

What Exactly Is a Doctorate?

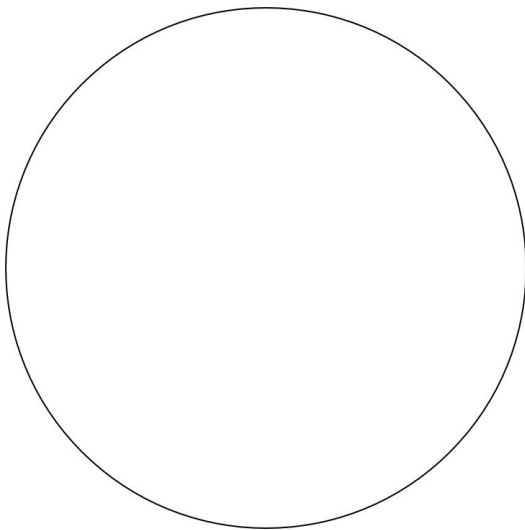
Matt Might

August 19, 2018

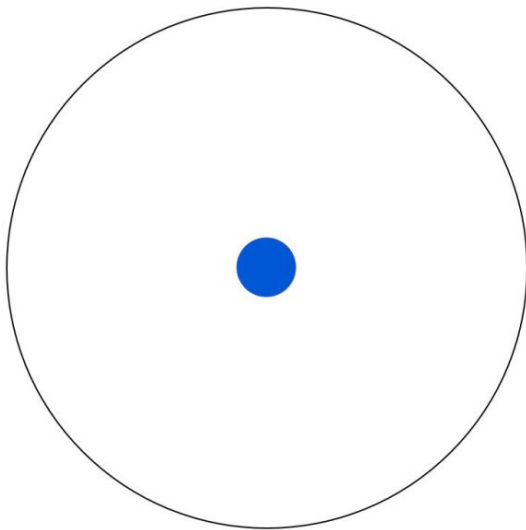
Every fall, I¹ explain to a fresh batch of Ph.D. students what a Ph.D. is. It's hard to describe it in words. So, I use pictures. Read below for the illustrated guide to a Ph.D.

¹Matt Might is a professor of Computer Science at the University of Utah. He tweets from @mattmight and blogs at blog.might.net.

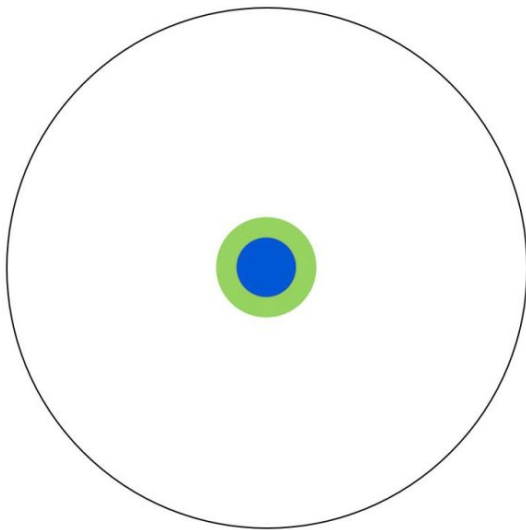
Imagine a circle that contains all of human knowledge:



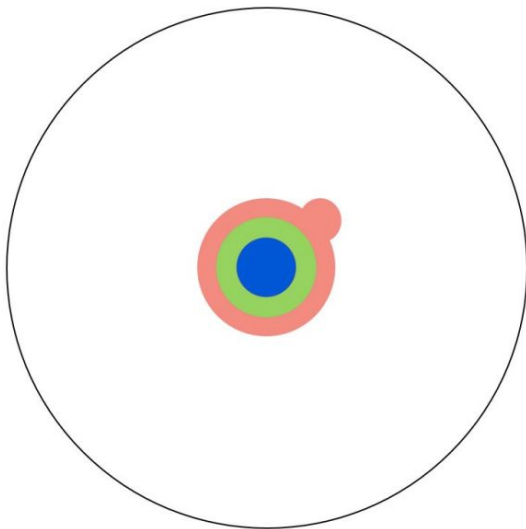
By the time you finish elementary school, you know a little:



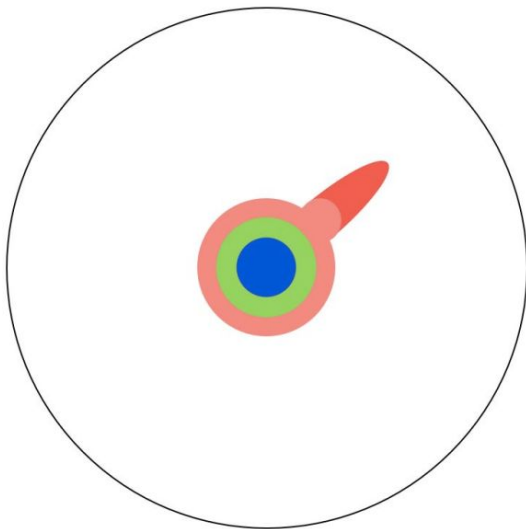
By the time you finish high school, you know a bit more:



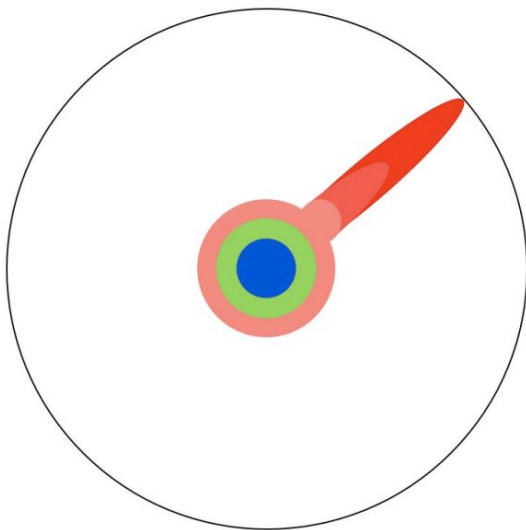
With a bachelor's degree, you gain a specialty:



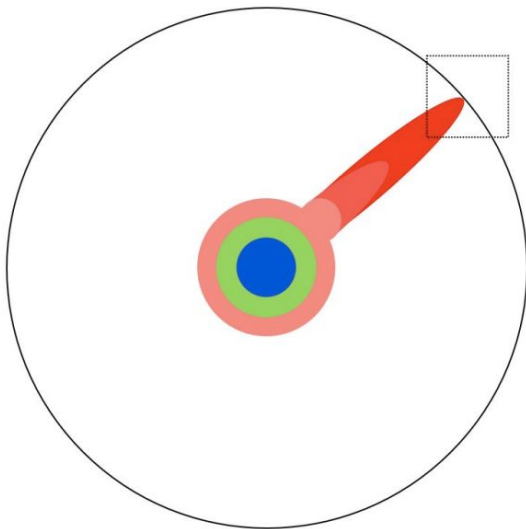
A master's degree deepens that specialty:



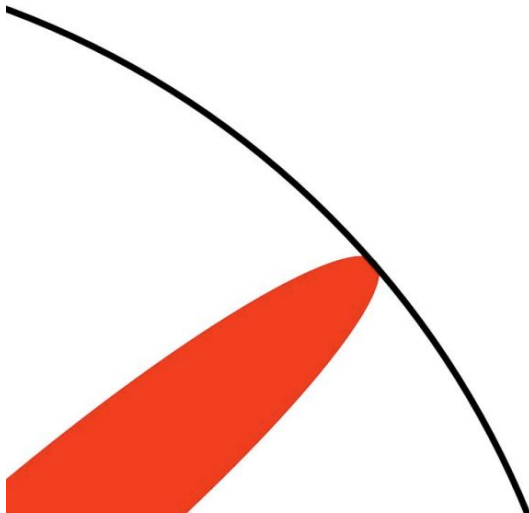
Reading research papers takes you to the edge of human knowledge:



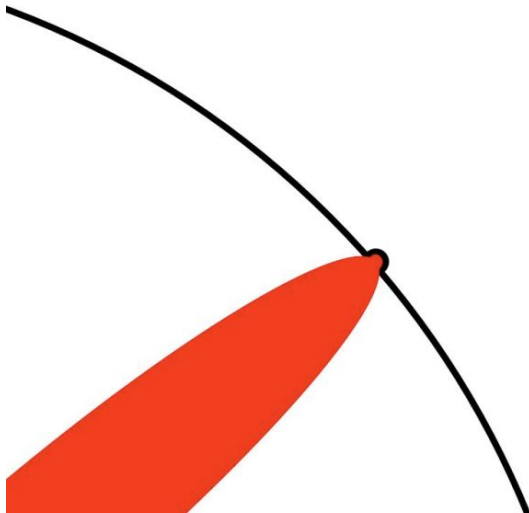
Once you're at the boundary, you focus:



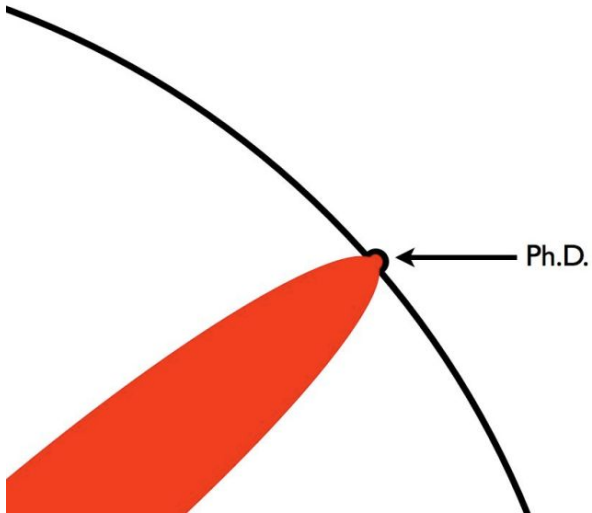
You push at the boundary for a few years:



Until one day, the boundary gives way:



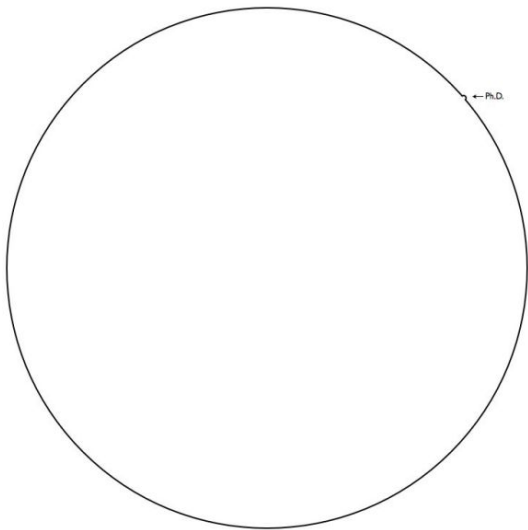
And, that dent you've made is called a Ph.D.:



Of course, the world looks different to you now:



So, don't forget the bigger picture:



Keep pushing.