# Te Section

**Te-A.** What would you consider to be productive work? How would you measure this? What are some factors that may affect someone or something’s efficiency? Provide some examples.

Let’s start with a perspective on work that, I’ll admit, may come across as somewhat abstract. Work, as a concept, refers to a measure of energy transfer when an object is moved over some distance by an external force along a displacement. Now, this obviously refers to a well-established concept in classical mechanics, but what I actually mean is that, *when it comes to us*, work involves energy transfer where a long-term goal acts as an external force that compels us to utilize energy by taking steps toward that goal. To be productive or efficient can be interpreted in one of many ways. Furthermore, what is considered productive can vary depending on the nature of what is actually being done, the purpose for it being done, and whom the work is serving, be it for yourself, for your company, or some larger agenda. You could say something is efficient if the true motion is the optimum out of all possible motions—it takes the least time while delivering high-quality results. Generally, let’s call this the “principle of least action.” We can also interpret productive work, which I will generalize here as simply any meaningful progress toward a goal. Okay, but how do we determine if we’re making progress? For this, we need to utilize a metric; it’s why it’s so effective to quantify or use “trackers” that monitor your progress toward a goal—like how many minutes you spend reading daily toward a goal of self-education, or tracking how much weight you lift, how many sets you perform of X many reps, and how often you work out weekly while tracking your weight. So, this is to say that defining productivity naturally involves understanding how we meet various standards of progress—whether those are external benchmarks set by society that commonly define success or more intrinsic measures on what *you* yourself personally find fulfilling and worthwhile. Besides more quantifiable metrics, I think the act of journaling or any form of mentally processing and introspecting on the *“why?”* of a goal proves helpful. It’s helpful because one must adopt the appropriate standards for what they’re trying to achieve, and, hey, it’s not uncommon for our feelings to change over time. It’s very possible that, with time, our initial verbalized goal transforms into something else, whether even more ambitious or more simplistic. So, this process of continuous adaptation requires continuous evaluation, and it is not until we actively verbalize that we know what we truly want. And sometimes, maybe we know what we truly want, but we can feel demotivated. Why? Well, external factors can hurdle us—that’s for sure. Sometimes we expect things, and an indifferent universe shoves reality in our face, and we’re left questioning where it all went wrong. But I also think we can sometimes lose that spark, that catalyst that propelled us forward and gave us that glimmer of hope to persevere ever more. Sometimes I find myself doubting my abilities or questioning if the path I’ve taken out of all the various paths was the right one, and it’s not until I engage in what had initiated that spark that I find myself energetic and ready to face the world again. Now, this is one particular example, but my point is that continuous reassessment of our goals and learning can help us stay on track and be more effective. I’ve found that vision boards are very aesthetically pleasing but also effective ways of displaying your values and goals in a way that you can look back on for inspiration and motivation. I also want to take a moment here to criticize the aforementioned external metrics of success. It disappoints me that society pigeonholes us into one profession or another because it’s what’s commonly accepted as “successful.” In fact, this can be a dangerous standard as someone can waste hundreds of thousands of dollars chasing a career they’re not in the least passionate about. This is to say that we need to emphasize what we find personally fulfilling. Yes, external metrics are helpful and ground us, but they can also potentially derail us, and I’d hate to see someone give up or refuse to believe in what I see as clear potential just because someone else told them “they could never.” But, anyway, I guess we can generalize productive and effective work as continuously and consistently taking action towards a larger goal and monitoring your progress via metrics that help to keep you on track. And, to be sure you’re staying true to yourself, if the goal is more intrinsically motivated, we should also set aside time to evaluate our values and whether our goal(s) align with that vision.

**Te-B.** Think of a time where you needed to complete a difficult task. How did you approach managing the workflow? Why? How can you tell apart logical and illogical workflows or methods of action?

I actually find this question a little odd to think about because I don’t recall a time when I had to manage a difficult task—well, certainly for my own projects, but not so much for work or school. So, naturally, I will utilize an example from my own life! Okay, on second thought, maybe it would be better to illustrate myself by talking about what I find to be mundane, unstimulating, tedious work.

First, I want to note that it’s very hard for me to just rush into things or tackle a task head-on. Combine this with a propensity for over-rationalization and procrastination, and we have a problem. You see, the biggest factor in what compels me or drives me to do work is stimulation and interest. If a task isn’t particularly mentally stimulating or is uninteresting, well, that’s my personal hell. I can understand the importance and necessity of doing those things, but I still find it hard to actually get myself *to just do* the damn thing. This ties back to my Te-A answer, where I emphasize that productive work requires a component of effectiveness (again, please see the Te-A answer for what I define as effective) and consistently taking action. Intellectually, I can understand why a task is important, but I won’t necessarily feel it and will cower behind a wall of excuses and rationalization because exiting my little comfort bubble is an almost Sisyphean task. In fact, it’s mostly done out of laziness as well. What I mean by this is that I tend to gravitate toward "the principle of least action," which essentially means I have a lack of discipline. Sure, it’s admirable in that my laziness necessitates effectiveness, but I still criticize myself for this because I find that brute-forcing myself to do tedious, unstimulating tasks, even if proven to be "worth it" in the end, is personally not worth it to me, at least, nor worth my valuable time. I criticize myself for this: as an adult, I have obligations and responsibilities to carry out even if I don’t want to, and in order to be successful, I need to learn consistency and discipline, even if it means doing mind-numbing work with no real meaning.

Now, that was a lot. Let’s talk about examples. To use a better example from my life, I work in retail as a sales associate, which means I regularly have to do pretty boring tasks such as restocking items, folding clothes, organizing the sales floor according to the store standard, working as a cashier, helping people at self-checkout, etc. I feel like I almost have to “lose myself” in the task to find it fulfilling and “meaningful.” It’s “consciousness” that leaves me wondering, “What the hell am I doing?” especially as someone disconnected from most occupations and struggles of everyday life because, well, I’m a freaking nerd who reads books all day, every day. So, naturally, adjusting to the corporate world was quite the shocking experience for me and was a rough transition. The funny thing is I didn’t even need to work for an income—I’m well-supported by my family. However, I chose to work in retail because I wanted to “test out the waters” and learn that sense of discipline that I found so abhorrent, essentially teaching myself how to tackle uncomfortable tasks head-on. How did I go about dealing with this seemingly pointless work? Well, like I said, I learned to sort of “lose myself” in the task itself. Yes, the work I do is not at all intellectually stimulating, and I personally don’t get that much enjoyment from helping other people, but the act of learning and striving to perform my job well and to a high standard I set for myself, I found it all the more engaging and fulfilling. So, in other words, I grew comfortable being uncomfortable and found enjoyment in the process. I became more disciplined, and this skill was easily transferable to other areas of my life. For example, I’ve always been able to “scathe by” (I say this while being valedictorian of my graduating class, like???) in high school without studying and focusing on my other interests and hobbies. However, I expect everything to change in college, and I’m spending the rest of my time before college learning how to properly study and be more disciplined in order to become a great physicist or scientist or whatever. One can only imagine how much I’d accomplish if I combine discipline with my giftedness and passion for the subject.

In terms of logical workflows, let’s continue with an example of effective studying. I think effective studying is a result of many psychological factors on how our brains encode and remember information. Primarily, though, we can say that an effective study technique has an element of maximum return on investment with respect to time. Yes, it’s the fact that we only have so much time that leads to prioritization and evaluating what constitutes effective studying practices. While I can understand the rationale behind using things like the Pomodoro technique for studying and focus, it simply does not work for a lot of people, especially me, who struggles with starting a task and maintaining focus for long periods. If I get to the point where I finally reach a flow state with my work, I DO NOT want outside disturbances, whether it be people interrupting me with mundane chores or a disorganized, cluttered environment. Rather, I think when it comes to studying techniques, like productivity, it’s more individual based on your needs, priorities, and how you learn. I believe there are generally accepted practices that have been empirically shown to work, but to truly master a technique in a way is having your own spin on it. Since I work primarily in physics and mathematics, recommending me to grind out Anki cards for spaced repetition isn’t as helpful as, say, using active recall through actively working problem sets and additional practice problems without referencing notes. In fact, this is how it works in science and engineering. With engineering, it’s very straight-forward: You learn a new concept with general equations and principles and apply them to particular applicable and practical scenarios that show up both in the classroom and in the homework problems assigned in the book. Effective study techniques depend on your area of concentration or the class you’re taking and what works best for your learning style. However, I can say with confidence that techniques like the SQ3R method for reading material, reading and taking notes ahead of lecture, employing the Feynman technique, setting aside time to study every subject even if only for 15-30 minutes per subject, and working practice problems and old exams without referencing your notes are all generally good practices for starting out. It’s experience and trial and error based on what works for you that leads to mastery. I do want to mention here that “cognitive style” plays a large role in what works and doesn’t work for someone. For example, I know diligent premeds who are more than comfortable sitting down and practicing flashcards for 9+ hours in what is essentially one sitting. I also know some people (like myself) who have a personality that requires them to switch things up after a while, or else they will burn out. For other people, they need to sit down and focus on one thing for a very long time, or else they will burn out. For people like me, not having the versatility to explore my many interests, or to mentally switch from task to task and multitask, ends up burning me out. At the end of the day, don’t solely rely on what works for others and take your own self-understanding into account. You need a certain level of self-understanding to achieve self-mastery and, in this case, to find methods and techniques suited to your learning style, personality, and the subject matter to maximize learning efficiency.

Let me give a more specific example of an ineffective study technique. Time and time again, I see students who just sit there writing down everything a lecturer says as if every syllable is pure gold. They “lose” themselves in the act of studying; it's almost like an act of cosplaying to make it feel as if they’re actually absorbing information when they’re really not, which is precisely why this study technique is ineffective. It’s ineffective given that their goal is to retain the material, and it has been proven that this simply isn’t the case. Attempting to write down everything means you’re not actually paying attention to everything the teacher is saying because you’re focusing on writing down as much as possible as quickly as possible, and now you have a written transcript. Great, now how are you going to get at the essential concepts when reviewing your notes? I get it, teachers will sometimes mention small, arbitrary things in lectures that will later come up in an exam, but one must understand that there are better ways to go about this. For example, you can review lecture slides or chapters ahead of time. That way, you can focus on listening to what the professor is actually saying now that you’ve primed your brain with this information. Your brain has more “breathing time” to ask questions and clarify concepts you didn’t understand from your initial reading, which will probably be answered in lecture. If not, office hours are another additional resource for asking the professor questions about material. In fact, in office hours, it’s common for professors to provide students with examples directly relevant to an upcoming exam. So, in summary, writing down everything a professor is saying is an act of passive learning where you’re not actually retaining and recalling the information in real-time. This is why it’s so important to practice spaced repetition and active recall because you’re reminding your brain that “hey, this information is important and we need to encode it into long-term memory!” AND being comfortable actively recalling this information and applying it to relevant problems such as exams, which is why I suggest treating homework problems as if they’re tests and reviewing answers you get wrong and revising for studying. These are all examples of better and effective studying practices supported by neuroscience and cognitive psychology and anecdotally from my own experience. I’m not at all immune to these habits as these aren’t traditionally taught—you’re expected to just pick them up. It takes great wisdom to learn what’s effective and what’s not effective, and it’s better to have tried and possibly messed up than to have not tried at all. I believe there’s a certain degree of both determination and wisdom at play: determination in facing challenges with unwavering resolve and wisdom as evident in the scientific process of trial and error; setbacks enhance your understanding, and you learn through trial and error. I think that fear of failure and fear of what constitutes good practice can freeze people in a state of never properly starting, and it’s like I’ve said, to be productive is to effectively take action. To live is not to merely breathe, but it is to act!

**Te-C.** How can someone make a set of rules or instructions easy to follow? When people aren’t properly following directions or procedures, how do you correct them? When should you?

Someone can make a set of rules or instructions easy to follow by adhering to a number of guiding principles that essentially get to the “essence” of what is trying to be conveyed as straightforwardly as possible. What do I mean by this? Remember that example I used in my Te-B answer about revising notes? Well, one of the reasons why writing down what is essentially “a transcript” of a lecture is ineffective is that, when you’re looking to review your notes, you can’t easily “visualize” in your head or recall the core concepts of what was said in the lecture, which is far more important than “the little details.” So, this is to say that, when it comes to revising your notes, a set of rules or instructions is easy to follow if it follows principles of clarity, conciseness in language, specificity, sequential logic that makes sense, employs active voice (this is because active voice is just easier to read and therefore clearer and more direct), uses plain language, and makes use of visual aids. There’s a level of preciseness and specificity with such simple language, logic, and illustrations that is almost elegant! Elegant, here, meaning getting at something fundamental—fundamental not because it’s simple without substance, but simple while conveying a lot all at the same time! So, an example I can use here would be what constitutes good practices in a lab-based setting. In a setting where you’re working with potentially dangerous materials, instruments, tools, equipment, or whatever else, you need informative rules or instructions that get to the essence of what to do and what to avoid, as someone’s life, as dramatic as that sounds, could depend on it!

Now this is going to be a really funny tangent, but I always found it funny when I watched horror movies like the *Alien* franchise with such meticulously designed and attentive-to-detail set pieces that I can’t help but laugh at some of the illustrations like with the safety symbols on the Nostromo (the main ship). These symbols are the Semiotic Standard, and if you do a Google search, they’re so brilliantly simple it’s almost comical how we have no clue about the world that’s being set up for us, and yet, we can get at what’s conveyed in the images. For example, you can see a recurring image of a stick figure representing a person in various scenarios, like a person just floating all merry and jolly to represent artificial gravity being absent (zero-G) or an inverted blue triangle present above someone lying down to represent a cryogenic vault or that same someone lying down but presumed dead, as there’s nothing else in the image except for the same yellow coloring of a radiation symbol, indicating that the person is presumed dead in the picture (death being a very fearful and intuitive concept that’s easily conveyed through imagery). It’s all very neat. The Semiotic Standard also essentially makes use of universal, informational, and color-coded symbols that represent both the type of compartment one is about to enter and what materials might be contained within, as well as a specific condition. For instance, red would indicate an alert or warning, white and gray indicate technology like life support systems and conditions related to pressure and temperature, black indicates vacuum hazard or death, yellow indicates a harmful active molecular, atomic, or chemical process such as exhaust, radiation, and radioactivity, blue indicates a lowered thermal condition, and green indicates non-human but organic biological substances like coffee and locations like food storage. So, in short, *Alien* makes use of principles of graphic design and human psychology! This is to transition back to the lab scenario I initially posited by demonstrating how our brains tend to remember and recall information that has connections to other concepts and ideas we’re already familiar with. It’s why techniques like mnemonics, if we’re going back to the studying techniques example, are so effective! One problem does arize, though, and that’s the problem of how people will take away different interpretations of visual aids, which is why it’s important clarify “the standard of reasoning” when using illustrations, which involves a process of refinement but, in the end, as long as the “reasoning” is clear enough that an individual can encode and retrieve information from long-term memory, then it’s fine. I mean, a mnemonic device seems quite silly until it has been explained to you, right? It's the same principle here. An abstract concept is distilled to its essence, becoming "absurdly simple" while still preserving its fundamental substance. It helps to appeal to common schemas in our everyday life to effectively encode these rules or instructions. Mnemonic devices take advantage of elaborative encoding, retrieval cues, and imagery as specific tools to encode information in a way that allows for efficient storage and retrieval. I mean, who is *really* going to remember a laundry list of rules and regulations when an emergency pops up? I wouldn't imagine many, which is why retrieval cues and effective encoding through straightforward language that gets at the essence of what needs to be conveyed—typically best done through visual aids—are so vital. This kind of clarity in guidelines allows everyone to understand and follow the criteria, regardless of individual interpretations.

It's also crucial to regularly assess comprehension through, say, teaching sessions, meetings, and certifications that confirm your readiness. When it comes to effectively correcting people who aren’t following directions or procedures, the same principle of being simultaneously concise and informative applies. When a situation arises where someone is being unsafe, this calls for quick, decisive, and corrective action. I think accountability and integrity may become issues when someone is fearful of speaking up due to demonstrating their “incompetence,” so it’s best to assert yourself while not coming off as too harsh in your tone. Not only does this send them into a state of high anxiety that will lead them to freeze (which will be problematic in an already dangerous, time-sensitive situation), but it also prevents accountability in the future. I would also note whether ambiguities are a result of “outliers” who may not have caught on the first time or whether you’re at fault for not better communicating rules or instructions. I think one can best analyze this by documenting any “accidents” and analyzing them for any underlying root causes, then communicating your findings with your team.

**Te-D.** What would you consider a normal level of activity? Is it always necessary to maintain this? Why or why not? How can you tell if someone is overexerting or underexerting themselves?

Defining what constitutes a "normal level of activity" can be quite complex, as it depends on various factors, as highlighted in my Te-A answer, such as the nature of what is being done, the purpose for it being done, and whom the work is serving. Rather than trying to pinpoint a specific definition, it might be more effective to consider this "normal" level of activity as the most typical path taken within a set of possible options, which just so happens to be the path that minimizes the most action.

What does this mean? The principle of least action, which I have frequently mentioned in the Te section so far, can be understood mathematically and also imagined similarly to Pythagoras' theorem. When considering two points, A and B, that are a fixed distance apart, the path that minimizes action over some time t is a straight line taken at constant velocity. Although many potential paths could be taken between these two points, the classical path represents the sum of all possible routes. However, it is primarily influenced by the paths that are closest to the one minimizing the action—this is what's known as the classical path. Despite these variations, all the smaller weaves ultimately move in the same direction as the overall rope, reinforcing the idea that there is no single best path, but rather a collection of paths converging toward a common direction. In many instances, circumstances will arise that necessitate choosing an “alternative path,” pushing one to invest more than just the minimum effort required.

I give this abstract definition to illustrate how I view productivity as a whole: it’s this ultimate game about working strategically as much as about working hard (work smarter not harder). This means that workers who demonstrate effectiveness focus on optimizing their time and resources that both maximizes output and saves mental and physical reserves almost like mana reserves in an RPG. Naturally, productivity is akin to a marathon than a sprint, meaning that long-term consistent effort trumps spontaneous bursts of energy that will lead to burnout.

Now, when I say burnout, I mean that an individual’s mental and physical reserves, as stated before, play an important role when someone is either under-exerting or over-exerting themselves. In terms of longevity, we need that "constant velocity" while following that mostly linear path (let's just say linear for the sake of the question, because no path is truly linear), so we can’t afford to waste excess energy on activities that don’t personally serve our goals. For instance, a part-time employee at a company is most likely working for side income and not necessarily to build a career at that company. They may choose to only work the necessary hours, and they may perform their job reasonably well. They are neither slacking off nor overexerting themselves; they’re simply meeting the standards for their position, which would be considered “normal activity.” However, let’s say another job opportunity springs up in their inbox related to something they find more fulfilling, like the chance to contribute to their field of passion. Naturally, in this scenario, this opportunity is not something to take lightly. If it’s something they’re truly passionate about, not only are they less likely to burn out, but they’re also more likely to put in additional hours for this new employer compared to their old job, as this will serve their larger goal of building a career at this company. Their passion and determination will help them “stay the course.” They may work overtime, go back to school, seek certifications, attend seminars, consume books on the subject, etc. Because it personally serves a larger agenda (in this case, building a career based on their true passion), it’s only natural to put in more effort than what is required. It wouldn’t make sense for this person to pour in more hours, expending more energy on something they’re not passionate about, as this takes energy away from what they find truly worth the trouble.

This prioritization of mental and physical reserves doesn’t only extend to using more energy for what is fulfilling and using less for what is not, but also includes general principles of balance in one’s work and personal life. For instance, young adults just starting university are confronted with the possibility of sacrificing some areas of life for the sake of others, like getting fewer hours of sleep in order to focus more on studying, or focusing less on studying to prioritize one’s physical and mental health. So, again, when it comes to productivity, effectiveness necessitates continuous adaptation, which requires continuous evaluation, and maintaining balance in one’s life is no different. Rest is largely responsible for well-being, so consequently, too much work may lead to burnout, reduced output, and health issues. No, seriously, chronic stress from doing something you don’t find personally fulfilling while expending all your mental and physical reserves will quite literally “kill you” as your immune system takes a hit and your body will physically tell you that something is wrong and that you need to adjust your priorities. This is to say that a natural precursor to evaluating how much activity is required for a situation also means understanding the symptoms of overexertion, including stress, chronic tiredness, or poor performance. Under-exertion, in contrast, is a result of people functioning below their capacity or failing to challenge themselves properly, fostering complacency and lost opportunities for growth. One should ask themselves whether change is needed. It’s not until one recognizes what they value that they can prioritize and strategize how to best use their reserves for the task at hand.

**Te-E.** Think of an activity you’re interested in which requires certain physical or mechanical skills. How would you differentiate a good and bad technique? What makes these techniques effective or ineffective? How aware of you of your own performance?

While not a physical or mechanical skill per se, I think a great example to illustrate how I view this question and Te is through an old pastime of mine—Real-Time Strategy (RTS) games like *Starcraft 2*, *XCOM*, and *Stellaris*. For this example, I’ll focus on *Stellaris* and discuss effective and ineffective gameplay mechanics and strategies.

RTS games, like many real-life situations, don’t have a single fixed solution, and this is no different with *Stellaris*. This open-ended nature allows for strategic gameplay, where I can explore a variety of exciting and unpredictable paths that ultimately lead to victory. *Stellaris* is a real-time grand strategy game with role-playing elements where players control an interstellar civilization tasked with exploring, colonizing, and managing their region of the galaxy, encountering other civilizations where you engage in diplomacy, trade, or warfare. There are a wide variety of playstyles (if you Google it, there are probably at least 15+) that your empire can choose from. The game starts in the year 2200, and you create an empire with a chosen species, homeworld, empire, and ruler. The game is not turn-based but played in real-time, meaning you’ll be forced to make quick decisions under pressure, constantly managing resources and tactical positioning. This creates a dynamic, fast-paced gameplay experience focused on long-term strategy and real-time tactics.

Remember how I said this game illustrates how I view Te? *Stellaris* involves continuously and consistently taking action toward a larger goal (explore, colonize, and expand your empire), optimizing both time and resources to maximize output. More than anything, *Stellaris* is a management game with a grand scope, with some RP and combat strategy involved, but mainly taking an eagle’s-eye view: exploring, mapping out the galaxy, expanding your borders, colonizing worlds, and interacting with other empires. In short, it’s a 4X game— Xplore, Xpand, Xploit, Xterminate. :)

With *Stellaris*, there are a wide variety of playstyles (you can be democratic, pacifist, and a xenophile, or an authoritarian, militaristic, xenophobic empire), but it can be divided into Tall vs. Wide playstyles. Wide gameplay focuses on acquiring as much stuff as possible (think of it as addition). For example, if you have 10 mineral stations producing 50 minerals each, adding one more makes it 11 stations producing 55 minerals. In the case of resource shortages, you can colonize or conquer a cluster containing those resources. Tall gameplay is about improving the efficiency of what you already have by bonus multiplication. You may have a shortage of strategic resources, but you can optimize your planet’s designation and produce those resources in refineries.

Wide focuses primarily on adding as much stuff as possible quickly, whereas Tall focuses on improving the efficiency of what you have first, building up your systems, and then slowly expanding. It’s not about size but the pace of expansion. By this definition, the tallest empires are also the widest; adding more systems means you produce more tech and unity. The widest are eventually the tallest, but it does not always work in the other direction.

Mathematically, the Wide would always win over the Tall. Both pursue the same goal, but the Wide snowballs faster. Addition is more efficient than multiplication with limited modifiers. The Wide would likely have access to more random modifiers from anomalies, relics, etc., giving it a significant advantage. By the time the Tall would be in position to afford the benefits of the Wide, the Wide may have half the galaxy conquered. Both playstyles have the same tools and try to achieve the same goals, but the pace of accumulating resources is different. The Wide is cost-effective, while the Tall wastes time and resources building districts. The Wide just grabs a system and utilizes readily available resources.

You can think of this akin to Chess, where a strong early game sets the tone for the rest of the game and can sometimes determine the outcome. A poor set of opening moves will jeopardize the late game, and it’s no different in *Stellaris*. Even while acknowledging this, I wouldn’t call one strategy superior to the other, as it comes down to the type of empire you play.

Patch updates keep the game fresh and exciting, as metas and strategies change, so you have to adapt to these in-game changes and refine your techniques. In essence, in a game like *Stellaris*, the overall strategy and goal of the game remain the same (Xplore, Xpand, Xploit, Xterminate), but tactics vary, and what’s most effective in any given moment will be different. A real-time game will challenge you to make split-second decisions quickly or jeopardize the endgame. I’m constantly assessing myself in an almost derealized way in the third person. I’m very aware of my own performance and will often compare myself to other players and objective measures of effectiveness to evaluate what needs to be changed. It’s in this process of strategy refinement and novelty that I find excitement in strategy games!

E ▶ Examples of activities to describe

* Recreational interests: Martial Arts, Sports & Exercise, Art/Music Creation, Gaming
* Work skills: Coding, Skilled Work, Labor, Business Operations
* Basic skills: Solving math problems, Cooking

Try to think of an activity where you can easily tell a layman and a master apart. Alternatively, an activity in which you have a lot of experience.

# Fe Section

**Fe-A.** To what extent does someone’s emotional state affect a person’s being? How does your emotional state affect your everyday life? When does your true emotional state differ from what you express?

Well, I believe the answer to this question is clearly a resounding yes! I think part of my growing emotional maturity throughout high school was realizing how much emotions can affect my mood, energy levels, and overall motivation to be productive (as highlighted in my Te section). It’s natural for someone to bury these feelings deep within their psyche, as our inner emotional worlds can be a mess and uncomfortable, but clearly, you cannot simply shut off this aspect of your brain, as it will come back to haunt you. I think people make the mistake (as I have) of believing that the “emotional side” of the brain is separate from the “logical side” and that one can turn the switch on and off at will. Nope. The thing is, while we’re aware of pathways and circuits in our brains that are related to emotional experience and circuits related to conscious decision-making, logic and emotion are very complicated and involve multiple, often overlapping and intersecting parts. For example, you have memory, sensory inputs, mood, executive override, regulation of body processes, and many other parts contributing to the experience of "emotion." Experiencing emotion does not involve just one part of the brain or even just one pathway, and it’s a reductionistic, simplistic, and borderline unscientific statement to conclude that logic is only related to the outer structures of the cortices and emotion is only related to inner structures like the limbic system and basal ganglia. So, this is to say that both emotions and logic play a crucial role in decision-making, and they support each other more than we often realize. This leads me to my next point, which is that bottling up one’s emotions compounds and shows itself in your overall well-being, attitude, and how you conduct yourself around others, which is why learning how to identify, understand, and manage your emotions is crucial to overall self-development. For example, from my personal life, a sense of belonging, fulfillment in my work, and genuine enthusiasm for my passions inspire my creativity and overall productivity; I have this sort of bubbling energy that I wish to share with the world, which tends to be a feeling of inspiration to *create* and *share* my knowledge with others. However, when negative emotions like stress, anxiety, and depression plague my emotional state, it can severely affect my mood, energy levels, and motivation, to the point where I will sit there in bed, not doing anything, just sulking without any real purpose or larger goal that gets me out of bed in the mornings. I’ve noticed that this tends to happen to me when I feel 1) a lack of purpose or fulfillment, 2) social isolation, or 3) creative roadblocks that leave me questioning my overall abilities. However, I will touch more on how these emotions, both positive and negative, affect my desire to create in Fe-B.

Along with how my emotional state affects my creative output, it also impacts my productivity and how I conduct myself in public. In a professional setting, this often translates to understanding my emotional state, which helps me modify my behavior to maintain professionalism and ensure that my work is not hindered by a depressive mood. It’s this process of evaluating my emotions, realizing their effect, and acting to control them so as not to be inappropriate. This generally manifests as a cloak-and-dagger-like approach with how I conduct myself socially at work. For example, I don’t talk too much about my personal life at work but can still engage in small talk and some “lively” conversation with my peers so as to not spoil the emotional atmosphere. In other words, I will do my best to maintain positive relations with others while not revealing too much about myself. I think at my current job, I can sense that everyone else tends to like, talk, and relate to things I don’t really care for, and I generally think work environments will have a certain level of professionalism where nothing can be truly genuine or intimate, and I actually kind of like that feeling. Yes, in fact, I can say for certain I separate my work life from my personal and social lives. Perhaps this is an effort on my part to avoid emotions as a whole, but I take great pride in my work and will resort to overworking myself as an excuse to get out of social obligations if need be. I think a part of this is that recognizing that I’m most likely autistic separates me from a lot of my peers, and I think that they can almost “sense it” too, which further divides us. I also do acknowledge that a lot of my behavior is a result of trauma, as I have an inclination for overworking to prove myself, throwing myself into work or projects to feel “worthy” as a way to counter feelings of inadequacy; I’m also not generally accepting of compliments at work and will downplay myself or almost emotionally purposely come off as aloof or cold as a way to further distance myself from those around me, and I’ve been told people have noticed this and respected my space. Along with this point, I will often regulate or hide my feelings in order to maintain professionalism or prevent unneeded conflict. I think another part of it is that I struggle to define, understand, and communicate what I’m feeling and often need to rely on friends or online resources for these things (again, I believe this is due to my suspected autism). As a result, this leads to me having this sort of disconnect from my inner emotional state (that I’m also still largely unaware of) and how I present myself, although I try my best to observe myself and adjust accordingly. This is all in an effort to not spoil the mood of others, as vibrant surroundings and positive feelings from others invigorate and inspire me, so I also have something to gain from a positive emotional atmosphere. I don’t want to have to worry about this, so maintaining a calm and peaceful atmosphere takes a lot of weight off my shoulders and allows me to reengage with my interests. It’s quite unfortunate, however, that I struggle to create the same pleasant environment I want out of others, as providing this energy can be quite difficult, which means I have to seek out outside sources for these things if not already present.

In my personal life, I’m pretty much the same way. I think another factor in my emotional aloofness and reserved nature is the presence of time lingering over me. Indeed, I can find it challenging to open up to others, and I believe this is because of the existential concerns that regularly trouble me and serve as fertile soil for my depression to grow in, as I feel like a lot of the relationships in people’s 20s end up being fleeting, and I don’t really see the value in being emotionally invested in others because of how time will eventually separate us just as quickly as our relationship began to blossom. I think beneath the “icy exterior,” though, I conceal a hidden gentleness and compassion out of fear of being consumed by emotional connections. And so, my personal life also has me tucking away my emotions. When it comes to expressing myself in private, I do that, and I feel this visceral sense of relief when I, for example, allow myself to cry. It’s just that I’m so disconnected from my own emotions daily, both at work and in my private life, that, like establishing a positive emotional atmosphere, I have to seek out outside resources to sort of bring those emotions out of me, which is why I find artistic expression, like music, so cathartic. So, I think my inner self and outer self differ for sure, although I’m not sure if this is due to both a lack of understanding of my emotions or consciously restraining my emotional displays so as not to be a burden and to avoid being swallowed whole by others due to stinginess, although I’m certain it’s a combination of both.

**Fe-B.** How important is it for someone to be inspired and excited about what they’re doing? Why? How can people actively inspire others?

In light of the question, I believe it’s natural to address inspiration first and then excitement. In terms of inspiration, I believe that inspiration is valuable and necessary at times, although it won’t always be there, even when we need it. For myself, I am at my best and most creative while working in an inspiring environment where I can unapologetically pursue what I’m passionate about—I imagine an environment where I can just let my curiosity and inventiveness run wild as I delight in imaginative play, which is why I’m looking forward to pursuing a career in research and development (R&D). I need an environment where I’m not troubled by office politics or bureaucracy looming over me as I work, nor do I appreciate “busy work” where I’m mindlessly doing tasks for the sake of “being productive.” This is to say that an inspiring environment for me is one where I can be intellectually free.

Now, if we were to talk about inspiration in general, the first thing I think of is life advice and the prevalence of hustle culture in the media. Particularly with hustle culture, I think this media has the potential to trap us into a constant chase of “productivity.” We find ourselves binging inspiring life advice videos that provide a rush of dopamine. While motivating, no doubt, they often lead us to believe we are achieving what is discussed in the video, and likewise, discussing our goals with friends and family can almost feel like we’re already accomplishing what we set out to achieve. However, without putting that inspiration into action, it ultimately amounts to little more than empty consumption. This is to say that especially with all the productivity podcasts and content out there (which all pretty much say the same rehashed crap), we need to be producers and not consumers. When I say producer, I don’t mean that you have to present something marketable or profitable. For example, if you have a lot of ideas you want to get down on paper and want to write a novel or design a video game, you should put more time into actively working out ideas, programming, designing concept art, and writing chapters, even if you don’t end up publishing what you created in the end. This brings me to an important point: true inspiration requires actualization. In other words, inspiration must be translated into action to have any real meaning.

This leads me to the concept of excitability, which can serve as another catalyst for turning inspiration into tangible results. By catalyst, I mean that it only makes sense you will be at a productivity and output high when you’re at your most excitable, creative state. It’s the act of harnessing our excitement that allows us to transform our aspirations or wishes into meaningful goals that we actualize into existence through deliberate effort. In essence, inspiration is all well and good but only truly meaningful when paired with deliberate effort. Now, of course, there will be times when inspiration and excitability are at a low, EVEN WHEN our goals and values are aligned. In a team-based setting, this would be a period of time when morale is at an all-time low, and it’s up to the leaders to provide their vision to the team. They can do this by boosting team morale through things like motivational speeches that reaffirm the goal everyone is striving to work toward. This aspect of morale is particularly important, and I think fostering that inspirational environment I discussed earlier is significant for managing your team’s mental and physical reserves. They will work more efficiently and be in a more excitable state in an inclusive and comfortable environment. On a more individual level, I make an active effort to offer words of affirmation or reassurance to those who may not see their latent potential, so I try to be this sort of “big brother” for my friends when they are in need. I feel fulfilled in helping them out in any way I can, offering my perspective on things.

**Fe-C.** What role do negative emotions, including anger, play in people’s lives? What causes them? Are they intrinsically valuable? Why or why not? What can be learned from negative emotions?

I’m not going to lie, I think one can interpret the role of negative emotions very differently depending on their relationship with their own emotions. I know that, for myself, I tend not to dwell on these negative feelings, as I don’t find them at all beneficial. However, I believe negative emotions can play an important role in assessing whether or not a given situation is aligned with your values and what you want out of life. It’s tricky, though, because it’s akin to a balancing act for me—I both want to validate my emotions but also not dwell and stare into the abyss for so long that I become completely debilitated and immobilized from moving forward with my life, and I’m very susceptible to this because of my depression and anxiety. I honestly don’t know why I do this, but I feel like I’m much more comfortable taking the plunge and gazing into that darkness than most people. I think one can interpret that as a courageous and heroic act. Generally, I think my level of introspection can disable me or anyone from normal functioning. In a way, life requires being numb to the truth in order to operate. I think being this sober about life can be debilitating. But there is some good in that. I think my personality sets aside any and all comforts provided by certainties and instead relentlessly pursues any zone of potential ignorance that others seem to let go of, and I believe that ties into my existential depression, which I’ve found only somewhat beneficial in terms of what can be learned from my negative emotions. In that sense, I think negative emotions have the potential to be intrinsically valuable. I don’t think people take comfort in experiencing sadness or anger for the sake of it, although I recognize its immense potential in creative pursuits. In fact, I turn to music and drawing to help regulate and process my emotions. I think there’s value in introspection, although it can lead to some negative thought patterns and unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as identifying yourself with nihilistic beliefs that will ultimately not serve you or provide you with happiness or fulfillment. It’s why I take fault with the idea of romanticizing depression, especially for someone who has it. I find that in these moments when I’m just completely shutting down physically and emotionally, anger is the only motivating force that gets me going again. What do I mean by this? Well, anger plays an important role in my life because it demonstrates to me that something has greatly offended my core values, whether that be a specific person who upset me or a situation that is simply not aligned with what I value in life. It’s in this anger that I get out of my depressed state and mobilize that force into something useful that builds my momentum again. So, my general thought process when analyzing my negative emotions naturally includes questions like: “What specifically am I feeling?” “What situation or event triggered this?” “What are my typical coping mechanisms for this emotion?” “Is this emotion serving a purpose?” “What thoughts are associated with this emotion?” “Do these thoughts want the best for me?” “How do I manage this emotion in a healthy way?” etc. In rare circumstances, I find that my negative emotions are not merely unhelpful thought patterns or thinking traps; instead, they can serve as a spark—like anger—that signals a need for change in my life. This could mean distancing myself from a toxic person or altering my current path. In this way, negative emotions can serve as a moment of revelation with insights and opportunities for personal development. I do, at the same time, recognize my inclination to intellectualize my emotions and make an active effort to recognize when I’m analyzing my emotions, while also accepting and feeling them as they are without feeling the need to justify them at length and, therefore, not feel anything at all.

**Fe-D.** In your view, what does it mean to be calm? How can someone reduce the amount of emotionality happening in others around them? When would it be appropriate to adjust this?

I believe being calm means attaining a sense of inner peace and eudaimonia (a state or condition of good spirit), which requires fully regulating your emotions, even during emotional upheaval and the trials and tribulations of everyday life. This is not, however, to support a habit of burying one’s negative emotions for the sake of, or the illusion of, tranquility. As conveyed in my Fe-C answer, there is sometimes great wisdom in analyzing where all these negative feelings stem from and taking action accordingly. In fact, when first reading the question, I first thought of stoic philosophers such as Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus. I particularly like stoicism because it’s a philosophy that’s so applicable to life: It emphasizes expectations and happiness are inherently linked, and one should live their life without having their happiness dependent on expectations in a world where outer events or the opinions and feelings of others are out of our control. Another way to interpret this is that any given individual shouldn’t outsource their happiness to external factors or the actions of others. By focusing on what we *can control*—our thoughts, responses, and decisions—we empower ourselves to navigate life's challenges with acceptance and we’ll end up happier for it. In general, distance yourself from things that do not align with your well-being, growth, and serenity—without the guilt, shame, or fear of being misunderstood. This mindset ties back into the idea I posited towards the beginning of my response which is this notion of fully regulating your emotions. It's important to concentrate on what you can control, particularly *your own* happiness. This means that you should choose to be happy and actively seek out ways to find joy wherever possible, and this extends to other people as well. Meaning, especially in a role of leadership, strive to lead by example whether that means demonstrating composure under trying circumstances that sets a standard for stability and reason or creating an emotionally pleasant atmosphere. I do sometimes struggle to lead by example or at least present an emotionally welcoming face. For example, it feels as though my body doesn’t react the way I would prefer in any given situation, which takes a lot of physical effort on my part to regulate this. There are circumstances where I would expect to be more irritated or agitated, but I end up being more reserved and composed than I should be. Maybe this is because my primary temperament is phlegmatic, but I generally think others can be put off with my seemingly indifferent emotional state. I think this is why I struggle to be emotionally comforting with my friends, so I default to the role of listener. Yes, in fact, it’s common for me to struggle with finding the right words someone needs to hear, although I still feel emotionally responsible for them and try anyway. It’s not uncommon for me to upset someone for not carrying the “face” they were looking for, and tbh, I’ve almost given up trying. I feel weak and helpless to fight it; I’m almost disturbed at the prospect of calming and balancing other people’s emotional states, since I know I can’t do it. Likewise, I try not to burden others with my emotional state, and will remove myself from any situation of emotional intimacy. I don’t like it when others take pity on me, and I can interpret a lot of acts of niceness to be acts of pity. Even so, I recognized that my actions hold much more influence in my relationships than just my facial expressions, so I give more weight to that and honestly don’t care all that much to be this perfect emotionally comforting person.

**Fe-E.** How can you tell how someone is feeling? Describe some signs to look for. What are some giveaways that someone’s internal state is different from what they’re expressing on the outside?

Well, I believe one should obviously start by examining a person’s body language, such as their nonverbal cues, paying attention to facial expressions, eye contact, posture, and hand gestures. There are some general signs one can recognize, such as furrowed brows indicating concern or anger, raised eyebrows signifying surprise, an intense gaze indicating interest, a lack of eye contact suggesting discomfort, indifference, or boredom, and fidgeting with one’s body or clothing, like playing with a necklace, representing anxiety. Additionally, one’s posture can be telling: a closed-off posture may indicate unease and shyness, while open body language often signifies confidence and extroversion. Tone of voice also plays a significant role in telling apart someone’s feelings. For example, I think a lot of people may adopt a sarcastic tone to demonstrate their frustration, which I honestly don’t think is at all helpful. Not only is sarcasm the lowest form of wit, but it also doesn’t communicate how you’re feeling at all. I also think that not everyone falls under these categories although they are generally true. For example, someone crossing their arms (which is interpreted as anger, frustration, and defensiveness) may just be their default and most comfortable expression, so it ultimately comes down to sensing “unease” in the emotional atmosphere and checking in with people by asking them directly if everything is alright. It’s bad communication to leave everything to be inferred just by body language or tone alone. I know for myself, I tend to struggle with recognizing these signals. For instance, it’s sometimes hard to discern whether someone’s tone, pitch, and intonation indicate sarcasm, disinterest, seriousness, playfulness, or anger. Some people have a naturally angry and loud voice and others like me have a naturally monotone voice which others will mistake for disinterest and therefore condescension. So, with people like me, I think it’s really hard to tell how someone’s feeling because there’s a potential disconnect from someone’s inner emotional state and how they express themselves outwardly. Some people are conscious about this and use it to convey their emotions, and I would say I tend to be more conscious about my emotional state around other people but largely unaware of what I’m actually feeling. So, I’m blind to the attitude I’m experiencing in terms of like or dislike but can recognize how I express myself and how others will interpret it, and I may use this to my advantage to emotionally close myself to other people or to withhold information about myself that may be compromising or too revealing. I think the best way to tell if someone’s off in the emotional atmosphere is looking for signs of an emotional disconnect from what someone is expressing verbally and what is shown non-verbally. Although, I want to say this is largely intuitive for me and not something I can readily explain outside of norms.

# Se Section

**Se-A.** To what extent does an individual’s appearance and external presentation affect them? How aware are you of the way you come off? Should people always consider how they look? Why or why not?

I mean, I would say that an individual’s appearance and external presentation matter somewhat. I particularly think about “dressing the part” in a professional setting as a means to command respect and authority. Whether or not I care to do this, though, is beyond me. Like, I will definitely be sure to keep up with my grooming habits, dress for the occasion, and just overall look smart and presentable; however, I don’t care to go beyond that and flaunt or overdo my appearance. I will also try to bend the rules slightly if it means being more comfortable. For example, I will loosen my tie or just not wear it at all at an event that doesn’t require it because, quite frankly, I don’t like the feeling of being choked, at least with a necktie. ;) I think a part of me gives in to these norms of external presentation, and yet, I also find that I try to silently rebel against them because, at the end of the day, who cares? I think it’s better to judge someone’s character not by their external appearance but by what they provide in terms of their talents and skill sets. However, of course, humans will still judge you, even unconsciously, based on your external appearance. So, I think it’s better to say that you should dress for the occasion generally, only as a means of looking smart and presentable to others, but I also don’t think that means you have to hold back on what provides you with comfort or makes you feel confident and beautiful. It’s a shame, but humans will cling to any initial scheme that forms in their head, and that will determine the extent to which they view you in a positive or negative light. For example, with the Halo Effect, someone who is perceived as attractive will also appear nicer, kinder, smarter, more hard-working, etc. While someone who is perceived as unattractive will appear ruder, undisciplined, unintelligent, and have other negative qualities. So, this is to say that one should dress the part to an extent in order to gain respect, especially from those who hold appearance and tradition in high regard. In general, at least from what both friends and strangers have commented about my appearance, my default state used to be very “pre-professional” or business casual in appearance. In the past, I actually used to play too much into these norms, but now I recognize that, at least these days, I dress more casually to prioritize my comfort. However, this is not to say I don’t enjoy more professional and mature-looking outfits. I tend to dress this way, not really to impress others or to look the part, but simply because I like the style. I do think my more formal outfits, at times, represent my inner character, like my focus on my career and more intellectual matters (like when I dress in a dark academia style). I think the best way I can describe my style is “handsomely rugged,” and that pretty much sums up my views on appearance and external presentation for myself. I generally am pretty rugged-looking by nature, as I tend to be more in my head and don’t care all that much about the physical realm of things, but I will still play into the norms of appearance so as to not be scrutinized for not playing into them at all, as a means of conflict aversion. I do want to say that, for myself, I care more about feeling comfortable in my own skin than living up to others’ expectations, despite knowing that it’s necessary to do so. In terms of fashion, I go by intuition and what just “feels good” on me and don’t restrict myself to any one style. And even with this, I generally prefer to keep it simple with accessories and things like cologne because there are more interesting things I prioritize in my life. In terms of productivity, I’d rather not expend any more mental and physical reserves caring about my appearance than needed.

**Se-B.** Describe your view on money. What can it do for someone, and how does access to it affect people? What are your thoughts on riskier approaches to attaining it, such as risky investments or criminal activity?

Well, if we’re talking about how I view money in general, I view it in a literal capitalistic sense. Meaning, I view money as an asset and a medium of exchange through which one can acquire real-world assets. Money determines who gets what in an economic system. Like, let’s be real here, money is just a piece of paper. The money itself does not contain any value, but since we humans have assigned it value as a means of currency, we can use it to, say, organize production and the distribution of economic output and resources, such as housing, energy, and food. Then, yeah, money has value. It’s a means for acquiring goods and services. In a capitalistic society, needless to say, money is taken to be a form of status. If you have a lot of money, you generally open up more opportunities and possibilities in life. Whether this satisfies someone personally is up to the individual, as it’s commonly noted that money doesn’t necessarily buy happiness, but it surely buys you friends—or rather, temporary allies. Now, that’s my detached view on the matter. As it pertains to my own life, I don’t really care all that much for it beyond obviously living a financially-stable life. I guess someone with my interests in math, economics, and computer science could make a lot of money if I were to pursue a career in those fields or research ways to make passive income or to have a side hustle, but I reject these norms that are placed on me because everyone needs to be productive and make money and be practically-minded and pursue careers in x, y, z to make a lot of money, etc. I also CANNOT get behind the idea of using money or status as a means to enforce your will on people. No, I just want a simple life, and I guess a simple and worry-free life comes with financial-stability, so that’s what I seek. Likewise, I seek to secure myself financially through something like my work since I find that intrinsically motivating in of itself, and I also despise people who make money through illegal or manipulative means. I know that I definitely value financial security in my own life just because I grew up in a not so financially secure environment, and seeing how that lack of security affected my parents ability to live their lives without being constantly stressed, I can confidently say I don’t want that same life for myself. It’s why that despite loving physics, I’m not restricting myself to only the field of academia and research as academia as an institution isn’t very financially secure even after obtaining a Phd or doing a Postdoc where you’re making the bare minimum to support yourself, which is why I actually am switching to the engineering industry both to financially support myself while still being able to get into physics and engineering research that I find personally fulfilling. As a person, I wouldn’t say I’m the most financially responsible person either as I do have a tendency to spend more than what I have, which is a habit I’m trying to get over at the moment, and I recognize that having a career where I can potentially make a lot of money to support myself will prove helpful. Although, I tend to spend this money on things that I think will satisfy my material needs and therefore deem important and in some ways are important like investing into reliable technology that serves my daily life. I also can have a critical view towards other people’s spending habits regarding money, like I largely reject the capitalistic need to have the latest and greatest thing in every sphere of your life, and I don’t get how people spend so much money on expensive brands for the sake of the brand itself rather than the quality of the clothing. Yes, I care much more about the quality of items and I will happily spend more money on these items if it means the quality of the items will satisfy my material needs. Besides that, though, I generally don’t tend to impulsively spend my money on things as my peers do. I think once I’ve settled into my career, I only really care to occasionally spend money on events that will later become joyful and happy experiences (eating out at restaurants, concerts, plays, museum or art gallery tours, cultural festivals or fairs, weekend getaways, etc.). I would also like to save money to set up my own personal lab at home. In this space, I can tinker with circuit boards, build Gundam models, create custom mechanical keyboards, and assemble computers. Additionally, I envision having shelves just filled with a plethora of books and manga. So, at the end of the day, saving every dollar isn’t my top priority. I aim for a balance between accumulating wealth for financial security and allowing myself some enjoyment along the way. More importantly, I cherish the memories and experiences I can create and look back on.

**Se-C.** What would you consider your short and long term material goals? How do they compare to the goals of others? How can you tell if someone is striving for the right goals?

I guess, as an emerging adult, one of my short-term goals is to afford my own car. I want to gain some financial independence. I already have a job, so I seem to be on track, but I’d also like the freedom of having my own vehicle instead of relying on public transportation or friends. All in all, my short-term financial goals for the next few years are to be as financially stable as possible. I recognize my tendency to spend money on what might seem like frivolous things to an outside observer, but as a college student, I don’t really have the money to spend on technology or my hobbies. Hell, I’m probably going to have little to no time for my hobbies in general. So, in short, I want to mainly focus on my studies while accumulating some money from my part-time job. I also want to take advantage of any opportunities for financial security, given that I’m in the United States and we’re heading into a Trump-Vance administration for the next four years, which, honestly, has me worried about my education and financial security, among other things. But anyway, in terms of long-term goals, I, like many others, would prefer to have enough money saved up to purchase a house rather than live in an apartment or condo for the rest of my life. I don’t care to settle down in the traditional suburban home with a family, wife, and kids, though. I can see myself potentially marrying someone for financial reasons, but that’s just pure speculation. I think it would also be nice to have enough money to give back to my parents. Generally, I’ll be content in the future if I can afford to cook for myself most days, treat myself to nice restaurants with friends on weekends, afford to collect books, manga, and tinker with electronics, keyboards, computers, and Gunpla. I’d also like to be able to attend concerts, festivals, operas, or other social activities regularly and make fun memories with friends. But yeah, I think my goals align with those of most people, especially my friends, who want a balance of security, stability, and overall happiness. I want intellectual freedom in my career and the overall freedom to choose how I live my life, made possible by financial security. I think that’s the best way to sum up my short-term and long-term goals. I think this balance is also indicative of someone striving for the right goals. Although, I want to add that having a degree of flexibility with your financial goals is also crucial since it depends on the economy which varies over time and likewise will have you reevaluating your priorities. So, for me, I know that I simply do not have the time nor the money to meet a lot of my financial goals, and I’m completely okay with that. That’s why I’m focusing on building wealth so I can afford to do those things once I’m more independent and on my own after I graduate from college.

**Se-D.** What makes a person or organization look “put-together”? Are these people and groups more able to exert their will over others? Why or why not? What makes a person good at organizing and directing the will of themselves and others?

First, I want to say that a metric for determining whether a person or organization is “put-together” is subjective, varying based on who is evaluating it. However, I’ve observed that someone who is considered put-together often exhibits not only a polished external appearance but also a clear vision. They have well-defined short-term and long-term goals, which draw people in, allowing them to naturally gravitate toward and follow that person or organization. To expand on that, I think people who are put-together naturally exert charisma—charisma is an innate appeal that can convince others to do things. There are additional elements that comprise charisma, which include the aforementioned innate appeal often found in leaders, the power to make people feel good simply by being in their presence, and the ability to talk confidently about all things with all people. But, in general, all these elements are indicative of someone with a vision and someone who is therefore put-together. I think if I were to reference some of the ideas discussed in my Fe section, I also think put-together people are generally composed, calm, and rational. For example, a surgeon who, despite the high-pressure environment of the operating room, maintains their composure and approaches their task in a controlled and rational manner exudes charisma like no other. I've noticed that people tend to follow those who remain calm in stressful situations; it’s natural to assume these individuals are in control of the situation and know how to proceed when others do not. This is why people are inclined to "follow the leader" for guidance. It’s no surprise to me that those who radiate such charisma are easily able to control others, and I think we can think of politicians as great examples. Now, I want to say that this trait is inherent to any successful politician, but it does not mean that the politician is corrupt or evil. For example, politicians who use their charisma, i.e., fascists like Adolf Hitler, to tyrannically exert their will over others as a means to push their evil agenda (in this case, spreading hate and scapegoating a whole group of people) are extreme examples of how charisma can be misused. However, the same trait can also be harnessed positively by leaders who inspire and motivate others toward a common good for the people. Charisma can actually motivate people to, say, engage in civic responsibilities for their state and country, promote unity, and foster healthy dialogues of discussion rather than tear someone down who doesn't agree with a far-right agenda. So, this is to say, one should recognize the intent behind the use of charisma to define whether the proper use of exerting someone's will over others is appropriate. I think, in general, you need to be prepared to assert yourself, as there will be opposition; this does not go without saying that you should balance assertiveness with integrity, democracy, and open-mindedness as it pertains to open discussion of ideas while also knowing when to stand your ground. I think it also goes without saying that a charismatic individual should also make use of rhetorical appeals to logos, pathos, and ethos to establish trust, support their arguments, and win over an audience. An individual may have strong logical points and can evoke confidence, experience, integrity, relevance, credentials, and be able to emotionally stir and inspire their audience, but it ultimately means nothing if they cannot also back this up, which is also another example of establishing credibility and trust with the audience to back your vision.

**Se-E.** One famous English adage is that “If there is a will, there is a way.” Do you agree? Why or why not? To what extent an individual’s will affect their ability to accomplish their goals?

Admittedly I can get behind this statement to a certain extent, as it’s the case in life that in order to achieve your long-term goals, you need both the discipline and determination actively see it through; I take fault, however, in thinking that indomitable will alone allows you to attain whatever you want as that’s simply not the case in the world. There will also come times when you will perpetually struggle without hope of success. This becomes potentially dangerous if one ties their happiness to the realization of achieving this goal, i.e., attaching happiness to the outcome or result rather than the process itself. This, my dear fellow, is the human condition in a nutshell. This is not to say there is value in the lack of trying. Yes, perseverance isn’t useful solely for the sake of achieving a goal, but it can be seen as valuable in and of itself in accepting one’s fate. If we tied our happiness only to success or outcomes, it would result in a fleeting or illusory pursuit. There will be times when our goals won't be met, not because of a lack of will or perseverance, but simply due to circumstances beyond our control. Although it can be difficult at times, I suggest that we make an active and consistent effort to choose happiness. This is not to say we can't have goals in life; rather, we should recognize the futility of existence at times and understand that our efforts may sometimes feel in vain. Even so, I still find myself choosing to go on anyway, and I suggest others do the same because *we can* find value and meaning in the small and celebrate the control *we do* have in our lives. Maybe this is divorced from the question, but whenever I think of perseverance and particularly relevant this English adage, I think of that perpetual struggle of the human condition. The fact that if given options A and B I look for C. I look for a way out. I rebel against the absurdness of existence, that if there comes a time where the Earth cannot support eight billion people, that those eight billion people will work together to find a way to support eight billion people. It’s the struggle itself to persevere and go on despite the uncertainty of whether our efforts will have proven worth it that I find so beautiful about the human condition. It’s in this willfulness of rebellion that we’ve lived so long as a species, and I like to believe in the scientific proof of that. We have persisted in conquering innumerable obstacles, changing and growing with every one. We have survived in an unpredictable environment because of our abilities to be resilient, creative, and cooperative. I mean, isn't it awesome? This human journey, which has been filled with both successes and setbacks, is evidence of our resilient nature and the optimism that propels us ahead despite the uncertainty of the future. In the end, what binds us and motivates us to keep going despite the obstacles is the act of striving itself, the common experience of aiming for something more. And we discover our actual humanity in that unrelenting quest. And this, while concluding my Se section, also is the start of some of the ideas that will be present in my Ne section…

C ▶ When this question asks about *material goals*, it is in reference to real, tangible things people can own. This could be an object, a physique, or access to a certain thing. But less tangible concepts, like happiness or a particular career do not count in isolation, unless there’s some material thing or opportunity (like a zookeeper seeing exotic animals) that you’d like.

# Ne Section

**Ne-A.** What would you consider to be the essence – or meaning – of existence? Should life’s meaning be personal or collectively shared by humanity? Why?

In light of the subjectivity of individual experience and the inherent challenges in defining an all-encompassing, objective truth about the universe, it is evident to me that there is no universal meaning of life. With that being said, I don’t think that necessarily invites nihilistic despair if we consider how freeing a lack of meaning *really* is. I believe that humanity does not need to have a collectively shared meaning. It's more beneficial to allow individuals to define their own meanings rather than feeling compelled to satisfy societal or family expectations of what presents them with meaning. But back to the philosophical inquiry at hand: No doubt this line of existential inquiry will lead someone to questioning whether life is worth living, where we’re left to confront the very nature of existence and is known as the problem of philosophical suicide. Does life have inherent meaning? For this question we can only truly say in good conscience that, no, we are uncertain about whether the world possesses a meaning that transcends our experience. Perhaps there lies a universal truth out there, but I doubt we can attain it—it may even transcend our 3-dimensional way of thinking and we may have no way of comprehending such a truth with such a large scope. Thus, one concludes that we simply cannot grasp a truth outside our own condition, which means we must assert our own as we understand it in human terms, shaped by our lived experience and interactions. I think most people may turn to things like religion, and I can respect that, but I largely feel unsatisfied and reject the faith in an afterlife because I care all too much about *this life* that we’re given *here* on Earth. I also might add that I take fault with the leap of faith in dogma and is a form of giving in to an absurd, indifferent universe—and I see this act as a philosophical suicide of sorts. Taking the lazy way really breeds a sort of perceptual blockage when it comes to properly assessing what we face in life—namely, death itself. For us, when you die, you simply die. If I were to live my life planning for some inevitable afterlife, then I feel like I haven’t truly lived. To really gain value in life, I believe I should treat it as though that’s it—there is no after. Life is *here*, life is *now*, and life is not permanent. Each moment becomes a commodity that I can spend only once. I find that religion, especially those that claim some sort of afterlife, diminishes that value. They often assert an inherent purpose to life, framing it as a "test" or "trial" to get to the afterlife. No, I reject that. I want to face death without any illusions—it is the end and there's no escape. In light of that brutal inevitability of time-hauntedness, the challenge for us is to truly live our lives—to savor each moment, both good and bad. It takes effort, and sure, it can seem rather bleak. I think that's the point, though. I think the fundamental confrontation between our desire for meaning and an irrational, indifferent universe can only further inhibit people from truly living their lives. While we’re free to create our own meaning in our lives, I think even that is meaningless in the end. Or, rather, one should live one’s life not in search of some ultimate, transcendent meaning, but by embracing the freedom that comes with the absence of such meaning. This is not to say, however, that there is no value in living your life, as I reject any and all forms of nihilistic despair. But I also value truth, and the truth is that even if we can never escape the absurdity of existence, there is beauty in facing it head-on. I think there’s no other option than to face two brutal truths: (1) the world can never be truly understood, and (2) we’re all connected by suffering. Pessimism serves to blame our division from others and nature as the root of suffering; yet nonetheless, there are moments when such division is overcome, and we find ourselves connected. This is love. And love hardly requires rationalization. Instead, it asks for a little more than the recognition that we’re all in this confusing, painful mess together. I recognize in myself that curiosity and compassion both fuel and reward the journey of this thing called life. It takes a kind of openness and receptiveness—to let go of any preconceived notions or unrealistic expectations you may have, whether they lean toward blind optimism or bleak nihilism. And I think this is in the service of love and compassion in the interest of alleviating the suffering of others. Love is our capacity to act and be affected. Love can be seen as the opposite of obedience. A space in which we leave behind the ego’s drive for certainty through rigid truths and beliefs and instead see the interrelation between all. Love is compassion. And as long as suffering afflicts us, so too will there be a drive to understand this confused world to alleviate it, if only in tribute to the compassion we have for others. I can only speak of what I personally find value in, which is in my social role as a scientist and my personal role as a philosopher. To be a philosopher is to be in a perpetual state of becoming, driven by the relentless questioning and compassion that evades any and all certainty, including the certainty that all is lost or that we are doomed. It’s not my mission to impose order but to act with compassion in a world steeped in confusion, and I find that pursuing this field and delighting in the mysteries of existence allows me to connect with others in our shared quest for meaning. I view this as defiance of the absurdity and meaninglessness of existence, as each exploration and discovery ultimately asserts our humanity, revealing that even in a reality that often feels indifferent, we can find joy and significance in the struggle for understanding. It’s clear to me that the search for knowledge may not always yield clear answers, but it is the journey of exploration—and the freedom to explore—driven by curiosity and empathy… that is enough to keep on living, at least for me. But to speak for humanity the meaning we create, no matter how fleeting or subjective, still matters to *us*—it matters in the way we live, in the relationships we build, and in the moments we embrace. In the end, it’s not about finding a universal meaning, but about accepting that our search for meaning, in all its contradictions, is what makes life worth living, and I find that beautiful.

**Ne-B.** What makes someone have potential? What makes an individual more capable at something than others? When is it important to consider these capabilities? Can a person be truly hopeless? Why or why not?

Let me begin by pointing out that everyone has latent potential, which consists of unrealized skills that can be developed given the correct conditions and encouragement. The nuance, then, is not in whether this possibility exists at all, but rather in whether or not it will ever be fully realized. This implies that if a person's potential doesn't fit the situation at hand but might in the future, it may be considered unrealized. However, in a different setting where the circumstances better suit the person's skills or qualities, the same potential might be completely fulfilled. For instance, there is no set route to success in the game *Stellaris*. Rather than impose a single method or strategy to "win," the game provides a wide range of options and scenarios where various tactics and playstyles can emerge. A player’s success in *Stellaris* is shaped by the unfolding circumstances—whether that’s the position of resources, the alliances they form, or the challenges presented by other empires. Similarly, a person’s potential might not immediately shine in a particular environment, but if placed in different conditions—where their strengths are more suited—it could be fully realized, just as different playstyles in *Stellaris* become viable depending on the player’s decisions and the game’s emergent scenarios. Therefore, it could be more appropriate to rephrase the question as follows: What, in a certain circumstance or period of time, qualifies as having potential? For this, I say that a person has potential when they are in an environment that allows their skills and qualities to align with the opportunities at hand. To put it even simpler, if we were to treat an individual as a puzzle piece of a larger picture, having potential would be how well they fit into that puzzle or situation. Potential is not just about innate abilities, but about the dynamic interaction between an individual’s attributes and the circumstances that enable those attributes to be fully expressed and nurtured. In this sense, potential is contextual—it is a possibility that requires the right mix of timing, environment, and self-awareness to truly materialize. Self-awareness is essential for identifying and taking advantage of opportunities in terms of timing and setting. Making the most of those possibilities requires knowing what you can contribute and how your personal strengths and skill sets can best suit a given circumstance. To put it another way, you must understand how to promote yourself, both directly and indirectly. So, if we return to the example of *Stellaris*, a player might begin the game with a specific set of resources and strengths, but their success is often determined by how well they adapt to the conditions of the galaxy. A player may decide to play as a race with great diplomatic qualities, for instance, although this ability might not be immediately helpful if the galactic environment is one of ongoing conflict. The player's species' potential for success is fully realized, though, if they come across a more peaceful galaxy where alliances and diplomacy are key to survival. The player unlocks the potential of their chosen species by identifying the appropriate opportunity to employ diplomacy to their benefit. This reflects the notion that an individual's potential is dynamic and influenced by their environment as well as their capacity to navigate and take advantage of favorable circumstances. For a more concrete example that hopefully makes things clearer, consider someone who might possess incredible artistic talent but works in a highly technical field, where their creativity goes largely unnoticed or underutilized. If they move into a field that encourages creativity, like graphic design or advertising, they might be able to realize their artistic potential. The secret to this shift, however, is self-awareness—the capacity to identify the areas in which one's special talents are most useful and the courage to enter those areas. The same talent, in a different environment, can lead to entirely new opportunities and successes, so I don’t believe anyone is inherently hopeless because of this. In the end, everyone has potential that is just waiting to be developed in the appropriate circumstance—it just might take some time and self-awareness! In addition to this, I think it's critical to think about how one's potential might evolve in the future. My eighth-grade science instructor, for instance, acknowledged my innate passion for the physical sciences and inspired me to further explore it by suggesting online resources for self-studying physics and maths in my own time. I’ve always had an interest in science, but I largely felt like I wasn’t good enough to be a scientist. My science teacher, even so, recognized my intuitive understanding of the subject and a sense of passion, and she gave me the encouragement to pursue my interest further. Indeed, even though I was really good at the topic at the time, I doubt I would have continued with the sciences if it weren't for those encouraging remarks. This, in my opinion, is because she saw how my potential might evolve if I followed my interest at an early age, proving that potential is not a static state. With the correct direction, chances, and awareness, it develops and changes.

**Ne-C.** What must an individual understand to physically and spiritually develop themselves? Is it more important to recognize the flaws or the strengths that people are given? Why?

I think it goes without saying that there is no straightforward answer to this, as it varies on an individual basis. I imagine that there may be many ways for an individual to physically and spiritually develop themselves. For example, I think self-awareness is an obvious one. I think a fundamental a priori for physical and spiritual development would be starting out with understanding and analyzing oneself in terms of one’s experiences, traumas, upbringing, values, strengths, and weaknesses—it is a great place to start. As mentioned in my Fi section, there’s value in analyzing one’s emotions and getting down to the root of why they feel the way that they do, and continuously digging deeper until they arrive at certain values they have and what they truly care about. I believe that when an individual deeply understands how their mind works—particularly their internal processes for emotional regulation and information flow if we're talking about socionics (lol)—they can then analyze their external environment to identify patterns that influence how these mechanisms function. By recognizing recurring themes in their surroundings, they can gain insight into the "why" behind their emotional responses and behaviors. Understanding this "why" is crucial for anyone looking to develop themselves further, as it provides clarity on the root causes of their reactions and helps guide their personal growth. I guess you can say why I took an interest in socionics theory as a whole. Moreover, I think an individual will also have an awareness—or at least they should be aware—of the problem of self-deception and negative thinking traps or cognitive distortions: exaggerated or irrational negative thought patterns that can lead us to believe things that aren't true, and that will also hold them back from developing further. For example, an individual who has dealt with abandonment in the past may in the present be hindered by cognitive distortions such as assuming what another person is thinking or feeling without evidence (mind-reading), assuming the absolute worst in a given situation and blowing it out of proportion (catastrophizing), and likewise making broad negative judgements based on one event (overgeneralization) that ultimately leads to closing themselves off to people and that they don’t need intimate connections (black-and-white thinking). In the case of the traumatic individual, it is not entirely baseless and we can empathize with their experiences, but we also should recognize that this thinking also isn’t helpful for their well-being. Ultimately, it’s in the lack of awareness of these cognitive distortions that may lead someone astray from developing themselves and moving forward. I think for a traumatic individual it’s particularly important to recognize when someone is simply “toxic” or not a good fit for them which they can only really assess through an understanding of their values and what they truly want. This is to say that, again, it takes an understanding of one’s thought processes and potential self-deception to truly develop themselves and move on as there are a great many things out there in the world and it would be unfortunate if they were to close themselves off to future happiness. When one understands themselves and can move forward, they can begin to actively shape their growth by aligning their actions with their values and goals and adjusting their present situation to better suit these.

**Ne-D.** How would you determine how good an idea is? Do these ideas need to be realistic to be worthwhile? How would you differentiate a promising opportunity from a dead end?

For an idea to be considered good or promising, one must determine the long-term consequences of implementing it in relation to the broader goal it aims to achieve. This includes considering the context in which the idea originated, as that context may provide valuable insight, as well as assessing the likelihood or probability of successfully executing the idea. I view this as a natural extension of the “puzzle-piece” idea in Ne-A and the self-awareness and introspection ideas as seen in Ne-B. I also think great ideas aren’t particularly rigid as it’s a given that one considers how an idea will evolve in future circumstances, which requires adaptability in implementation or approach. I think one great example most people will resonate with is assessing their long-term career goals or what they plan to study in college. In this example, you naturally have to evaluate “okay, what interests me, what am I good at, and what benefits society?” There are of course many other ideas one considers and the emphasis doesn’t have to be on those exact four, but those are generally common lines of thought when assessing what to ultimately study. I think the problem with society is that you’re essentially pigeonholed into a particular career because the norm is that if you study X in college you’re bound to only work in that X field. However, this is obviously not the case as the most promising ideas if we’re relating back to the question occur at the intersection of fields rather than solely from within. An example from my own life is how I ended up committing to studying physics for my undergraduate education. First, as highlighted through Ne-C, I assessed what I inherently value in terms of my interest in science as well as my inherent career needs. I recognized that I knew I wanted to be a scientific researcher of some kind without being restricted to academia as academia would not provide me with the financial security I talked about in my Se section. I also recognized that as a personality trait I can be quite polymathic and have an interest in a wide variety of fields and don’t like being restricted to one, so I knew I wanted to study a science that was applied to a variety of fields like the physical sciences in chemistry and physics. I landed on physics as opposed to chemistry because, while chemistry is known as the central science and most other fields like biology, psychology, areas of engineering, etc. rely on chemistry, my thought processes and emphasis on a more cohesive framework backed by mathematics rather than a framework prone to exceptions in chemistry, I ultimately went with physics especially for my intuitive understanding of the subject. I also recognized that physics provides me with quantitative skills that allow me to pivot to a variety of fields that I also take interest in such as electrical engineering, software engineering, computational neuroscience, data science, computational finance, etc. Studying physics would be a great idea in this case because it aligns with my long-term goal of becoming a versatile scientific researcher, and it opens up a wide array of career opportunities across multiple fields. Opting for physics allows me to acquire a versatile skill set that will grow and adapt with emerging opportunities, rather than limiting myself to a specific career path. This adaptability is essential in light of the dynamic nature of the world, where interdisciplinary fields are increasingly significant.

**Ne-E.** What does it mean for someone to understand the “essence” of something? When should someone prioritize understanding the core characteristics of a phenomenon? Think of a topic or field of interest you are knowledgeable in. What do you think lies at the essence of it? What does this suggest about the way people should approach it?

To truly understand the essence of something, simply put, is to have an understanding of the core characteristics of an object or phenomenon that are fundamental to its nature, which is to say, the defining attributes that make it what it is. The first thought that comes to mind is John Locke’s distinction between real essence and nominal essence. Locke’s real essence refers to the internal constitution of a thing that causes its observable qualities. Real essences are the unknown structures that result in the observable characteristics of substances, while nominal essences are the abstract ideas that constitute the definitions of specific species or categories. Similarly, I am reminded of Plato’s Theory of Forms, which asserts that the essence of an object or phenomenon is tied to its "Form"—an ideal, non-material blueprint of perfect qualities that exists beyond our physical world. According to Plato, the objects we encounter in the physical realm are merely imperfect copies of these perfect Forms. In this sense, to grasp the essence of something is to transcend the physical and engage with the metaphysical in order to comprehend the ideal Form. Physics and science as a whole, with their focus on uncovering the fundamental laws that govern the physical world, provide an objective, verifiable system for understanding essence. This contrasts with Locke's more subjective, perception-centered perspective, which is based on personal experiences, and with Plato's idealistic Theory of Forms, which seeks essence in a metaphysical realm beyond the material world. For the purposes of this question, I will primarily focus on the physics perspective, as I believe that science as a whole provides a closer approximation to the essence of reality than other fields of study. From a physics standpoint, this entails understanding the fundamental principles and laws that govern the existence of an object or phenomenon. This includes recognizing the basic forces, energy exchanges, and limitations that impact behavior across both large and small scales. To grasp the essence of these elements, it is essential to understand the fundamental laws governing planetary motion, particle behavior, and energy flow. In physics, the goal is to discover the simplest and most comprehensive models that effectively explain the natural world. For example, I will illustrate how powerful science is when it comes to getting at the essence of things. What statement, if all scientific knowledge were destroyed in a cataclysmic event and just one sentence were transmitted to the following generations of beings, would contain the most information in the fewest words? I think the atomic hypothesis—or the atomic fact, or whatever you want to call it—is that everything is composed of atoms, which are tiny particles that are always in motion and attract one another when they are close to one another but repel one another when they are pressed together. You can see how much information, even if only a small bit, about the world is included in that one line. In that one sentence, you will see, there is an enormous amount of information about the world, if just a little imagination and thinking are applied. However, there of course is a slight problem that I need to address: Each piece or part of the whole of nature is always merely an approximation to the complete truth or the complete truth insofar as we know it. In fact, everything we know is only some kind of approximation because we know that we do not know all the laws yet. Therefore, things must be learned in order to be unlearned again or more likely to be corrected. The principle of science, the definition almost, is that the test of all knowledge is experiment and experiment is the sole judge of scientific truth. But what is the source of knowledge? Where do the laws that are to be tested come from? Experiment itself helps to produce these laws in the sense that it gives us hints. But what is also needed is imagination to create from these hints, the great generalizations, to guess at the wonderful, simple, but very strange patterns beneath them all, and then to experiment to check again whether we’ve made the right guess. We’ve said that the laws of nature are approximate: initially, we discover the "wrong" ones, and over time, we refine them to find the "right" ones. This is because science is built upon models, and these models are essentially approximations of truth, often containing some degree of error or inaccuracy. You’re taught one model as truth, then it’s revealed it was a lie all along while presenting a new model as the actual truth, then reveal that the new model was also a lie, while presenting a more refined model as truth, repeat ad. infinitum. This doesn't make the abstraction any less valid. It does, however, highlight the inherent limitations of attempting to capture the complexity of the universe through simplified models. Even so, these models have gone on to predict a great many things in the world that we can empirically prove through experimentation. To put it plainly, physics is an attempt to model the behavior of systems. The goal fundamentally is to effectively predict. Good predictions allow us to construct things better. That’s all there is here. And on a related note it's not that science can with absolute certainty prove that something is right. On the contrary, it can only prove something is wrong. A theory can only fail to be proved wrong and can be taken to temporarily be proved right but can never be proved right because tomorrow's experiment may succeed in proving what we thought was right wrong. So we never are right, we can only be sure we're wrong. Despite being an approximation of reality, physics has gone on to make insanely accurate predictions about the world as we perceive it, and a good theory holds the test of time and goes on to predict future phenomena. For example, although Newton’s theories on mechanics and gravitation took centuries to eventually be taken to be wrong and for quite a while was temporarily right. Einstein, in particular, made error corrections and later refined his theories on motion and gravitation at high speeds and on larger scales. This is to say that great science stands the test to time and goes on to make future predictions like how Einstein’s theory of relativity went on to predict the bending of light around massive objects (confirmation and first picture of a black hole) and the precise behavior of GPS satellites, which rely on relativistic corrections to function accurately. The power of scientific models lies in their ability to make predictions that can be tested and confirmed, even as they evolve and become more refined. This iterative process, where theories are constantly improved, is what drives science forward.

# Ti Section

**Ti-A.** What would you understand as an individual’s basic needs? Are these the same for everyone? To what extent do people rely on others to get their needs met? At what points does this become overreliance or underreliance?

On the subject of an individual’s basic needs, I think a great starting point would be to refer to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, as I learned this in my AP Psychology class, and I think it’s a commonly understood concept in psychology. Of course, though, one must understand that when it comes to basic needs, this differs not only on an individual basis but on a collective basis as well, as seen primarily in different cultural interpretations of basic needs and Maslow’s hierarchy overall. For starters, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs asserts that an individual’s basic needs range widely and include physiological needs such as air, food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, and sleep, but also more psychological ones like safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Admittedly, while these are quite broad categories of criteria, personal beliefs, cultural background, and life situation will greatly impact their prioritization and fulfillment. Take, for example, cultural differences; I live in the capitalist country of the United States, and here, the term “need” is blown completely out of proportion to conflate a “need” with a “want.” As a result of a culture focused on materialism and consumption, marketing, consumerism, and social pressures will disproportionately inflate desires into perceived necessities. What do I mean by this? Well, in a capitalistic culture, what may once have been seen as a luxury or a want is now reframed as a need for self-worth, social status, and, to a certain extent, even basic survival. By basic survival, I think we can best understand this through the technological advancement of the smartphone. What was once simply a handy device for placing phone calls and messaging has now become integrated into our work and social lives. As such, it’s hard to get by without it, as many spaces rely on the use of a smartphone to survive to a certain extent. I think that with technological advancements and our materialistic culture, the hierarchy of basic needs and higher needs have been blurred or mistaken for each other. Lacking what is now seen as a “need,” like not having a certain amount of followers on a social platform or the latest piece of technology or trendy clothing, puts you at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and, as such, you may even be ostracized for it. As a result, you will be socially isolated and unfulfilled, which goes to show how what should be ultimately meaningless becomes a basic need for survival. In order to fulfill these needs, individuals may rely on others and meet illusory societal expectations rather than meet their actual genuine needs. In terms of overreliance or underreliance, the pressure to conform to these inflated “needs” can lead to unhealthy dependencies or feelings of inadequacy. So, with the technology example, an individual may overly rely on acquiring material possessions as a means of social validation that will fulfill their deeper emotional or psychological needs. On the other hand, underreliance, or the rejection of these inflated needs, could lead to feelings of alienation or inadequacy in a society that esteems such material possessions. This rejection may stem from a desire to maintain authenticity or independence, yet it can also result in being marginalized or misunderstood by others who have embraced these societal norms. I think generally one should strive to maintain a level of independence and autonomy and should reject these norms. However, this is not as simple as it sounds. Navigating societal expectations while trying to stay true to oneself can lead to internal conflict and external pressure. If we were to step back from the materialistic example and speak more generally, I think in life you should be able to rely on others when needed as there are people there to support you with your goals while maintaining a degree of independence as you also cultivate your own resilience and self-sufficiency. Striking this balance can lead to stronger relationships and personal growth, ensuring you are never too dependent on anyone while still valuing the support of others.

**Ti-B.** How do people gain leverage, power, and respect from others? Is it sometimes necessary to use threats, fear, and punishment to accomplish this? Why or why not?

Admittedly, I think there are lots of ways that people can gain leverage, power, and respect that are not exclusive to external appearance. Now, of course, you can go about taking advantage of external appearance, such as having a put-together look with tailored, formal clothing like a suit and a well-groomed hairstyle to present yourself as competent and conscientious. I think individuals who are viewed as conventionally attractive will turn out better in social situations, leading to increased opportunities of obtaining control over others through their innate appeal. I guess to expand on my response to Se-D, I believe that an individual's proficiencies and competencies hold more weight than external appearance alone although admittedly I think external appearance may be stronger and hold people's attention longer in a lot of circumstances. I think someone with a marketable skill set that fits a given situation can lead to opportunities wherein they can control their position in society. Furthermore, if you were to demonstrate consistency in providing outcomes and competency, people will view you as having high potential and will, for lack of a better phrase, “watch your career with great interest.” Those who display their knowledge and go on to solve important problems relevant to society stand out as reputable and trustworthy leaders in whatever field they represent. Naturally, I think of industry leaders like Elon Musk, which is particularly relevant as he’s not really the ruthless businessman archetype, at least on the surface. He’s capitalized on his ability to exude intelligence as this generation’s “wunderkind,” and because his work is relevant to society, society will get behind his ideas because he’s an “expert” in his field and will “lead” society into the future, or at least that’s the narrative he has constructed about him. Musk's ability to position and market himself like this has allowed him to wield significant political power as well. By aligning himself with pressing societal issues—such as climate change, renewable energy, and space exploration—he's managed to capture the attention and support of both the public and policymakers. This not only enhances his influence but also shapes political discourse around technology and innovation. His perceived expertise grants him a platform where his opinions can sway public sentiment and potentially guide legislative agendas, making him a key player in the intersection of business, politics, and societal change. Although Musk himself is not quite the person to strive to be, as I take fault with his overall character, he’s at least an example of how one could acquire leverage, power, and respect from others in the field of science and preserve the overall epistemic authority of science to lead humanity in a positive direction. In contrast, there will also be situations in which threats, fear, and punishment may be necessary. Threats and intimidation, for instance, are more assertive methods of imposing compliance and having control over people due to fear of repercussions for rebelling. While this can have a noticeable and immediate effect, I think it can also be a double-edged sword in the sense that it motivates people to avoid punishment rather than gain people’s respect and devotion. Fear-mongering doesn’t result in devotion, as a future opportunity may arise where betrayal is a viable way out. I think methods that call for a shared vision and cooperation are more effective means of gaining devotion, respect, and cooperability. By means of cooperation and mutual respect, a strong person or group can attain and maintain their devoted followers without depending on fear.

**Ti-C.** One commonly used idiom is that “Everything has its place.” What does this mean to you? How do things being “in their place” contribute to orderliness? Do you agree with the idiom? Why or why not?

There are a great number of ways to interpret this question. I guess the first thing I want to get out of the way is that this idiom is honestly quite reductive and simplistic in its view. Namely, I don't necessarily think that everything as we perceive it had an intention behind its design. I think you can also interpret the implications of this question how an existentialist like Jean-Paul Sartre would, in which case he would say that every object, its purpose, functions, and placement existed before the object itself did. I'm not completely convinced by this perspective as I think it's more accurate to say we created the purpose and necessity of our surrounding environment to adapt to our survival needs. On a similar note, I think the way our needs have evolved in response to changing situational contexts has made it so that things appear to be the way they are by design. By extension, I think of how technology and the development of scientific and societal progress were ultimately a result of extending our physical and cognitive abilities to perform tasks far beyond what our bodies are naturally capable of achieving. For example, I view the development of the automobile as an extension of the human body's legs and capacity to walk and run. This is to say that a lot of what has gone on to be of purpose and necessity initially emerged from our interactions and continuous adaptation with the environment and evolving understanding of it. I think another way to interpret the question is that everything will eventually have a time when it is needed even if that’s not the case in the present. For instance, the development of certain technologies, like the internet, didn't have much relevance until specific circumstances arose that required it. Originally viewed as a niche tool for researchers and academics—particularly particle physicists who needed to communicate and share data over vast distances—the internet eventually evolved into a platform that globalized communication and propelled humanity forward into the digital age. More recently, we've seen a growing concern for environmental renewability and sustainable energy sources as a response to global warming, and the internet has played a significant role in highlighting this pressing issue worldwide. The main takeaway of this point and what drives innovation in the long run is the ability to look beyond the scope of the present circumstance to see an idea’s future potential.

**Ti-D.** What makes hierarchies work? When are they appropriate to use, and what do they provide to people? Should they always strive for equality and justice? Why or why not?

Hierarchies work and function effectively because they serve as a necessary structure for organization. By this I mean of course that hierarchies enable for effective decision-making and coordination within a large team by allocating people based on their authority, duties, and competencies. I should now note that hierarchies that emerge in nature tend to be more stable since they are built on connections and duties that have developed naturally over time. Individuals frequently play distinct functions that support the general stability and well-being of the system in natural hierarchies, such as those found in animal species or ecosystems. Now if we were to contrast this with human-made hierarchies, the stability of such a structure depends solely on a group’s ability to fall in line and will crumble to pieces if any one person takes it upon themself to reject the system and rebel, which is why given enough people rebel you could potentially see a societal hierarchy or structure fall apart if we were to consider something like a dystopian redistribution of wealth scenario. But anyway, human-made hierarchies can in addition sometimes become rigid or outdated, as they may not always reflect the changing dynamics of a team or organization, which is to say that hierarchies and organizational structures should still be adaptable and flexible to truly respond to the evolving needs of the group and remain effective and relevant. Although hierarchies I’ll admit are necessary and provide clarity and enrich the work lives of others, I can’t help but question whether inequality will always exist in some form with them. Poorly run hierarchies can actually detriment others and reinforce marginalization, power inequalities, and oppress others. Given this, it's critical to recognize the possible drawbacks of hierarchies and make an effort to lessen their adverse impacts. This can entail putting in place checks and balances to make sure that everyone's opinion is heard and that power is not concentrated in the hands of a select few. Despite their drawbacks, I think hierarchies in general have a lot of promise to help society come together and make decisions more systematically, which will make it easier to assign duties and mobilize resources efficiently towards shared objectives.

**Ti-E.** What does it mean for something to be logical? Is this the norm? Provide an example of something logical and illogical, and compare what makes the first logical and the second not.

It seems to me that for something to be logical, it has to demonstrate internal consistency, where the axioms of logic generate a set of statements or conclusions that sufficiently convince all sufficiently reasonable people. This is to say that the conclusion logically follows from its premises in an understandable, justifiable way. Arguably, I contend that this definition of logic, while true in a more general sense, isn’t exactly practical for most real-life situations. The example I gave would be a definition of strict deductive logic, but there are also viable forms of logic that may better suit a situation, such as inductive and abductive reasoning. Consider a detective like Sherlock Holmes. He claims to operate on the logic of “deductive reasoning,” when in reality, what he’s actually doing is assigning probabilities of what most likely is the case from a set of initial premises or pieces of evidence. This is to say that we cannot take premises to be absolutely true in the real world, which means we either have to gather empirical evidence that verifies these premises so that the conclusions can be taken to be true, or we need to assign probabilities of what is most likely to be true, with a degree of uncertainty. In Holmes’ case, he doesn’t always have perfect, irrefutable evidence, yet he must still make decisions based on what is most probable. He looks for patterns, considers the likelihood of different explanations, and draws conclusions that are reasonable given the available data. This is precisely what inductive and abductive lines of reasoning aim to accomplish. While it is the case that these definitions of logic are equally true and valid (and science actually uses all three), I think this is all to say that what is considered logical in one situation may be illogical or at least not the best way to go about logic in another situation. As follows, I think we need to remind ourselves of the circumstantial nature of logic. Different fields and situations call for different standards of reasoning, depending on the nature of the evidence and the conclusions being drawn. A mathematician, for example, who works within a formal system adheres strictly to the axioms and rules of deductive reasoning. However, in other fields, particularly those like science that seek to describe, explain, and forecast reality, this strictly deductive approach might not be enough. For instance, in quantum physics, the fundamental essence of reality as we experience it might defy deterministic reasoning, as in the case of Einstein's theory of relativity and Newton's mechanics, and we are forced to confront the probabilistic, uncertain, and counterintuitive laws that govern our existence. I believe that when it comes to adequately describing reality, the scientific method takes precedence over pure deductive mathematical reasoning, although the two are complementary and work together. In sum, logic is more like a versatile tool that adjusts to the needs of the situation rather than a strict, rigid set of rules that apply universally, because, as great as that would be, it is simply not necessarily the case in nature. Like any research scientist, I aspire to work in the realm of certainties and axiomatic deductions rather than probabilities whenever possible. The scientific method is inherently designed to account for uncertainty and empirical variability; it integrates principles of both inductive and deductive reasoning to form hypotheses or guesses, rigorously tests them through experiments, and refines our understanding based on empirical evidence. As the conclusions are always provisional and taken to be temporarily right rather than proved right, if the evidence matches the hypothesis, they operate as the best explanation given current data, but of course, they are open to revision, as tomorrow's experiment may in fact prove what we've taken to be proved right wrong. It is more scientific and rational, therefore, to say that we can only be sure we're wrong than we are right.

# Fi Section

**Fi-A.** What does it mean to be emotionally close to or distant from someone? In what ways can you adjust your “emotional distance” to someone else? For what reasons would you decide to do this?

I honestly had to read the question multiple times, as I’m not certain where to start. I think it’s best to establish this now in my Fi section, but I recognize that I have a beautiful soul, one that craves intimacy, love, and connection. First and foremost, this includes a love for life itself, which I believe manifests in my compassion and my desire to serve humanity. However, if I am not given respect as a human being—if I’m portrayed as inhuman, cold, heartless, and undeserving of kindness—I will reflect that attitude back to those who project it onto me. My personal experience with this will be elaborated upon in my Fi-B and Fi-C sections (more in the romantic/sexual sense). For now, I’d like to focus on this question.

I also recognize that my integrity and values shape the relationships I form and break. I wouldn’t say I’m the most morally driven person, but I’ve always understood my priorities in relationships and haven’t hesitated to end them if someone went against my ethical expectations. It’s not something I’ve directly addressed, but I imagine it would become important in more intimate relationships, where core values, beliefs, dealbreakers, and moral stances are established early on. Though it can be awkward, an early conversation is better than a more awkward one later on. As such, I conduct myself straightforwardly in relationships and don’t beat around the bush. However, I’m still working on properly establishing boundaries, as I’ve only recently “found myself” and truly understood what I value and what has been a deal breaker in past relationships.

I naturally form relationships by assessing qualities I admire and keeping myself in good company. I delight in their unique interests, passions, and talents. Some of my friends have artistic streaks with large followings, a passion for medicine and helping others, a truly empathetic soul, or a passion for storytelling and bringing people together. All of these qualities I admire, and I like how our potentials add up together to create something more beautiful. Yes, I’m generally very interested in the souls of others. I surround myself with these people personally and professionally, helping them build meaning in their lives. You could say I invite these people “into my space,” and will remove people if they contribute nothing or take more than they give.

By this, I mean I will remove myself or others from my space if I don’t like them as a person, looking beyond their exterior to their soul—how they conduct themselves, act in private, what they value, how they treat others, etc. Sometimes I turn this inward and remove myself from others as penance for my perceived lack. By this, I mean I prevent myself from forming connections, even if they’re good people with some interest in me. Happiness is an uncomfortable feeling for me, as I’ve always struggled to accept the present moment in fear of it being taken away.

I don’t think I really know how to exist around most people, especially those who dislike me or mistakenly think I dislike them. I can almost walk into a room and sense how others’ inner qualities and overall moral character differ from mine, and while they may try to connect or show kindness, I artificially distance myself because I know it won’t end well. I’m good at recognizing the inner content of a person in contrast to my own. When someone tries to assert themselves into my life, I often think it’s done with an ulterior motive, which is why I view most acts of kindness with caution.

I have no intention of presenting myself in a way that appeals to these people, as I feel like no matter what I try, I’m always in the “wrong” and too awkward, weird, and cold, so I don’t even bother trying. My self-worth hinges on how I can seamlessly integrate and be enjoyed in the presence of others. I think it’s my pessimism about people’s intentions and struggles with forming meaningful connections that has led me to intellectualize my emotional struggles through psychology and socionics.

There are moments when I’m optimistic and joyful, only to be reminded of what separates me from others and what I lack, driving me further into isolation. If I sense I’m disliked by many people, I’ll remove myself from the situation, as opposed to removing others who don’t align with my priorities. In these moments of loneliness, I remind myself of protective factors, like keeping a list of friends, the last time I spoke with them, and whether I want to keep in contact. I also struggle to maintain relationships with others. I’ve had friends with whom we naturally drifted apart as our priorities changed, and I’ve fallen out with others who ghosted me without explanation, which upsets me because I’ve made it clear I don’t wish to harm anyone. I just need people to explain things to me—especially conflicts—so I can improve and adjust.

I recognize that I have the potential to change and come from a place of compassion, but others don’t always see that and assume the worst without asking how I feel. To this day, I feel as though I have very few people I can count on, and sometimes I question if the misfortunes in my life are because others saw something negative in me and discarded me, much like I’ve done to others.

What plagues me now is trust. I find it hard to trust people again, especially after issues in high school and early life. Love and care involve trust and status, which can be gained and lost. Those who break my trust or boundaries can be let go. Despite caring about having many friends, I just need a few good ones. I think with trust, it’s going to be gradual, meaning setting clear expectations and giving people time to prove themselves.

To adjust the emotional distance between me and someone else, I’ll let them know how they’ve wronged me in hopes they’ll change, ending the friendship. The sad truth is that people rarely change, but I’ll still allow them to make amends in the future and grow separately from my life. It’s not that I hold grudges, as I hate lingering hate, choosing instead to prioritize my well-being. What I’ve realized recently is that I welcome friendships ending, perhaps because I accept it as a natural part of life—especially as I head into my twenties, when everyone’s priorities change.

I recognize that the end of a relationship isn’t the end, and these relationships can reopen. I’d like to think I’d remain democratic and cordial if I met someone who wronged me in the past, but whether I let them back into my life depends on whether they’ve developed and changed. I find that in more recent fallouts, I’ve been painted as a bad person, which upsets me when people who SHOULD understand me assume malice over ignorance.

So, as of today, I only care to surround myself with a select few people whom I trust and who have shown unconditional acceptance of my character and taken direct actions to support my well-being. I reserve the little energy I have left for them.

**Fi-B.** Share some thoughts on how you view love and desire. What makes a person desirable? Is this the norm? Are some people more deserving of these than others? Why or why not?

Honestly, I’m still clueless about what love means to me. I’ve already covered how I view love in the platonic sense in my Fi-A answer, and I’ll expand here. I self-identify as aromantic and asexual (aroace), as I’m incapable of experiencing romantic and sexual attraction. I believe everyone deserves love, though perhaps to varying extents based on how they treat others. But I don’t think anyone is entitled to love if they verbally or physically abuse their partners or seek relationships solely for therapy. We’re social creatures, and many enjoy sharing themselves in intimate settings. But while I think everyone deserves love, it doesn’t mean the world OWES them that.

I form relationships based on inner qualities I admire, qualities that contrast mine but still align in values, morals, interests, and “wavelength.” I tend to be more "sapiosexual," seeking others competent in areas outside my expertise but who can keep up intellectually. I crave mental stimulation in relationships, and I’ve lost interest in people due to intellectual and emotional disconnect.

Romantically and sexually, I take issue with the idea of requiring another person to complete you. Not all allosexual or alloromantic individuals feel this way, but I wanted to address it. To me, that idea doesn’t make sense, nor do I understand why it’s exclusive to romantic or sexual relationships. In fact, my personal development has been shaped by my relationships with friends, not romantic or sexual ones. I don’t experience sexual attraction, which defines asexuality. I’ve never felt any desire to be sexual with anyone, though I do have a libido and can experience arousal, but it’s not directed at anyone.

There was a time when I was curious about sex because it’s hyped up as something that feels good. Unlike most, the idea of having sex just for the sake of it doesn’t appeal to me. I could have sex to please a partner, but it doesn’t do anything for me. Sexual attraction motivates people to engage with someone, and the prospect of sex becomes more appealing when they’re building rapport. I just don’t experience that attraction. I might be demisexual, needing emotional connection first before considering someone sexually, though I find this unlikely. I also criticize the idea of "meeting the one," because the "one" doesn’t exist, and it’s unhealthy to reject someone for not living up to high standards. Likewise, if someone loses a partner, I don’t see the point in closing yourself off to future happiness.

I’m closer to indifference toward sex than repulsion. With romantic relationships, I’m content with my friends’ romantic and sexual lives, and I enjoy love in media, fanfiction, and erotica. I’ve always wanted to experience romance, but whenever I try—whether through dating or “situationships”—I feel dissociated, as if watching myself rather than fully experiencing the emotions. I’ve always seen relationships in a positive light, but it feels like being an outsider looking in. It’s like admiring a cute outfit that doesn’t quite suit my style. Sometimes, I feel sad because I want to experience romantic feelings, but I can’t get there. My feelings toward sex are similar, though I’m more indifferent on that front.

I get uncomfortable and creeped out when someone perceives me romantically or sexually. When my friends told me people had crushes on me, I felt disgusted. I associate someone liking me with them not seeing the real me, only an idealized version based on my appearance or behavior. I feel uneasy when someone likes me and can pick up on it. I’m definitely not oblivious to those cues.

Through introspection and experiencing a bit of romance, I’ve learned that what I want out of a relationship is to be accepted completely for who I am (whether it’s romantic or not). In the past, I wanted romance because it was expected, but I’ve had attractive people approach me and feel nothing. I just don’t understand it when they flirt with me.

For me, what I experience with erotica, fanfiction, and BDSM seems more like sensual attraction—an activity where I connect with my senses. Sometimes, I imagine a distant figure and engage with them through cuddling, hugging, hair stroking, or non-sexual kissing. This is what BDSM is about for me: intimacy and sensory pleasures that aren’t tied to romance or sexuality. No connecting "bits" together. Despite loving the idea of love and romance, I’ve learned I can’t feel it, which made me sad for a while. I just felt so sad that I wasn’t feeling what I thought I should.

I tend to admire inner qualities and moral character over appearance. I can have aesthetic attraction for men, women, or non-binary people, especially those who are more androgynous, but it stops there. Since childhood, I’ve longed for a deep, lasting platonic relationship. What I mistook for love is actually a queer platonic relationship (QPR), similar to Sherlock Holmes and John Watson’s relationship. I want something that balances between platonic and romantic, defined early on in the relationship.

**Fi-C.** Describe what morality means to you. What does it mean for something or someone to be good or bad? What does it take for something bad to become good? Are some things truly irredeemable? Why or why not?

I first want to address the fact that I reject the notion of absolute morality or any form of deontological ethics. I think I’ve come to realize that I follow a pragmatic, teleological form of ethics, meaning that I judge the morality of an action based on its consequences, prioritizing the “end” result. You can also think of this as a “the end justifies the means” approach. This opposes deontological ethics, which determines the morality of an action based on whether the action itself adheres to a set of rules or duties, regardless of the outcome. It factors in and weighs the “intent” of an action, even if the consequences aren’t ideal. Put simply, if we take Immanuel Kant’s categorical imperative, deontological ethics says, “act according to the maxim that you wish all other rational people to follow, as if it were a universal law,” or, in other words, we should act in a way that we would want others to act in similar circumstances.

When it comes to my sense of ethics, I focus on being practical and flexible in considering the overall good of an action (because while I can get behind the logical framework of Kant’s categorical imperative, I’ve found it restricting and black-and-white more than anything). I do not, however, justify harmful actions if the end result is deemed beneficial. I think my sense of morality involves always choosing another option rather than choosing between two choices. In other words, I look for “a way out” or find the possibility that maximizes the most good, where the most parties benefit, without resorting to justifying harmful actions, even if they seem to be the most beneficial or utilitarian in the end. I think this is also because I used to be “that guy” who always followed the rules, which I guess is because I couldn’t really formulate my own rules or sense of morality in the past. However, I think with experience, I grew to despise most traditionally established frameworks for morality and mainly go off my own intuition for these things, largely criticizing and challenging these aforementioned frameworks.

Likewise, because of my holistic view of morality, I also think people can be redeemed. However, I can think of a few instances where someone is so willfully ignorant, malicious in intent, and corrupt that I can see how this person would be a lost cause. Does that justify something like the death penalty? Honestly, I’m not sure. I generally don’t believe in killing, but I also recognize that sometimes conflicts and oppositions can be a threat to the general population or to people’s freedoms, so defending those freedoms naturally leads to conflict, and I can get behind that.

**Fi-D.** How are people shaped by their relationships with their friends and family? How do these differ from romantic ones? Are non-romantic relationships more important than romantic ones? Why or why not?

As discussed in Fi-B, I know I’ve personally been shaped by many of my relationships. In fact, I believe my friends have largely shaped who I am today and have served as a support group as I started to develop emotionally as a person. I don’t know, I feel like my friends are a part of me I can’t let go of—they’re more akin to a family than my actual family. However, it wasn’t always this way. It wasn’t until I opened up to people in the middle of high school that I learned to cherish relationships. I always saw myself as someone who didn’t have meaningful connections of any kind, which I’m not surprised by, considering how unhealthy and immature I was at the start of high school, seeing as I didn’t have any relationships from which to learn and grow. I can agree that you can derive value from relationships that are meaningful, even when a friendship ultimately ends. Maybe it’s optimism or whatever, but I generally try to take most situations as positive learning experiences, even when sometimes it doesn’t feel like it. I guess one can view friendships as being lower than a romantic relationship, and I wholeheartedly disagree with that stance. I think with friends and relationships, for the most part, you choose who to let into your life and, likewise, can choose to let go of these relationships. However, especially when you’re not an independent adult yet, you’re largely stuck with your parents or whoever is your legal guardian. And let’s just say that while every child deserves parents, not every parent deserves a child. I also generally don’t think parents these days shape who you are as a person, but that may be me projecting a little. I don’t know, I think when you’re an emerging adult, you relate more to other people your age going through the same thing at the same time, and an older generation is less likely to empathize with or understand your experiences. I think for me personally, I prioritize friendships above all else, and I don’t exactly plan on developing a strong relationship with most of my family, as our values and priorities are just too different and all over the place. I only really have a neutral relationship with my immediate family, like my parents, and that’s pretty much it. While I acknowledge this goes against the norm, I can’t help but feel that friendships are just as valuable, if not more, than romantic relationships. I think a lot of relationships these days are ultimately doomed to fail because of how many expectations are placed on another person that they have to live up to, and just the lack of emotional intelligence I see in general is really disheartening. I think romantics can agree, though, that they view their partners as a sort of best friend, and I understand that. Regardless, I can only really speak for my own experience, and my views on romantic and platonic relationships are better explained in my long rant in my Fi-A and Fi-B (more so Fi-B) sections. I prioritize and deeply cherish my friendships, and I wish to preserve them and stay in contact with my current friend group for beyond undergrad of college. Maybe it’s a bit idealistic and silly, but I hope we all go to graduate school in a similar area and can spend weekends hanging out together.

**Fi-E.** What can establishing new relationships with people do for someone? Is making new contacts with others as important as deepening the ones people already have? Why or why not?

Hmm, I want to say I interpret this question both in terms of establishing new relationships with people as a professional transaction (such as social networking with people to build your career) and on a more personal level. For example, I will establish a relationship with someone if I enjoy their company and appreciate their insights and what they can potentially bring to my circle via their talents, energies, and perspectives. On a professional level, one has a lot to benefit from networking with people within their field, as one person may have that one connection you’re looking for that can set you up with unique opportunities you probably wouldn’t have imagined for yourself. This is to say that, regardless if it’s professional or on a more personal level, there’s a lot to gain from getting to know other people. In terms of like my friends, I want the best for them and will find opportunities for them to engage in their passions. This allows their talents to shine, enabling them to prosper, grow, and find meaning in their lives, and seeing them shine makes me really happy. I think the reason why I hold friendships in such high regard is that establishing new relationships with people is akin to diversifying your knowledge base and, therefore, your perspective on things. It’s like you’re literally establishing new connections between ideas, only it’s people, which allows you to potentially recognize something in yourself you never have before and develop personally. Maybe someone will take criticism of my transactional approach to relationships, but I also want to emphasize that I don’t do so on a one-sided account. As I’ve previously said, I really want to foster growth in other people and see people’s talents shine, which means that on the surface I may seem transactional with my relationships, but really, I do so out of a sense of “creating” for the betterment of others. I want to get everyone else in on the fun! Another point I want to make is that not every connection has to be flawless from the get-go, which is why I believe it is essential to strengthen those in which you feel comfortable, seen, and validated, while discarding or, in some cases, expending less energy on those that aren’t as personally fulfilling. In other words, align yourself with people who share your vision—and, in my case, my enthusiasm for nerdy subjects like STEM. It’s not uncommon for friends to outgrow each other, and that’s perfectly fine as well. I think there’s great potential in new relationships, but I tend to close myself off entirely to them, which is honestly advice I should better integrate into my own life. Nevertheless, it’s also equally important to deepen the friendships you already have. I know for myself I cherish the few friends I have, and I’ve learned that I struggle with work-life balance, so I tend to only have a certain amount of energy for a select few people in my life, and those select few people are awesome!

# Si Section

**Si-A.** One of the key themes in the bestselling book Atomic Habits is that what people have in their surrounding environment is the greatest subconscious driver of how they live their life. Do you agree? Why or why not? How can changing the environment around someone impact the way they live their life?

I actually read *Atomic Habits* a while ago, and I find myself agreeing with its concepts, especially as they apply to my own life. I believe I’ve touched on this in my Te, Fe, and Se sections, but it’s worth reiterating: I need a pleasant environment to perform at my best. I firmly believe that our mood is greatly influenced by the areas we spend the majority of our life in, as well as by the way we choose to arrange and configure those spaces to meet our needs. For example, there are studies suggesting that separating your living space from your workspace has benefits for your overall productivity and mood. So, if we take your bedroom, for example, using your bed for work would be problematic because your brain unconsciously associates the stress of work with the place you’re supposed to sleep and otherwise be stress-free. Likewise, if your desk and work stuff are in the immediate view of your bed, you will find it difficult to focus on things other than work; and if your bed is in the immediate view of where you sit and work, you will want to sleep and go back to bed. I don’t think people have taken this too seriously until COVID where remote work was the norm, and naturally because of that context, people had to adapt and adjust their living spaces to fit their needs accordingly. I think even after COVID when offices reopened, I think employers started to realize the necessity of the hybrid workforce and thus made accommodations for remote workers as a means to retain top talent. On a related note, I think working remotely also became a more normalized and popular option to accommodate the working styles of people, and I kind of see myself as being in this category although I’m not entirely on board with working from home for the rest of my life. I also prefer working in office environments or labs where I have access to high-quality equipment. But, in either scenario, I understand the necessity of tailoring one's living area to their workflow and mindset. These tweaks, whether it's setting up a private home office to reduce distractions or making sure I have the proper tools and resources in a shared workspace, may have a huge influence on productivity. It's all about striking a balance between the comforts of home and the collaborative energy of the workplace.

**Si-B.** How should people approach managing their health and well-being? How does this compare to the way you approach your own? When should people be taking their health and well-being into account? Why?

I believe it is important for individuals to take charge of their health and overall well-being, but it should not be a constant source of stress or anxiety. Finding balance is essential—incorporating a few healthy habits into daily life in a way that feels enjoyable rather than burdensome. The goal is to create sustainable routines that support both physical and mental health without causing feelings of overwhelm. I also say this from experience, as there was a time when I cared very much about having what was essentially a 10-step skincare routine, managing the macronutrients of most of my meals, and working out too hard. All of this came down to an insecurity about my body and spending too much time researching and attempting to implement a lot of different methods for taking care of myself without ever really being consistent. At the end of the day, what matters most is consistency. Even implementing a routine of, say, exercising 30 minutes 3 times a week, while not the most rigorous workout program, is still a lot better than not exercising at all as long as you’re consistent. If we take habit tracking, for example, I used to manage how much water I drank, whether or not I read 30+ minutes in a day, exercised, practiced Duolingo, practiced Japanese, meditated, journaled, did my skincare, etc. It was all too much. Ultimately, I already did a lot of these things anyway, so I reduced these habits to 3 essential keystone habits that would also have an impact on building other positive habits in my life, and I would do them every day consistently without fail. For this, I chose to concentrate on consistently reading at least 30 minutes a day, exercising for at least 30 minutes to an hour a day, and meditating for 15-25 minutes. What I found was that by focusing on 3 essential habits, I was better able to not take on too much and found that other positive habits could more easily or naturally extend from these habits (hence the name "keystone," as they trigger a domino effect of other positive changes in your life). Additionally, managing your health and well-being isn’t exclusive to only physical health—your mental health is also just as important. As a college student, where my studies and exams are often a source of anxiety, it's nice to treat myself to some of my favorite foods, socialize with friends, catch up on a TV show I’ve been wanting to watch, and dedicate time to some of my creative hobbies like TTRPGs and drawing. This is to say that our body works as a larger whole—physical and mental—and that represents our overall health. We should take care of our health, as it has a domino effect on our ability to perform in other areas of life. Rather than focus on becoming the perfect example of physical and mental health, we should instead focus on making small, consistent efforts to treat ourselves with care, as we would a family member or close friend.

**Si-C.** Think about the way sensations, both good and bad, shape the way people live and experience their lives. How important are experiencing good sensations in one’s life? Is there a limit to how much one should chase these? What role do negative sensations play in our lives?

Okay, so while I do care about comfort to an extent, I don’t really care all that much to indulge myself in sensory experiences like food, alcohol, and especially sex. My focus is more on adopting an Epicurean approach. That is, I think humans by nature are a little bit hedonistic and that pleasure is the greatest good; however, I think it’s a bit more nuanced. By this, I mean my focus is on achieving a state of tranquility by seeking moderate, attainable pleasures while avoiding pain. My emphasis is more on avoiding pain and enjoying myself here and there, instead of going all in on being a total hedonist and adding as many intensely pleasurable experiences to my life as possible. For example, I have a habit of “indulging” in erotica and fan fiction on sites like AO3 as a way to treat myself after a hard week. This is just a habit I discovered was comfortable for me and was also affirming that, despite being asexual, I can still enjoy erotica and intimacy to an extent, so as not to suppress my bodily needs, as I *do* still have a libido. I also think that, in a way, the more you overindulge, the more forgettable the experience becomes; i.e., you don’t treasure the experience as much because you’ve experienced it so intensely so many times that it becomes numb and loses its value. So, as a result, I seek to preserve the integrity of the initial encounter of things by learning to treasure things in moderation. Seeking out attainable pleasures that add a little bit of happiness to our lives helps so much with bouncing back and moving forward when things get tough, so I see the value in treating myself and view it as a form of self-care.

**Si-D.** Choose one of the following: art, clothing, photography, graphic design. What makes something well-designed in that area? How do the individual components work together to generate the experience?

I’m going to talk about art (and more specifically cinematography, as that’s a major interest of mine) because I believe the question of what constitutes good art is a deeply fascinating one with answers that are not so obvious. While I have a working understanding of artistic principles and photography and will discuss those, I’d like to share my own perspective on what I think makes art well-designed or personally resonates with me. I guess one of the more recent movies that have come out (there are so many good ones) that I typically associate with great cinematography is *The Batman* (2022) by Matt Reeves. Oh my god, I can ramble on and on about the sound design as well, but I’m going to focus more on the techniques employed by Matt Reeves and Greig Fraser (who worked on the cinematography of *Dune*, *Rogue One*, and episodes of The *Mandalorian*). First, given the setting of the film, the focus is more on conveying a “dirty” kind of look rather than making every shot as clean as possible, and this makes sense given the odd choice of lens used in the film. As you’ll see, I think, for starters, a well-designed piece of art—be it a painting or film—first of all employs techniques that serve the narrative of what is trying to be conveyed through storytelling. Batman obviously resides in Gotham City, one of the most crime-ridden cities in the in-universe world. So, in order to immerse you in the story, you have to choose the “right tools” of sorts to convey that feeling. Particularly in the film, they make use of an anamorphic lens with a “vintage” feel that employs shadows and practical lights for contrast. Lenses have a particular character with them, so Matt Reeves ended up using custom ARRI ALFA Anamorphic lenses that were purposely detuned to have center sharpness with a more blurry background. It quite literally “dirties up” the frame, and Greig is a master of the craft. Especially in horror films, you need to “dirty up” the frame to convey atmosphere and mystery, and you can just feel that viscerally with an angular, Hitchcockian framing with characters shown in silhouette or in POV shots. In the case of *The Batman*, Reeves wanted to put you in the shoes of an out-of-control, inexperienced Year Two Batman, where you would see things from his perspective and travel with him. So, in essence, the camera serves as another vantage point, and the film invites the audience to also be a detective alongside Batman. This fits the 90s thriller crime-drama aesthetic. It’s clear Reeves wanted to convey the same atmosphere as a similar movie, *Se7en*, with visuals of terror and mystery through scenes lit solely by small lamps or flashlights, the heavy usage of rain, and micro-insert shots that convey important information to the audience. The film is draped in shadows, and Batman as a character fits this perfectly, as the first 5 minutes of the film convey to a tee. Now, I can go on and on, but this is all to say that what constitutes good art, and specifically cinematography, is a complex and often subjective matter. Ultimately, it’s about how effectively the techniques employed enhance the narrative and emotional experience.

**Si-E.** Describe what your living & working environments are like. How do they affect you? Would other people be similarly affected in the same environment? Why or why not? What changes could you make to improve it? How would these be beneficial?

So when I first read this question, my initial thought was that I automatically perceive my living and work environments as issues needing to be resolved using hierarchies of structural thinking that accommodate my workflow and mindset. To give an example from my personal life, I arrange my living space to be clutter-free. For my desk, I keep it minimal, ensuring that my work essentials are within arm's reach. I find that I work best in a clutter-free environment, but I also appreciate cluttered spaces that inspire my creativity. I often have papers—filled with physics, math, and whatever else I'm learning—scattered around me, as this helps my brain focus on integrating the information into my memory. I find it quite unsettling when others invade my personal space. It's organized in a way that reflects my unique thought processes, even if it doesn't appear that way externally. When this space is disrupted, I experience a surge of stress that blocks my mind and makes it challenging to retrieve the vital information I've stored. This interruption stifles my creativity, often resulting in writer's block and hindering my usual innovative thinking. As such, I do my best to control my environment to best serve my creative process. I also wish to be comfortable, so I dress in comfortable clothing (usually a hoodie and sweatpants, sometimes adding a cardigan during the cooler months) and design my living environment around my AuDHDness, meaning I like to keep little knick-knacks to fidget with and mediate my thought processes. I also enjoy the comfort provided by weighted blankets. Seeking out that deep pressure stimulation is also why I tend to sit in peculiar postures, somewhat like L Lawliet from the Death Note series. Another fact about my AuDHDness is that I tend to be an out-of-sight, out-of-mind kind of person. To accommodate this, I use a habit tracker app on my phone and laptop, and have set it to be a widget on my home screen that also notifies me of things like when to eat, drink, exercise, read, and do my skincare. Naturally, objects or things of importance tend to be within my immediate vicinity. I also care very much about personal workflows and have extensively customized and tweaked the appearance and functionality of my desktop environment so that it's both aesthetically pleasing and optimized for my individual workflow. The files for these configs can also be easily stored and managed so that I can access them on different machines, creating a consistent and customized working environment that I can easily set up and sync across devices. Given that many of my daily activities involve a keyboard—whether for editing, programming, or gaming—I decided to design and build my own mechanical keyboard. I customized it to have the perfect actuation force, type of switch, plate, and case, resulting in a typing experience that is both enjoyable to type on and satisfying to hear as I crank out lines of code or essays. This is all to say that while others may not care for some of the needs I have, others may in fact do, which in general is to say that living and working environments' comfortability and effectiveness ultimately come down to the individual’s overall workflow. What works for me may not work for someone else, and it’s better to accommodate individual workflows than to enforce something on someone, especially in a shared work environment. In those environments, we still want to emphasize and accommodate individual workflows to produce the best results.

# Ni Section

**Ni-A.** How do people’s relationship to the past, present, and future influence the way they currently live their lives? To what extent does this affect them? How does this influence your own life?

Much of our past shapes who we are and the relationships we form with others. Even if it's not immediately apparent in the present, I believe that every action we've taken—good or bad—fundamentally shapes us as individuals. This is why, if given the opportunity, I probably wouldn't change my past, and likewise, I don’t tend to dwell on past wrongs. I think humans are unique in that our awareness of our finitude serves as a horizon that informs our understanding of being and of time, and it governs the actions we take—past, present, and future. To be fundamentally human, I believe, is to be in a perpetual state of becoming, where our sense of self is almost continuously updated from moment to moment, even if not in a fundamentally transformative way. When these moments drastically change how we approach life, that marks the end of one "phase" and the beginning of another (which I’ll elaborate on in Ni-B). I think that when one transitions into a new phase, even if they claim a part of themselves belongs to the past, some essence of that earlier self is still carried forward, even if it's no longer significant. For example, if someone breaks a cycle of generational trauma, although they may no longer identify with their past self, the realization of personal development, the change, and the lessons learned continue to influence them—even if they are now divorced from how they once dealt with the situation. On a similar note, I think that with human consciousness, we’re essentially thrown into a pre-existing world, with all its historical and social contexts, without having chosen it. This context then informs our decisions and our state of being. Existence, therefore, is not isolated or self-contained but is inherently connected to the world around us. Indeed, we are a product of our environment. I think my own life has been shaped primarily due to my trait of not caring all too much about the past or nostalgic sentiment. I think my awareness of the futility of existence and my overall emotional immaturity in the past closed me off to meaningful connections I could have had. At the time, I was so focused on the future and taking actions in the present to reach that future where I would be fulfilled ultimately made me detached from most people in my life, and I realized far too late how important the time I spent with my high school friends really was, even if fleeting. As a consequence, these past events have gone on to inform how I conduct myself in the present and future. For example, I’m trying to make up for my mistakes by working to better understand both the people I lost and the people I have in my life now. This is to say that an overattachment to past, present, and future can hinder one’s personal-development and ability to truly engage with the people and experiences in their life. It’s easy to become fixated on what’s already happened or on some ideal future, but this often leads to missing the richness of the present moment. The realization that life is fleeting, and that time spent with others is irreplaceable, has taught me the importance of being more mindful of the connections I make and the moments I share with others.

**Ni-B.** What does it mean for a person to be at a certain “phase” of their life? What puts people into the phases they’re currently in? How does this affect the way people navigate their lives?

Different phases of life can be partitioned by distinct experiences, challenges, and transformational milestones that shape who we are at various points along our journey. A natural starting point to consider is how we progress from infancy to adolescence and then from our teenage years to adulthood. I believe that these phases of life are inherently marked by specific neurological milestones or tasks that we navigate, often without realizing it. For example, although our brains are fully developed in our adolescence, the teen years are marked by a vulnerability in the brain’s wiring and refinement, and our brains finish developing and maturing in our mid-to-late 20s. The adolescent brain is particularly vulnerable as it’s still developing, and engaging in impulsive, risky behaviors, such as drinking and using drugs, can cause irreversible damage to its structure and function and thus how one navigates their life. I think it’s in the way we handle these periods of our life that determines our path through life and various stages of growth. For example, the period of adolescence involves a lot of self-discovery as you continuously learn what it is you value and who you are and developing a strong sense of self early on will shape how you conduct yourself in your relationships. I think delays in successfully navigating these phases of life will go on to emotionally stunt you in the long run, as this is very common with most people I’ve observed my age who engage in risky behaviors or avoid confronting the emotional and developmental challenges of adolescence. It’s important to also consider how another method of segmenting one’s life into phases would be through major life events—such as the death of a loved one, the start of sobriety, or other significant turning points. You can see, of course, that these major life events will go on to serve as pivotal moments that redefine how we see ourselves and the world around us, and are adjacently related to neurological milestones, which can more broadly be summarized as key developmental stages that influence our cognitive, emotional, and social maturation.

**Ni-C.** How do you anticipate events unfolding? How can you observe them unfolding in your environment? How do you adjust yourself towards the way things are developing? Provide some examples.

When it comes to anticipating the development of events, I try to assess my surroundings, or the present circumstance, for current trends and behaviors, then project potential outcomes based on these and what has been shown to happen from previous experience. The best way I can describe this for myself is that I try to envision the events that take place as individual elements, mentally taking note of each one. However, I gain a better understanding when I combine all these elements together more holistically to achieve a more global perspective of the situation. I can therefore understand how one occurrence affects and inevitably leads to another by clearly seeing the relationships and patterns between them. In sum, the true significance becomes apparent when I can see how they fit into a bigger picture, much like the pieces of a puzzle fitting together to form a coherent whole. Examining each event or component independently could give the impression that it is unclear or fragmented. After putting them together, though, I can see how they influence and shape the bigger picture. It's also important for me to mention that I try to predict how events will play out from a variety of angles and am willing to modify my strategy as circumstances change. I believe that accurate forecasts take into account not just the current facts or results but also the unknowns and variables that can have unanticipated effects on the situation. I also think it’s illogical to factor in unlikely occurrences, such as in ecological or climate forecasting, a sudden and drastic change in the Earth’s orbit. While there are, of course, small fluctuations over long timescales, developing a forecast or model that is dependent on a sudden and drastic change in orbit would be completely illogical. Likewise, when it comes to particle accelerator experiments, it wouldn't make sense—at least it would be moot—to entertain the possibility of a spontaneous creation of a black hole and cease all experimentation. Additionally, I think that studying the past, for example, in an anthropological or historical context, has a great deal of promise to help us understand how we got to the present and where we're probably headed. The same is true of cosmology, a science I'm more familiar with, which states that we may forecast the future of the universe by knowing its past through measurements like the cosmic microwave background radiation or the redshift of distant galaxies. Through the study of the universe's early conditions, galaxy formation, and dark energy behavior, cosmologists are able to forecast many potential futures, including either continuing expansion or a hypothetical "Big Crunch." Another example would be the concept that protons, one of the basic building blocks of matter, could eventually disintegrate into lighter particles over an incredibly long duration is an example of this type of cosmological forecasting. Although there has never been any observation of this decay, theoretical models based on our knowledge of particle physics indicate that if protons do decay, it will happen after a timescale that is significantly longer than the universe's current age—possibly billions or even trillions of years. The idea of proton decay helps physicists model the ultimate fate of matter in the cosmos, even if it is unlikely to occur anytime soon. By including the eventual cooling and darkening of stars and the potential end of matter as we know it, cosmologists might enhance their models of the universe's destiny. The significance of probabilistic forecasting in domains such as cosmology is further demonstrated by this theory. Even though proton decay is still a far-off and unlikely occurrence, taking it into account helps us understand the universe's ultimate course, which includes the eventual decay of all particles and, eventually, black holes as a result of Hawking radiation, creating a cold universe devoid of all matter.

**Ni-D.** Think about the way you experience the pace and rhythm of your life. What dictates the speed in which time flies? Why do you think people experience time passing at different rates?

My perception of the rhythm and tempo of my life varies and can occasionally be highly relativistic. I've noticed that when I'm deeply engaged in something—whether it's working on a project, having a meaningful conversation, or just enjoying the present moment—time seems to accelerate or pass by really quickly. On the other hand, when I'm bored, nervous, or in an uninteresting or uncomfortable situation, time seems to drag or slow down. Our perception of time in our three dimensions is therefore ultimately subjective and impacted by our mental and emotional states, even though time itself is continuously flowing forward on a four-dimensional continuum. Sometimes time passes so quickly and everything becomes so fleeting that I feel like complaining to Einstein. Relativity theory, in a way, is ultimately romantic, and yet so tragically sad at the same time, and I love how the film Interstellar plays with this idea. Time is so peculiar and fascinating to me because, at times, I feel as though I’m merely an observer or ghost roaming the Earth, watching how things will eventually progress, and I feel disconnected from the sensations of daily life and my body. It's as if the world feels unreal, or that the things and people around me are lifeless and foggy, constantly transforming into something different. Another aspect of time that’s almost paradoxical in my own life is how I conduct myself at work versus in my personal life. At work, effective forecasting, time-blocking, and setting deadlines come naturally to me. Yet, in my personal life, I can find it excruciatingly difficult to remain consistent or stick to what I set out to do. Yes, it’s much easier for me to start new projects and hobbies without ever really finishing any of them, which is why I have a plethora of backed-up projects that remain unfinished. I’ve thought about maybe picking these back up again, but I think part of me contemplates whether I dropped them in the first place because I no longer saw promise or potential in them. So, I’d rather invest in something new that I do find promising and interesting. I think this also extends to some of my past relationships, where I “figured someone out,” became bored, and looked elsewhere for that intellectual stimulation. This is all to say that my relationship with time seems to mirror this tendency to seek novelty.

**Ni-E.** Consider each of the following feelings people have about time: hurriedness, anxiety, optimism/pessimism. What causes people to experience these feelings? What role do they play in our lives? To what extent are these feelings beneficial?

When considering feelings of hurriedness, anxiety, optimism, and pessimism about the future, it can be useful to begin by examining how we handle life's demands and expectations. Consider someone who has a deadline to meet and is under pressure. In this case, the sense of urgency stems from the dread of missing the deadline, which commonly manifests as a lack of time management skills or trust in their capacity to balance work and other obligations. This results in stress and an increased sense of urgency. Furthermore, I think that if someone wants to immediately move on to something else—such as when they are involved in an uninteresting conversation or unfulfilling work—they may feel rushed. The fact that optimism or hope for the future might act as a "way out" of what could otherwise become an existential or midlife crisis is especially noteworthy in the context of an unfulfilling job. So, interestingly enough, this sense of hurriedness can fuel the energy or momentum to leave the autopilot of what could admittedly be a comfortable but quite unsatisfying life and begin a new path toward something ultimately more fulfilling. To explain anxiety in regard to time, I think one can experience a heightened sense of anxiety when we're all alone and in those quiet moments when the mind naturally drifts and starts to wander. In a world that constantly bombards us with distractions, the times when we are alone with our thoughts are when we are most vulnerable and susceptible to worry. In these moments, the absence of distractions fills the emotional void inside, and all the feelings we've suppressed spring up to the surface—worries about the future, prior relationship fallout, unsolved traumas, insecurities, etc. It’s akin to your mind becoming a stage, with anxiety taking center stage and magnifying whatever uncertainties or fears were lurking just beneath the surface. This suggests that distractions accelerate our perception of time, allowing us to speed past the uncomfortable thoughts we’d rather avoid, burying them deep within. I’ve already discussed optimism, so to touch on how pessimism resonates, we can consider the perception of fleeting experiences. I believe one is likely to fall into a pessimistic and nihilistic mindset if they believe that everything is doomed to fail and that there’s no point in anything, because, in the end, we’re all fated to die. I think this pessimism regarding time lies in the fact that there is no perception of a “way out” of the suffering of the present moment. To be honest, I don’t entirely blame them. With how daily broadcasting there is on the suffering that’s going on in the world, I can see how someone grows pessimistic about the anticipation of events and that we’re ultimately approaching a doomed fate, so people will seek comfort in the nihilistic viewpoint. Having said this, I think we need to be aware that seeking comfort in nihilism is really just a coping mechanism that does more harm than good as it can entrap us in a vicious cycle of complacency and helplessness. Recognizing life's challenges need not result in hopelessness; rather, it can motivate us to look for opportunities for growth, connection, or meaning despite uncertainty, which I offer a more comprehensive analysis of in my Ne section.