Ascension Reflex: A Novel

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# Epigraph

An inferno descended upon the Earth.

The world shattered.

Thy kingdom come.

Peace was murdered.

All society halted its motion in horror as the world watched.

Good in the world was replaced by survival and submission to the Elements.

Thy path be fire; thy field be famine; thy world be burned anew.

The Ancient gods of life and death collect the souls that flew.

Nothing was ever the same.

Regrowth could not be more painful.

- From *The Book of Fire*, 3:1-10.

# Preface

There is always a beginning. But what comes after is not always the same.

The impulse of life to survive led it to uncertainty. The origins of humanity echo as far back as millions of years with early hominids, each characteristic of their biology as formative to all that ever occurs in future homo sapiens history.

Though the names may be familiar, that is where most similarities end. While sustaining themselves almost exclusively on grass, grains, and fibrous plants, humans’ four stomach digestive systems unfurl a dramatically different reality than what readers of this book know of evolutionary history in their own world.

All that is known about the single stomach human origin history of the Earth is thrown into disarray by this mere difference of digestive multiplicity. Something as simple as ruminating humans, both in thought and in meal, changes everything. This is more than a butterfly flapping its wings to start a hurricane on the other side of the Earth unpredictably later. This goes beyond chaos theory. This is alternative anthropology.

For ease of understanding and simple clear communication, references to the world outside of this book, one firmly rooted in single stomach human evolutionary history, are referred to as Earth version 1, shortened to E1. This book expounds on Earth version 2, which is E2, also known as Ruminatia. E2 is the hominid origin in which early pre-human creatures sustained themselves as herbivores. E2 is the world in which this book occurs.

E2 prehistory is not populated with hunter gatherers like E1, as herbivores survive differently. E2 humans follow a different technological sequence based on the facts of ruminating digestive biology and herbivore diet.

World religions do not exist as they do in E1. All the rituals and symbolism are unrecognizable. Good and evil are still a recurrent ultimate question, and the problems of the human condition share much of the themes of E1. The problems of philosophy are as they always have been in E1, but the entire origin of academic thought in E2 follows a different thread.

The scope of this book is in an order of magnitude greater than what can be written in a single novel. This is not just a book: this is an introduction to a totally new unfamiliar world, one of wonder and intellectual vibrance.

For there was no Socrates. There was no Plato. But ever still, the Classical Academy formed. Universities emerged. Research societies of E2 exceed those of E1.

An ancient Rumi scholar once said, “the fields give us life, but our minds give us purpose. And our emotions drive us to greater heights beyond the tall grass in which we thrived.”

From grazing the ancient fields of peaceful contentment, to the modern arcology cities of *Ascension Reflex* present day, 330 AR, the humans of Ruminatia are no docile cows chewing cud and awaiting slaughter. They are fiercely intelligent and culturally rich.

The only commonality with bovines they share is the gift of digestive freedom. Freedom from the hunger of wolves. The hunger to consume animal life for sustenance, an E1 struggle that Ruminatia would never comprehend beyond satire.

Their relationship with Nature is one of symbiosis. Rather than dominating and consuming the environment, they live in balance with it. The invention of fire was not used to make food easier to digest, as E1 style cuisine bears no resemblance to the complex culinary palette provided by Ruminatia’s unique domesticated plant life.

While English never evolved in E2, the narration of this book is a faithful representation of this world in contemporary E1 English

The current era of the world of Ruminatia is not high tech. Not in any way you might expect. But in others, they may be far more advanced than E1. *Ascension Reflex* has not yet reached the stage of digitalization, cyberspace, rocketry, satellites, AI, and all the associated sci fi bugaboos.

But they live two to three times longer than E1 humans. They can lab grow complete replacements for most organs without any risk of rejection by the body. Genetic technology far exceeds anything E1 has ever devised, even without the luxury of powerful computers. As Nature is central to their society, understanding biology has always been their Manhattan Project.

And while war is rare in E2, it has occurred in its history. Their neurobiological adaptations naturally make them more peaceful, but the power structures of social creatures are an eternal source of dire problems for any advanced society, no matter how they evolved. But the way war was fought in E2 is significantly different than E1.

War. War ever changes. E1 split the atom. E2 conquered the genome. One hazards to guess which could be more terrifying… when leveraged for evil. But not every disaster has a human cause. Some are preordained by the whimsy of the Universe.

Religion and science both held power in society. But the core E1 world religions traditionally studied by scholars never culturally evolved. Others formed in their place. In any sentient being, there is space for gods. There is also space for analytical power. Both result in distinctive cultural structures that never go away.

One might imagine the religious feast festivals of E2 based on an herbivore and ruminant consumption process would be a celebration of the stewardship of nature, rather than in E1 in which blood and sacrifice are invoked so frequently. Rather than having dominion over all animals, a divine proclamation might be to grow in tandem with all life. Rather than expansion, imperialism, Manifest Destiny, and colonialism which are direct descendants of the drive to dominate and consume other life, an herbivore human religious, cultural, and philosophical evolution would embrace enrichment, humanitarianism, a culture of care, and a worship of Nature and all its aspects.

Neurological adaptations from the dramatically different gut biome and evolutionary history led to reflection and memory being enhanced. Rumi humans are less impulsive, more peaceful, and the vividness and accuracy of their memories and their ability to recall them make E1 humans look like veritable goldfish. A comparative historian, if they had access to both worlds of E1 and E2, would suggest that the E1 computer revolution never occurred in *Ascension Reflex* because they simply remembered nearly everything they saw, heard, and read. This led to a rich world of libraries instead of computer networks. There was no Charles Babbage in E2; he simply was not required.

The motto of the E1 European Age of Enlightenment was “dare to know.” In Ruminatia, it was never daring to know. It was not considered audacious. It was in their nature to know. One might assume that E2 humans would be incredibly smarter than E1 humans because of their impeccable memories and long lifespans. But E1 humans evolved under different pressures that led to other sharp forms of intelligence that were not cultivated in Rumi brain structures. Simply, Rumi humans have a different intellectual profile of skills than E1 humans. They each have their strengths and weaknesses.

E2 is no more superior to E1 than apples are to oranges, or the favorite color of purple vs green connotes superiority of one over the other. The pure difference in the two different realities of anthropological histories is a matter of divergent evolution from a single mono vs multi stomach cause. From that is a deluge of consequence. From that is a universe of new meaning.

# Vignettes

## The Everest Canyon

It was as though the very axis mundi connecting Earth with the afterlife was ripped open by the force of a billion bombs and burning energy erupted from the skies across the entire world. The continents were on fire. Mount Everest was now part of the atmosphere, leaving behind it a jagged canyon as explosive debris of what was a mountain. It expanded into an inferno spanning countless thousands of miles across the Earth.

No one saw it coming. Many never had a chance to realize it even happened before they were wiped from existence. Some might wish they shared that fate in the decades that were to follow. A mere five kilometers visiting Earth potentiated itself into global devastation that lasted a century. First fire. Then cold. Then starvation. Civilization was condemned to save itself.

This cataclysm baptized the Earth. And the ensuing fiery waters enveloped its inhabitants, granting them eternal life, but in the beyond. This blessing of brimstone was not biblical. But the grandeur of the conflagration evoked the mythos of jealous angry gods. Events of such magnitude in which billions die cannot be adequately conveyed without the spectacle of religion. The path to renewal marked the dawn of the Common Era.

Event date: 0 AR. Cataclysm. Pre-Impact world population: 5.4 billion. Post-Impact total world population within twenty years: 10%. Consequence? Epoch creation. Civilization collapse and reformation. The Impact marked the beginning of the Common Era and its aftermath.

# Afterword

My Early Formative Notes

* Four Ruminatia branches of philosophy
  + Ethics, analytics, explication, and reflection
* Redwood Tri-Lake Institute
* Writing rule: no language creation
* Core human condition creates same ideas as E1 in E2. Eternal concepts remain the same.
* Linguistic universalism – while English does not exist in E2, core structures that allow direct translation without error are core features of the languages that E2 evolve, making seamless translation possible. Total rejection of the theory of indeterminacy of translation.
  + Rejection of Whorfian Thought – Instead of language shaping thought, this suggests that thought structures shape language in a universally compatible way.
* Rumination neurobiology enables language that evades equivocation far more effectively than E1 languages. E2 humans with an order of magnitude better memory from adaptations have far more many precise words to use.
* In E2, the field of logic itself, a subdiscipline of analytics, is directly derived from the science of linguistics.
  + Logic is Not Abstract, But Linguistically Grounded – In E1, logic developed through mathematics and philosophy, but in E2, it emerges from language structure itself.
* The second branch of academic philosophy, analytics, is a hybrid of E1 logic, linguistics, and mnemonic intuition formed from a unique E2 practice called “cognitive channeling.” It is the rapid rote memorization of hundreds of thousands of words or more with near total recall to produce eureka answers even in fields like computation, enabled by Ruminatia neurobiology. This practice explains why electronic computation was not a natural development of E2 technological evolution: computation is remains a human profession and is not automated.
* An E1 human can hear a total of 10 octaves. An E2 human can hear 13 octaves. E1 untrained singers are capable of a 3 octave singing range on average, while E2 untrained singers are capable of producing 8 octaves of audible range, slightly more than a grand piano. The world record for an E1 singer is 10 octaves of range, while an E2 world record range extends to 14, which is 1 octave more than E2 humans can even hear, and 4 more than E1 humans can hear. E2 humans screams can break glass. E2 human speech is far more musical than E1 speech.
  + As a result of E2 voices impacting the structure of non-reinforced glass, glass as a concept never took on the meaning of fragile and was always designed to withstand a sledgehammer. Someone might be called tough as glass, and it would be like calling someone tough as nails.
* Musical ability is more universal to E2 humans as their memory recall of musical notes and lyrics and singing ranges cover an entire piano’s range. E1 has a wide range of musical instruments in music. Acapella is a far more common practice in E2 music since their voices can produce far more of what E1 instruments normally would be required for. Beatboxing in E2 is also far more effective for percussive parts of music.
  + I think there would just be more music in general in E2. Music theory represents all music. E2 is just way better at it.
  + Because E2 music evolved differently with less physical instruments because of a natural preference for vocal singing, E1 music has advantages, especially with electronic music, which E2 never invented
* This difference, among many others, emphasizes a societal philosophy of individual value over automation in E2.
* Rootcraft Age (Prehistoric) – Tools are grown, not carved.  
  Stratite Age (Bronze Equivalent) – Layered organic composites and bio-resins emerge.  
  Quartzite Age (Iron Equivalent) – Silica-based and mineral-infused materials replace laminates.  
  Plexite Age (Steel Equivalent) – Reinforced plexiglass-like materials dominate construction and tools.
  + This would eliminate technological evolution based on war technology and eliminate metallurgy. No warfare driven innovation.
  + This explains why E1 conventional computers never emerged.
  + This alternative materials history also explains why space exploration isn't happening.
  + It's not that they never had steel. They just developed it so much later in history that it was a secondary material with inferior properties to what their technology had previously developed. And mining was different.
* The field of psychology had no Freud or Jung or Skinner. The sharp memory meant people didn’t lose memories. Normal REM sleep. just like in our world, E2 psychology is split on most of the hard questions of consciousness. because of the greater intensity of clear memory recall, DeJa’Vu is a far stronger force in E2 daily consciousness. deja vu is merely more common because they have a much bigger expanse of short term and long term memory. And nostalgia functions differently.
* nation-states going to war is the usual type of war in E1. in E2, most wars are collections of clandestine violence, assassinations, and espionage. in E1, a leader sends an army to face another army in war. in e2, the organizing force of war isn't an army. it's secretive targeted attacks on the powerful figureheads. because of the lifespans of E2 humans and their exceptional memory and peaceful inclinations, political support for organized war is hard to gain. And in the modern era, in e2, such targeted warfare usually involves genetic bioweapons. Because of this way of fighting, most leaders of political bodies are committees.
* E2 humans wouldn't just sit and chew cud. They would multitask. chewing cud would be like a modern day equivalent of chewing bubble gum. chewing cud should simply be called ruminating
* Focus less on the stomachs and more on the herbivore aspect.
* Wolves were never domesticated because humans were never hunters. E2 domestic pets would be totally different. Domestication wouldn’t be focally done on predatory animals for pets. Domesticated antelopes would be the dogs of E2. I like the idea of antelopes being the primary domesticated creature as central as dogs. they would have selectively bred antelopes to be many varieties of appearance. imagine a seeing-eye-antelope for a blind E2 human. In E2, they domesticated and selectively bread antelopes as companions and symbiotic work animals instead of wolves as in E1.
* All primates were herbivores, not omnivores. E2 equivalents to monkeys and gibbons are herbivores, but this book is not about zoology.
* it's very important that (like how the core alien races in Star Trek look like humans) E2 humans and species, even though they inhabit an herbivore evolutionary history, maintain an essentially totally familiar E1 human appearance and beauty. This is absolutely essential to the success of this book
* because of their expanded size of musculature in their core muscles, yoga is far more advanced in E2 and plays a greater part of culture
* Cultural universalism as it applies to E2 concepts. Even though E2 follows a totally different history, the concepts and feel of the universe will be eerily based on E1 reality.
* The perennial philosophy of E1 acts as a core common thread connecting E2 with E1. As much as herbivores are fundamentally different than omnivores, they both are homo sapiens. The core reason why there will be eerie coincidences between the two realities is an incontrovertible set of conditions in which intelligent life exists. As E1 only has one species of civilization, homo sapiens, there are no other known examples of how civilization exists, and an essential thesis of this book is that advanced sentient life is, like a spiritual principle, preordained to follow common threads in societal development and philosophy. To develop the story in any other way would make E2 humans not humans at all and the result would be a book about aliens.
* A writing rule for this book is to constantly parallel E2 with E1 rather than to diverge to the point that the reader has nothing in common with the characters.
* What would clothing be like? And sexuality would as close to humans as humanly possible. As identical as possible. They will still be placental. They will still have romance. There will still be family structures
* This drafting process is a labyrinth of a kaleidoscope of a bee hive containing a Wonderland rabbit hole in each cell of the honey comb
* I just had the thought of the book being from the perspective of the author writing it as an omniscient narrator which would explain how the reality of E1 is constantly paralleled smoothly with E2. If the narrator doesn't have access to E1, the book would be impossible to write.
* Would tasteful use of first person by the narrator create new opportunities
* The narrator is in E1. The E2 is a thought experiment masterpiece written by a philosopher in E1. The narrator is a reader
* This book is now a form of meta-fiction
* This gives a total life to the real world because now we aren't talking about parallel universes and it allows 2025 real world to interact with the concepts in E2 without involving some kind of quantum mystery
* I'd love for the book being reviewed to be released and met with scathing reviews
* To make this book make more sense, in order to rationalize how the real world is being compared to Ruminatia, the narrator is actually the beta reader of Ascension Reflex and the book is now called The Beta Reader: An Herbivore Origin. Any problems with the massive scope of Ascension Reflex would be blamed on an unknown author
* The meta fictional impulses of the text will be unobtrusive
* Given that AR has no hope of being anything but artificial as it is a constructed alternative history of humanity's civilization, artificiality would actually relieve the reader of trying to believe such an otherworldly civilization
* What makes this idea unique is the fact that it's intended to be hard science of reality with a single biological change of three extra stomachs millions of years ago And all that implies And this concept comes with a lot of paradoxes
* The meta fiction layer is a tool and lattice for the drafting process. The title The Beta Reader: An Herbivore Origin is a placeholder title
* The Impact is now called The Everest Impact
* 10% of 5.4bn is over 500 million people. While The Everest Impact was devastating, it was more like the black plague in effect than a complete civilization reset to stone age
* It's like writing a Rumi encyclopedia. The book is not an encyclopedia though, but having an encyclopedia is extremely useful
* No more chapters until I have a hundred pages or more. A made a "Vignettes" section after the Prologue. Any time I have an idea for actual story that isn't world building, it becomes a single line in this section. So far there are three: Story about the Everest Canyon Arcology character Story about the researcher named Electra Fairhart Story about omniscient narrator from E1 real world
* The most common eye color of Rumis is purple
* They aren't cows. Cows don't exist because they never domesticated them. All the ways a cow eats are like the way a pig eats. Would they even process by way to cud
* The question is so simple but the implications if taken from hard science are beyond all measure: what if all primates were herbavores and yet still formed civilization?
* E2 discovered the eternal objects of Jung because Archetypal Psychology is real.
* E1 Carl Jung has a direct parallel historical E2 intellectual figure who came to scarily similar conclusions
* An entire novel could be devoted to herbivore human archetypal psychology
* The Perennial Philosophy and Archetypes are inextricably linked to civilization
* Ok hear me out. A writing rule: any E1 inventor or thinker can be translated to E2 as Rumi [last name].
* Rumi for short as a tribute to the E1 thinker
* "Beyond belief and unbelief there is a desert plain, For us, there is a passion in the midst of that expanse. The knower, when he reaches there, will prostrate, Not belief, not unbelief, not existence in that place." Citation: Rumi, Jalal al-Din. The Quatrains of Rumi. Translated by E.H. Whinfield, London: Octagon Press, 1898.
* I'm going to refer to Ruminatia as Rumi. Ruminatia is the world. Rumi is the adjective. Ruminatian isn't used. Rumi is used instead.
* Of course! The E2 Odyssey. Following the convention of E2 Famous Thinker, any E1 term can be prefixed by E2 and translated into E2
* The book calls them Ruminatia the same way we call Espanol Spanish. It's an English word for E2's world
* The absolute technical uses of E2, Rumi, and AR cannot be established on day 3 of writing
* America refers to an entire side of the world, the US individually, any country in America is possibly going to refer to itself as America. That's the specificity of Ruminatia
* Symbiotic migration as grazers in Ancient history.
* The Great Digestive Divergence. A term for the core anthropology alternative history
* The E2 antelope is the E1 dog.
* E2 Amish are the traditionalist Grazers. They follow the ways of the ancients. They vanish into the fields.
* Meat is used as an assassin’s poison in E2. Not only do Rumis get sick if they eat meat, depending on the type of meat, it could be variably fatal. Choosing to eat meat would be a taboo way of suicide
* E1 vegans say meat is murder because animals are being killed. In E2, meat is murder because it was the murder weapon. I suspect People For The Ethical Treatment of Animals would like this book.
* This is making me scared that we might discover they created a new form of writing like Chinese symbols but with way many more symbols because they simply remember all of them
* E2 Unicode, even though they don't have computers, is a metaphor for their script. It is many times bigger than E1 Unicode simply because there are so many symbols
* Their vocal range influenced language creation as well as the complexity of their writing system. There were simply more ways to make words based on pitch alone, not syllables. The reason their script is so complex is because the standard speaking octaves of Rumis is three times as wide. The script needs to account for pitch of each sound of each word.
* Spoken E2 language sounds like Enochian being chanted to E1 humana
* Because untrained rumi singers can sing 8 to 14 octaves and hear 13 octaves, and generally speak in a 4 octave range (3 octave is the untrained singing range of E1), their singing would be so much different than their speaking. If E2 speaking were like singing to E1, E2 singing would be world class opera. Not sacred. Common place and expected. Singing wouldn't be considered something that requires years of practice to merely compete. Certainly the E2 movie genre musicals would not be so segmented into a specific category. Action movies and dramas and documentaries would all have certain elements of song
* E1 people can't witness anything in E2. E2 only exists in the book within the book.
* Any time E1 cannot be translated to E2 or E2 cannot be translated to E1 it's called E0 translation. E0 is null. E0 represents Indeterminacy of Translation. E0 will be useful for our developments of this book. It is symbolic logic for parallel universes.
* E1E0 means Saving Private Ryan has no E2 path. E2E0 means something in Ruminatia has no E1 parallel.
* E2 Shakespeare. How much is E0 and how much can be E2ed
* E0 is the Earth of difference. All that E1 and E2 do not share are contained within it. It isn't an actual Earth. It is a metaphorical Photoshop composite of E1 and E2 with layer blending enabled.
* E0 is where the Perennial Philosophy failed
* E1E0 Greek gods. E1E0 The Fates. E1E0 Divine command vs free will. E1E2 (meaning it DOES translate) nature vs nurture.
* Because of the beta reader, E1E0 is often violated because the reader cannot imagine E2 without concepts of the Greeks.
* The unnamed author of Ascension Reflex makes E1E0 errors often
* "This is ridiculous. E2 cannot have an E2 The Matrix movie series. What was the author thinking? Totally E0!!”
* This pitch assumes the book will be riddled with E0 errors. As a writing rule, the author of AR does a serious impressive job and the reader is usually surprised by any errors
* Earths Notation is a creative act. Invoking any translation is a creative rather than scientific endeavor even if the process of translation uses the language of hard science.
* 1. On Seeking Wisdom and Transcendence
* "Do not be satisfied with stories, how things have gone with others. Unfold your own myth."
* , Rumi, Masnavi-i Ma’navi (13th century, public domain)
* 2. On Knowledge and the Infinite
* "You were born with wings, why prefer to crawl through life?"
* , Rumi, Masnavi-i Ma’navi (public domain)
* 3. On Change and Cataclysm
* "Try not to resist the changes that come your way. Instead, let life live through you."
* , Rumi, Quatrains (Rubaiyat) (public domain)
* Every form in E1 is a candidate for E2 translation.
* E2 2°F Higher Body Temperature Changes Everything. Stronger immune system, faster healing, and enhanced cognition. Less vulnerable to cold, but more sensitive to heat. Higher stamina and endurance, but different vulnerabilities in combat. Different medical treatments, sleep cycles, and sensory experiences.
* How might we gloss over certain absolute herbivorous differences to maintain a human appearance? Obviously not all possible adaptations from being an herbivore ought to be embraced: otherwise, one might imagine them cows.
* Slightly Altered Canines & Molars
* They do not regurgitate food like cows. Instead, rumination is an internal process. They chew again later, but subtly, akin to how humans might absentmindedly chew gum.
* Brown color eyes are almost unheard of in E2 humans. Most common, purple, then green, then blue. If they made a movie about E2 humans, in E1, they'd probably need to give the actors purple contact lenses. That alone would be enough to signify they are Rumi
* E2 humans’ vocal range increases with age. E2 humans are echolocators. The older they get, the closer to bat and dolphin levels of echolocation ability they reach. 8 octaves all the way to 14 octaves in the latest phase of life. Because written language is encoded with pitch, elders have a richer vocabulary that early stages of life cannot even speak except for read. Ultrasonic private communication exists. Elders can whisper secrets at frequencies that younger E2 humans physically cannot hear.
* This makes sense because they live up to 300 years. Late life may mean they have 100 years left to live.
* Yesterday we worried about how they might be able to advance in medical without computers. Now I wonder if E1's computers are a coping mechanism for a faulty brain
* E1 is not limited. That's the apple and orange paradox. Which one would win in total war if E1 and E2 were to occupy continents across the globe? Would E2 wipe E1 out with something that makes Ebola look like the common cold, or would E2 nuke E1 into radioactive shadows
* Cognitive channeling could be a means of payment. How many cogs © would an E2 salad cost? ©50?