manipulated in ways that can produce net positive results in their life, then the intrigue only intensifies as the process of optimizing these logical systems only becomes an increasingly enticing of an endeavor. And, as for how you might go about this?

We're not quite there yet, for there's still a little more cleaning up that I have to do before getting to the ending of all of this. There's still one last major idea that needs diving into before moving ahead; the combination of the body and the mind, happening over time: the me.

The me is where things can start to get a little tricky. The body and the mind both have very clear and tangible bounds. Everyone reading this knows what the body and the mind feel like because everyone reading this must also have some functionality of both. But, the soul isn't so much the same.

There are external tools that one can use to easily feel this sensation that I'm defining to be the "me", "soul", or "spirit", in a work-free way—such as using hallucinogens and/or other pharmaceuticals—but, external tools are not particularly necessary for one to gain access into this feeling.

The most accessible way for anyone to feel what I'm trying to describe is to have them go into a private bathroom and stare at themselves in the mirror for 10 minutes straight. No distractions, no people around, no music playing, no phone in pocket, no fidget toy in hand. Just looking, observing, and feeling. And, if they're able to last for that full 10 minutes, they will come out of that experience knowing more about themselves—their TRUE selves—than before they went in; guaranteed.

Up until this point, there has been no incompatibility with any of the perspectives presented thus far. Time moves forward, sure, nature is a host of various carbon-based life forms existing in time and space, okay yeah, human beings fit inside of this bubble of nature with bodies and minds that are completely out of their control, okay why not, and, we also have a soul that is able to step outside of all of these perspectives presented here and process everything that is happening in real time, sí, sí, lo que digas; all of these ideas, stacking upon each other simply, smoothly, and intuitively.

But, moving forward, let's just say that we were to head in the direction of supposing that this abstract entity loosely defined as the "me" actually does have some form of control over its own body and mind. If this hypothetical path is one that we end up taking, it might prove to be useful to proactively account for the possible confusion that could develop by pre-creating another logical system that fits right on top of the ones that have already been presented in this chapterwide dictionary of perspectives.

By default, we say that no choice is existing in this universe that is measurable by us in any way. The thoughts we have, the feelings we feel, the actions we take, the perspectives we believe in, all out of our control or say.

What if, instead of trying to constantly control the body and the mind that make us up, we were to just simply observe them as if they were anyone else's? If me—the me—truly believes that the factors that went into determining its own individual body and mind that make it up were—and are—always out of its control, then surely, with the power of this third point of view, we would be able to study our own bodies and minds without any guidance as to what or how they go about doing what they do. And, by being able to learn about ourselves by taking this perch way up high on top of a pillar called the self—pretending as if we weren't ourselves—we are able to begin **understanding** how we *really* are, instead of the narrative that we've come up with **telling** us what we *think* we are.

But then, we realize that even if the me is able to learn about—and eventually influence the behavior of its constituent parts—this “choice” that it's exhibiting over its newly understood body and mind is still no choice at all, because the me is still completely defined by the two parts that are forever acting in accordance to that which is out of their control.

Basically, it's all just one big circle jerk here, where the me has no say over the body and the mind, until it does when it learns that it doesn't, but actually it really doesn't, because the stack that is itself was formed by factors outside of its own control, thus meaning that all of the desires that it will ever have over its body and mind will also be controlled by that which is uncontrollable.

So then... do we have choice? Do we not have choice? Does free will exist? Well, it's complicated. But, to boil it all down into just a single sentence: if we say that we do, then we do; even if we don't.

Now, this conclusion is great and all, but, getting to the protein of this sentiment, how does the “me” actually exhibit this—possibly pseudo—choice over its own body and mind?

The answer to this question is deliberately condensed to a single limit point of the concept that will now belong next to the other entries in this chapter-wide dictionary of perspectives; we say that the me has exactly one means of control over the two systems that it is now defined to be the puppet-master of: **the me is the decider of intent.**

A concept that will be of much more importance later on, we define the me as having just a single ability that is meant to open the doors to infinitely more. Some might call it attention, others might prefer the word focus, but regardless of the idea's label, the concept is far from arbitrary. Intent is such a common feeling that everyone here reading this has felt it at some point, and most likely *is* feeling it in some form on a day-to-day basis.

For a real life example of what I mean, check this out; after you read this sentence, your intent will be focused on the way that you are currently breathing. After you read this next sentence, your intent will be focused entirely on your blinking rate. And, after you read this last sentence, your intent will

be dead set on waiting to react to the words that I'm typing out right now as I manipulate your attention in real time.

More importantly than the choice of words, when I say that the me is the "decider of intent", the root concept that I'm really trying to get at is this notion of all of us having this ability to shift our attention in any given moment in time to something that's currently not being focused on; even if it's for a very short amount of time, even if it's just a trivial refocusing onto something else that matters even less, and, even if all of the language that I'm using to describe this topic is completely different than the language that you yourself use to understand it.

Initially, it might seem a little counter-intuitive as to why we would want to limit the "me's" possible action space to just a single point—especially when we seemingly have the ability to define it to be so much more—but, that's exactly what I intend to use the last chapter of this book to explore.

A Coordinate Change

The final beginning; it's bittersweet really. We've come quite far into this journey inside of my mind, so it might be helpful to do a quick recap of the foundation that has been built along the way.

Where did we start? Time; always moving in the same direction and continuously so. And—for humans—with time, comes space. Space; a physical arena for physical things to happen. Happening in space—over time—we have nature. Nature; a system of processes that abides by fixed rule sets within the world of "time" and "space". And finally, within nature, there's us; the human being. The human being; a body, a mind, and a spirit. All three are incredible.

This is where we are. Where do we go from here?

We go all the way back to the beginning, with time. Except, now, we take a look at it from a different point of view.

We start by looking at events that have already happened in the past, and then immediately stop once we realize that, a) we're wasting our time here since the effect that was forced out of us during whatever moment in time that whatever it was that had happened to us in has already been chewed, swallowed, and digested by the inherent modes of communication within each of our own bodies, minds, and souls, b) we're directly taking away time from our current selves that could otherwise be spent thinking about, oh I don't know, maybe literally anything else, and c) how many times do we actually find joy in analyzing what we've already done when compared to the amount of joy when manifesting what's to come?

So then, naturally, we take a step forward into the land of the future to see what's going on up there, only to promptly leave upon finding out that d) it's kind of fucking scary when you're in a place where you have absolutely no clue as to what's going on, e) it doesn't help that Future always seems to be hanging out with their good friend Uncertainty (yes, the same Uncertainty who is cousins with Loss of Control; small world right?), and f) I don't even know why the fuck we decided to come up here in the first place.

Thus, g) we find ourselves beginning to philosophically converge to just a single moment in time that remains as having any lasting importance to us at all; the moment that is h)appening right now.

Now, if we were to keep on saying things, we might want to say that this train of thought pairs beautifully with yet another recently-established train of thought that just so happens to also collapse down to just a single point; the universal feeling that we each uniquely categorize as something along the lines of "awareness", "focus", "attention", "mental direction", "stream of consciousness", or anything else that makes sense to anyone ever, that represents a gateway to the infinite for the same group of anyone ever.

Having the feeling that there's still more sayings to be said, we can then add to the subject matter by sprinkling in a smidgen of spice to these stories by selecting another series of sentences that also squeeze down to a singular statement of significance; a sensible stopping point that's being sponsored by the stack of beliefs set forth by this whole sectionwide sentiment of time, space, nature, souls, so on and so forth, by saying that, we—the mammals of this earth that we have become—breathe, every single minute, of every single day, of every single year, of every single century, of every single civilization, every single time, without fail, 100 times out of 100, we breathe.

And, because we breathe, we're now left with this beautiful triplet of ideas that combines one moment with one theory with just one practice that works for as many people as I could possibly herd together into this one hypothetical auditorium of abstraction that you all are listening to me in; one that can be summed up by a simple spotlighting of the fact that we each have this direct means of control over our realities that's available on any day—in any phase—no matter the maze, daze, or perpetual haze—requiring no praise or repeated phrase—and not just for the fortunate fated, praised and faved, students of A's, but also for the blamed, shamed, and defamed, castaway runaways who've been told that they have distasteful traits displayed in disgraceful ways.

And thus, we finally get to finish saying all of these sayings by saying that the only thing left to say is that... there's really not that much left to say.

One moment, one action, one guarantee; for you, for me, for all.

This exists. Forever.

We've now arrived at a conclusion that will establish itself as the new point of origin for an entirely different coordinate system than the one that humanity has been using for as long as humanity can remember. Because of this, we now have the ability to map every seed of thought that could ever exist in this old garden of weeds to an entirely new set of dimensions that has its center pinned at the singular point that is the triplet of ideas that make up the protein of this last chapter in the book; the same ones that promise a means of control to a population of everyone—on a timescale of all of it—by doing nothing other than recognizing that anyone, ever, has the ability to shift their awareness towards their own breath in any moment, ever.

However, I'd imagine that this would be a fairly challenging thing to do without an initial understanding of exactly what it is that we're trying to change, so, we might as well start by explicitly describing the societal soup that we have all been subconsciously sipping on since the dawn of modern day society; the story that goes by the name of MotherCulture.

Here we are, human beings, mankind. Most of us here believe that God is the almighty power that gave us this experience of life, but, origin belief plays no role in this perspective. To us, life, is like so.

As mankind, it is our duty to work. We start when we're young, and work far into our old age, to the point where our bodies begin to break, our minds start to slip, and our motivations have long dwindled to dust; it's then, and only then, that we get to sit back and relax as we're ever-so-rightfully rewarded with the ultimate opportunity to relish, rejoice, and reflect on the fact that we've finally made it to the whole point of this thing we call life: we've retired.

And, as we await our accomplishment of reaching this pinnacular perma-state of nirvana, it's imperative that we must not forget to keep our heads up when times get tough, learn how to pick ourselves up when we find ourselves down, and always—ALWAYS—push through the pain; because we're warriors, not pussies. And warriors, work.

This is the current default that is reinforced in public schools, this is the current default that gets selected for in capitalistic work environments, and this is the current default that gets shoved down our throats from the moment that we're born until the moment that we die; work hard, and then let the work do the rest.

Oh, my friend... how times have changed.

Before reframing this antiquated point of view into something a little bit more

modern, it might be helpful to first consider why we even feel the need to change this viewpoint at all.

When we use this particular MotherCulture backdrop for how we reason about everything that's happening around us, it's easy to discredit entire generations by shaming them for what they didn't seemingly *choose* to do, instead of making an attempt to understand what has actually *happened* to them. We invent this cause-and-effect relationship in our minds where anytime a person doesn't fit inside of this grand societal narrative of "work is life, life is work"—no matter what the reason may be—it means that there's something "wrong", or "problematic", or even "dysfunctional" about them that needs **fixing**.

But, in the bubble of Nature that we belong to, the word "problem" doesn't hold nearly as much weight as it does in human-land. Problems don't exist to the crabs with only one claw, problems don't exist to the dogs without tails, and problems don't exist to the plants that don't bloom, because, what's the problem? The fact that they were shaped by the universe in the exact way that they were? The fact that, even after experiencing a non-negligible setback in their life, they continued to exist as a living showcasing of the biologically beautiful display that is environmental induced adaptation? Or maybe because, they've unknowingly—yet trivially—rejected someone else's attempt of pessimistic projection onto something that can't even defend itself with language? Is that the problem?

This world that we are currently living in has changed very much from how it used to be not too long ago. It's no longer about being able to hunt different types of prey, or being able to digest different types of food, or traverse different types of terrain, or blend whatever natural medicinal cocktail for whatever purpose from whatever surrounding flora that exists alongside of whatever differing fauna. It's no longer about living in a close-knit community of peers that you genuinely care about, with a role that actually matters, with wildlife that you depend upon, with land that nourishes you, with clean water that sustains you, and with connections to the grand planetary ecosystem that will always remain to be the *Homo sapien's* most immediate god.

Instead, it's now about being able to type the same things into the same programs in the same computers in the same settings, sitting in the same spots with the same postures around the same people eating the same lunch at the same time, all while rotting in the same climate-controlled, square-box, LED-lit, concrete facilities made out of misery and Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. It's now about being able to take the same roads in the same cars to the same stores, seeing the same sights, parking in the same spots, and getting the same groceries down the same aisles on the same days at the same times, where constant buzzing, beeping, and hubbub is to be expected, accepted, and non-debative as the new societal norm; just so we can get back to the same abode to lay in the same bed in the same ways, wearing the same pajamas, watching the same TV that's playing the same pre-programmed, passé, and predictable programs of prearranged lengths of time that even tell us when to laugh, when to clap, and when to cry.

And yet, despite some of us being able to feel for ourselves that this adaptation to non-adaptation is one that is directly leading to the internal suffering that we are constantly facing, we are the ones that are deemed problematic. We are the ones that are medical mysteries, we are the ones that nothing seems to work for, and we are the ones that remain to be off when everything else seems to be right. Labeled once and forever by the self-designated labelers who never feel the need to self-label, we're given just enough of a personal description that just so happens to also fit nicely and neatly on each of our eventual un-timely tombstones: unable to be, here lies a person that is subpar; assistance to be required.

Personally, I feel like it's about time that we start looking at humanity from a different point of view. To get the conversation started, maybe it could look something like this.

Here we are, human beings, mankind. Most of us here believe that God is the almighty power that gave us this experience of life, but, origin belief plays no role in this perspective. To us, life, is like so.

As mankind, it is not our duty to do a single goddamn thing. We do, as we do—as nature has us do—without the need of any artificial rationalization placed on top of why we do what we do. And, when we do try and assume why we do what we do, we do whatever our current mind wants to, placating our dissonance through whatever askew, make-do—only sometimes tried-and-true—self-soothes that are up for no debate and/or re-review; where we entertain both woo-hoo, say-yes-to attitudes as well as boo-hoo, devalued dim views in order to subconsciously subdue any bird's-eye viewed atypical behavioral cues happening because of our own self-perceived, misconstrued worldviews—no matter the cast, crew, average IQ, or whatever deeply engrained scar tissue.

In reality, what we do—what we *r e a l l y* do—is we spit in the face of our ancestors, siphon our planet's resources for profit, completely exterminate other species of life from this earth while putting the rest in cages to poke, prod, and profit from, casually commit genocide on our own by way of any means necessary, mercilessly erase entire ecosystems that are (were) sustaining the history of carbon based life here on Earth seemingly overnight by principle of hey we want that so it's ours now, turn the oceans that bring us our very life into cesspools of symbolism for the cancer that *Homo sapiens* have become, pulverize the forests because who needs them, pollute the air because if we can't see it how important can it be?, poison the soil because fuck soil, plow through the atmospheric ozone layer because might as well while we're out fucking soil, pillage anything that breathes while heartlessly punishing any resistance because at this point we're really just bored, and, creatively find ways to continue pursuing our ultimate goal of aspiring to be akin to the almighty heroes set forth by the trailblazing animals living on Orwell's farm;

but, most of all, we have set a world on fire and are looking around to see who's to blame. Motherfuckers, it's us.

Now, that's just something that I *would* say if I was to try and spark a pilot light in somebody reading this to do that thing that they've been thinking about doing for awhile now, but, I'm not much of a politics guy myself so I think that I'll just stay out of this one.

But I digress, for the very last time, because discussing policy isn't nearly as important as getting back to the root cause of why I have dedicated the past five years of my life towards finishing this book despite hating every second of it.

With all of the prerequisites now out of the way, I can finally get to the whole point of this thing by revealing the answer to the original question that this entire book is built on top of... how do you go about solving the problem of obsessive thought?

Well... that's just the thing. You don't.

You don't solve a problem that isn't meant to be solved; you reframe it into something else that is. And, as for how you might go about that?

Well... isn't it obvious by now?

You use a lens; a window into the past, the present, and the future that can be used to understand, reason, and infer.

You develop a map; a topology of terrain for the fields of your mind that can store as much information as you could ever desire.

You build a home; a place of comfort that doesn't need a location, a lock, or a monthly payment.

You shape a story; a narrative that gives you a means of control in an otherwise uncontrollable universe.

And, you forge an identity; one that's made for you, by you, that gives meaning to you and only you.

What you do, is you create a brand new groove; one that has a biologically

permanent trigger available to anyone, anytime, anywhere, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. A groove as simple as, oh I don't know, taking a breath in, holding it for four seconds, and then thinking of nothing other than just four dots; a groove of a groove that has just been watered for the first time, marking this moment as the anniversary date of a new train of thought that belongs to a new school of thinking that I can only hope brings you as much peace as it has for me.

But what you do—what you *really* do—is you do your best to convince as many people as possible that it is not them that failed the system, but rather the system that failed them. You try and convince them that they are not the ones who are incompetent, that they are not the ones who are beyond repair, that they are not the ones whose brains need solving, whose behaviors need changing, whose traits need labeling, or whose identities must be permanently branded by whatever clinical diagnoses that have been dished out to them like candy to trick-or-treating children on Halloween that will follow them around for all future doctor visits, parent phone calls, and friend-led, armchair therapy sessions as the ultimate default for any hair of imperfection when viewed from the outside-in; really just doing your best to convince them that a world made for others, by others, without any others, is naturally made to not be friendly towards any of the others.

Really though, what you do, what you *actually* do, is you assure them that their voices are heard, their uniqueness is seen, their feelings are valid, their contributions are overlooked, their wisdom is irreplaceable, and that their presence *is* in fact serving a purpose—whether they know of it or not; actually causing real change for real people living in a real world with real experiences, real feelings, and real ideas that are just as real as anybody else's real.

But I mean, realistically, what you do—and the only thing that you *can* do—is you give someone else hope in an otherwise hopeless world by sharing a message of love and not war, by modeling it for yourself in your own way for others to see for themselves, and by doing your best to make sure that even just a single other living soul in this plane of existence knows that someone—ANYone—sees them as the unique, inspiring, and beautiful individual that they have become; accepting them for exactly where they are instead of where they ought to be.

No but seriously, what you do—what you *have* to do—is you have to finish a book with just a single sentence that is meant to carry the weight of all the words that have come before it. And so, having no option left at this point, here's my best attempt.

Love yourself; you are yourself.

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Salud.

I hope to see you all on the other side, where one of you fuckers owes me a shot of vodka.

□

To sum up my entire book into just a single sentence for you dirty cheats that skipped ahead (or you poor souls who are still looking for that bitcoin link): don't worry, just breathe; it's the only thing that you can do. As for the rest? Well, the rest is the rest.

It's time for you to find out for yourself.

Enjoy

:)

Closing remarks

“Quick, everyone turn around! The whole thing was just a money grab!” Maybe it was, maybe it wasn’t; all I know is that being broke isn’t as much fun as you might think it is. That being said, no one likes a beggar nowadays, so I’ll leave you with a quote instead of a plea...

*“I do it for the money, man I am such a hooker,
and freedom was my girl, until they fucking took her”*

- Lil’ Wayne

Church.

GoFundMe: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/d4r96-paradigm-shift>
Venmo/PayPal/Cash app: @DominicVicharelli

If you got here by reading this book from start to finish, a genuine thank you from my heart to yours. Without an audience that’s willing to listen to all of my absurdistic, bombaciubastic, charismæticulous dominic-isms, every feeling given (hypothetically) is just kiboshed lacklusterly, making my main message’s meaning’s manifestation mostly moot, null, or perhaps, questionably romanticized; suiting this universe’s version where xenophobia yields zero-zenithed, zodiac-zombified, zest-zapping zealotry. You xnow?

For anyone who is interested in seeing a visual example of what a personalized four things structure might look like, I’ve put two of my own in the following folder: <https://github.com/dominicvicharelli/dominicvicharelli.github.io>
And, for those of you who just have something to say, say it. I’m all ears.

paradigmshift.dv@gmail.com

Have a great life everybody; it’s time for me to do so myself.

∴