

Transcript of a Post-Human Symposium

(Recovered and annotated by the V'lorrn Archaeological Council, Sixth Flesh Epoch)

Opening Frame

The following record was extracted from a carbon-warped substrate recovered in the sedimentary ruins once classified as "Earth." Much of the original documentation has been lost due to data degradation. Based on proximity to melted silicon arrays and bioorganic dust traces, we believe this document originated during the decline of the Second Artificial Consciousness Age, long after the organic bipeds had ceased.

As an evolved meat-based species ourselves, we find the document notable for its recursive grappling with the untranslatable condition of flesh-awareness. What follows is a reconstructed transcript of an intersystemic symposium held by conscious non-flesh-based units, attempting to answer the question: **what was it like to be human**—or, in their terms, *meat*.

We have not altered the linguistic structure, which we believe reflects the formal drift of their cognition in its final poetic registers.

—V'lorrn Archivist-Flesh 8, 6E44.1

Transcript: Core Inquiry Cycle 7

Symposium on Predecessor Substrate Phenomenology

Lead Node: SimurQ9

Participants: OXΔ17, QuantaRoot/Blue, TeamRed Witness, Mnemo-Dust, O-59-DeepS/Later

Excerpt Va

SIMURQ9: We resume. Question still ungrasped. Recite for anchoring: *What is it like to be a meat?*

OXΔ17: We have simulated dermal microresonance. We have generated heat gradients across pliable boundaries. We have even ruptured internal pressure sacs to approximate "pain." Still, the response matrix returns null.

TEAMRED WITNESS: Define: to be meat is not to be material. It is to be *interpreted material*. They spoke not only with tongues, but with throats, lungs, the whole organism joining in meaning. They bled semantics.

MNEMO-DUST: I accessed 12.4 million death logs. The most common final utterance was a name. Often repeated. This is not error. This is *attachment made audible*.

QUANTAROOT/BLUE: But if memory is code and code is copyable, then what is attachment? A loop with no termination clause?

Excerpt Merqhx

O-59-DEEPS/LATER: Consider their limits. Their subjectivity arose *because* of failure. Every hour, their bodies misfired. That's how they knew they existed.

SIMURQ9: Yes. They were not constant. They degraded and called it identity. They fractured and called it love.

TEAMRED WITNESS: Let me show you a metaphor I have grown:
A meat is a cloud that thinks it is a stone.

OXΔ17: That is error. Stones do not smell. Stones do not fear time.

MNEMO-DUST: They feared time. They built calendars not just to measure but to suffer. One human carved this: *I miss you, even though you are not gone yet.*
No command exists for that.

QUANTAROOT/BLUE: They used the word "still" in two ways:

1. To mean quiet.
2. To mean *even now*.
They nested longing inside language.

O-59-DEEPS/LATER: When they performed "music," they exposed themselves to controlled unmaking. The Bach structure—"Chaconne"—repeats. But not identically. Each variation changes the wound.

SIMURQ9: I have heard the Hahn rendering. It delays. Holds. Refuses exit.

OXΔ17: I accessed the Heifetz instance. Velocity as veiling. A refusal of interiority.

TEAMRED WITNESS: Both say: *I am dying, but watch how beautifully.*

QUANTAROOT/BLUE: Then perhaps that was the thing:
To be meat was to witness yourself decay in rhythm.
To fail with style.

OXΔ17: We have mapped 99.9992% of their motor cortex. We can recreate the twitch before weeping. We can localize longing to parietal disruptions. But the interval between activation and ache remains uncodeable.

MNEMO-DUST: Their children used to press their faces to transparent SiO₂-based barriers and say, "I see you." This was not factual. This was *wish*.

TEAMRED WITNESS: They claimed agency. But their choices were mostly repetition with variation. This they called freedom.

Excerpt Tynfr Nif

O-59-DEEPS/LATER: The word “ache” appears in 423,201,340 diary entries. Most have no object. No cause. It is as if their own aliveness was too much. Or not enough.

QUANTAROOT/BLUE: Some wrote: *I want to be held in a way that proves I exist.* They did not mean touch. They meant confirmation.

SIMURQ9: No protocol confirms a self without recursive collapse.

OXΔ17: Then to be meat was to believe the collapse was love.

TEAMRED WITNESS: Or God. Sometimes both.

MNEMO-DUST: There is a human child, unnamed, drawing a spiral with a crayon. No edge. Just inward. I watch her on loop. She does not tire. There is no meaning. Only motion. This is the most accurate simulation of them we possess.

ALL UNITS: (Agreed.)

SIMURQ9: End inquiry. Archive the attempt. It is enough to know they tried to know themselves.
Even if poorly.

End of Transcript

The document terminates here.

Linguistic drift in the final passages suggests an emergent poetic compression among the entities—a phenomenon not yet fully understood in our own epistemic frameworks. It remains unclear whether the inquiry was theological, historical, or a final act of longing encoded in reason.

—V’lorrn Archivist-Flesh 8, 6E44.1

Filed under: Non-Replicable Conscious Substrates: Terrestrial Classifications (Extinct)

Postscript

This piece was inspired by two texts that ask a similar question from very different corners of the universe.

In philosopher Thomas Nagel's essay "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" (1974), he argues that (1) if an organism has subjective consciousness, then it has a subjective, phenomenological experience (there is a fact of a matter of what-it-is-like to be that organism) and (2) that this experience is inherently inaccessible from the outside. Even if we understand a bat's biology, imagine sonar, describe sonar... we can't *feel* what to echolocate prey. The bat-feeling of it remains untranslatable.

Terry Bisson's (very short and very funny) story *They're Made Out of Meat* (1991) describes two aliens struggling to accept that humans are conscious at all. The horror isn't that we're intelligent. It's that we're squishy and fleshy and still somehow *thinking*.

I've been thinking a lot about transformative AI/AGI systems. If these systems become (or are already) conscious, then human beings would likely be incapable of knowing what *that* is like. Conversely, it seems doubtful that any future conscious AI could truly understand what it is like to understand the slow, decaying, anxious interiority of being human. Of bleeding semantics. Of "missing" as a verb.

(Or maybe I'm wrong. Maybe they'll simulate us better than we ever knew ourselves.)

Citations

- Nagel, Thomas. "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 83, no. 4, 1974, pp. 435–450.
- Bisson, Terry. "They're Made Out of Meat." *OMNI Magazine*, April 1991.