

Essay Through a Life: A Gaze into the Center of Time

Maksim Barziankou, Poznan, 2025 - ...

Part I. The Feather of Attention: A Chronicle of Return

How often do you turn off your mind?

Sometimes it happens on its own: you catch yourself being somewhere far away. A song is spinning in your head, the past is replaying, the future is being rehearsed. Externally, you seem to be living — sitting in traffic, going to the store, scrolling, working, watching movies. But inside — you are not there. There is only a stream of “daydreaming” that feels harmless. Yet it is the exact opposite of the present moment. And it is precisely here that a real conversation about freedom begins.

The problem is not thoughts themselves. The problem is that they take ownership of you. Because if we simplify it into a crude formula: you are attention. Not a “personality,” not a “role,” not an “opinion,” not a “set of habits.” Attention is the only resource which, once given away, gives away everything else: your body, your energy, your time, your decisions, your path. When attention is captured, you become an automaton who is sure he is choosing. But in reality, the choice is made for him: by people, algorithms, environmental inertia, ancestral programs, social “this is how it’s supposed to be.”

And here it’s important not to slide into paranoia. The world really is built to attract attention — this is normal competition for a resource. The point is not that “they are bad.” The point is that if your attention does not belong to you — you do not belong to yourself.

From this follows the next painful question, one that almost no one wants to touch honestly: if the probability of you appearing is almost impossible (as mathematicians say, the number of possible combinations is monstrous), then why do we live as if life were merely a service waiting room before death? Traffic jams, shopping, endless repairs, work for the sake of bills, movies as anesthesia. This is far too small for the scale of the fact that you appeared at all. It’s not necessary to know “why we are here” (no one knows). But it is absolutely possible to know that a fully automatic life is far too cheap a way to spend such a chance.

Then the practices begin. The most grounded ones. No mysticism in form: breathing, cold, the body, concentration, rhythm. They can be called primitive, but the effect is anything but primitive. Because they return a basic thing: the ability to hold attention where you decide.

Here an important correction surfaces immediately: for some people it’s easier. Usually for those with strong neuromuscular connection — athletes, people who know how to “be in the body,” not only “in the head.” For those who feel their body worse, it will be harder, but sometimes the contrast turns out to be even stronger — as if a person lived their entire life in a blurry picture and then the focus was suddenly adjusted.

And this return almost always happens in stages — not as an “illumination,” but as stripping away an old layer of paint.

At first, you simply notice, briefly: this moment exists. I am here. It feels like a short *déjà vu* — as if you suddenly realize you are inside your life, not standing next to it.

Then you begin to see that thoughts are not you. They run in the background. They come, go, cling. But you can stand nearby and watch.

Then emotions come next: emotions are not you either. They happen. Sometimes beautifully, sometimes dirty. But they are not equal to you.

And at this point the habitual order collapses: the world is the same, but you see it differently. As if you had been walking in glasses and then took them off to rest your eyes — and suddenly realized how tense you had been.

For me, it once clicked in an icy shower, during the practice of “moving attention” through the fingers. When neuromuscular connection is already built, a strange physical obviousness appears: wherever you move attention, it feels as if heat flares up there. Not a metaphor — a sensation. And at some point a simple but life-turning truth arrives: I hadn’t gone anywhere for ten minutes. I was here. In the body. In the breath. Without fantasies, without inner cinema, without scrolling “what was” and “what will be.” Just presence. This experience cannot be “explained” in a way that someone would understand it. It can only be lived. But once lived — returning to automation no longer appeals.

From this comes the image that best describes the difference: you are walking down the street and simply breathing. And suddenly the air becomes real. Not a “service action to maintain consciousness,” but something tangible — as if you inhaled for the first time in your life. As if before everything was blurry, and now the focus has been adjusted.

Over time, this leads to a very concrete skill — the feather of attention. You can feel any point of your body separately from everything else — simply by moving attention there. It sounds like esotericism until you do it. And once you do — it becomes boring physiology and discipline. And this is where the most uncomfortable part begins.

Because next you will have to dismantle the programs. And this is painful. Psychologically — because the “correct answers” collapse. Physically — because the body resists, because the nervous system is accustomed to living in tension and stimulation. And deepest of all sit the ancestral programs: scenarios that have lived in you longer than you have lived. They do not ask whether you want to live this way. They simply activate.

The funniest part is that people who have never asked themselves “who am I and why am I here” are most often the loudest in teaching others “how to live.” “It’s expected”: family, mortgage, prestige, congratulations, fears. And if you don’t repeat the template — “something’s wrong with you.” The question that breaks this loop sounds like this: when did I decide what I decided? Who put “good” and “bad” into me? And where in that was mine?

Now about what is usually called esotericism. My answer is simple: if you begin to work with attention, reality really does change. And you may encounter “accidental coincidences,” chains of synchronicity, gifts from the world, people who appear at the right time. You can call it magic, you can call it statistics. But essentially something else matters: when you return attention to yourself, you enter the world differently — and the world responds differently. This is not proof of “mysticism.” This is proof that you stopped living sideways.

But there is also a trap: to hang the label “esotericism” on the Essence itself, so the mind feels more comfortable. The mind loves labels. They create the illusion of understanding. But the real path requires the opposite — removing labels one by one until only a clean surface remains.

And yes: the feeling of unity is possible. This is not a philosophical idea and not a belief. It is an experience in which the boundary between “I” and “the world” becomes conditional. When a stone stops being “external.” When the “observer” disappears and only presence remains, in which everything is one. This does not make you “special.” It makes you normal, simply without filters.

And here a point arises where you want to stop and think about the future. Because such states are not “pleasure for the sake of pleasure.” They are not escape. They are course-setting.

If the first journey took almost three months, then a mature thought arises next: it’s time to rethink the path. And where is that better done than at home? Home is not just a place. It is a space where you can gather yourself back together, stop “drifting,” and choose direction again. Not for one day. But for years ahead.

That is why I want to keep a diary for my seventy-year-old self. Not for likes, but for fixing the trajectory. To see where I was an automaton, and where I was myself. To not wake up in old age with the feeling “wow, how time flew by.” Because time “flies” only when you are not in it. When you live in the past and the future. And when you return attention — time stops running away. You set its subjective speed yourself.

If this resonates with someone — I can make a series of posts: simple, structured presentation, without shamanism, with practices and with dismantling of programs. I warn you right away: it will be unpleasant. Because to return attention means to return responsibility. And responsibility is always more painful than automation.

But this is the only path on which life stops passing you by.

MxBv, Poznan, 2025 - 2026.

10.5281/zenodo.18148484

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0