

On *Everything Everywhere All At Once*

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1 Problem Statement

I watched the (as far as I know) critically acclaimed *Everything Everywhere All At Once* last night. I think it's worth writing about, since I found it very philosophically interesting, and since it simultaneously seems to have captured the interest of critics, if not necessarily the populus broadly speaking (not to say that critical / commercial success and significant meaning are mutually exclusive, but I don't have the impression that the correlation is particularly strong). I should probably figure out just how successful this movie was in a relative sense, both critically and commercially. I understand that it has a reputation of being an indie-hit sort of success, so not necessarily mainstream. I suspect that its success (I will use this term to mean a general combination of commercial and critical success from here on out, unless specified to be either specifically), is due in significant part to (in no particular order): 1) a flashy, bold, vibrant visual style; 2) a sometimes-crass, sometimes cheap-absurdist ("random") humor; and 3) pretty decent (if chintzy) sci-fi elements. I kinda indicated that, rather than watching this movie, you could watch *The Matrix*, read *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (at least all the parts referring to the Infinite Improbability Drive and the Total Perspective Vortex. In this case, I might even recommend watching the movie, specifically for the Infinite Improbability Drive visuals, which are both pretty good and relevant visual descriptions.), watch one or two of the more visually impressive or flashy Edgar Wright films, and listen to Absolutely by Nine Days. (Seriously, at one point one character's dialog just consisted of a few lines from this song, not quoting it and not particularly making an outstanding amount of sense, just thrown in there.)

2 The Interesting Bits

Of my review, not necessarily the film. This film is the most clearly a philosophical allegory of any film I can remember seeing. Note: it is not *the most clear philosophical allegory*, but *most clearly a philosophical allegory*, an important distinction. The villain appears to be, far more than obviously, nihilism itself. This is all well and good; this film does a good job as a cautionary tale about the dangers of nihilism, at least in a *pathos*-centered approach. It doesn't immediately have much apparent intellectual rigor, but the bad guy is clearly nihilism (albeit with a infinite-unknowable-realities-butterfly-effect-esque sci-fi twist), and it's clearly portrayed as frightening and dangerous. The problem I have with it is that it doesn't provide, in my view, a clear or satisfactory response. It doesn't have anything that is able to defeat nihilism.

Once I understood that the villain was nihilism, I was watching for the philosophical counter, immediately expecting something to fit either Kant's filtered perception / pure reason (perhaps with a hint of the thermodynamic miracle), or the übermensch of Nietzsche. I didn't feel that there was a clear statement of either. There was a touch of the thermodynamic miracle. but I think overall the response was more in Nietzsche's camp. It seemed to have elements of Hume's empiricism (certainly not Spinoza's rationalism), and fell short of moving on to Kant. Really, the philosophy of the winning team seems to be an empiricist, mildly-sophisticated hedonism. It seems to propose 'well for whatever reason, we're here, be nice and happy'. The moral at the

end of it is rather weak, a bit of the value of family (hero wins via the power of love / friendship, anyone?) and what seems to ammount to an optimistic fatalism. Honestly, without a strong counter to nihilism, this seems like a kind of nihilism itself. In short, this is a philosophically interesting and relevant film, but fails to provide any compelling response to nihilism.