

LA 1780: What's the Time?

Assignment 1

Raj Patil
CS18BTECH11039



These are Saitos: the same character sampled over time in Christopher Nolan's "Inception".

I happen have a healthy sense of stress (aka eustress) regarding my achievements, my generic progress, and what I can do to get wherever I want to more efficiently and nauseam (i.e. I could be a productivity guru). This drive and the thought that one holds the choice to control their future state is accompanied by an array of auxiliary effects.

Building some context before I get to why I chose this particular picture ...

I am currently entering the prime of my life and as with all humans, I am great at ignoring reality and being able to forecast practical scenarios of how my life will turn out to be over time. This can lead to one forming opinions regarding concepts one hasn't experienced yet.

For instance, whenever I observe humans who have accepted that they are old (mentally), I converse with myself, asserting that I definitely won't end up like that in the future, followed with the corresponding progressions:

- take care of my health, to look good, be functional, strong, performant, and injury-free
- reading extensively to be the go-to-guy to have awesome conversations with
- investing the time needed to excel at a particular field
- investing the time needed to be a proficient in multiple domains (aka pursuing polymathy)
- doing justice to the romantic and social aspect of my life: not using work as an excuse
- philosophical reflection and self-development along the sidelines so as to not have a mid-life crisis down the lane.

I might have missed some of my other pursuits but the point I am trying to make is I "believe" I can do all that and more irrespective of externalities to a large extent. This, however, leads to me judging others, who use excuses to excuse them of even one of these dimensions of life that I find valuable. I may even psychologically ostracize them from my kingdom of perceptual productivity and assume they've given up on life.

Bringing the picture back into the mix: This isn't the usual kind of ageing that the picture encapsulates but one where the protagonist (Leonardo di Caprio) observes young and old Saito over an extremely short duration (~hours). Saito was a generally able person before the protagonist sees him again when he has aged. Irrespective of Saito's plans about the near future: he still feels old, is full of regret and is waiting to die.

When observing an old man in reality, the observer assumes they've had their chance and take at life. But the movie stands out in exaggerating the contrast between the expectations one has and how they all evolve over time by presenting a conceptually relatable life over the span of some hours.

What I want to convey from this is that, generally speaking, humans frequently fall to the fallacy of expecting events to evolve over time as planned and that they overestimate the extent of their control over events. The quality of our judgments deteriorates exponentially as the time over which we are evaluating the progression of events increases.

This, thankfully, is not the final takeaway I would take away from this line of thought though. The awareness of this fallacy encourages me to treat the future in a slightly more playful manner, considering all the possibilities where I could end up. At the same time, encouraging me to focus more on the present because that is where, rationally, I can be the most mindful; exercise the greatest control; where results will be highly positively correlated to my efforts invested and still be able to direct my future in a stress-free manner.