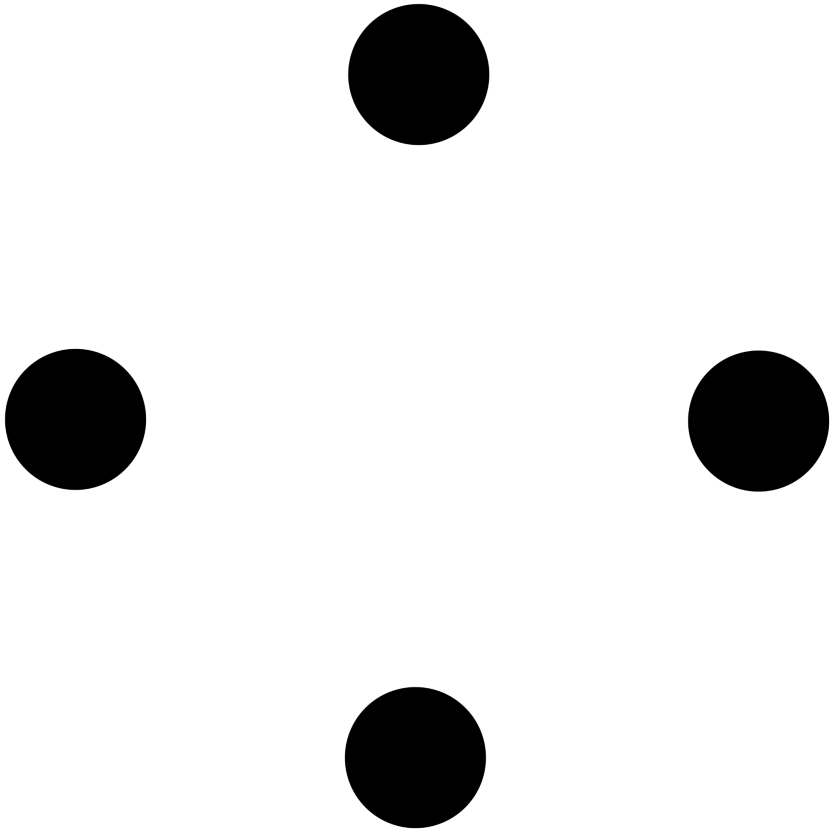
Paradigm Shift



Dominic Vicharelli

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To my mom and dad, for I would not
be in this position without them

To Mama G, for teaching me what
"incompetence" looks like

And to all of those who have lost hope;
you are not alone

A note to the reader...

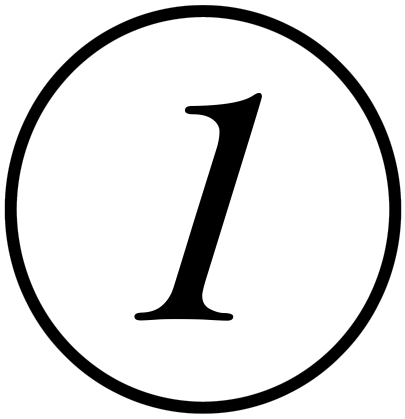
This text consists of three parts. The only thing that I ask of you as you dive into this project of mine is to please read them in the order that I have presented them.

As for the rest? Well, the rest is the rest.

Why don't you come find out for yourself?

Enjoy

:)



A Problem

Ahh... the beginning. Where to begin, oh, where to begin. All big ideas start small I guess, so there's really only one place to begin at; the beginning.

The beginning is difficult, because you don't know about me, and I don't know about you. You don't know what this book is about, and I don't know how you are going to respond to what I have to say. It's a hard spot, the beginning. And, it's up to the author of the story to make this hard spot, well... not so hard. So, in an attempt to ease this transition into a brand new relationship between your brain and mine, I'll start off with something that both of our brains can understand; a story related to the mind.

Building a Model

Let's say that one wanted to model how a human mind works–something that we all have and are able to understand, to some extent. How might they go about it?

The mind is one complex piece of machinery, and any attempt to model how it works will have to account for such. But, the more complex the model becomes, the greater the chance for there to be inaccuracies within it. And, it seems as if our understanding of the human mind changes every decade–with the advancement of available technology being introduced into our society at a rate never seen before–making the idea of creating a complex model even more convoluted.

But, just because the mind works in a complex way doesn't necessarily mean that the model has to be complex as well. In fact, there's a very simple way to model how one might think about the functioning of a human mind; one containing a minimal amount of components and terms. For an example of what I mean, consider the following.

First, we start with a definition. The mind, what is it? The mind is an abstract sensation that continuously takes place in human beings–starting from the age of four to five years old–and continuously takes place until the day that we die in what we perceive to be somewhere in the front of our skulls. This sensation called the mind has the ability to do what we call "think," and

"remember," and "compute," and "imagine," and countless other abilities, to what we perceive to be limitless possibility. The mind is exemplified by the space that holds a weekly grocery list, the space that remembers a loved one's upcoming birthday, and the space that visualizes the answer to $x - 3 = 0$.

With a loose definition now in place, we can start building the model. It starts with the building blocks. *A* building block; *a* thought. A thought, defined to be anything that exists to any frame of reference, happening in the nonphysical space brought forth by the mind.

Thoughts exist in spots. Different thoughts exist in different spots; spots that are always changing and are dynamic in nature. The amount of spots that we each have depends on a lot; genetics, health, environment, nurture, nature, mood, hunger, the whole she-bang. Sometimes three, sometimes fifteen, it really just depends on, well... everything.

Thoughts can be short-lived just as well as they can be long-lived. I can think about the outfit that I am going to wear tomorrow just as well as grieve over the passing of a loved one. Thoughts can lead to any emotion, as well as any behavior. Thoughts can be benign, malicious, obsessive, invasive, painful, joyful, any combination of those, and so much more. But they always come and go, with some coming back.

There exists a natural ordering on these thoughts that enables us to even talk and reason about them in the first place; the order in which we perceive them.

Thoughts have an inherent ordering to the perception of the human mind; a one-two-three. First I see the car, then I see the chipped windshield, then I think about my own chipped windshield. A one-two-three, happening in a row, not all at once.

Thoughts, happening in the mind, with some order, give rise to a stream of thoughts, happening over some length of time, with some specific order. A stream of thoughts represents something more than just an ordered set of building blocks, it represents data. Data for the mind to learn from.

This mind of ours, super-intelligent as some might say, has the ability to do one very powerful thing in particular. It has the ability to recognize things that we call patterns given a stream of data in the form of a stream of thoughts.

A pattern is recognizing what comes next before it comes. Recognizing patterns gives rise to predictability in a system, with us usually picking up on some repetition happening in the behavior of that same system. We pick up on patterns related to when the mail is going to come, what times our bodies get hungry, and the range of behaviors that people who are known to us are likely to exhibit in a range of different scenarios.

Patterns of thought represent predictability in the sequence of building blocks. These patterns of thought related to the mind, exist within a mind; a mind that is picking up on patterns with the ordered set of behavior that is being produced by itself. A pattern of a pattern if you will; a meta pattern.

This is what the first story of this trilogy is all about, a pattern of patterns; one that some of you might find useful. In particular, a group of people that, in the twenty-first century, have been given the overarching label of "neurodivergent"; a term used to describe any mind that strays away from the average.

In modern society, those who are deemed neurodivergent are given quite a bad rap; and, understandably so. On average, those who are neurodivergent are likely to experience a plethora of mental health issues, making them less than ideal workers in a society that's revolved around work. But, I have something else to say about this group of people; and not just a sentence or two.

For me to say what I really want to say about this group of people, it's going to take some setting up, and, quite a bit of it. So, if you think you might land somewhere on the neurodivergent map, and are interested in a different viewpoint that you can use to look at yourself, unfortunately for you crew, you've got quite a bit of reading to do before you can get it; and, skipping ahead to the end will only do you so much.

But, not all is bad news bears though, for, if I've done what I hope I have done, getting to the peak of this story won't just feel like a formality of getting to the punchline. Just because it might be a winding road doesn't mean that we can't also have some fun along the way.

So then... it's time to continue on with the model. What pattern is it that I would like to discuss? Put simply, the pattern of obsessive thought. What is obsessive thought? I think that the concept is best explained through the use of an example rather than a definition.

Thoughts have an ordering, a one-two-three, this has already been established. What we call "normal" thought might look something like, one-two-three, four-five-six, seven-eight-nine. What we might call "limited" thought could look something like, one-two, three-four, . . . three-four, four, four. What we might call "impaired" thought could look something like, two-one-three, one-three, four, one-one-three, two. And finally, "obsessive" thought would look something like, one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three.

Except, with obsessive thought patterns, one-two-three, one-two-three, time plays an important one-two-three role. Specifically, if we look one-two-three at what happens over one-two-three time, quickly, the full effect of one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three the obsessiveness is one-two-three shown. And how much one-two-three of a disruptor it one-two-three, one-two-three becomes for one-two-three everything one-two-three else to take one-two-three, one-two-three place.

If one tries to let it go, one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three . . . one-two-three, one-two-three one-two-three . . one-two-three one-two-three, one-two-three one-two-three,, ... one-two-three, one-two-three, . one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three one-two-three one-two-three; . . one-two-three, : . it one-two-three never goes one-two-three away. And if one-two-three they instead focus really one-two-three hard on one-two-three it, one-two-three, the one-two-three, more one-two-three, it one-two-three, seems, one-two-three

one-two-three to one-two-three happen one-two-three, and one-two-three with one-two-three greater one-two-three, one-two-three, frequency.

This is what I define to be the problem; the problem of obsessive thought.

The only other aspect of this model that will be of importance later on is the concept that I will refer to as grooves.

A groove is a type of pattern with the thoughts; predictability within a certain set of one-two-three's. A groove isn't just one instance of a one-two-three, it's the instance of a one-two-three happening over days, months, or decades.

Grooves are carved out by repetition and enforced by habit. The more a series of thoughts takes place, the easier it is for them to be thought of again. Repetition strengthens grooves, and the amount of instances that a groove is entered into is a good indicator of the ease of future accessibility to think or act in that certain way again.

Put simply, the more that we are swayed in certain directions, the more likely we are to be swayed in those same directions again. Once a groove is born, its presence is known about, once and forever. It's the initial digging of a tunnel that gives rise to a mental pathway that is likely to be visited again.

But, being hand-wavy is only going to get us so far in understanding this model, so, I've come equipped with some examples.

Example #1; the work groove. Let's say that you live in a city. And in this city, you have a job. And to get to this job, you have to take the bus, for you do not own a car. But, before you get on the bus to get to this job–the one that's in the city–you must eat a meal, for the calories are necessary for you to do your job without feeling like you're going to pass out the whole time that you do it. But, before you eat, you like to shower first thing in the morning, so that you can rinse off all of the sleep sweat caused by the previous night's concoction of poison that must be regularly ingested in order to get knocked out from the thought of having to wake up to yet another 9 to 5.

So, every single day that you have to work, it's the same routine. Alarm clock goes off at 8:00, in the shower by 8:05, eating breakfast by 8:20, preparing yourself for eight hours of torture at 8:45, and get to the bus stop by 8:53. Catch the same bus at the same time every morning, sitting in the same spot and getting to work at the same time, where you'll spend all your work time thinking about all the work things. Then, ride the same bus home after eight hours of spending work time thinking about work things, stopping at the same stops, seeing all the same sights, all at the same times.

Like clockwork, the same set of events happening every single work day. Shower –> eat –> prep –> bus –> work –> eat –> work –> bus –> eat –> rest. And, with every iteration of this sequence of events happening, a strengthening of that sequence of actions occurs. Or, in other words, the easier it now becomes for that exact sequence of events to happen again.

When looking at this string of repetitive actions through the lens of a model that only consists of two parts, it presents a pattern with the building blocks;

a groove. A groove that, in this case, had a trigger that was the sound of the alarm clock every morning, and a set length of time that ended whenever the work day was finally over. A groove is simply this, a pattern with the thoughts in the spots that is triggered by some-thing and lasts for some-long.

Example #2; the friend groove. We humans are social creatures. We interact with others, share experiences with others, and grow in the presence of others. But, despite us being these social butterflies, we also have unique individuality; things that separate us from every other living creature out there. Asymmetries, handicaps, stylistic choices, and so much more, all coming together to create a unique instance of a single human being.

When we spend our time around others, a bit of our own uniqueness gets swapped for a bit of their uniqueness. This is very noticeable when becoming friends with someone new. As the friendship develops, a few of their idiosyncrasies become your own (and vice-versa), some of their lingo becomes your own lingo (and vice-versa), and a part of them becomes a part of you, just as a part of you becomes a part of them.

Every time you are around each other, your mind prepares itself for the tomfoolery that is about to come. All of the jokes, all of the pranks, all of the shared good times, primed in the forefront of the mind, and activated as soon as their presence is near. In this way, this pattern of thought fits into the definition of a groove; predictability with the thoughts in the spots that has some trigger and lasts for a certain duration of time. Here, the trigger being the presence of the friend, and the ending coming about once their presence is gone.

Example #3; the Brussels sprouts groove. For this final example, I'll need to introduce a fictional character; good ole uncle Tommy.

Uncle Tommy has no kids of his own, and, God forbidding, won't, any time soon. Let's just say that... uncle Tommy isn't one for sitting in on parenting classes, or, life skills lectures, or even, how to take care of a basic house plant 101. He's a traditional Italian Catholic with his only real skill sets being related to his abilities of acquiring cash in sketchy ways, as well as taking care of his mother. But, tonight, uncle Tommy has been tasked with babysitting your seven year old ass while your parents have a night to themselves to hit the naked boogie.

Now, between you and me, uncle Tommy is a fairly atrocious cook. But he doesn't know that, and neither do you, you're just a kid. Nothing way out of the ordinary, just, under-spiced, overcooked, low heat, smells like feet, sort of a situation. He's cooked a variety of meals for you before, but on this one particular occasion, he has decided to tackle Brussels sprouts. Ah, the brave soul.

He cooks them as flavorless as possible. Straight out of the bag, freezer burnt to hell, soggy, out of season, pesticide-pumped, factory-farmed Brussels sprouts that never had a chance in the first place, mind you, but a decree to the method he used nonetheless. You try one of uncle Tommy's world famous bagged plants, and, surprise surprise, they taste exactly like the garbage that

he is going to make you take out later that night in an attempt to teach you what his version of manners look like.

You spit them out, throw your little tantrum, get forced to eat them anyway by an uncle who thinks he's doing the right thing by shoving vegetables down your gullet, see if you can out-grudge him . . . get out-grudged, and finally end up eating the Brussels sprouts despite wanting to vomit the whole time you do so, just so you can begin your bout of pout.

You finish dinner, brush your teeth, change into your pajamas, and the whole thing is forgotten about before nightly cartoons at 8 o'clock; but, the effect that uncle Tommy has played on you is far from forgotten.

Now, we fast forward to your mid-twenties. You haven't consumed a single Brussels sprout since leaving uncle Tommy's greasy, temporary nest for you when you were a kid. But, unknowingly to you, that's going to change, because, on this particular night in the future, you get invited to go out to a fancy restaurant with a couple of friends for one of their birthdays.

Among the small talk that happens at the table before everyone orders their meal, speculations as to what everyone is going to get bounce back and forth.

"Swordfish with lemongrass aioli or the mahi-mahi tacos with mango salsa?"
"The charcuterie board or the shrimp and crab bisque?"
"The spicy tuna roll or the wagyu beef with sautéed Brussels sprouts?"

The thought of uncle Tommy's Brussels sprouts suddenly pops up in your memory. "Definitely not the Brussels sprouts, Brussels sprouts are disgusting."

"What, no way! You have to try them at this restaurant, I hear that they make a mean Brussels sprout here. I heard that they even have old man Brussel himself growing sprouts in the garden out back."

The combination of peer pressure from your friends along with having a couple of drinks in your system wins, and the Brussels sprouts are ordered. They're brought out to the table with trepidation being felt during the entire wait. But, you end up finding the (liquid) courage to break out of the invisible shell that uncle Tommy placed on top of you when you were a kid, and, as your brain prepares itself for the possibility of having to kill off previously learned neural pathways, you try one.

Absolutely delicious. Sautéed in garlic infused olive oil on high heat to get a nice crisp on the outside, and seasonings galore that made it more closely resemble a sweet treat than that of a vegetable. And so, on that day, you find out that you actually love Brussels sprouts, and your perceived notion of not liking them when you were younger solely came about from being in the hands of an incompetent cook. What else have you been lied to about?

And so, here we have an inactive groove of some twenty odd years, that has been completely disbanded in the matter of an instant; an interesting point that might be of particular use later on.

A groove that had a trigger of being presented with the option of Brussels sprouts, and an ending that was brought about in the presence of a competent chef, the groove only existed until it didn't; a repetition that only lasted until the last one, sneaking up on you in a way that was completely unforeseen.

And with this, the full model is now complete. One that comprises of just two parts; the building blocks, and the patterns with the building blocks.

We are now able to think about what an average model might look like when taking data from the billions of humans beings that (have) live(d) on this earth; a model that can help explain a large subset of human behaviors exhibited yesterday, today, and–as we are to believe–tomorrow.

One where thoughts, feelings, and experiences all come and go as they do, with little deliberation spent on them after-the-fact. Where going from one to two and from two to three is expected; anticipated. There's no hesitation when going from thought to thought, because, why would there be when there has never been a need for it?

For those in the average, they might not even realize that something outside of it exists. But alas, there's an entire group of people alive today that have been dished a whole slew of labels for their known positions away from it. A group of people that have been given the overarching label of neurodivergent, we can also call them those that stray from the average.

The stories for this bunch of people are much different from the ones that are told for those in the average. The stories for this group have common themes of depression, anxiety, and trauma; not ones of smoothness, continuity, and gradualism. Stories of hurt, and survival, and ruggedness; not of choice, and luxury, and lavishness. Ones where pills are gulped, poison is sipped, minds are ruined, and lives are lost to the merciless abyss of inconceivable realities.

There are too many of these stories to hear. People upon people upon even more people that have spent the majority of their lives in endless suffering, with some of them ending just as horribly as they started. My story, the story of my own suffering, is nothing more than a drop of water in an ocean of despair.

But, I would feel completely remiss if I didn't at least share just one particular aspect of my story that I genuinely think could be of much use to a large number of people reading this text. I want to give you all the structured way of thinking that has solved the problem of obsessive thought as it pertains to myself; by way of relabeling a problem to something much less significant than that of a problem.

But, this is a loaded tale, the one of how to solve a problem as large as obsessive thought. And so, I'll start with a fictional story that's meant to get all of us on the same page; attempting to achieve mutual relatability between you and

A Story About Joe

Instead of using the same, seemingly powerful, yet somehow empty words that are commonly used to describe an experience of the non-average to one in the average–things like, *soul-sucking* depression, *crippling* anxiety, or *chronic* fatigue–I want to share my experience of what it's like for me to feel these feelings by not actually sharing it at all.

Instead, I will tell it by way of a fictional story; a story about a guy named Joe.

Meet Joe everybody. Joe, say hi.

"Hi everyone!"

Joe here is going to be the main character of the stage for the next little bit, hopefully aiding me in my endeavor to try and relate a common experience of the non-average to the average without them having to go through it for themselves. Luckily for that group of fortunate souls, Joe here is going to demonstrate to us what it's like to go through a bout of major depression.

Okay, so what are we in the story? We're just observers, observing Joe and his situation. We're observers, but not human ones. You and I? We're gods of time. Gods of time that have been sent to study Joe so that we can report back to our supreme god boss back in our mother universe. Why have we been sent to Earth to study Joe? That's not important right now. The only thing that matters right now is that we study Joe. And, by studying Joe, this is what we see.

Every week, Joe goes to the store to get groceries. Joe isn't a picky eater, he mostly just sticks to the same basics. He gets good produce, not too many processed foods, and a variety of meat and seafood. He shops with a visual scale in mind of quality vs. price, and tries to get food that evens his scale to be right about in the middle.

He gets his groceries every single week; in fact, he goes on every single Sunday. Every Sunday, he does his groceries and his laundry. Joe is a minimal man, a safe man, an easily pleased man, and prefers to stick to just what he knows and needs. And so, every single week, on every single Sunday, Joe goes to the grocery store to get his basics, and does his laundry every time he gets back.

Something that used to take him half his day, Joe now does in just a couple of hours. The aisles of the grocery store have been memorized, the weekly grocery list has stabilized to the same repeating items, and he goes to the store during a time of day when traffic inside the store–and on the streets–is minimal.

But, at some point, as does inevitably happens, some adversity hits Joe's life. Money becomes tighter, bills become higher; less comes in while everything else goes up. Not to worry though, for Joe is a veteran when it comes to life's struggles, and knows how to handle himself through it. And so, compensations are to be made and adaptations are to be had, but, without fail, he does groceries and laundry every other Sunday.

Every other Sunday, he does groceries and laundry. But prices seem to keep going up, while wages seem to keep going down, and so, with Joe's hand being forced, more work must be had. More work which leads to more stress which leads to more rest which leads to more work.

More time working and more time resting, but no matter what, groceries and laundry every other Sunday. Every other Sunday, without fail, groceries and laundry, every fourteen days. Less on groceries and less on laundry, but, he has yet to worry, because, every two weeks, he has yet to miss.

He works and rests and works and rests until he slips up on the rest, which turns a little rest into a whole lot of rest. More work and more rest and somehow even more work and somehow even more rest. This doesn't make sense... how is more work leading to even more work? How is more rest leading to needing even more rest? Something feels off. But, there's no time to think, for it's time to get back to work.

Purchase a treat; card declined. Card declined, but how? Must be not enough work. But where's the time? There's no more time for more work. It must come from somewhere else... it must come from the rest. Ah that's right, it's more work and less rest and more responsibilities and more bloodshot eyes and more pressures to be succumbed to and more load to be carried; how could Joe be so silly to think otherwise?

More work and less rest, more stress, it's quite the test. Need more time working, need more time resting. Need more time working, need more time sleeping. Need more time working, need more time recovering. Need more time working, need more time working. But, no matter what, groceries and laundry, on Sunday, at the beginning of every single month.

More work and less sleep and some eat and more work and shitty sleep and struggle to eat and calling in sick and now only sleeping and still not eating.

No more working, can't work, need sleep, too tired. Rest is needed and rest is to be had. Just a nap this one, repeating in Joe's skull as he quickly fades off to snoozing.

A pleasant dream, a break from the fatigue. Energy, boundless energy. Exploration, boundless exploration. Routes to be discovered, beasts to be examined, a new sandbox for endless categorization. Joy oh joy, boundless joy. What Joe

wouldn't do to stay here fore–BEEP BEEP BEEP.

Alarm clock going off, it's a time that makes Joe shake his head. How was it only that long, it felt like forever? Until Joe checks his phone and sees the date.

It's tomorrow. An entire day had passed. He took a 22 hour nap. A grumbling belly, a quivering chill, and nothing in the fridge for poor ole Joe; it must have been too much time resting, and not enough time working.

Eight missed calls, oh no, work is in danger. Worry, worry, worry, quick, quick, quick, call them back, and explain the situation. No answer. Call again. No answer. Call again. No answer; leave a voicemail.

Quickly prepare for work, go to work, compensate mistake of missing work by offering to do even more work. Ooh, that's it! More work, keep the pay. Just don't let me lose the work, I need the work. And the offer gets accepted and thus is so; more work to compensate for not enough work.

More work, less sleep, and more screen. More screen and more work and more screen and still hungry, but no matter what, a ride to the grocery store from Joe's roommate every single month. Not always Sunday, and doesn't always line up with his laundry schedule, but it's the only way for Joe to make it to the store that he cannot afford to miss.

"Are you okay Joe, you don't look so good?" He's fine, tell them you're fine Joe!

"I do my groceries and laundry every month. Once that goes away, then I'll know that I'm not fine. But until then, I'm fine, I have to be. I have to work. Work so that I can rest so that I can work again; don't you understand? Ugh, how could anyone understand? They haven't been given the label that I've been given–by a doctor, no less. Ugh, silly people and their ignorant minds; if only they were aware of–BEEP BEEP BEEP–oop, shift is getting ready to start, time to get back to work."

More work and some sleep, more work and little sleep, more work and only some eat. And, after all of this working, Joe finally gets some earned time off. Ahh, a breath of fresh air, a relaxing of the pain; how Joe appreciates just his few couple of days.

As he's taking his few short days to rest and recover before getting back to the endless grind, Joe takes a moment to himself and thinks... you know what? Maybe it's time to start doing less. Maybe all the work and all the rest has finally paid off, and the time to do less has auspiciously arrived. Relief is felt, the chair back squeaks, and a sip from the drink is finally had.

Joe makes a phone call with request in hand and a smile on his face for the first time in what feels like ages. He gets patched through, finally a chance to speak his mind. And, upon his courage to take his health as a priority over his work for once, he gets his expectations shattered immediately as he's denied for a drop from full time to part time. Wait what, denied? Yeah, denied. There's

not enough workers and not high enough wages, so all requests for a drop in hours are to be denied on the spot. And so it is to be.

More work and less eat and less sleep and more screen. More work and more cope, more work and more cope... why? For more work, of course.

More work and some eat and less sleep and onward and onward and onward, everyday, slowly rotting Joe's poor little soul into a desolate void of despair, as his innocence gets slowly ripped away from him layer by fragile layer.

More work and less rest, more fatigue and more frustration; but definitely more fatigue. More work, no care for eat, barely sleep, adrenal fatigue, can't wait to sleep. But not quite yet, for there's more work to be had, more anxiety to be felt. Muscles that need to tighten, and moods that aren't necessarily going to lighten.

Waiting for the fatigue to set in. Waiting for collapse to happen. More work and more waiting and more stress and more fatigue. More work and more waiting. More waiting, more waiting, more waiting, until... that's it! Enough! No more work! No more waiting! Only sleep, with just a little weep. Compromises will be made and backs will be whipped, but first, rest will be had.

Rest is had, and again, longer than a nap, for chronic fatigue won the battle that it was oh-so-very equipped to do so, and upon waking, it's a similar situation to the first. Missed calls and angry managers, but this time, with a permanent mark to his record that wasn't present before; a strike one and a strike two.

But see, that's just the thing about chronic fatigue; it's chronic. It doesn't just go away with one good snooze, it's a habituated series of events; a groove. And so it doesn't take long before Joe falls to the hands of the invisible once more, having to call in sick for a shift that he wasn't allowed to call in sick to before; strike three.

Something that was motivated by his subconscious even though it was feared of by his conscious, Joe loses the one opportunity that he thinks is holding up his entire life. And, with work now leaving, it sure does seem to remove a whole lot with it. Thus, so it goes.

No more work, way less eat, okay sleep, but no matter what, groceries and laundry whenever his roommate offers to take him.

No more work, way too tired, but somehow barely sleeping. That's weird, Joe thinks. Way more time, way more tired, but somehow less sleep. Peculiar indeed. Oh, but look, it's that time of month again. Time for groceries and lau–card declined? Uh-oh.

Can't work, too tired. Can't sleep, don't have work. What is to be done?

Money from parents? No, not an option in Joe's case. Money from the government? On what grounds, "being too tired to work?" Money from a rich relative? Ha! For Joe to be so lucky. Which snaps Joe back to reality; uh-oh.

Cope is consumed and options are stirred upon, and then, that's it! A plan! A plan from A to C with directions on getting from A to B and from B to C. Hope is restored, faith is found, and a tiny flame of energy is found inside of Joe's otherwise vacant soul. And with this, it's time for him to get started on part A.

All that has to be done is this thing that Joe's done before? Easy. He gives it a go.

Failed attempt

Huh, that's strange. He's done this before, plenty of times actually. Maybe if he just tries it again.

Failed attempt

Huh. Maybe just try it a few more times and see if that works.

Failed attempt
Failed attempt
Failed attempt

"Ya know, if only–"
Lights go off. Power bill is past due.

No more heat, running low on food, behind on money, and soon, even without shelter. And, boy oh boy, does Joe really not want to feel that cold winter air each and every night without warmth. Unfortunately for Joe, the one piece of advice that rattles around in the hive mind of current society related to something along the lines of "just try harder!" is completely useless to him. Joe has nothing left to give; he is chronically fatigued, biologically speaking just as much as mentally. He is no longer able to do what he was once capable of doing, no matter how trivial of an activity it is.

And so the days pass. Mail unattended to, voicemail box full, knocks on doors go unanswered. Can't do any work, need more sleep. Can't do any dishes, need more sleep. Can't do any cooking, need more sleep.

Sleep and sleep and sleep and sleep, with only some eat. Only some eat, but he somehow develops an ulcer? Peculiar as well. But, no matter, for there's no time to think, only time to sleep.

More sleep and little eat and a check of the phone and holy shit, two months have passed? Quick, check the mailbox and listen to the voicemails.

Services to be dropped, scores to be adjusted, and warnings turned into actions to be taken. Joe's already devastated heart drops just that much lower as he now realizes the true severity of his financial situation that he was forced to throw under the rug because of the severity of his biological situation.

Joe thinks he has hit rock bottom; he has ruined the relationships he once had with his friends by ignoring their communication, he has ruined his financial status in today's modern society by skipping inevitable payments needed to sustain life, and he has ruined his body which is in very poor physical shape with it bordering the line of being malnourished... a rock bottom that he can't imagine getting any lower.

Joe has no option left but to take the one even worse than the pre-determined-to-doom family "borrowing" (if he was even so lucky to have this available to him as a viable option in the first place). He decides that he must borrow from the greedy; the bank. Big bank; big money. The hand-shakers in suits sitting in cubicle offices playing the game of money in a fashion that hurts other participants; with the intentions of their transactions being far out of reach of the well-being of the people involved in them.

Joe is prey to these sharks, with very little concern of his well-being showing its way through any sort of their behavior. Joe owes a whole lot of his struggles to this group of predatory hunters living in today's concrete jungle, but that's a discussion for another time. The only thing that matters now is that groceries and laundry now happen with the help of a credit card. Splendid.

With this tiny boost in morale due to the bump in his immediate financial status, combined with the realization that if he doesn't get his shit together soon then things are going to get even worse than they are now, Joe is given a single milligram of usable energy for him to be able to play the game of pretend as he convinces himself that the jobs that he's now applying for will be the stimulus that he needs in order to get him back on his feet. And thus, so it goes.

Work is sought, work is not found. More sleep, no eat.

Work is sought, work is not found. Some sleep, no eat.

Work is sought, work is not found. No sleep, no eat.

Bills are due. Weather is getting colder. Work is sought, but can't even be bought.

Some is sleep, less is eat, more is stress, less is time. Less is sleep, no is eat, more is stress, even less is time. Mind is racing. Racing, racing, racing. All of the sudden, very stressed, oh no, very very stressed. Heart rate is up, heart rate is up up up, oh no, oh no, oh no, here we go, heart rate is up up up, uh-oh, very stressed, just breathe, just breathe, just breathe, heart rate is up and breathing is fast and heart rate is up and breathing is fast and oh no

what do I do, oh no, oh no, oh no, what do I do, what do I do, quick, someone help me, what do I do?!

Heart rate is up and breathing is fast and the part of the mind that hasn't gone completely under yet tries convincing the other dying part that things are going to be okay, and that you just have to breathe; but things are not going to be okay, things are far from okay. And, without money, support, nourishment, sleep, or material assets, things aren't going to be okay anytime soon. In fact, they're going to get even worse.

The dire thought of this, the feeling of not being able to catch your own breath over a situation that was no more than simply thought its way into, is a scary thought for Joe to experience to say the least.

Breathing is erratic, heart rate is through the roof, Joe is on the verge of something very bad happening to him, until... it does. Something happens; the pot boils over. A breakdown. A pit of despair lower than what he was ever able to conceive of as being possible before taking a swim in it for himself. A feeling so raw and vulnerable and terrifying for a human being to experience as it represents the shattering of a glass floor, only for him to be left screaming in free fall with nothing to grab onto as he's cut by glass on his entire way down.

And so, rest is needed. And rest is had. And, when Joe rests, he has time to think. Time to think about what, all the ways that he can work his way out of this putrid hole that he's in? If only his circumstances were that giving.

No, instead, he's had time to think about what a shitty human being he is for making the shitty choices that brought him to this point. He thinks about all the effort that he put into something that was off in a direction that didn't pan out to anything, or, all of the energy that he didn't put into the things he knew could've panned out to something instead.

He thinks about how getting out of his situation is going to be similar to running up a muddy hill in the rain, day after day after day, while fighting the nauseation and fatigue of the flu as he does so, and how he feels like he doesn't even have enough energy to get himself to the beginning of the hill–much less be able to climb it consistently.

He thinks about all the monkeys in suits at the top of the hill, under shelter and drinking champagne, as they watch peasants try and climb it for their own enjoyment. He thinks about a lot, and this thinking takes a toll on him. You see, there's an aspect of the behavior that his mind is exhibiting that's much more permanent than the moment that it is exhibiting it in. As Joe goes through this process of self-doubt and shame and guilt and the sort, he builds the grooves associated with negative self-talk. Over time, as these grooves get dug–so to speak–the likeliness that they are visited again increases. Abiding by the way that grooves were introduced, the more that he thinks about those certain things in those certain ways, the more likely he is to do so again.

The real damage of going through this sort of mental adversity isn't just related to the bruises and/or scars that come with it. The real damage comes from the digging of a negative groove that didn't exist before going through that

negative experience–that now has the potential to last for a lifetime. And, the longer that the adversity is endured, the more that the groove gets dug.

But enough thinking, Joe's mind thinks to itself, for, there's no more time for thinking. It's time to get back to what's more important; surviving.

Health is better, not much better. Mind is bad, very bad. Something has to change. And, there's one very easy change for less than $30 a month (with insurance, that is); medication. SSRI's, SNRI's, SDNRI's, SARI's, tricyclics, tetracyclics, MAOI's, anxiolytics, antipsychotics; whatever you need, they got it. And, so it is to be had.

More sleep and more pills and more sleep and *way* more eat.

More sleep, more worry, more pills, more sleep, more eat.

More worries, more reasons to worry. No money, no heat, no job, no health. More pills, more serotonin, *l e s s* of a worry. And so it's learned; **more pills, less worry.**

Weather gets colder, way more eat, way more sleep, still no heat. Cold days and cold nights, short days and long nights. Work becomes more important than food for Joe, for, he feels that freezing to death is less preferential than starving to death.

He lowers his standards that have just been slightly raised, and, with pills now serving as the backbone for what little energy is being spoon fed to him, Joe eventually finds an immediate pickings job that he finally seizes. Shitty work and bullshit pay, but being a warm slave is better than the cold gray.

Work is had, heat is bought, work is had, food is bought.

More work, more cope, more sleep. Did he take his meds this morning? Better take some again just to be sure.

More sleep, more eat, more cope, more sleep.

And, when the very familiar day rolls back around for Joe to go back to work, as he's putting his boots on to get ready to slave away his time once again, he immediately stops in his tracks. In just a single moment, Joe has an experience that feels like it spanned over a lifetime.

Joe has a flashback of him doing the exact same thing that he's doing now, and the path that it lead him down on the first go-around. He remembers more pain and less sleep, more rain and less eat. He remembers more work and less rest, and he remembers chronic fatigue and a stagnated mind. He remembers every step that lead him down the path towards getting his soul slowly ripped

away from him that has left his mind with unforgettable scars that still bring him anxiety and discomfort.

And, as he's snapping back to being present in this moment, he's stuck. He's in the middle of tying his boots, and, as he's having this powerful sequence of thoughts, he can't get himself to finish tying them.

He can't bring himself to finish tying his boots because he knows of exactly what comes after. The pain, the misery, and the suffering, all from an experience that he used to be able to brush off so promptly.

He can't do it, he won't do it. He looks up at the clock, another few precious minutes gone. If he's going to do something he has to do it now. He's crouching there, stuck, staring at his shoe, experiencing a post epiphany hormone wave, thinking about how he has to go stand in the same spot for eight hours and flip burgers and fry potato clippings, or sit in the same spot for eight hours and punch keys and read emails, or do whatever it is that's so mind numbingly basic of an activity that must be done for eight consecutive hours of his time with a thirty minute lunch break smack dab in the middle.

In an impulsive decision, he takes off his boots and stands in the hallway for a minute as the internal storm happening within his mind is trying to find any solid ground to reason about what to do. He knows that he needs the money from work, his livelihood is quite literally on the line if he doesn't get it; but he also knows that going to work in the state that he's currently in is going to feel like a lifetime compared to that if he was healthy. In an attempt to quiet this storm, he quickly shuffles upstairs and crawls under the comforter on his bed to try and ease this incredible discomfort that's brewing inside of him.

As he's curled up in the fetal position under his blanket, he checks the time on his phone. Two minutes before he's going to miss the bus. And he already has to sprint to make it. Too late, right? He should just call in, right? It's basically impossible for him to make it to work now. Surely, it's too late, see there's only–oh, see there's only one minute left. Surely impossible.

Joe thinks about what he's saying. Part of his mind is trying to come up with any reason as to why staying under his blanket is going to be his best move, while the other part knows that a) he needs the work, and b) even though there's only one minute left, it actually *is* still possible for him to make it. And, the angel(?) on his shoulder wins, as the sequence of events needed to get ready for work is now quickly played in the forefront of his brain.

Oh fuck. There's only one minute left. Fuck. Are we really doing this? We're really doing this. Fuck.

Off in a subdued sprint, Joe jumps out of the bed that he just crawled his way into as fast as his crippled nervous system lets him, in order to get re-ready for work with the few seconds left that he has available. Uniform on, phone, keys, and wallet in pocket, Joe throws his boots on and sprints out the door in order to catch the bus. And, after he barely catches it, he's hardly able to breathe a sigh of relief, for his mind can't help but envision what the next eight hours of his time is going to look like; pure misery.

Joe gets to work, body and mind feeling like they've already worked for sixteen hours, and is now expected to perform in the presence of others on some task that means nothing at all, but at the same time, somehow everything there ever is–to his manager, at least–with rest only able to be taken at predetermined intervals. That's four, two hour blocks, with a couple of ten minute breaks and a thirty minute lunch sprinkled in; well within the bounds of generous if you were to ask the ones making the rules.

Now, two hours to someone in the average might not seem like it's all that big of a deal, but, as someone who lives in the non-average, let me step in for Joe here and say what his decaying mind can't fully put into words right now.

Two hours can feel like a lifetime when energy reserves are in the negative, especially when little sleep and poor nutrition are right there alongside of them. Imagine the sickness that the flu brings to the body, and the exhaustion that comes alongside of it, and then imagine having to feel that feeling, on your feet, for eight hours, doing the same bullshit thing, all while having to smile and greet customers that are oftentimes assholes.

Imagine being so anxious that your nervous system literally can't handle even the slightest bit of confrontation; feeling like you're about to break down crying when someone complains about napkins not being put into their bag, even when there's a fucking napkin dispenser right next to the drink machine. Imagine being so depressed that the only activity that you can do well is the one where you shut off your body and mind and have them do nothing–and even that, you have a hard time doing. And then, imagine having a mind filled with all of these thoughts as it exists in a setting that requires adaptive problem solving and active listening to be able to not get yelled at for doing the job incorrectly.

All of this to say, time is relative; and, for the exhausted subset, time is

l o n g.

Joe suffers through his four, two hour chunks by suffering through eight, one hour chunks by suffering through thirty-two, fifteen minute chunks, by suffering through four hundred and eighty, one minute chunks. As hard as every second is to get through, Joe knows that he can make it by the minute. And so he does.

More work, and need sleep, shitty eat, only here for heat.

As Joe suffers through his blocks of misery over and over again, he begins to think once more. He begins to think about the ones with the power, and what sets them apart from the ones without it. A clarity of thought that's fueled only by a growing rage of frustration and anger towards the misery that he must endure, he watches the clock tick away by the second as he desperately waits to rest his heavily fatigued nervous system.

During his ten minute rest from hell, he continues to think about how he belongs to a group of people that are being herded like cattle by another–much

smaller–group of people, and how this upsets him. And how his life doesn't have to be this way, slaving away his time only to make enough money to slave away more of his time. He thinks about a balanced world, one at equilibrium with its own set of ecosystems, and how this image is being torn apart and burned away from him by the greedy. And how–BEEP BEEP BEEP–oop, break's over, time to get back to suffering; thinking isn't rewarded here.

Joe reaches into his pocket to pop another anxiolytic to cope with his existence, and as he's pulling the pill bottle out of his pocket, his heart drops. He looks up with eyes wide and starts to breathe heavily. It's his worst nightmare that he didn't even know existed yet; his pill bottle is empty.

Oh no, oh no, oh no, fuck, fuck, fuck. What am I going to do, I completely forgot to get this refilled, fuck, what am I going to do? I can't go without this right now, fuck, this is bad. Oh no, oh no, oh no, here we go again, oh no oh no oh no oh no, fuck fuck fuck.

Heart rate is up, way up, pupils are dilated, heavily dilated, he's sweating from the face, his muscles are activated, and his nervous system is trying its best to prepare for disaster; Joe is having his second panic attack. Except, this time, it's at work.

Joe falls to his knees, desperately trying to catch his breath so that he doesn't die, as his heart rate is skyrocketing upwards of 150+ bpm. Upon seeing Joe fighting for his existence, his coworkers are forced to call an ambulance.

Joe blacks out but manages to stay alive, as he's transported by way of a $2,000 immediate taxi service to the nearest hospital (yes, even with insurance). He wakes up in a hospital bed and leaves the same day with newfound damage to his reputation, his mental health, and, maybe most importantly, his wallet (Go USA!). On his feet, but looks as if he shouldn't be, Joe shuffles his way home with time off of work to rest and recover.

And so it goes. Sleep is more, pills are more. Sleep is less, pills are more. Sleep is even less, pills are at the most. Eat is no, stress is up, what day is it again? Headaches are yes, cope is maxed, tobacco is new, caffeine, you too.

Joe fights his way through days that only seem to be throwing punches, only to find himself in a situation similar to the one he found himself in before. In an attempt to stay alive, Joe ends up losing his second job–the one that was only being held up by the 250 mg pill he was taking every morning–through a similar case of needing more rest when it was instead time for more work. Joe slowly spends his time falling further and further down a pit that he will feel to its fullest in not too much longer, and, at some point, the now doubled down, chronic fatigue catches up to him, and his hand is forced to take yet another drastic route. It's time to call his grandma-ma.

Broke and jobless again, with credit card debt, medical debt, and an addiction to SSRIs, benzos, tobacco, and a handful of other mild recreational drugs, the true damage is still the one done behind the scenes. By going through the process of shattering all of the previous glass floors, the consequence for all the

next iterations of falling through any others is that Joe is no longer going to stop at the layers that he once did before. Every time that Joe is faced with adversity–which, being in an adverse attractive state and all, I can't imagine that it'll be a rare occurrence–he goes all the way to the new bottom.

A tunnel that leads to the same spot that it just lead to last time, except, this time, dug just a little bit further out; the bottom, just a little bit lower, and the tunnel, just a little bit wider. By workings of his own mind, Joe is now forced to feel the full effect of his negative experiences upon every new instance of any little thing that sets him off towards a downward spiral.

And, being in such a fatigued and vulnerable state, Joe is very excitable, for his nervous system is constantly unhinged. So, how does Joe cope with the shitty state that he's found himself in when he's already coped-out? Simple, he ups his dosage yet again.

At home with grandma-ma, Joe takes his time to try and recover from something that becomes increasingly harder to do as the days pass him by. He goes to get his SSRI dosage upped in an attempt to gain any source of well-being back, and receives news that triggers him on yet another downward spiral... "We can't go any higher. Doing so would be too dangerous for your health."

Oh fuck. And here he was, thinking that the acute case of not having medication available was bad. Now, he's being told that there's nothing else for him to take today, tomorrow, or the next day that will help ease his passage into a decrepit state that represents the rotting of a once prosperous, innocent child's soul.

These pills serve entirely as the backbone of strength and energy for people to perform what they need to do on a daily basis just to get by to the next day. If it's the case that someone feels the need to up their dosage, it's likely the case that they're already in a bad enough state when they first figured this out; otherwise, why would they feel this need in the first place? And so, in a bad enough state already, hoping that there exists something that makes this bad state just a little less bad, you can imagine the feeling of losing this tiny drop of hope in an already hopeless time.

The effects of this permeate through Joe's soul as if he has just received news of the passing of a loved one. He's now forced to cope in the exact way that was trained out of him by ingesting a prescribed pill every 24 hours; by learning how to cope without one. He doesn't know how to go about dealing with more stress in a way that doesn't involve taking more pills. So, where does he turn? To the Buddhist monks? To the Peruvian ayahuasca shamans? To the church? Fuck no. He turns to a drug stronger than all of those. Except, not a prescribed one; a recreational one. And, the easiest pickings? Alcohol.

The less sleep and shitty eat and way more drink catch up to him much faster than he could have ever imagined, and he acts out in a way that also makes his grandma-ma responsible for his actions–both monetarily and emotionally. A stupid stunt that lands Joe in the hospital yet again, his grandma gets called

there to pick him up and take him home; just your average case of acute alcohol poisoning that demanded his stomach to be pumped.

As Joe is laying awake in the hospital bed thinking about how he can't afford any of this help that he's receiving, while also preparing to have to explain his situation of being "too tired" that's causing him to act out in the ways that he is to an old lady who carved her own path through the great depression and second world war, he feels an extreme amount of guilt and regret for getting his innocent grandma-ma involved with his bullshit. It pains him, but not enough to find the energy to get up and do the actions required to start getting healthier. If only it was that easy.

But it does pain him enough to begin his coping before she gets there. He looks around for his benzos that he's been popping like jolly ranchers, but they seem to be nowhere around.

"Nurse?"
"Yes?"
"Where is my Xanax? I've been taking Xanax for a long time now, I need to take my Xanax."
"I'm sorry, but I can't give you that. You're going to have to wait to speak to the doctor."
"Can't give me that? Uh-oh."

Joe tries explaining as simply as he can in the state that he's in, "Look, if I don't get my Xanax, one of us is going to be in big trouble. I will start going through withdrawal, and no one here wants to see me go through withdrawal."

"Look, I'm sorry, but there's nothing I can do for you. You'll just have to wait to talk to the doctor."

Oh fuck, here we go again.

Joe begins acting out, seriously acting out, enough so to where security is called on him. But Joe here, despite having a malnourished physiology, is able to easily recall the wrestling he did back back in high school–back when he was a healthy individual–when he's fueled up by rage de withdrawal. It takes more than just a couple of pesky security guards to hold him down as he has a newfound fire inside of him to keep his global one still lit. The cops are called, and as they show up, at about the exact same time, Joe's grandma arrives at the hospital to pick him up.

Joe's grandma gets the pleasure of watching a spawn of her own spawn go through a fit that no parent should have to see *any* child go through–much less any human. Joe is thrashing and flailing and screaming and punching and trying to do whatever he can to subside the pain from the rift that is beginning to tear apart deep inside of his body.

In the car, Joe's grandma was planning out the talk that she was going to give him during the car ride back to try and help him get his life back on track.

Now, she's thinking about if she has enough liquidity to bail Joe out of county jail.

Joe, on the other hand, is going through a process so painful that it can induce suicide, and is now being put behind a set of iron bars so that he can suffer on cold concrete for being the pesky degenerate that he is. As he's being shoved into the back of the cop car–while screaming and spitting and cursing– Joe's poor, innocent grandma-ma is blessed with the opportunity of having an officer explain to her how she can get a defense attorney for Joe's newly procured criminal case; all while having tears in her eyes and a part of her soul forever tainted, as she had to watch firsthand the boss fight that is a group of cops trying to detain a drug user that's going through major withdrawal.

Joe, in the back of the cop car, is now in a story that no longer favors the main character. If we analyze Joe's state, we see just how bad it really is. Besides the obvious things like, no money, no job, no friends, lots of debt, substance abuse, and now having to go to jail, there's even more goodies packed within for lucky ole Joe.

As if that wasn't enough on its own, Joe has also developed serotonin syndrome on top of his already existing depression. Just thinking about this combination of symptoms makes me want to kill myself. That is a reduction upon a reduction of a very much needed hormone and neurotransmitter, one that heavily affects mood no less. By fueling into the never-ending cycle of consuming more of a cope that was only meant to be a band-aid, Joe's endocrine system is what pays the final price.

Serotonin syndrome isn't like the common cold; it doesn't just come and go in the matter of a couple of days. Serotonin syndrome is something that gets developed over the course of months and months and months (except in the acute case of taking something like MDMA), and likewise, is something that is gotten out of over the course of months and months and months. Maybe as I might convince some of you later on, the body works in a very gradual fashion, with buildup for certain ailments happening long before the chink in the armor is actually shown.

So, before Joe is even able to function as a human being on his own again, he has to deal with the situation that is his maxed out medication vs. his body's massive serotonin resistance; where delaying the first is only going to further delay the second. So, before he is even able to consider finding another minimum wage job and eating better and sleeping better and taking less drugs and living a healthier life, he first needs to get to the point where he feels comfortable enough to wipe shit from his own asshole again; a process that, in his case, is likely going to take many months of sleepless nights before getting to such a point of self-sufficiency.

When thinking about the length of time it's going to take Joe to "pull himself up by his own bootstraps," it's enormous. Joe somehow has to figure out this beast of a monster of mental dysfunction, and has to figure out a consistent way to stop him from wanting to crawl up under a blanket all day long, everyday. He thinks about the years that it's going to take him working

bullshit jobs and climbing bullshit ladders, all for bullshit pay, and how, during this entire time, his body and mind are going to constantly feel like they're on the verge of shutting down on themselves; and upon thinking about all of this, Joe has a very hard time seeing the good in his life for the next few years to say the very least.

For, now, during the entire process that Joe fights for his life as he climbs his way out of this very deep hole that he's found himself dug into, every single setback that he experiences on his journey out of it is going to be akin to falling to the same level as the times when it was the worst. The precedence of the bottom has been set to the absolute lowest that he has ever felt, and, for Joe, this is pretty damn low.

As Joe thinks about all of this in the back of the cop car, it sets off the beginning of yet another panic attack. Except, this one is immediately too much for his taxed physiology to handle, and he passes out similar to last time. His body attempts to go into rapid recovery mode while the cop is just looking forward to being finished with their paperwork for the night, and, after just a short while, Joe gets woken up by the dong of a church bell that the cop car is passing by; a signaling of the stroke of midnight.

As he hears this church bell ring, he's struck with a very powerful memory. Joe is snapped back in time, to 12 o'clock noon, when he was doing his groceries and laundry, every week on Sunday. Oh how stable that time was; how predictable everything was that came and went. Joe longs for such a time. He snaps back to being present in the cop car as they hit a bump, and he gets hit with another wave of sadness and nostalgia.

How he wishes he could go back, before all the pills, before all the medical debt, before he was forced to get a credit card, to when his only worry was deciding which one of the routes was the fastest way to get to the store every week. He thinks about the thousands that he's down, what it's going to do to his grandma-ma, and if she's even going to let him live with her again or if he'll have to suffer through his laundry list of conditions inside of a homeless shelter all on his own.

And then, Joe has a thought that he's never had before. One that initially gives him hope, but, because it gives him hope, it also unsettles him. A thought that's very scary for the novice mind to first experience, Joe realizes that his situation would be much better off if he was to just take his own life.

He realizes that he can skip the years of hard work and pain and suffering and misery to himself and his poor grandma-ma by just putting an end to it now. That he doesn't have to go through the whole process of getting better if he just nips it in the bud to begin with.

As he's having these thoughts, it's going to be very natural for an instinctual part of his brain to bring the fantasizing mind back to reality. Whether it be a memory, or a relationship, or some hope of anything at all, something will be done to try and pull the soul back to the light once this initially happens.

But, unfortunately for Joe, this isn't going to be an isolated occurrence. Because now, now that this thought has been had, oh boy, is there danger to be had. Every single time that Joe comes across adversity when climbing up this muddy hill and all–a moment that will occur quite frequently to say the least–his mind is going to default to the groove that tells him that he should kill himself. Upon every failure, upon every setback, upon every missed opportunity, the first line of defense: suicidal ideation.

Years and years of having to fight adversity head on, feeling shitty the whole time you do it, and having thoughts of suicide every single time you make a tiny mistake–mistakes that are doomed to constantly happen. Can you imagine the feeling of this scenario? The pain that this could bring a tortured soul?

Joe sits with the fact that he's going to get no vacation from himself for so many months to come; no break from his hopeless prefrontal cortex that just wants to be heard. An internal storm, trying to be rectified by spoon-fed serotonin, one that doesn't pass upon simply waking up to a new day. Worse than nightmares, worse than headaches, worse than fatigue, as it is all of those and more; this isn't something that passes with chance, not even with luck.

This feeling of hopelessness, combined with suicidal ideation, combined with chronic fatigue, combined with grief of the damage that you've caused to the loved ones around you, combined with a mind that's constantly thinking of the most negative thoughts that it can come up with, combined with a body that doesn't have enough energy to even get itself out of the fetal position, combined with so much all-encompassing pain that deliberate, physical forms of it become relief, this–THIS–is the closest that my language can come to communicating this feeling of depression to those unfamiliar with its evil.

And, for those of you who will never have to experience this feeling in your lifetime... you have been blessed by a God that I don't even believe in to evade a feeling as savage as this one.

This feeling isn't one that comes and goes like all other feelings. It's an all-encompassing darkness that culminates in silence, slowly tearing apart someone's life piece by piece, as they actively watch themselves become a shell of the person that they once were. This is not a disease that plays its role and then goes away. It's one that morphs to the role until it becomes the role; a demon of a beast that only exists in the shadows of one's reality until it has found its way to completely envelope their entire physical and mental being, at which point it latches on with a bite that does not miss. Scary enough to get people to think about suicide, and painful enough to get them to actually do it.

Even if the depression is to be defeated, its mark in the form of an undiggable groove now has the potential to last for a lifetime. Meaning that, if you are a person who is predisposed to feeling the weight of negative experiences heavier than, say, someone in the average, then you might have a real rough time stopping the trains of thought that you once knew so well from taking over; except, this time, faster.

Depression is quite the beast, and any attempt to downplay its ferocity is ignorance to what it can truly do to a human being. Currently, our best solution to fighting such a disease is a masking of the pain by playing god with our endocrine systems–an already godly creation–to distract from the incessant feeling of knocking on death's door. A massive oversimplification of a massively complex system that works just well enough to allow us to shift our attention to more pressing matters at hand; like whether the dress is blue or gold.

In a world where we go back to living in the environments that we were bred from–living in the best way that we knew how–I would imagine that depression isn't something that would commonly exist within tribes of humans. But, it's likely that we will never have this again; not any time soon anyway.

In a world where we live so far off from the conditions that forged us, I would('ve) imagine(d) that it would be a fairly common, low barrier speculation to think that, hmm, maybe it's the sitting in chairs for eight hours a day, or staring at screens for twelve hours a day, or consuming refined sugars, artificial flavors, denatured seed oils, processed meat from ill animals, and pesticide sprayed foods that are fed by toxic water and previously pillaged soil, or endlessly scrolling on social media feeds, or living alone and isolated from all friends and family, or the lack of community based, bidirectional support groups that are all making us collectively feel like shit.

In theory, the most obvious solution to depression is most likely going to be one along the lines of having a natural, from-the-land, for-the-land diet, getting eight hours of high quality sleep every night on a regular circadian rhythm, getting a vast range of exercise throughout each day, and having a responsibility within a tribal-like setting–one rich with social connection and bonding. A solution so simple that anyone can do it, right?

Regardless, I had to start somewhere to get everyone acquainted with a different reality. One where time isn't spent choosing between options, but is instead spent surviving the ones that were never even options in the first place. No, the problem that I want to talk about *is* a related one though, and I think that it'll be best understood by shifting our attention back to Joe.

There's a reason that you and I, gods of time if you remember, have chosen to study Joe. You see, our situation is a little bit different from that of Joe's.

Off in another universe, you and I belong to a unique race of gods; ones that can control time. Forward, backward, or standing still, we control it all at the snap of our fingers. We live amongst other gods of time, off in an ethereal cloud of space dust–one made up of the same stuff that heaven is made out of–in a universe different from the one that humans live in.

Along with our control of time, we possess a lot of other abilities that a human might call "godly"; too many of them to name. But, one in particular, is that we possess the capability to travel back and forth freely between universes, just as freely as we can travel back and forth in time within them.

Among our species, or more particularly, our local tribes, there exist dominance hierarchies similar to the ones that we observe on planet Earth. You and I exist somewhere in the middle of these hierarchies, taking orders from the ***supreme*** gods of time above us, with them taking orders from the ***super supreme gods of supreme gods of time*** above them.

You and I are trying to get our wings, the ones that will promote us to being supreme gods of time, thus unlocking a whole new range of capability and power. In order to do so, our supreme god above us has given us a list of problems that we must solve. If we manage to solve all of the problems on the list, then, and only then, are we able to get our wings.

For, in this universe of ours, the only currency that is recognized by all the gods is knowledge. If we can all go backward and forward freely in time, visiting other universes and timelines as we please, anything of material value becomes worthless, for its accumulation can easily be had by any of the gods.

But, knowledge is different. Because, even though we can travel anywhere and anywhen we want, finding specific knowledge still requires that we observe the *right* places at the *right* times. And so, if we're able to find solutions to the problems that we've been given by either crafting the results for ourselves with direct influence, or by finding the moment in time that produces them naturally, we give our supreme god above us a leg up in their own journey; allowing them to work their way towards becoming their own god of gods.

You and I have chosen to study Joe because we believe that he is going to help us solve one of the problems on our list. You see, there is a part to Joe's story that I didn't give on the first go-around that was crucial to understanding the downfall of his life into the pits of depression. Joe has a predisposition; a very important one.

Whether it be an uncontrollable looping neuronal network, an unstoppable endocrine disruptor, or simply a maladaptive thought sequence, it's unimportant as to what the exact mechanism is, so long as one exists (and, because this is my story with my characters, I birth one into existence just by saying so). What's more important is that, whatever the exact mechanism may be, the manifestation that bubbles up into his reality is one that makes depression and anxiety way more likely than someone without his predisposition would have otherwise; Joe, some might say, is a stray from the average.

Joe's predisposition makes its presence known about in the form of something that is directly related to the problem that we must solve. In fact, Joe experiences the exact thing that we must solve. Joe has the problem of obsessive thought patterns; constant and consistent one-two-three's.

This chronic repetition of thought in the human brain proves to be one of mystery to our community of gods, one with a bounty for whoever can solve it in the form of an increase in reputation amongst the other gods. With the motivation behind solving this problem being double fold, we are quite keen to

be the first pair of gods to solve it. And, to do so, we have chosen Joe to be our subject of study; for better or for worse, for Joe's sake.

See, you and I, we knew that Joe was going to become depressed way before it happened. In the process of looking at different humans to pick which one to study from, a lot of time was spent studying a wide variety of creatures experiencing this same issue before a selection was made particularly on Joe. During that process, a lot was learned about the patterns that exist within the human race; and, more particularly, the patterns that emerge from humans that experience a chronic case of obsessive thought.

We've seen case after case of people fall to the throes of depression, the ones who experience the worst of the obsessive thoughts, way more often than those who exist in the average. There's something about either the physical or nonphysical looping mechanism that correlates heavily to neurological distress, which in turn usually leads to physical distress; a correlation that we can't help but pick up on as we scroll through planet Earth's library of lives.

We stopped particularly on Joe because he possesses a characteristic that is perfect for testing the plan. My plan. My plan on how you and I are going to the solve the problem of obsessive thought.

You see, Joe has a very poor memory. Not a case of dementia, but much more likely to be a case of an underdeveloped brain region related to his long-term memory (his mom was a drinker). But, as for the exact cause, it's largely unimportant. All we care about is the fact that he has a hard time remembering things in the long term, but is still able to function on a day-to-day basis just like everyone else (except for maybe a few hiccups along the way).

His case is perfect for the execution of my plan; you're going to love it. I think it might be the one that gets us to be the first ones to solve this problem so that we can get one step closer to getting our wings. And, if it works, drinks on you afterwards.

What is it, you ask? Well, why don't I just show you in action instead of telling you. Let's go introduce ourselves to Joe.

We spawn in front of Joe, at the period of time picking up right where the depression story ended, with Joe in a very poor physical and mental shape. We make ourselves visible to Joe as floating clouds of glowing space dust and speak to him in the friendliest tone that gods of time can have with a mere earthling.

"Hello Joe. No need to worry, we come in peace. Allow us to introduce ourselves. We are gods of time, coming from a distant universe that is unknown to you. We are all powerful, all capable, and are only somewhat merciful gods that have come to discuss something with you."

Joe is clearly shaken up by what's happening, but eventually pulls himself together enough to be attentive to what we have to say.

"We have a gift to offer you Joe. But, this gift doesn't come for free, it comes with a price. The price of time. Your time, to be exact. You see, you won't receive this gift until after we are done with our work together, something

that might take a very long time. And, as much as we wish we could give you this gift upfront, we're afraid that doing so just isn't possible.

So Joe, what do you say, are you willing to work with us in exchange for a substantial gift that you will receive once we're all finished?" we offer him, as if he has a choice.

Joe mumbles out a "sure" as he tries to not shit his pants, and we go ahead and take it as binding.

"Fantastic! Well then, let's get started. To begin, we're going to need you to take this." We use our fine control of gravity ability to inject Joe with a syringe and plunge the plunger. "This, Joe, is water from the fountain of youth. Not literally, but essentially. You see, you humans turn out to be very intelligent. It turns out that your race, the same one that eats potato chips in La-Z-Boys while watching Storage Wars, progresses medical science enough to figure out indefinite cell immunity from all pathogens and cancer cells, essentially creating an mRNA vaccine that allows humans to skip the whole aging process. So, congratulations Joe, you're now going to live forever!"

Joe, still confused as to what's going on, initially is fearful upon hearing such a statement, even though it was something that kid version of Joe would have always wanted. His thoughts now aren't ones related to how much freedom he's going to have, but instead, to how much pain he is going to have to endure.

"We need you to be able to live forever so that you can experience the same boundlessness of time that we experience on an every-single-moment basis. We wouldn't want you croaking in the middle of our science experiment now would we Joe?"

Joe, wide-eyed, gulps.

"No we wouldn't. So then... it's time that we get started. We–"

"What do I have to do?" Joe interrupts, as he finally finds the courage to speak. "It better not be something up my ass," he jokes, in an attempt to lighten the load on his nervous system.

"Relax Joe, we're not porn producers. And besides, if we wanted something up someone's ass, we could do a whole lot better than ole Joe Schmo. No, we want you because we know that you suffer from a problem that we happen to be very interested in. We hear that you suffer from having to go down the very dark roads that obsessive thought patterns have lead you down."

Joe's heart drops just a hair, and his eyes widen just enough to show how much he is interested in what we have to say.

"We want you to help us solve this problem, for solving it is in both of our best interests."

Joe's curiosity is piqued.

"All we need you to do is to answer some really simple questions for us Joe. To start, tell us... what are you thinking about right now?"

Joe takes a few seconds to respond as he initially doesn't know how, and eventually mutters out an "I don't know" just to buy himself more time.

"Joe, we're going to need you think harder than that. Just answer the question as simply as you can... what are you thinking about right now?"

Joe takes some time to himself but can't think of anything due to the fact that his body is still fighting shock. After a short bout of silence, we decide to light a fire under Joe's butt by demonstrating our godly capability.

"Well, maybe you just need some more time to acclimate." We back out of the picture and snap our metaphorical fingers and just like that, a year passes from the perspective of Joe's obsessive mind.

We travel back to be in front of Joe and announce our presence once again.

"Hello there Joe. Remember us?"

Joe freaks out a bit, and then freaks out a lot a bit, as he remembers us giving him hope a year ago and then disappearing without warning or a return date.

Initially fear, now a little bit of agitation, Joe decides to speak up about what we did. We, being understanding and somewhat merciful gods, let him say his piece even though we couldn't give less of a shit. Then, after the dust settles and the hormones get absorbed, we ask him the same question that we're still looking for an answer to.

"Now that you've calmed down Joe, it's very important that you answer this next question for us very carefully. Tell us Joe, what is on your mind right now?"

"This again? I don't know, I'm still shaken up."

"Would you like another year to think about it?"

Joe immediately begins to put his tail between his legs and apologizes for his actions.

"We don't need an apology Joe, we need an answer. And so, it's time that we get back to the year old question; hopefully you've come up with something better for us this time around. If you don't want us working with someone else instead, tell us Joe, what are you thinking about right now?"

"Uh, uhm," Joe's mind panics. "Uhmm, uhmmm.. apples. I'm thinking about apples."

"Apples?"

"Yes, apples."

"Apples. That's what you're thinking about, you're thinking about apples?"

"Yes."

"Well, I guess we have to start somewhere. Okay fine, excuse us for a second Joe."

We back out of the picture and I get filled with excitement to finally be able to share my plan with you.

Okay you ready to hear my crazy plan? Okay, okay, hear me out... what if we got rid of all the apples?

You look at me with a scorn of bewilderment, as if I'm just as crazy as Joe seemed when he first said the word apples.

"That was your plan? To get rid of all the apples? That's what you think is going to get us our wings, by removing all the goddamn apples?" you tell me.

No, but hear me out... it could work. Maybe not in the immediate sense, but in the sense of what it can lead to.

"How? What universe do you want to travel to in order to prove to me that removing all the apples from Joe's existence is going to end up solving the problem of obsessive thought? How are those two connected in any way?"

No, trust me, I'm on to something. We remove all the apples, and then, whatever is next, we just remove that too. Rinse and repeat all the way until there is nothing left, and then, boom, problem solved!

You take a moment before responding as you internally begin to question my competence as a god, and how you even ended up getting stuck with me in the first place.

"You do realize how long that's going to take, right? Much less, if we're even capable of removing whatever new thing it is that he's thinking about after you get rid of all the apples? Not even considering if you're even able to completely get rid of all the apples in the first place. What sort of plan is this? How about you let me come up with a plan that will actually work."

And I, being confident in my approach to remove all the apples, put my foot down as to how we proceed with the case of Joe.

We could do that, let you come up with the plan and all, but, you know what? We *always* do your plan. I want to do my plan for once. And, even if you think it's stupid, I'm just asking you... let's do this stupid plan just this one time. You don't even have to do any of the work, I'll do it all. You can spend the whole time picking your teeth or twiddling your thumbs or doing whatever it is that you want to do; I'm just asking for the opportunity to do it my way.

You take a moment to think about my request, and in a moment backed by a little bit of remorse and a lot a bit of aloofness towards the issue, you reluctantly agree even though you're not thrilled about it, and I take off with excitement. "Wait here," I exclaim on my way out.

I spend the next eighteen earth months setting up traps, plans, and schemes to completely remove all apples from the entire solar system that Joe's planet calls home. I burn all the trees, ruin all the seeds, raid all the stores, dismantle the company, and somehow even manage to start a campaign to change the common saying to "eating an orange a day keeps the doctor away!"

After all of this, I come back to you metaphorically huffing and puffing as I'm filled with godly excitement to finally be able to boast my accomplishment to your majorly uninterested self.

I've done it, I've finally done it! All apples, completely gone. The chances of Joe ever thinking about apples again are slim at best.

You, unimpressed, congratulate me on my useless achievement. "What have you actually achieved? Like we've already discussed, you're just going to have to repeat this procedure a few more billion times as he'll just keep coming up with new things that he's thinking about."

Yes, but now we know that he won't be thinking about apples again.

We spawn in front of Joe once more, who hasn't seemed to change much from the last time we saw him eighteen months ago. He's still depressed and feels as if he's hanging on to his forever life with the little hope that we've given to him with the promise of our eventual gift.

"Hello again, Joe! I hope you remember your godly science experiment partners, for we're back for more data collection. Tell us Joe, out of all the things in the world that you could be thinking about right now, what is currently on your mind?"

Joe responds without initial deliberation. "What am I thinking about? How am I supposed to answer that when I'm looking at what I'm looking at?"

"Joe, we really would like for you to get on with answering the question. Need we remind you that for both of our immortal souls, the difference between one year and one hundred years is trivial. But, for your human mind, the experience is far from."

Joe's eyes get wide as he has a sudden, rare memory of the year of prolonged, dwindling hope that we caused for him the first time we met. Upon reliving this feeling, Joe's mind snaps to the quickest thing that it can think of in order to answer the question.

"Oranges, I'm thinking about oranges."

If there was a way for an ethereal cloud of god dust to show defeat, it would be written all over your space complex. There's silence between all three of us as you're getting ready to pounce on the opportunity for a good ole I-told-you-so, and, Joe here is trying to figure out what him saying oranges has anything to do with us acting so weird.

Obvious to us now, when under acute stress, Joe's brain defaults to similar pathways of thinking that give rise to similar behavior. In his particular case, somehow, simple fruits have been coupled in his brain with the idea of needing to pull information from a highly accessible source of learned knowledge very quickly. Maybe fruits were one of the first things that he learned of as a child, maybe they were the first thing his mind was able to visualize, or maybe it's something else entirely, but, whatever it is, it's entirely unimportant.

What's more important is the fact that we're eighteen earth months into working towards a solution and we're only 0.0000000001% of the way there. At this point, we could have also just been gods of human physiology and simply

plucked the problem out of existence. But, I'm adamant with my choice of continuing on this oh-so-silly path, much to your continued dismay.

You ask me what my genius plan will be this time; to get rid of all the oranges? Just to keep rinsing and repeating for a few more billion times? And I respond with something even crazier.

What if we got rid of all food?

A moment of silence is had from you, as you're now considering if my so called "godly" brain actually belongs amongst the ones that we're studying now.

"Remove all food? How? Why? Did you even think about that before you breathed it into existence (metaphorically breathed of course)? How are you going to take away all food from an organism that is dependent on it to live?"

I told you at the beginning that you don't have to do any of the work, and besides, time is of no concern to us; so, bitch, let me vibe (I say, appealing to my godly ego of wanting to do it my way. And yes, I would argue that gods still have egos; I mean, are you going to tell me that Zeus couldn't have used a therapist? But I digress).

It's my burden to bear so go back to twiddling your thumbs or taking a nap or holding your dick or whatever it is that you want to do with your time while I get back to trying to solve the problem my way.

You do a metaphorical eye roll and buzz off to leave me to it. And I, I get back to thinking.

Hmm, removing all food... this one might be tricky...

85 earth years pass on by, at the blink of an eye for you and I, and I come back to you even more excited than the first time around.

You're not going to believe this, but I solved it. I actually came up with a way to remove all food from Joe's environment, once and forever.

"Bullshit. Show me."

Gladly.

We go and visit Joe and you see the creation that I have been working on for the past eight decades. We're in the middle of a valley with a river flowing by and plenty of trees on the outskirts and open fields in the middle. There's a small population of people living in primitive houses in the middle of this valley, untouched by anyone besides those who live inside of it.

Upon entering the village, you notice that everyone is wearing a backpack for some reason. You ask me what the backpacks are all about it, and I instruct Joe to come over to us so that I can unzip one of them.

Wah-lah! Behold, my creation. So, I did some research with the aid of some unethical human testing (only somewhat merciful if you recall), and I found out something quite interesting. As it turns out, humans are able to survive solely off of a mixture of bull shark stem cells, blood from the elusive Siberian tiger, milk from a nursing Cleopatra's tit, koala semen, and the original fruit punch Jack3D, all the way until the end of their life cycles. Every single person in this village is wearing one of these rigs, with someone coming in at unknown intervals during the night to refill each of them with more of the life-sustaining fluid; all without them ever knowing. On top of that, the people that have been selected to live in this village alongside of Joe are ones that also have memory issues. I have built a community of people that don't need food, aren't around food, and thus, don't ever think about food. I've done it!

You, slightly impressed this time, still turn to your repeated rhetoric. "Okay, but so what? We're still in the same scenario as last time. Let's ask Joe what he's thinking about again so that we can waste another handful of decades."

Joe, who's living a fairly better life now in this community of people, still suffers from the one thing that you and I are after; his relationship with what we call the obsessive thought pattern. Aware of this, we talk to Joe once more.

"Joe, hello again. I know you remember us this time, so I'll get straight to the point. Our data collection needs to continue, so, tell us Joe, what are you thinking about right now?"

"I'm doing a lot better, thanks for asking... dick. What am I thinking about right now? Well, it's gotta be all of the beautiful nature around me. The trees, the water, the grass, the mountains, the fields; all of it. In fact, it's so wonderful that I can't stop thinking about it!"

"Oh don't worry, we'll fix that for you. Back in a jiffy Joe!"

We leave Joe's presence and sit in silence for a bit as we both prepare for the discussion that's inevitably going to happen. You, thinking you don't need a reason as to why we should stop with this plan now, and me, already working on how I can remove all the natural elements from Joe's life–making him revert back to depression as a likely consequence–sit in stillness as our thought patterns are wildly forming down drastically different pathways.

You, annoyed with the silence, break it with anticipation. "Are we really doing this again?"

Indeed we are my friend. Indeed we are.

You, not having the energy or desire to fight this fight, go back to your hibernation as I stew with my thoughts.

Then, there comes a period of repetition. For the next three thousand earth centuries, the cycle is the same. Joe presents something that he's thinking about that seems impossible to completely remove from his life, you reluctantly agree to let me continue on with my plan that you think is going nowhere, and then, after some arbitrary period of time where immortal Joe experiences the

rise and fall of different human civilizations, I present a working solution to your still majorly unimpressed self.

Over and over again, this happens. And, in the process, there's something of interest that's worth noting. Upon each iteration, I increase my skill of being able to remove whatever arbitrary thing it is that Joe comes up with from his immediate environment. In the process of having the scope become narrower and narrower over time, I am forced to become better and better at coming up with solutions to successfully remove whatever it is from Joe's environment. The only way for me to continue down this path is to rise to the needs of the occasion on each occurrence; inducing the chiseling of a new skill set.

And poor Joe, destined to live forever as our paltry science experiment, has his reality slowly become narrower and narrower upon each repetition of our acquaintance.

At some point after doing this time and time again, I come to you, with a metaphorically confident grin and a glowing complexion that you can feel in the fabric of reality before I even get close to your physical presence. You know something is up, and indeed, something is up. I've come to your presence with some very exciting news.

I've done it. I've finally done it.

"Done what?"

Done the impossible. Check it out.

We spawn out in a void of any light or energy; a complete vacuum of space.

"What is this place?" you ask.

We're in deep space. An area where there's no visible light from any distant star or structure for millions of light years around.

You spot something else floating out here with us; a human. It's Joe. Upon recognizing you becoming aware of Joe's presence, I call out to him.

Say hello Joe!

"He can hear us?" you ask.

Not through vibrations in this medium, but through an antenna, chipset, and microphone that he has in his space suit. And check it out, he also has one of those life sustaining rigs that I made, but even more optimal. Turns out that garlic was more effective than bull shark stem cells; who knew?

With this one large spacesuit that he's in, he has enough life sustaining fluid to last for a very long time; that is, taking his very low energy expenditure into account. And, he can't even see this massive suit that he's wearing because of

the blinders I put over his viewing window. His reality is completely devoid of any stimuli. Joe, say something!

There's no response from Joe.

You, still confused at the situation that you're looking at, ask me of the moment's importance. And I, who have been waiting for what seems like an eternity to finally be able to share the fruits of my labor with you, have already prepared my answer for you well in advance of this moment happening.

Hey, so check this out my friend. Hey Joe, I know you can hear me you son of a bitch, so answer my question or else I'll make this a whole lot worse for you; don't embarrass me in front of my friend, Joe. Now, say it for my work partner's godly ears to hear... what are you thinking about right now?

There's a pause, and then Joe answers real slowly.

"There is nothing any more. Only nothing..." Joe's voice slowly fades out.

"Okay so you've ruined a poor man's soul, so what?" you ask me.

Don't you see? This is it, I've done it!

"Done what?"

I've solved the problem! No more obsessive thought patterns!

"You're joking right? Poor ole Joe floating out here in deep space is your example of how staying with your plan to the end is an answer to the problem of obsessive thought?"

I do indeed. Here, watch.

We say goodbye to Joe for now and teleport back to Earth. We ctrl + f on Earth's population and enter the keywords "obsessive thought patterns" into the search bar. Everyone that deals with this problem is highlighted for us to see, and, within a snap of our fingers, they're all wearing the same space rig that was developed for Joe, just as well as they're all vaccinated against death and shot out to various regions of deep space; each to suffer through the rest of their days much like how Joe is now.

Within another snap of our fingers, we fast forward a few thousand earth years, and go to visit each and every person that was shot out to various regions of deep space. And, to neither of our surprise, none of them now have an issue with obsessive thought patterns.

I boast my achievement once more to you, now armed with proof that my solution actually works.

Ha! And you were worried that we were wasting our time doing this plan!

You, at a loss for words, are experiencing a mix of frustration, confusion, and disappointment. But, in any case, you manage to get out, "Yeah, you might have solved the problem in some very specific case, but it's in the most backwards way possible. It only works given a perfect set of circumstances, and even then, it doesn't even address the problem directly. How is that considered a success in your mind?"

And I, who have been eating your shit for my plan this entire time, am boiling over with excitement to finally make my claim as to why this whole thing was worthwhile.

You see, my fellow brethren of a god, what you don't understand, and might not ever have the ability to fully understand, is that not every one of us was given the best option available. We weren't all given VR Xbox 1440s and World Destroyer for Nintendo 64^3 in our youths; some us were too busy eating Cinnamon O's Munch and drinking Doctor Thunder to be rolling in the privilege that we didn't get.

This whole time, this entire time that I was working on my plan, I knew that it wasn't the best plan available to us. I knew that I wasn't working with first place material, and hell, I couldn't forget it with you ramming it back down my throat upon every instance of me succeeding.

But, I didn't stick with my plan because I thought it was the best plan available; I stuck with it because it's one that I believed in–and still believe in–despite your constant noise trying to convince me otherwise. It was a path that I wanted to explore, and, now, now that this path comes to bear incredible fruit, you're too blinded by your circumstances to appreciate the fact that not all fruit is as sweet as the sweetest.

"Oh please, you act like shooting people off into space and making them forget everything that they've ever known by doing nothing other than just snapping your fingers is something that's worthy of praise. It's a barely functional solution that only 'solves' the problem given a perfect set of circumstances."

I sense a little bit of disconnect, so I'll explain a bit further.

Our task was to solve each of the problems on our list that we were given by the gods of time above us. If we were to think abstractly about any arbitrary solution to any arbitrary problem, then we can arbitrarily categorize these solutions into two–not always perfectly–disjoint buckets: those of the direct type vs. those of the indirect type.

The direct approach is the one that everyone is familiar with. In the direct approach, the problem is labeled as a problem and the imaginary game of tug of war begins. A person, dealing with a set of circumstances that is labeled as being a "problem," is to come up with a sequence of events that directly

changes the dynamics that this "problem" brings to them–in an attempt to mitigate the negative issues that emerge from its presence.

There's a see-sawing curve, where the power shifts back and forth between the problem and the entity trying to solve the problem. When breakthroughs are discovered, the see-saw moves in favor of the problem solver. When the problem solver is stumped, the see-saw moves in favor of the problem. That is, until, at some point, the problem solver comes up with a solution that's good enough that it allows them to get off of the see-saw entirely.

The aim of the direct approach is simple; defeat the enemy. A deep understanding of the components at play is only secondary to coming up with a functional solution to the problem at hand. Essentially, if it works, it works, and no other questions need to be asked; there are other problems that need solving.

Compare this to what I'll refer to as the indirect approach; a sequence of events that indirectly changes the dynamic with a set of circumstances that would otherwise be labeled as a "problem."

Easily seen through an example, imagine that you're back in elementary school dealing with a physically dangerous, classroom bully. The direct approach would be something along the lines of confronting the bully, learning karate, telling a teacher, or a parent, or an older sibling, or anything else related to any dedicated amount of time that's spent towards thinking about what it would take to win this specific battle.

On the other hand, an indirect approach might look something like, maybe one of your parents gets a job out of state and you have to move away. A sequence of events that, in the direct sense, was seemingly unrelated to the "problem" at hand, yet still had the power to change the dynamics of the experience that you had with it once and forever.

At first glance, the indirect approach might not seem like a solution at all. And, for the majority of the time spent developing this pathway, it's not. The indirect approach to solving problems remains completely worthless up until the point in time when the entire set of actions sum together to create something of more value than just its individual components.

The amount of time, resources, and creativity that it takes for the indirect approach to prove itself to be useful is magnitudes higher than that of the direct approach. If we were to have studied psychology and psychiatry and biology and chemistry and the history of the human being and all of that jazz, we probably could've spit out a direct solution in less than five years' time. But instead, we spent 6,000x that long, while probably doing 60,000x the amount of work.

In this way, the indirect approach is blatantly subordinate to the direct approach. But, the direct pathway comes with a very sneaky implication hidden away in its details that's much different from the front and centered, lack of sneakiness that comes along with the indirect pathway.

We have to remind ourselves that we're dealing with imperfect creatures, on an imperfect planet, in an imperfect universe. When we think about this whole sphere of "ideas" and "concepts" and "solutions" to "problems" in their

absolute general forms, they're always going to be just a wee bit detached from the reality of the humans implementing them. When we imagine what it would have been like to spend those five years coming up with a direct solution, we might also want to consider what might've happened after those five years were over.

Not to say that this is something that definitely *would* happen, but, just consider the following scenario that doesn't seem too far off from something that definitely *could* happen. Let's just say that we solve the problem of obsessive thought for the human beings living on planet Earth by studying whatever it is that we have to study in order for us to come up with a direct solution.

Then, later on in our journey, while we're off solving the next problem on our massive list of problems, we just so happen to find ourselves in the same exact timeline of the same exact universe on the same exact planet studying the same exact creatures as we did when having to solve the problem of obsessive thought. And so, we can't help but turn our attention to how our solution has fared over all this time; and, after doing so, we find that something is just a little bit off.

Because of the fact that our direct solution involved person-to-person interaction at some point in the mode of its exchange–whether it be a pill or a conversation or a surgery or whatever–we opened up our solution to influence from human imperfection.

It took some twenty odd Earth years for a mutation to happen, stemming from the haphazard human practice of administering the solution to the masses by utilizing underpaid and overworked laborers who already had biologically-relevant predispositions to make mistakes in the first place. This inevitable carelessness finally caught up to the DNA of the species, and so now, a new problem exists. Two new problems actually. The problem of distracted thought as well as the problem of reoccurring nightmares.

Let's say that our supreme god boss above us gets word of this before we're done solving all the problems on our list. And, because our solutions are only valuable if they are solved in their absolute entirety, we're sent back to solve these two new problems. Which, if we then took this one step further, maybe this cycle were to repeat later on down the road after we've solved both of these two new problems, forcing us to now solve four new problems.

With humans (in particular), direct solutions may advance the way of "progress," but, oftentimes at the cost of doing so in a very ugly way. A direct solution for tuberculosis was once heroin. A direct solution for treating mental illness was once the act of drilling holes in people's heads to let the demons out. And, a direct solution to creating a more superior race was once thought of as being achieved by killing six million Jews plus an additional who knows how many other millions from different minority groups. Direct solutions are messy, because, well, put simply... humans are messy.

On the flip side of things, indirect solutions can take a way longer period of time to be of any use to anyone at all, but, the juicy payoff that comes from

sticking with the process until the end is the robustness that emerges once a working solution has finally been pieced together.

But, hypothetically speaking, what if we were able to negate this blatant con of needing a massive, front-loaded amount of resources for some backwards attempt at a solution, by averaging it out over the spread of other gods of time working on this same problem? That is, what if we were to share our solution with the other gods of time in an attempt to justify the massive workload that we would have to otherwise undertake ourselves in order to invent it?

"You make no sense," you tell me. "You're now trying to base your entire argument as to why indirect solutions are better than direct ones around an idea that you've just completely pulled out of your ass. Why would we ever want to give this solution out to the other gods of time? What could we possibly gain by doing that?"

Well, nothing. But, we're not actually giving it out to the other gods of time.

"Then who are we giving it out to?"

Humans.

"Humans? What humans?"

The ones reading this book.



A Solution

Okay, so what is this thing? Well, that's a complicated question. This thing is a lot of things. But, it's also no thing. No product, no physical manifestation, no tangible collection of mass. No feeling of its intricacies, no grappling with its handles, no smelling it, no tasting it, nor no hearing it.

It often changes its shape depending on the demands of the situation that it needs to be used in. But, one aspect of it that remains true no matter how it is used, is that it exists as an arbitrary categorization that can be used to organize a person's entire life; comprehensively so.

Choosing just one set of words or one pairing of adjectives to describe this thing is too simplistic; so instead, I'll use a lot.

This *thing* is a **lens**. It's a window that can look into the past, it's a channeling of energy that can be directed in this current moment, and it's a structured framework that can be used to predict the future. It's a way to process what has already happened, what is happening, and what is going to happen; a way to understand, reason, and infer. It can be directed in any direction of the user's choosing, without it giving its opinion as to how it's being used.

This *thing* is a **map**. It can be looked at from a perspective as zoomed out as possible–taking the whole map into account–just as well as from the perspective of an infinitely zoom-able point somewhere in the midst of it. It's a means of efficiently storing information that favors the visual system in the human brain; it represents a data structure that can hold as much information as information is required, without its complexity of search being astronomical for an astronomical amount of content. It provides routes from one location to another, it provides the topography of different terrains, and it serves as a reliable reference for when direction is desired.

This *thing* is a **home**. It represents a place of comfort in an otherwise uncomfortable world. A free dwelling that can be customized to however one chooses; a dwelling that exists on the go just as much as it does in a physical location. It is a home that allows for changes in the structure, allows for different paint on the walls, allows for different types of cupboards to be swapped out, hell, it even allows for a swimming pool to be put on the top floor; the choices of decoration remain exactly as that: choices. A home that can be accessed anytime, anywhere, by anywho, even in the darkest of situations.

This *thing* is a **boilerplate**. It represents skeleton code that just does the bare minimum on its own. The true beauty of what a template can do is

only shown through the beauty of its implementation. The rule set to build is minimal, and allows for an immense amount of creativity. In its unimplemented form, it represents neutrality as an empty canvas for one to paint on in any way that they please.

This *thing* is **easily shareable**. It can be drawn on a bar napkin just as well as be painted as a mural in someone's house. It allows for comparison between other individual implementations without there being a universal ideal that any one of them can chase. It allows for multiple people to operate under the same structure–coupling experiences between however many humans one pleases–just as well as it allows for private, personal discussion to be shared between individuals with drastically different backgrounds and representations.

This *thing* is a **universal dialogue** between your body, your mind, and your soul. It's given in a format that is easily understood by all the parts that make up a human being, with all the components having read, write, and execute access to this whiteboard of communication. It represents a channel of conveyance for the subconscious mind to speak to the conscious mind, a channel of transmission for the body to request its needs, and a channel of control for the soul to delegate over both of its constituent parts.

This *thing* is a **story**. It's a narrative that places the control of one's life into the hands of the one living it; as much as can be done. It can tell the main character how to think in a situation that they might not be able to think in otherwise, it can guide them towards acceptable behavior in an otherwise unacceptable situation, and it can produce emotion through a behavior function that can be tweaked and twiddled with as much as is needed.

And finally, this *thing* is **hope**. It can be used to actualize what's not currently here in our timelines just yet, acting as a source of inspiration for what is to come. It's a shoulder to lean on that provides as much comfort as comfort is desired, it's a tool that can be used to steady-state a life that is otherwise unsteady, and it's a way to anchor one's core essence to an immovable rock during a passing storm. It's a thread that can be held onto, even when all of the other threads have already begun to pluck away.

But, as many things as this thing is, it's also not.

This *thing* is **not** a get out of jail free card. It's not a way to deflect responsibility of actions already taken, nor a pre-excuse for deflecting responsibility of the ones that are to come. It can't be used in a court of law, just as well as it can't be used in an argument with a loved one; it is not here for pity, it is here for reflection. It can't be used to excuse the behavior of the one who implemented it, it can only help to explain it.

This *thing* is **not** a get rich quick scheme. It is not something that gives its entire value upon immediate digestion of its components, but rather, can only be seen through the hindsight of its influence. It is not a way to bypass the gradualism of the body, just as well as it is not a way to bypass the requirement of energy when it comes to work; it simply channels the energy that is already free to create with.

This *thing* is **not** something that can be used to totally avoid negative feelings. Neither it, nor its implementer, have total control over whatever happens in the direction of the outside coming in during the processes that are our lives. External influence will always play an unpredictable part in the outcome that is the perception of any given moment, no matter if it's wished to be one way or another; and, this doesn't always lead to sunshine and rainbows.

This *thing* is **not** something that can be forced. What goes inside of it is genuine to the person that it's meant to capture. Falsehoods naturally get plucked out as a consequence of repetitive attentiveness to the matter. It is something that flows with the current of energy that already exists; the flow of energy that's well out of our control. It's not crafting nothing into something, it's re-crafting what already is into something else.

This *thing* is **not** a party trick. Its presence isn't meant for the validation from others; it is internally defined for internal use. It's not necessarily flashy, it's not necessarily sparkly, and it's not necessarily always available for the communication to others; it is, however, always internally relevant and understood.

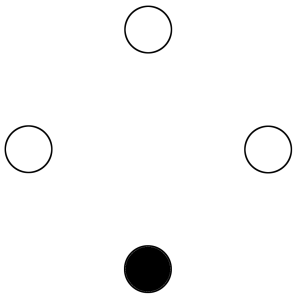
This *thing* is **not** a perfect window into the chaos that is to come. What is to come is what is to come, as it's well out of the range of any of our predictions. Until humans have a much better understanding of the universe that we come from, we will never be able to fully predict what happens in the future of our lives due to the chaos that we perceive to be around us all of the time. It is not meant to control the future, it's used to prepare for it.

This *thing* is **not** a solution to all of the dysfunction that exists. It is not the golden bullet that is meant to replace all of psychiatry; it simply represents an alternative. This thing is not meant to replace all of therapy, it is not meant to replace all of medication, and it is not meant to replace every conversation had about dysfunction; it is simply meant to open up a new avenue for discussion.

And lastly, this *thing* is **not** you. Not entirely, that is. No matter how comprehensive and thoughtful and exact this thing is implemented, it will never be able to fully capture the entire essence that is a human being. All of the nuance, all of the complexity, and all of the quirks that make us all stand out from each other are all things that no simple model has the room to exhaustively hold.

In reality, this thing is a lot of things. But, it's also no thing. But really, it's just four things. Four things arranged in the shape of a diamond.

Clean-cut in theory, controlled chaos in practice; I guess I would call it my Categorization of Life.



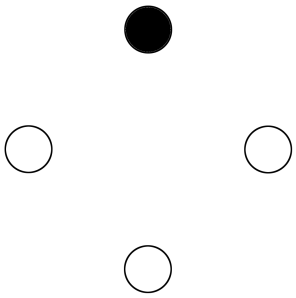
The Bottom is where everything starts; it represents the foundation for the entire structure–both literally and metaphorically. It's the place for whatever it is that needs to be done in order to do whatever it is that wants to be done; the veggies before the cake.

If asked for a single word to be used as an arbitrary categorization that best describes the Bottom, I personally would choose the word "Health." For some, Health might be best described by nothing other than steak, squats, and sleep; while, for others, there's no need for a "might be" because it already *is* best described in the form of a 1GB Excel sheet that has every aspect of their lives fully organized and mapped out. And, surely, everywhere in between.

At the bare minimum for anyone alive today, food, water, warmth, sleep, supplies, money, resources, and reoccurring responsibilities are all required–to some extent–in order to survive in modern day society. Individually, each of us then has a unique set of personalized things that sits on top of this bare minimum core, forming the totality of tasks required to move on to what exists beyond just the formalities of life.

The Bottom is to be implemented in whatever ways we best see fit. For example, instead of running, you could swim. Instead of swimming, you could box. Instead of boxing, you could do yoga. Instead of yoga, you could do breathwork. Instead of eating meat, you could eat broccoli. Instead of taking melatonin, you could snort a line of diphenhydramine. Instead of using a calendar, you could use a list. Instead of working in a kitchen, you could work in a trade. And, instead of feeling like you have nothing to be accountable for, you could get a plant. It doesn't matter as to how we go about taking care of each of our Bottom spots, as the choices forever remain to be ours.

The Bottom, where things go to get done, is well contrasted with its complement, the Top; where things go to give reason to the things that need to get done.



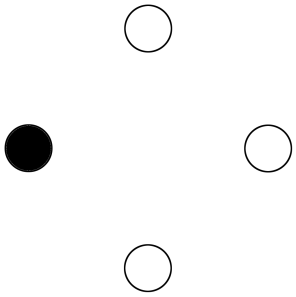
The Top represents an area not necessarily comprised of just joy and pleasure, but instead of principle and value. It's the region that holds whatever's held true over whatever continuous span of time relevant to any one human being that says so for themselves; creating a new personalized partition of itself relative to when the unchangeable begins to change for itself.

If asked for a single word to describe this region, I would use something along the lines of "Values," "Identity," "Self," "Soul," "Me," or "Root"; it's the BIOS of a human being–the seed of a soul that only requires water and time for it to grow to its fullest self.

The Top holds the ideas that give rise to feelings that can never be fully explained with words. How does one describe the bond that they have with their mother? Or the relationship that they have with their god? Or the code of ethics that keeps them from being a "bad person" even when their mind is telling them to act otherwise? We have no choice as to what goes into our Top spots, for, we are not choosing what we want to be, but instead, discovering who we really are. The things that we want so deeply–so badly–to be up there, require no further action in order to get them there; they already are.

The things that belong in each of our Top spots don't necessarily stay put there for the rest of time. Surely, they change; and, surely, they *will* change. But, change is intermittent at best, and usually requires a reality shifting experience like an epiphany, a near death experience, or, sometimes, just happening as a consequence of learning something entirely new.

With the Top and the Bottom, we already have a complete life; action, and reason for action. So then, what's left?



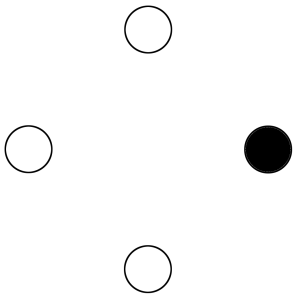
What's left is more than just the Left. What's left is everything that exists beyond the act of either fulfilling our needs or enjoying the reasons of doing so. It can't be guaranteed that every single moment of every single day is going to necessarily pertain to either the Top or the Bottom, and so, the leftover time is accounted for by squeezing it in between these two polar domains with the creation of another pair of complimentary, perpendicular domains that are also polaric to one another.

The Left side of this space is best categorized by internal interests devoid of external entities; the things that we want to do without anyone telling us how to do them. The place where rule sets are nonexistent, curiosity is always rewarded, and there isn't a "wrong" way of doing things, because, every step is a step in the right direction–as if those words meant anything at all.

The general structure of the Left side can be visualized as a (semi-)discrete collection of bubbles; where every (set of) bubble(s) represents a different domain of interest. Each bubble, having a variety of size, strength, and shape, has bounds that are personally chosen to suit one's own psyche. To an outsider, sports, snowboarding, and balance control might all mean the same thing, but, to the person coming up with that categorization, they might not.

Each of these domains forever has the capacity to serve as a container that provides the main architecture for the only other idea of importance that pertains to the Left side at all: any internally motivated goal that pertains to any self-defined area of interest.

For the optimization nerds out there, I have found that the following goal-setting axioms have worked very well for me through much trial and error.
Axiom #1: Have no more than one active goal per domain.
Axiom #2: Comprehensively close out any inactive domains before creating any new goals in any other domains.
Axiom #3: Have an explicit what, when, why, how, and clearly defined activity meant to serve as the moment of complete closure (bonus: keep records).



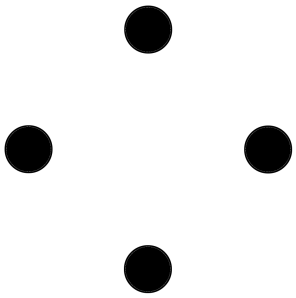
The Right side–converse to the Left–is the land for all of the activities, thoughts, and behavior related to any relationship that we have with any other sentient being that isn't ourselves; regardless of whether that's family, friends, peers, associates, students, teachers, lovers, pets, trees, aliens, or anything else that has any other reoccurring process of "life" happening inside of it.

The Right has nothing to do with accolades, achievements, or goals of any sort; no overall structure, no controlling the variables, and no fully predicting what is to come. Nonetheless, our desire of what we bring into this side has no effect on the social structures that still arise naturally just as a consequence of us existing as the biologically predisposed, power-hungry chimps that we are.

Back in our evolutionary past, power within a tribe was held blatantly and unequivocally; one where the stronger monkeys ruled the weaker monkeys. Nowadays, we no longer exist in just a single hierarchy, but in overlapping hierarchies of overlapping tribes with overlapping roles all in overlapping settings.

How are we supposed to reason about the behavior of someone who works in an office where their assistant is their older sibling, their boss is someone who they used to bully in high school, and the janitor is someone who used to bully them in middle school? Or, a Harvard professor who has a black belt in judo when they walk into an improv comedy club for the first time? Add in the widespread adoption of social media, and, as a consequence of having the sum total of some billion odd participants connected to the same online popularity platforms, there's now a hive mind of thought that judges any person's "wrongdoings" with a wave of disdain that has the weight of the entire world behind it by way of doing nothing other than sending just a single tweet.

All of this to say that, if one thing's apparent, it's that the social complexity of today's day and age has made it so that perfectly encapsulating any human's social behavior with just a handful of theories very quickly approaches zero. Because of this, the Right now serves as arguably the most important piece of the overall puzzle; the sink for anything that doesn't belong anywhere else.



Put together, these four semi-discrete regions make a whole that is much more than just the sum of its parts. It represents a continuous space that's meant to capture all thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of a human being; where everything exists as a fluid piece of an ever-changing whole.

If asked for just a single word to describe what this thing is in its entirety, I would say something along the lines of, theresnofuckingwayIcouldcomeupwithsuchaword; but, instead, if asked for just a single image to describe this thing, oh, that's so much simpler.

Just imagine a really large and complex spider web. Then, imagine that this spider web exists inside of a single soap bubble. Now, imagine that this single soap bubble exists alongside of some million odd other soap bubbles that each contain webs just like that one does; except, with ones that are all completely different from the others. Then, imagine that this collective of bubbles is squished together to a point where they all pop, and various parts of various webs are squished together to varying degrees of squished-togetherness. Finally, imagine that this ice cream scoop of complexity is what exists inside of just a single neuron that belongs to a network of billions of other neurons, with a sum total of connections upon the order of trillions. See? So much easier.

I feel as if this is a decent enough–yet also vague enough–representation of the true inter-connectedness and depth that this continuous space has the ability to hold. A space where data points can exist simultaneously in different regions at the same time–with completely different degrees of intensity–and the only bounds are the ones that are self-imposed by the soul coming up with the bounds for themselves.

Most importantly, what this space represents as a whole is comprehensiveness. Its entire purpose as an architecture of ideas relies on the foundational idea that this structure of thinking encompasses one very important detail in particular:

Everything, ever, belongs somewhere.



Perspective Determines Reality

Ah, there you are Joe! We almost couldn't find you out here; turns out we did a pretty good job of removing you from everything that has ever existed. Hey, so anyway, do you remember when we promised you a gift way back when in exchange for your willingness to work with us?

Joe's brain cranks on immediately as it is now teeming with lonely neurons that have a sudden urge not to be.

Well, good news Joe! Your numbers have finally hit!

The cranking accelerates.

Our gift comes to you in the form of knowledge. Particular knowledge about a particular condition regarding a particular human being to be more exact; and, if you haven't figured it out yet, I'm talking about you.

But, this knowledge can't be summed up in just a sentence or two, and, it definitely requires you to be in a certain sort of... headspace to be able to receive it properly. So, let's start with this.

Within just a snap of our godly fingers, you and I teleport back in time to the moment right after Joe mutters out a forced "sure" when we first asked him if he'd be willing to work with (for) us in return for a gift given to him in the end.

Hey, long time no see Joe! Hey, thanks again for helping us with our experiment; your time proved to be of incredible use to us.

The old Joe existing in this timeline sits in confusion for a moment as he tries to figure out how the past four seconds of him doing absolutely nothing at all could have been any use to us in the slightest.

Man, I'll tell ya Joe... don't get me wrong, I'm no god of ethics or anything like that, but I'd be lying if I said I didn't feel some type of way about the version of you that's now forever trapped in a branch of reality that is nothing more than unrelenting nothingness in a hopeless void of psychosis. I can't imagine that he's having a good time right now. Or, ever.

Fortunately, there's always a bright side! Well, for you at least. Not for him, he's fucked.

Joe, we've come back in time after our little experiment together to give you a story. Well, a sequence of stories really. A sequence of stories that will hopefully change the way that you think about, well... everything.

This Joe is now fully alert while still being fully confused.

Now, Joe, as much as we would love to sit down with you and give you all of the details of these stories front-to-back, we really wouldn't. In fact, we don't even want to be here right now. We would rather be doing quite literally anything else than be here talking to you right now.

But, alas, the drops of mercy that exist deep within our higher dimensional space roots still have a lasting influence that we cannot ignore. So, to meet you somewhere in the middle, we'll just stick to the protein of it all and let you figure out the rest from there; we have other problems on our list that need solving.

On top of that, to make it easier for your stupid human brain to understand, we'll even give you this sequence of stories from the perspective of another stupid human brain. In fact, we'll do you one even better.

You and I teleport back in time to just a few moments before we ever met Joe in the first place, presenting ourselves as two ordinary people.

Hey Joe, check it out; we can look like stupid hairy primates just like you! Meet your new conversation partners, eJo and oeJ.

This Joe, having absolutely no clue as to what's going on, spends a moment trying to figure out where we came from, who we are, and what we're even talking about.

Yeah, I'd be pretty confused if I were you too, Joe; but, fear not, for this will all make sense at some point in your life. Or, maybe not. Hard to say really, it's not like we can travel forward in time to find out, so why even bother thinking about it?

Anyway, Joe, we're going to get straight to the point because it is in both of our best interests to get on to what comes next. I mean, who actually cares about pre-conversation niceties when getting straight to the ideas themselves is so much more... sensible? As they say in Hebrew, **בלי לייפות**. Know what I'm saying, Joe?

Joe, who's still trying to figure out how oeJ's name is even spelled, is having a hard time coming up with a response, much less a coherent one.

Guess not. Alright then, well... if we're gonna do this, we might as well just start from the beginning.

A Natural Perspective

Everything starts with time.

We humans experience time in a very distinct way. In every single one of our experiences, time flows in the same direction; forwards. We don't assign a direction to time other than it moving in the same direction that it always has been. No loops, no backwards travel, and no standing still; just, forwards.

The rate at which we experience time changes as a function of a lot of things; such as personal enjoyment of the activity at hand, as well as physics phenomena like time dilation, just to name two. But, the rate at which we experience time is largely unimportant for this discussion. What's more important is a drilling down of the idea that time always has, and–as we are to believe–always will, move in the same direction; forwards.

Time, alongside of everything else that we experience in the natural world, is continuous. There is a seamless integration of the moments that we experience, no matter how fast or how slow they come. Things don't appear and disappear instantly, they must happen in a progression. Just like how we only ever experience time moving in the same direction, we always have believed, and, as of now, are to forever believe, in the continuity that time brings.

In this omnipresent continuity of time, there exists a natural ordering on the events happening within it; the order in which we perceive them. On the quantum level, this may cause some dispute, but here on the classical level, this is something that our species has largely taken for granted. We don't write sentences from the inside out, we don't analyze effect before cause, and we don't watch lightning strikes before the clouds have even formed.

The one-two-three's happening over time take on the same continuity that is present with time itself. In this continuity, the continuous one-two-three's happen in something that we call space; space being a sandbox arena of mass and energy that permits physical beings to interact with other physical beings.

There is a gradual aspect to the living cycle of all things, happening in space, over time. We see that the gradual things that happen in physical space, over continuous time, occur in groups. It takes a very specific group of gradual, localized events to happen in order for a tree to grow; not just randomly timed and randomly spaced out events happening across the universe. These groups of gradual, related events can be called processes.

A single bacterial organism is a process that hosts the processes of the different components of the cells that make it up. A single plankton is a process that hosts the processes of various bacteria, which each host the processes of everything happening inside of those bacteria. A single plankton is a process that is a part of the eating process of a process called a whale. A whale is a

process of processes that is hosted in a process called the ocean. The ocean is a host process to many other processes, that is hosted by the process that is planet Earth. Anything and everything that we experience in this continuity of time that is consistently localized to an area or path through space can be labeled as a process.

If we trace back all of the processes that we see in our environment, we can say that they all belong to the same system of processes that we can call "Nature." Nature is a system of processes that implements a set of laws that all of its children processes abide by.

It consists of much more than just the living organisms on our planet, for, when viewed through the lens of space and time provided here, it consists of any and all processes that we perceive to be, in the entire observable universe. There may be other systems that exist outside of Nature that are beyond our current means of comprehension, but, for the duration of this dialogue, I'll use the word Nature to refer to the system that hosts all the processes that are meaningful to us humans.

The laws that Nature provides us with are applied to both the living and the nonliving. The nonliving get a flavor in the form of universal force limitations; the ones saying that the speed of light is constant in a vacuum, that energy and mass belong to the same spectrum, and that there are four fundamental forces running all motion in our universe.

There's also the ones that exist for the living world of carbon-based energy pumps. The ones that say that traits that lead to a greater likelihood of survival by way of passing on like genes are naturally selected for over time in a competitive environment. This leads to an ever-changing meta between organisms; one that determines how DNA is replicated, how culture is created and maintained, and how carbon-based life forms interact with other carbon-based life forms.

Any process that we see, carbon-based or otherwise, abides by the rule sets set forth by our parent system of Nature. In this way, we can visualize Nature as being a very large bubble with other smaller bubbles inside of it. The realm of possibility for embedded bubbles within this larger bubble is going to certainly depend on what each individual bubble is, but one can say for certain that every one of them will be bounded from above by the much larger bubble of Nature that they are all inherently constrained by.

One such bubble encapsulated in this larger bubble of Nature belongs to that of the human being. The human being is a process that abides by the natural laws, both for the living and the nonliving, and is perpetually bounded above by such.

We have no choice as to the fact that we need to eat every few weeks, sleep every few days, drink water almost every day, and breathe every few seconds. We have no say in the fact that we interact more commonly with forms of mass rather than energy, what lightwaves pass into our eye balls, or the pain that we feel when touching a hot stove. In these ways, we are bounded by our

biology, which is then bounded by its chemistry, which is then bounded by its governing physics, which is then ultimately bounded by Nature.

Humans, existing as a process here on Earth, have developed a few abilities that allow us to do all of this conversing and discussing about what's going on around us. We have developed an ability under a loose label that we call "abstraction"; a way to talk about physical processes with nonphysical ideas.

Through abstraction, we can reason about other processes besides our own; it's what allows us to even talk about the concepts of continuity, gradualism, and processes in the first place. It gives us a way to communicate densely packed information between diverse members of our species while also appealing to our–evolutionarily recent–desire of using *a priori* based reasoning; personifying quite well as a metaphysical engine of intellectual creation.

The human being, a process that has already topped the food chain of all food chains–now with the ability to continue advancing in a completely different domain other than the purely physical–has become quite the incredible creature to say the least. Through the time and experimentation of our ancestors, we have been able to understand the human process better than we have ever before.

Through an understanding of the biology, chemistry, neuroscience, psychology, sociology, etc. that make each one of us up–all of which came from the dedication to explore these domains by the intellectual pioneers that first did so–we can confidently say that we have a sizable amount of cause and effect relationships related to our physiology figured out.

With everyone being able to agree on all of the agreeable stuff, there are still some who share radical beliefs on top of the generally accepted consensuses rattling around in the general public. One of the more controversial beliefs has its roots anchored in any notion of "free will" as it pertains to the relationship between the human being and our parent system of Nature; the belief being that our experience inside of this bubble called Nature is largely–or possibly, entirely–out of our hands.

Regardless of whether this notion is true or not, it can still be interesting to explore some of the consequences of believing in such a drastic claim; especially when there's a possibility for some of these trains of thought to lead to nontrivial, long-lasting, and net-positive effects. But, speaking pragmatically, both positive and negative consequences fall out of this belief.

On one hand, grief, shame, and regret all disappear within a snap of the fingers. Because, how can you regret something that you had absolutely no control over? Do you regret when it rains? Feel shame when the leaves start to fall in autumn? Or, feel grief over the memory of acting in that one way towards that one person, when your biology, environment, and learned behavior set you up to act in the exact way that you did?

On the other hand, pride, ego, and self-perception can all take a fairly large hit by the same fell swoop; especially if they were heavily relied on before as the main reasoning tools for how that person developed an understanding of themselves. How can you be prideful of instinctual personality traits that

were merely handed to you by your unique experience of life? Do you get egotistical over your eye color? Brag about the size of your fingernails? Or, condescendingly marginalize others for not being born into lives of wealth and safety?

But, right in the middle of these opposites sits a much greater feeling; a feeling of peace. Why? Well, it's simple; I do not choose, therefore I do not worry. I can simply sit back and watch my entire life unfold without having to take any action besides the occasional sip of an ice cold lemonade.

Now, that isn't to say that each of our experiences of life are going to be enjoyable the whole time that we're alive, but rather to say that riding the wave is a whole lot easier when we're not trying to control the flow of the water.

If this relinquishing of choice is fully received and digested, a newfound freedom prevails that comes with the emergence of much more mental space. For, however I act will always be in perfect alignment with the way that I am always going to predeterminedly act; which will always originate from my unique body's unique reaction to that unpredictably unique moment in time.

Mistakes happen because there's no way that that moment in time could've happened in any other way. And so, there is no "wrong" way anymore, only ***the*** way. The one that **is.**

And, most importantly, this feeling isn't necessarily contingent on the inherent truth value of whether or not we actually do have free will, but rather, on whether or not our brain accepts this idea as *our* truth; not *the* truth.

How interesting of an idea that is.

Body, Mind, & Me

When diving further into the bubble that is the human being, truly understanding what we really are can be a complicated task depending on how detailed we want to get. We are one complex organism with a whole lot going on inside of us–with our biology–and a whole lot going on outside of us–with our social behavior–as well.

It also depends on what implicit biases each of us hold when thinking about what a human is. To a Christian, a human is the making of God. To an evolutionist, a human is an evolved primate. And, to this framework, a human is a process belonging to the system of Nature. But, no matter the biases that we each hold towards understanding our own species, there are a few things that are indisputable between all sets of beliefs.

For one, we know that there has never been a predator as adept as us at the game of survival in the natural world. Regardless of whether or not our talents were chiseled over millennia by natural selection or God-given, it is undeniable

that the human being really is the apex predator of all apex predators. With the use of our own creations, there is not a beast that we can't take down; and in an elegant fashion, no less.

We also know that we have a prefrontal cortex that seems to be a bit more advanced than the brains of other organisms that we see here on planet Earth. And, when I say a bit more advanced, what I really mean is, enough of a bit more advanced to be able to put footprints on the moon, sort of a bit more advanced.

Not only can we take down beasts that are much larger than us with tools of our own species' creation, but, we can do it all while mentally meal prepping the meat that we're about to have, while pondering the ethics of killing animals in general, while calculating the compound interest that we're each currently receiving in our Roth IRA accounts, all while being 100 meters away from our prey as we hold a man-made machine that isn't far off from having enough power to trophy hunt a skyscraper.

Lastly, we know that we all share something that, in English, we call "consciousness"; consciousness being some sort of abstract phenomenon that we can all feel, yet have trouble describing. So, I won't even try.

These parts, a self-aware consciousness combined with a virtuoso killing machine that can do calculus, make up some–or all–of the components of the process that is a human being. Viewing them as separate parts instead of one integrated whole makes sense, because, fundamentally, they are.

The body has a set of capabilities that is different from the set of capabilities of the mind, which are both different from the set of capabilities of the human soul. But, although separate entities that are competent in different activities, they are all still connected together by the unbreakable bond that they inherently share with one another; the highway of communication that exists between the three realms of the physical, the abstract, and the divine.

Defining the distinctions between the three can be challenging because of this separate, non-separability that they all share with each other. Does the brain belong to the body or the mind? What about the hormones that are dictating my trains of thought? Is my soul telling me that I want peace? Or is it my mind that's looking for safety? Or my body looking for steady equilibrium? Is it a combination of the three? Is it all of them? None of them?

In order to account for this vague overlapping of functionality, it can be helpful to draw non-vague–yet still arbitrary–lines in the sand so that we can set our own definitions to then build from.

We can define the body to be all that is physical. Anything that can take on a quantifiable measurement of any sort in this physical arena of space that we all currently live inside of. This could be a measurement of volume, a defining of an entity's physical structure, or even the voltage of a current. This includes all of the cells, all of the DNA, all of the bones, all of the neurons, all of the hormones, and anything else that our body physically interacts with in

this vast continuum of space. We see the body, we feel the body, and we are the body. Partly that is.

The mind is defined to be all that which lives in the nonphysical. The mind hosts processes that exist in a dimension that we are only barely accustomed to perceiving through this one recently developed avenue that we call "thought." The mind captures what's happening across time, but not necessarily in space; everything that can't be quantifiably measured by humans (yet, that is). The mind is where the answer to 4 + 5 is, it's where we can imagine the laugh of a loved one, and it's where we can close our eyes and visualize sitting on a beach with a Corona in hand and Bob Marley playing in the background.

Beyond the separation of the body and the mind, there exists a natural tendency to arbitrarily categorize another boundary; the one that I might refer to as the Me. Some call it the soul, Hindus call it Atman, and Plato might call it the psyche, but in any case, we can define it as what the body and the mind carve out of both space and time as a collective pair. The gradual, localized, consistent form of energy that behaves in ways according to how it's behaved before, the Me is the bucket for all the processes related to both the physical and the nonphysical that have long been forgotten about by the passing arrow of time; the same phenomena that we often call the "essence" of a human being.

To better understand these three forces that comprise a human being, it can be helpful to look at the relationships that they have with one another.

The body and the mind share an inseparable connection with each another in the sense that, one hosts the other. The mind wouldn't be possible (yet) without a physical brain to host it in. And so, naturally, because of this hardwired connection between the two, they share an incredible amount of influence on how the other behaves.

Even though they are part of the same system, their own set of desires can present conflict for the other when we begin to get to the outer edges of their truest desires. For pure bliss, the mind wants no distractions. Eating, drinking, and peeing all get in the way of the flow state, for, once it's accessed, the needs of the body become of secondary concern. Conversely, bringing real change to the body sometimes involves ignoring the false flags set up by the mind in an attempt to ease the pain that it's feeling during the transition into a new state of being.

The body and the mind share the ability to communicate with one another in such deep rooted and efficient ways, that it doesn't matter if the thought of the message ever crosses over into the conscious experience of the person having the thought for themselves. Being apart of the same system in this way, they possess inherent modes of communication that often get overlooked by our prefrontal cortices.

When the mind is presented with something that it's forced to react to, there's no time spent building a bridge between it and its host body in order for them to effectively communicate back and forth; all of the bridges are already built, and in a highly optimized fashion no less.

That being said, examples are always handy–especially when they're ones that can get you to feel the exact feels that I'm talking about–so, I've come prepared with one that will hopefully highlight just one of the ways in which the mind has the ability to quickly and powerfully affect the body that it's hosted in.

In order to access this pathway, I'll tell you a story based around an interaction I had back when I was in college.

During my time in university, I studied computer science. As you might imagine, this meant spending a lot of time around a lot of other computer science students as well. Now, if you've ever been around a group of CS students from anytime around the mid-2010s and onward, then you already know that the topic of cryptocurrency comes up at least once.

Over time, multiple of these conversations occur across multiple groups of people in multiple classes, and, whether we wanted it to happen or not, even the uninterested became–at the very least–initiated with the idea of crypto.

In my case, this meant little about understanding the technology behind it, and instead knowing about which cryptocurrencies were being held by what people and why. It was obvious to me that I couldn't remember every coin that everyone held, and, I didn't plan on keeping records of such, but there were definite patterns that I couldn't help but pick up on through the various conversations that I was apart of during my time there.

Certain types of people with certain types of personalities definitely tended towards certain types of coins, and, because of this, I didn't have to know what coin every person was holding if I was able to pick up on these macroscale patterns instead.

Now, in the year 2022, when crypto experienced a huge boom, shit hit the fan. If you're not familiar with the land of cryptocurrency investing, a temporary boom happens somewhat cyclically over long periods of time, very similar to how the stock market operates. Starting with the creation of bitcoin in 2009, and up until now in the 2020s, there was one that occurred in the year 2022 that was the largest one yet. Teenagers who still had their moms serving them Eggo waffles and orange juice in the morning became millionaires essentially overnight because of the low sanctions and high volatility present in the crypto sphere at the time.

Those who struck, struck. And, I knew of one such person who struck; somebody whose number I just so happened to still have in my phone. So, when all of this crypto craziness had settled down, I reached out to him with a text saying something along the lines of, "Hey, were you still holding blah blah blah coin during that huge surge?" and, I got the response that I was hoping for.

This dude, just some random dude with no particular skillset of any use to anyone at all (in the traditional sense, at least), now held the title of what some people spend their whole lives trying to achieve. My man, was in fact, an actual millionaire.

Just some guy that I knew, some random dude that I had met in college, alongside of thousands upon thousands of other nerds who were ahead of the curve with this new form of currency, literally beat the game of modern life before their brains even had the chance to fully develop; way to go tech hipsters!

But anyway, upon talking about it with him further, I realized that he didn't even need the money because of the generous nest egg that his parents had given him right after he graduated. Turns out that a large investment in Apple some thirty odd years ago proved to be a worthwhile investment; who would've thought?

Now, I wasn't close friends with the guy or anything, I just so happened to connect with him over a project that we had worked on together, so I had no intentions of asking him to give me any of his winnings or anything like that. But, regardless, he did something truly unimaginable that I will never have the chance to fully thank him for.

He asked for my bitcoin wallet address, and less than ten minutes later, I had one whole bitcoin sitting in my wallet. One whole bitcoin, something that cost less than a penny upon its creation, was, at that time, worth over $40,000.

This dude was practically handing them out because of some whole "money isn't important" mantra that he was preaching (which, I would imagine is quite easy to preach when you basically have enough money to buy my entire family), and I just so happened to be walking on the right path at the right time. He gifted me $40,000 just because I was willing to talk to him for a bit about his spoils without asking for my own piece of the pie; an act of generosity that would be hard to believe even from a best friend.

The reason I tell you this story is to give credit to the statement that I hope will spark just a little feeling of joy within your heart. When I first got that single bitcoin, I cashed it out immediately. I eventually put some back in, and wound up winning some more. I then transitioned to cheaper cryptocurrencies, where a little bit of money can turn into a whole lot of money–at the price of even higher volatility–where I hit big on one coin.

I did a lot of research into all of the top 500 cryptocurrencies, as well as read commentary on what the masses were saying about each, and felt very confident in gambling on a small handful of coins that had the potential to turn me, myself, into a millionaire as well.

And, as luck would have it, before the wave was over, the fourteen hour days that I spent dedicated towards research proved to be worth it; my numbers finally hit.

With a coin traded under the ticker AVAX, I made an incredible amount of money by betting on it before the masses really got their hands on it. It went from being under a dollar to a max height of right around $100 in just a few months' time. It was an unbelievably quick, yet massive investment that almost got me to shit my pants upon realizing how much money that I had just made.

With this large sum of money, I have set myself up for the rest of my life. Financial security is of no concern to me anymore; hence the reason as to why I'm giving away this book for free. With the amount of money that I have leftover, I'm free to do whatever I wish with it. And, what I wish, is to give back to the people.

Anyone who is able to find the secret link hidden deep within this text will be rewarded with exactly one bitcoin of their own, sent to the wallet address provided through the form within the link.

Now, before you run off to see if you can find it, don't, because, it's all made up.

Yeah, no, just kidding about all that nonsense. I don't actually have a friend who hit big, I didn't get the chance to really gamble with crypto, and, I don't actually have the means to make a site that gives out free bitcoins to people all willy-nilly.

But, your mind thought that I did, and, because of this fictitious story that lives solely in the nonphysical, I was able to create a very real feeling in your very real physical being.

I apologize that I went to such great lengths simply to prove a point of how the mind is able to influence the body; however, wide nets must be cast for an audience of everyone.

The mind is able to affect the body in more ways than just one. I could have told a happy story, a sad story, an exciting story, a depressing story, or any other story causing any other emotion that I could have wished. All different neurotransmitters, all different hormones, all different heart rates and breathing patterns, all caused by activity happening solely in the nonphysical.

It's a powerful dimension, the sandbox that the mind lives in, and it is one that we are only just beginning to understand the true depths of.

One of the more interesting things to note about the influence that comes from the mind to the body is its intermittent escape from the clutches of the gradualism that the body knows so well.

The mind has outpaced the body in terms of its evolutionary track, showing itself in its ability to frame switch between different points of view almost immediately. Even though the mind is causing the release of hormones and the activity of the neuron connections that are causing the bodily behavior–both of which belong to the gradualism of the body–it contains the power to switch between which hormones are being released, and which neuron connections are being activated, at a rate that is much faster than the body would ever be able to experience naturally with predictable consistency.

The mind is capable of switching between ideas, thoughts, and trains of reasoning seamlessly, and as quickly as is demanded; much quicker than the body is able to switch between modes of sleep, hunger, and exercise. It can

switch between the joy of "*Gasp* I might be getting a bitcoin!" to the despair of "this fucker thinks he's got jokes" in the span of just a single moment.

This relationship between the body and the mind goes both ways. Just as the nonphysical has the ability to affect the physical, the same is true in reverse.

For just one of many examples, physical exercise happening semi-consistently with the body leads to positive changes in the mind 99 times out of 99. There's something so primitively simple about how advancing the body in some physical domain that requires energy and effort brings positive change to the mind attached to it, no matter what the activity is. What's more is that the amount of avenues that one can take to access this change is perceived to be limitless.

Likewise, not taking care of the physical needs of one's body plays an immediate and apparent negative influence on the mindset that comes along with it. It doesn't take a genius to realize that they aren't going to be visualizing sunshine and rainbows when going through a nasty hangover.

In general, any of the changes happening from within the body are going to be much more gradual than that of the mind. Systems upon systems upon systems have to work in succession and integration consistently over time in order to feel the full effects of all the work that is being put into whatever lifestyle change is actively being pursued.

Getting healthy doesn't happen with immediate effort (... wait a minute), gaining muscle and changing body structure doesn't happen overnight (except, it literally does), and the benefits of a healthy circadian rhythm aren't felt over the course of just a single sleep cycle (okay, now I'm just digging myself into a deeper hole here... but I digress). None of these examples provide an *instant* change in perception, unlike the mind, which absolutely has the power to do so–granted the presence of sufficient conditions.

The body and the mind, affecting each other bidirectionally, affect the soul in the most obvious way possible; they are it. The soul is defined to be that of the body and the mind over time, so this direction of influence is already apparent and needs no further explanation. The other direction, however, presents something of interest that will make much more sense later on when it's been given the proper context that it fully requires.

Each of the body, mind, and spirit have their own desires and pleasures that might conflict with the interests of the others. My body wants steak and milk, my mind wants drugs and porn, and my soul wants to finish this dialogue between us. Different desires, different pleasures, and different modes of reasoning, all housed within the same system, working together as one seamless machine.

Before moving on to what comes next, we might as well take a quick peak into some of the things that the body and mind can actually do. As it turns out, they can do quite a lot; a lot of which is definitely worth the sightseeing.

Starting with the body, the extent to which it's able to perform is jaw-dropping. Instead of me attempting to use strong words that try and push the bounds of human language–things like "limitless potential," or "incomprehensible ability"– I'll just use real life examples with real life people.

Eddie Hall. The first man to pick up over 500 kilograms off of the floor, shattering all previous records at the lift. For my fellow Americans, that's just a pinch over 1,100 pounds. In the process of doing so, he gave himself a concussion, a nose bleed, and memory loss. Since Eddie Hall, there have been other successful attempts at deadlifting over 500 kilos, but none in the record breaking fashion that Hall first pioneered.

Eliud Kipchoge. The first man to run a marathon in under two hours. For those unfamiliar, that's 26.2 continuous miles (just over 42 kilometers), ran at a pace of 4:34 for each mile. 4 minutes and 34 seconds for 26.2 miles, in a row, without stopping. That's running 104 continuous laps around a standard sized track, where every lap is under 1:09 pace. That is incredibly fast for incredibly long; an act that–alongside of all these other acts–will undoubtedly go down in the history books as one that pushed the limitations of the human body past a point that was once considered impossible.

Alex Honnold. A man that has climbed over 3,000 feet (about 900 meters) of a near-vertical granite rock wall... without using any ropes or harness. Over 3,000 feet of various holds that an amateur would literally drop their jaw at, where one mistake can lead to the ending of his life, and he does it all without using a safety net. Talk about sweaty palms.

Wim Hof. The iceman who has mastered the control over his–once thought of as uncontrollable–physiology in ways that have scientists scratching their heads. He has climbed over a third of Mount Everest... while wearing nothing but shoes, shorts, and gloves; he has ran the fastest half marathon above the arctic circle... while barefoot; he has climbed the entirety of Mount Kilimanjaro in just two days... again, wearing just shoes and shorts; and, he has even ran a full length marathon in the Namibian desert... without drinking any water.

James Lawrence. A man who has completed 50 ironman races in 50 consecutive days, across 50 different states. The ironman is one of the most grueling tests of endurance on its own, without the help of there being 50 of them in a row. For those unacquainted with an ironman race, it's just a mere 2.4 mile swim followed by a 112 mile bike ride followed by a full length marathon at 26.2 miles. No biggie, just 50 of those. In a row. On the road. Goddamn.

Ross Edgley. A man who has swam around the entirety of Great Britain–a total of 1,780 miles (2,860 kilometers)–over the course of 157 days on a typical cycle of six hours of swimming followed by six hours of rest. Need I say anything more about this one?

There are people on this planet who can break stone with their hands, there are people on this planet who can jump over five feet in the air, people that can run as fast as the speed limit in a neighborhood, people that can run for as long as the amount of time it takes for the Earth to rotate about its axis, and people that can quite literally pull multi-ton airplanes with ropes attached.

The body is able to withstand extreme heat just as well as it can withstand extreme cold. It can go weeks without food and days without water or sleep. It can survive off of eating just meat, just as well as it can survive off of eating just plants. It can make tools that enable it to take down any beast of any size, and is equipped with a stomach that can digest just about anything that it does. It has a fail-safe adrenaline system that can turn on in a fraction of a second that can give us either superhuman strength in the short term, or endurance beyond our normal capability in the long term. It has an immune system that protects it against millions of foreign invaders, many of which it has never seen before. It has a nervous system that allows for such fine motor control that it's able to cut the skin off of the outside of a grape while also being able to crush an apple with the same hand. It has a visual system that is able to process millions of colors and textures at once, an auditory system that can detect even the slightest breaking of twigs, and an olfactory system that... well, the nose isn't too spectacular, but it's still pretty cool.

Regardless of whether or not your system of beliefs that has brought you to this point is based on evolution or creation, there's no denying the fact that mankind is a highly advanced, highly capable species of the animal kingdom that has a body that has helped it reach the heights that it has.

Generally speaking, the body's learning process is most optimized during repetition as far detached from the mind as possible. That is to say, the body, being good at its own set of tasks, and the mind, being good at a different set of tasks, work best at their own set of tasks when they're as far away from the other as possible. We lift best when the mind is empty, and we think best when the body is exercised and fed.

Any time that's dedicated towards focused repetition in regard to any physical activity under the sun, and one is guaranteed to see an increase in their capability of performing that activity again in the future. On top of this simple methodology that's used by the body as a way for it to get better at any activity that it wishes to, once clear-cut competence has been achieved, recall of being able to perform that specific activity again in the future becomes practically automatic. It might take a few tries to fully recall the movement pattern–depending on the amount of time that's passed since the initial learning process–but, in general, once learned, always learned. And so, in this way, the body's memory is essentially infallible and endless.

Theory is always more useful with practice though, so, here's another chance for you to participate in another one of my little experiments; except, this one doesn't come with the cost of a false wave of hope.

Give me just five minutes of your time and effort, and I will (hopefully) teach you a new movement that you've probably never learned before. And, when I say me teach you, I mean, you teach yourself. And, when I say you teach yourself, I mean, your body teach itself; no thought required.

Okay, here we go. Standing up, both feet on the ground. Feet not touching, but fairly close together. Slowly rock from side to side and feel your hips loosen up just a bit. Feel the weight shift from the left side of your feet, to the middle of your feet, and then to the right side of your feet.

Feel how much there is to feel just from standing still and shifting your attention to what your feet are currently feeling as you sway back and forth, both internally and externally.

As you stand there, balancing in the middle of your feet, there should be, in particular, three parts of each foot that are making contact with the ground. The toes, the thick pad right before the toes, and the heel. Forgetting about the toes, just focus on the pads and the heels of your feet. To accustom yourself to feeling them even more, rock back and forth on the heels and pads of your feet. Do this a few times and let the body find a natural rhythm that it sways to; first on pads, then on heels, then on pads, then on heels.

Now, standing still, with your left foot, go up onto the pad while keeping the right foot flat on the ground. Go up high enough on that pad with the left foot so that if you look down, you can't see your left foot because your knee is in the way.

Finding your balance, swap the state of your feet; left foot flat now, and right foot arched on its pad. Swap the state of your feet back and forth at the same time for a few repetitions, and, again, let the body find a natural rhythm to the motion.

Now, standing still again, both feet flat on the ground, go back to doing the rhythmic motion of rocking back on forth between the heels and the pads of your feet. Up on the pads, then catch on the heels. Do this a few times, and then go back to the other rhythmic motion, which was swapping between one foot being flat and the other one being arched up on its pad. Do this a few times as well, and then go back to the stance with the left foot arched on its pad and the right foot flat on the ground.

This might feel weird at first, but, keeping neutral repetition with no attachment to the end result in mind, keep the position of both of your feet exactly how they are, and drag your right foot back as far as you can, pausing in this split squat stance with the left foot still arched. Now, keeping that same stance, swap the state of your feet; left foot flat, right foot on pad. Then, do the same thing you just did with your right foot now with your left foot; drag it back as far as possible while keeping both feet in the same position that they're already in.

Rinse and repeat, a little wax on, wax off, and within five minutes of neutral repetition, you now know how to crudely moonwalk. Within fifteen minutes, that crude turns into average, and, within an hour or two, that average turns into well above average.

From there, the moonwalking oyster is in the palm of your hands, as the more time that's spent on repetition leads further down the path of eventual mastery.

When it comes to the vast spread of capability that the human body possesses, one can't help but take a second look at the lifestyles that we've been convinced of are the new norm in modern day society. Without even bringing the mind into the conversation, an average day of the week for a working class citizen has very little to do with the amazing hardwired architecture that we all come naturally equipped with.

We wake up, sit at a table for breakfast, sit in our car to go to work, sit at a desk where we stare at a screen, sit in our car to come back from work, and then take a load off of our challenging day of sitting by sitting in a recliner so that we can spend our time staring at another screen.

Our bodies were bred from–and still belong to–the natural world, and, much to many of our chagrin, still operate as such. The lifestyles that have become the default in our society are a slap in the face and a kick to the balls to the true demands of the body; the demands that aren't governed by arbitrary rule sets sustained by bureaucracy.

We've been convinced that it's all of the red meat, egg yolks, and salt packets that are causing all of the heart disease, body ailments, and cancer in the general population, and not the sitting and stagnation and screen staring that we are all constantly doing. And that, the answers to all of these questions aren't going to be the simple ones of getting up and moving our bodies around for five fucking minutes, but instead, are going to be the ones that are marketed to us by our own personal practitioners when we ask them why we all collectively feel like shit.

In turn, we've been forced to come up with coping mechanisms that are even more complex than the problems that we're coping from. We poison our bodies with our own personalized choice of flavored ethanol, we have psychiatrists handing out day-meds, night-meds, mid-meds, tranquilizers, benzos, barbiturates, and amphetamines, we've gotten Gen Z addicted to TikTok like the Millennials are to prozac like the Boomers are to painkillers, and we have reached a tipping point as to what else can be put into our bodies to handle the reality that society faces us with outside of our doors.

The cure is simple, it always has been. It's one where we return to a lifestyle that suits the architecture that makes us who we are. The route to get there, is not. And, as much as I wish I was the one with all of the answers, I actually don't, because that sounds like one hell of an endeavor and I could really use a fucking nap. `It's time for someone else to grab the baton.`

The story of the mind shares some similarities with that of the body, but differs in one large way. Both the body and the mind have been selected for over time to be the complex beasts that they are, but the mind has relatively recently jumped over a hurdle that has put it on a whole new level of capability when compared to that of its ancestry.

The body is strong, it's always been strong. The mind is smart, it's always been smart. But, as of recently, the mind just got *r e a l l y* smart. So smart, that it has developed a new ability. It has developed the ability to become aware of itself.

Self-awareness, a process belonging to the mind, is exactly that; the awareness of self. It is a mind and a body that's having this conversation about minds and bodies, and it is a mind that is referring to itself as "the mind."

With this recent evolutionary ascent, the doors have opened up to all new sorts of capability for us. We have an incredible amount to discover when it comes to just finding the limits of what we are able to learn, much less the nearly infinite amount of content that we are able to learn about. But, this new capability doesn't come without us experiencing some growing pains along the way.

This inevitable exploration–fueled by innate curiosity–also comes with the cost of us having to deal with the unknowns that we come across; and, in the unknowns that the mind has recently been wading its way through, there are many traps that it has found itself prey to. Traps that will require time, energy, and selection to get past; time, energy, and selection that aren't in our current timelines just yet.

Any step that we take, any ability that we discover, and any new path that we tread, comes with this subtle but sure implication of us having to experience the latter portion of trial and error in abundance. So, in this way, the mind's intelligence and capability relative to what it *can* do is low. I can't help but wonder, what is the human mind truly capable of? What are some of the things that we might imagine will become better over time, compared to where they are now on our spectrum of capability?

For one, the biology of the body presents the mind with needless hurdles that it has to constantly jump over; needless hurdles that can't just simply be thought their way out of. Things like mood. Things like not getting a good night's sleep. Things like saying something mean to someone just because of the chronic lower back pain that you've been experiencing for over a decade. All of these examples, and so many more, exemplify some of the limitations on what the mind can do in its purest form; a state of pure thinking.

Instead of being able to think with clarity and precision, we get hungry, and all of the sudden we turn into angry Karens that are looking at the world through a lens of anger and frustration that's devoid of objectivity. It was Dr. Sapolsky who famously referenced a very interesting study that concluded that the single greatest predictor of whether or not a judge amongst a parole sentencing board was to rule positively or negatively towards the potential

parolee had nothing to do with the actual details of the specific case, but was instead best predicted by the amount of hours it had been since the judge had last eaten lunch.

Here we are, thinking that we're all high and mighty with our morals and ethics and laws and the sort, and yet, here we have someone who has devoted their entire life's arc to judge accordingly and fairly to a system of law that exists without human emotion, only to have their life's mission stripped away from them because of a rumbling tummy.

The mood patterns that our bodies exhibit are constantly limiting the full, unbroken potential that the mind has to offer. Telling a depressed person to think clearly is just as useful as telling someone with a flourishing life to do nothing with their time. Our minds are unable to change the biology of their host bodies at a moment's notice, even when they know that–in theory–they can; an aspect of the mind that we might imagine seeing some change in over the course of our species' existence.

We can spend a whole lot of time studying which neurotransmitters are associated with which desired states, and which hormones give rise to which positive feelings vs. which negative ones, and yet, we still aren't able to switch back and forth freely between these bodily states. With the made up crypto story, your mind influenced its body in a quick yet powerful way that I can't help but imagine felt pretty good (initially, that is). Why can't it do this without the aid of an external story?

If my mind can affect my body, why does it have to rely on pills to keep serotonin around for longer? Why can't it just tell my body to release more serotonin; or have it stay around in the synapses for longer? We know of what types of situations will cause stress before they happen, we know if a stimulus is going to bring us pain vs. euphoria, and we can know of what bodily ideals exist in theory, and yet, lack the ability to be able to think our way there.

Might this change in two million years' time from now? Assuming that we haven't nuked ourselves out of existence by then, it might very well be the case that, given enough time, an ability that gets selected for within our species is one where the mind is able to block out any negative internal feedback from ever crossing into its perception, especially during times of acute stress; e.g. when getting sober, or after breaking a bone, or even after a break up.

One can't help but think of other random mutations that would lead to vast changes in the way that we perceive reality. Maybe our dreams become completely controllable as a default. Maybe the mind is able to stay awake and alert during the times that it's sleeping, allowing us to think all day and all night. Maybe our minds learn to communicate strictly in the nonphysical with no language, drawings, or facial expressions needed. All of these, and countless other possibilities that might exist in the future of our species, could all possibly change within an evolutionary blink of the eye.

But, despite all of this potential for more potential that makes the mind look rudimentary, immature, and error-prone, in every other regard, it is the complete opposite.

The intro into what the mind is truly capable of doing is extremely similar to that of the body. For one, it doesn't matter if our abilities are God-given or chiseled out by evolution, there are still going to be some indisputable aspects of the mind that we can all agree upon. When we shift our perspective from what it can be, to instead what it is, the incredible complexity of the mind that's shown is utterly beautiful.

The mind is capable of such an immense amount of things that trying to create a comprehensive list of all that it can do would be a foolish endeavor. And besides, trying to explicitly list all of its abilities isn't exactly as clean-cut as listing out all the abilities that the body possesses. With the body, it's easy to group specific movement patterns that occur in a similar context with one word labels that encompass all of the variability. "Swimming" doesn't just refer to one specific movement pattern for one specific person, but to all of the movement patterns of all the people that happen in the same context of being in some body of water and deliberately moving in some direction.

With the mind, this is much more difficult. The body, containing over 600 skeletal muscles, and being able to perform in hundreds of thousands of different scenarios, makes for an incredible amount of permutations of different muscle activation sequences. But with the mind? We're talking about billions upon billions upon billions of neuron connections, with millions upon millions upon millions of networks consisting of those same neuron connections. The combination space of all that the mind can perform in is so large that the literal entity coming up with it can't even process it fully.

We do throw around some very loose labels for general processes, but in the act of doing so, we lose some of the true beauty of all the complexity that is happening behind the scenes. We use vague words like memory, learning, concentration, prediction, visualization, computation, and other terms of this sort in order to convey meaning in short and efficient ways; but each of these terms refers to a countless number of neuronal networks doing very specific things at very specific times, all with integration that happens so fluidly that it goes completely unnoticed by the conscious mind that is hosting these processes.

Because of this inability for us to exhaustively depict what the mind can do without taking away from the elegance of its extreme convolutedness, here are instead just a few things that it has managed to accomplish in the most recent blip of its evolutionary existence.

It has built a particle accelerator that smashes together subatomic particles at speeds approaching our universal ceiling of speeds; all without us being able to see any of it.

It has taken a picture of a space object that's millions of light years away from us; a space object that emits and reflects exactly zero lightwaves.

It has discovered short and concise ways to universally represent the underlying laws that govern how our universe works; and, sometimes, can be as

simple as drawing just a couple of lines. A couple of lines that are understood by the majority of eight billion people living anywhere on this planet; see: +, =.

It has figured out a way to engineer on the scale of both nanometers and megameters, with robust architecture that has, and can, last for centuries–no matter the scale of size.

It has created a reliable and consistent method for harnessing the supreme power that comes from splitting atoms in half, only to later on learn how to fuse them together for an even greater display of omnipotent dominance.

It is on the brink of creating global internet access that's available to anyone, anywhere on this planet, by way of shooting beams of light to satellites that are spinning around our globe so fast that they complete full rotations around it every 90 minutes. An internet access that would have a bandwidth rate allowing for anyone ever to download every single one of our entire DNA sequences in just a few minutes' time.

And, it has created a global surveillance system of little rectangular black mirrors that we all voluntarily carry around in our pockets as they track our every move, mood, message, memory, and moon cycle. One that possesses such an enticing stimulus for users to join under their own deliberation by way of never-ending, dopamine-exploiting media, that individuals around the globe have opted in by the masses; all within just 50 years of us creating the internet.

This is just to name some–*some*–of the things that the mind has done, and can do. Despite the imperfections that come from its relative infancy in other domains, in the domains that it can perform in, it can perform in exceptionally well.

With the tools of memory, language, and highly advanced motor control at our disposal, our minds have well outpaced the biologies that host them. Our knees haven't even adapted to lateral stress, and yet, our minds were able to go from airborne to the surface of the moon in less than 100 years.

A few hundred years ago, people would dedicate their entire lives, careers, and livelihoods towards learning one specific branch of all there was to study. Now, we have the knowledge of just about everyone, ever, refined over thousands of years, just chillin' in our pockets behind a glass screen that is accessible by only a few small movements of our eyes and thumbs.

It's borderline inconceivable to think of what the collective mind has been able to achieve once it was able to take the physical health of our collective bodies as certain by domineering its environment as much as it has.

A particular aspect of the mind's behavior that's worth mentioning is the blurry contrast between the different modes of reasoning that it can use to make sense of what's happening around it. Arbitrarily, they can be nondiscretely categorized into two large buckets; rationalization vs. logical systems.

Rationalization basically says that anything, ever, happened because I said so. Why? Well, I just told you; because I said so, that's why.

In a good mood, my mind tells me that the person who cut me off in traffic must really be in a hurry to get somewhere. In a bad mood, my mind tells me that that person can fucking suffer in hell for the rest of eternity for wasting eight seconds of my life.

Rationalization provides an imperfect human with an imperfect system to help explain what is constantly happening around it at all times; one that needs no verifying by any outside party. It's most often used as a short-term reasoning tool that is meant solely for the moment that it gets summoned into, validating the current needs and feelings of the human who defaults to this approach as a means of resolving any cognitive dissonance that they are experiencing in any given moment.

The imperfectness of rationalization is well contrasted with a system of thought that belongs in a complete opposite direction: the concept of a logical system.

Alternative to rationalization, a logical system can be looked at from any angle and provide the same consistent feedback, no matter the set of eyes or time of viewing. It's a reliable way to steady-state a system of thinking by formalizing it into a format that is both accessible and agreeable to all (well, to most). For example: $1 + 3 =$ what? Need I say more?

Logical systems are far from perfect, as they're still going to be created by imperfect creatures. An example of how they might fall short can be seen from a real life example of something that happened in the relatively recent history of the–what we often like to call–"civilized" *Homo sapien*.

Just over 300 years ago, happening in the very new United States by the not-so-very-new British land snatchers, there existed some established colonies where women were tied to stakes and burned alive because of the belief in the logical system claiming that they were witches.

Witches. In the 1600s; witches. By this time, Kepler had already published his Laws of Planetary Motion that help explain how that which we can't even see operates, and what were the brand new settlers of the grand ole US of A doing? They were burning women alive. Oh wait, I'm sorry, witches. They were burning witches alive. Why? Because that's what you do to witches. You burn them. Alive.

Makes sense to me; and, apparently, to many other people at the time as well. Regardless of the day, time, or mood that the burning took place, the belief remained the same; those women were tied up and burned alive because they were labeled once and forever as being the vile witches that they were.

Which just goes to show one of the cons of using logical systems in general; I never said that the logic has to be sound.

The introduction to the Me is where things can start to get a little tricky. Both the body and the mind have relatively clear and tangible bounds. Anyone who's able to perceive these words must also know what the body and the mind feel like, because anyone who's perceiving them must also have some functionality of both in order to do so. But, the Me isn't so much the same.

The most accessible way for someone to feel this feeling of the spirit–without the aid of any external resources–is to have them go into a private bathroom and stare at themselves in the mirror for ten minutes straight. No distractions, no people around, no music playing, no phone in pocket, no fidget toy in hand. Just looking, observing, and feeling. And, if they're able to last for that full ten minutes without any outside stimulation, I can guarantee that they'll come out of that experience knowing more about this sensation that I'm calling the Me than before they went in.

Or they can just try DMT. Dealer's choice really.

Up until this point, there has been no incompatibility with any of the perspectives presented thus far. Time always moves forward, sure, Nature is a host of both carbon-based and non-carbon-based life forms existing in time and space, okay yeah, human beings fit inside of this bubble of Nature with bodies and minds that may or may not be completely out of our control, okay why not, and, we also have a soul that is able to step outside of all of these perspectives presented here and process everything that is happening in real time; sí, sí, lo que digas. All of these ideas, stacking upon each other simply, smoothly, and (hopefully) intuitively.

But, moving forward, let's just say that we were to head in the direction of supposing that this abstract entity loosely defined as the Me actually does have some form of control over its own body and mind. If this hypothetical path is one that we end up taking, it might be useful to proactively account for the possible confusion that could develop by pre-creating another logical system that fits right on top of the ones already described in this dictionary of perspectives.

By default, we say that no choice exists in this universe that is measurable by us in any way. The thoughts we have, the feelings we feel, the actions we take, the perspectives we believe in, all out of our control or say. But, what if instead of trying to constantly control the body and the mind that make us up, we were to just simply observe them as if they were anyone else's?

If Me–*the* Me–truly believes that the factors that went into determining its own individual body and mind that make it up were–and *are*–always out of its control, then surely, with the power of this third point of view, we would be able to study our own bodies and minds without any guidance as to what or how they go about doing what they do.

By being able to learn about ourselves by taking this perch way up high on a pillar called the "self"–pretending as if we weren't ourselves–we are able to begin **understanding** how we *really* are, instead of the narrative that we've come up with **telling** us who we *think* we are.

But then, we realize that even if the Me is able to learn about–and even eventually influence–the behavior of its constituent parts, this "choice" that it's exhibiting over its newly understood body and mind is still no choice at all, because the Me is still defined by the two parts that are forever acting in accordance to that which is completely out of its control.

Basically, it's all just one big circle jerk here, where the Me has no say over its own body and mind, until it does–once it realizes that it doesn't–but actually it really doesn't, because the stack that is itself was formed by factors that were always outside of its control; thus meaning that all of the desires that it will ever have over its own body and mind are also going to be controlled by that which is uncontrollable.

So then... do we have choice? Do we not have choice? Does free will exist? Well, it's complicated. But, to boil it all down to just a single sentence: if we say that we do, then we do; even if we don't.

Now, this conclusion is great and all, but, getting to the protein of this sentiment, how does the Me actually exhibit this (possibly pseudo) choice over its own body and mind?

The answer to this question is deliberately condensed to a single limit point that now belongs next to the other entries in this macroscale construct of beliefs; we say that the Me has exactly one means of control over the two systems that it is now defined to be the puppet master of: **the Me is the decider of intent.**

A concept that will be of much more importance later on, we partially define the Me as having just a single ability that is meant to open the doors to infinitely more. Some might call it attention, others might prefer the word focus, but, regardless of the idea's label, the concept is far from arbitrary. Intent is such a common feeling that everyone has felt it at some point during their lives, and, most likely *is* feeling it in some form on a daily basis.

`For an example of what I mean, check this out; after you read this sentence, your intent will be focused on the way that you are currently breathing. After you read this next sentence, your intent will be focused entirely on your blinking rate. And, after you read this last sentence, your intent will be dead set on waiting to react to the words that I've typed out here on the page as I manipulate your attention in real time.`

More importantly than the choice of words, when I say that the Me is the "decider of intent," the root concept that I'm really trying to get at is this notion of all of us having this ability to shift our attention in any given moment to something that's not currently being focused on; even if it's for a very short amount of time, even if it's just a trivial refocusing onto something else that matters even less, and, even if all of the language that I'm using to describe this topic is completely different from the language that you yourself use to understand it.

Initially, it might seem a little counterintuitive as to why we would want to limit the Me's possible action space to just a single point–especially when we seemingly have the ability to define it to be so much more–but, that's exactly what this final set of stories is meant to make complete.

A Coordinate Change

We've come quite far into this journey through these theories of thought, so, it might be helpful to do a quick recap of the foundation that has been built along the way.

Where did we start? Time; always moving in the same direction and continuously so. And–for humans–with time, comes space. Space; a physical arena for physical things to happen. Happening in space–over time–we have Nature. Nature; a system of processes that abides by fixed rule sets within the world of "time" and "space." And finally, within Nature, there's us; the human being. The human being; a body, a mind, and a spirit. All three of which are incredible.

This is where we are. Where do we go from here?

We go all the way back to the beginning, with time. Except, now, we take a look at it from a different point of view.

We start by looking at events that have already happened in the past, and then immediately stop once we realize that, a) we're wasting our time here since the effect that was forced out of us during whatever moment in time that whatever it was that had happened to us in has already been chewed, swallowed, and digested by the inherent modes of communication within each of our own bodies, minds, and souls, b) we're directly taking away time from our current selves that could otherwise be spent thinking about, oh I don't know, maybe literally anything else, and c) how many times do we actually find joy in analyzing what we've already done when compared to the amount of joy when manifesting what is to come?

So then, naturally, we take a step forward into the land of the future to see what's going on up there, only to promptly leave upon finding out that, d) it's kind of fucking scary when you're in a place where you have absolutely no clue as to what's going on, e) it doesn't help that Future always seems to be hanging out with their good friend Uncertainty (yes, the same Uncertainty who is cousins with Loss of Control; small world right?), and f) I don't even know why the fuck we decided to come up here in the first place.

Thus, g) we find ourselves beginning to philosophically converge to just a single moment in time that remains as having any lasting importance to us at

all; the moment that is h)appening right now.

Now, if we were to keep on saying things, we might want to say that this train of thought pairs beautifully with yet another recently established train of thought that just so happens to also collapse down to just a single point; the universal feeling that we each uniquely categorize as something along the lines of "awareness," "focus," "attention," "mental direction," "stream of consciousness," or anything else that makes sense to anyone ever, that represents a gateway to the infinite for the same group of anyone ever.

Having the feeling that there's still more sayings to be said, we can then add to the subject matter by sprinkling in a smidgen of spice to these stories by selecting another series of sentences that also squeeze down to a singular statement of significance; a sensible stopping point that's being sponsored by the stack of beliefs set forth by this whole section-wide sentiment of time, space, Nature, souls, so on and so forth, by saying that, we–the mammals of this earth that we have become–breathe, every single minute, of every single day, of every single year, of every single century, of every single civilization, every single time, without fail, 100 times out of 100, we breathe.

And, because we breathe, we're now left with this beautiful triplet of ideas that combines one moment with one theory with just one practice that works for as many people as could possibly be herded together into a single hypothetical auditorium of abstraction; one that can be summed up by a simple spotlighting of the fact that we each have this direct means of control over our realities that's available to us on any day–in any phase–no matter the maze, daze, or perpetual haze–requiring no praise or repeated phrase–and not just for the fortunate fated, praised and faved, students of A's, but also for the blamed, shamed, and defamed, castaway runaways who've been told that they have distasteful traits displayed in disgraceful ways.

And thus, we finally get to finish saying all of these sayings by saying that the only thing left to say is that... there's really not that much left to say.

One moment, one action, one guarantee; for you, for me, for all.

This exists. Forever.

We've now arrived at a conclusion that will establish itself as the new point of origin for an entirely different coordinate system from the one that humanity has been using for as long as humanity can remember. Because of this, we now have the ability to map every seed of thought that could ever exist in this old garden of weeds to an entirely new set of dimensions that has its center pinned at the singular point that is the triplet of ideas that make up the protein of this last sequence of stories that I wish to share with you; the same ones that promise a means of control to a population of everyone–on a timescale of all of it–by doing nothing other than recognizing that anyone, ever, has the ability to shift their awareness towards their own breath in any moment, ever.

However, I'd imagine that this would be a fairly challenging thing to do without an initial understanding of exactly what it is that we're trying to change, so, we might as well start by explicitly describing the societal soup that we have all been subconsciously sipping on since the dawn of modern day society; the story that goes by the name of Mother Culture.

Here we are, human beings, mankind. Most of us here believe that God is the almighty power that gave us this experience of life, but, origin belief plays no role in this perspective. To us, life, is like so.

As mankind, it is our duty to work. We start when we're young, and work far into our old age, to the point where our bodies begin to break, our minds start to slip, and our motivations have long dwindled to dust; it's then, and only then, that we get to sit back and relax as we're ever-so-rightfully rewarded with the ultimate opportunity to relish, rejoice, and reflect on the fact that we've finally made it to the whole point of this thing that we call life: we've retired.

And, as we await our accomplishment of reaching this pinnacular permastate of nirvana, it's imperative that we must not forget to keep our heads up when times get tough, learn how to pick ourselves up when we find ourselves down, and always–ALWAYS–push through the pain; because we're warriors, not pussies. And warriors, work.

This is the current default that is reinforced in public schools, this is the current default that gets selected for in capitalistic work environments, and this is the current default that gets shoved down our throats from the moment that we're born until the moment that we die; work hard, and then let the work do the rest.

Oh, my friend... how times have changed.

Before reframing this antiquated point of view into something a little bit more modern, it might be helpful to first consider why we even feel the need to change this viewpoint at all.

When we use this particular Mother Culture backdrop for how we reason about everything that's happening around us, it's easy to discredit entire generations by shaming them for what they didn't seemingly *choose* to do, instead of making an attempt to understand what has actually *happened* to them. We invent this cause and effect relationship in our minds where anytime a person doesn't fit inside of this grand societal narrative of work is life, life is work–no matter what the reason may be–it means that there's something "wrong," or "problematic," or even "dysfunctional" about them that needs **fixing**.

But, in the bubble of Nature that we belong to, the word "problem" doesn't hold nearly as much weight as it does in human-land. Problems don't exist to the crabs with only one claw, problems don't exist to the dogs without tails, and problems don't exist to the plants that don't bloom, because, what's the problem? The fact that they were shaped by the universe in the exact way that they were? The fact that, even after experiencing a non-negligible setback during their experience of life, they continued to exist as a living showcase of the biologically beautiful display that is environmentally induced adaptation? Or, maybe because they've unknowingly–yet trivially–rejected someone's pessimistic attempt at projecting their own obstacles onto an entity that can't even defend itself with language? Is that the problem?

This world that we are currently living in has changed quite a bit from how it used to be not too long ago. It's no longer about being able to hunt different types of prey, or being able to digest different types of food, or traverse different types of terrain, or blend whatever natural medicinal cocktails for whatever differing purposes from whatever surrounding flora that exists alongside of whatever differing fauna. It's no longer about living in a close-knit community of peers that you genuinely care about, with a role that actually matters, with wildlife that you depend upon, with land that nourishes you, with clean water that sustains you, and with connections to the grand planetary ecosystem that will always remain to be the *Homo sapien's* most immediate god.

Instead, it's now about being able to type the same things into the same programs in the same computers in the same settings, sitting in the same spots with the same postures around the same people eating the same lunch at the same time, all while rotting in the same climate-controlled, square-box, LED-lit, concrete facilities made out of misery and Microsoft Excel spreadsheets.

It's now about being able to take the same roads in the same cars to the same stores, seeing the same sights, parking in the same spots, and getting the same groceries down the same aisles on the same days at the same times, where constant buzzing, beeping, and hubbub is to be expected, accepted, and non-debative as the new societal norm; just so we can get back to the same abode to lay in the same bed in the same ways, wearing the same pajamas, watching the same TV that's playing the same pre-programmed, passé, and predictable programs of prearranged lengths of time that even tell us when to laugh, when to clap, and when to cry.

And yet, despite some of us being able to feel for ourselves that this adaptation to non-adaptation is one that is directly leading to the internal suffering that we are all constantly facing, we are the ones that are deemed problematic. We are the ones that are medical mysteries, we are the ones that nothing seems to work for, and we are the ones that remain to be off when everything else seems to be on. Labeled once and forever by the self-designated labelers who ironically never feel the need to self-label, we're given just enough of a personal description that also just so happens to fit nicely and neatly on each of our eventual, untimely tombstones: unable to be, here lies a person that is subpar; assistance to be required.

Personally, I feel like it's about time that we start looking at humanity from a different point of view. So, in an attempt to get the conversation started, maybe it could look something like this.

Here we are, human beings, mankind. Most of us here believe that God is the almighty power that gave us this experience of life, but, origin belief plays no role in this perspective. To us, life, is like so.

As mankind, it is not our duty to do a single goddamn thing. We do, as we do–as Nature has us do–without the need of any artificial rationalization placed on top of why we do what we do. And, when we do try and assume why we do what we do, we do whatever our current mind wants to, placating our dissonance through whatever askew, make-do–only sometimes tried-and-true–self-soothes that are up for no debate and/or re-review; where we entertain both woo-hoo, say-yes-to attitudes as well as boo-hoo, devalued dim views in order to subconsciously subdue any bird's-eye viewed atypical behavioral cues happening because of our own self-perceived, misconstrued worldviews–no matter the cast, crew, average IQ, or whatever deeply engrained scar tissue.

In reality, what we do–what we ***r e a l l y*** do–is we spit in the face of our ancestors, siphon our planet's resources for profit, completely exterminate other species of life from this earth while putting the rest in cages to poke, prod, and profit from, casually commit genocide on our own by way of any means necessary, mercilessly erase entire ecosystems that are (*were*) sustaining the history of carbon-based life forms here on Earth seemingly overnight by principle of hey we want that so it's ours now, turn the oceans that bring us our very life into cesspools of symbolism for the cancer that *Homo sapiens* have become, pulverize the forests because who needs them, pollute the air because if we can't see it how important can it be, poison the soil because fuck soil, plow through the atmospheric ozone layer because might as well while we're out fucking soil, pillage anything that breathes while heartlessly punishing any resistance because at this point we're really just bored, and, creatively find ways to continue pursuing our ultimate goal of aspiring to be akin to the almighty heroes set forth by the trailblazing animals living on Orwell's farm; but, most of all, we have set a world on fire and are looking around to see who's to blame. Motherfuckers, it's us.

Now, that's just something that I *would* say if I was to try and spark a pilot light in somebody reading this to do that thing that they've been thinking about doing for awhile now; but, I'm not much of a politics guy myself so I think I'll just stay out of this one.

But I digress, for the very last time, because discussing policy isn't nearly as important as getting back to the root cause of why I felt the incessant need to get this message out to you.

With all of the prerequisites now out of the way, I can finally get to the whole point of this thing by revealing the answer to the original question that this entire dialogue is built on top of... how do you go about solving the problem of obsessive thought?

Well... that's just the thing. You don't.

You don't solve a problem that isn't meant to be solved; you reframe it into something else that is. And, as for how you might go about that?

Well... isn't it obvious by now?

You use a lens; a window into the past, the present, and the future that can be used to understand, reason, and infer.

You develop a map; a topology of terrain for the fields of your mind that can store as much information as information is desired.

You build a home; a place of comfort that doesn't need a location, a lock, or a monthly payment.

You shape a story; a narrative that gives you a means of control in an otherwise uncontrollable universe.

And, you forge an identity; one that's made for you, by you, that gives meaning to you and only you.

What you do is you create a brand new groove; one that has a biologically permanent trigger that's available to anyone, anytime, anywhere, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. A groove as simple as, oh I don't know, taking a breath in, holding it for four seconds, and then thinking of nothing other than just four dots; a groove of a groove that has just been watered for the first time, marking this moment as the anniversary date for a new train of thought that belongs to a new school of thinking that I can only hope brings you as much peace as it has brought to me.

But what you do–what you *really* do–is you do your best to convince as many people as possible that it is not them that failed the system, but rather the

system that failed them. You try and convince them that they are not the ones who are incompetent, that they are not the ones who are beyond repair, that they are not the ones whose brains need solving, whose behaviors need changing, whose traits need labeling, or whose identities must be forever branded by whatever clinical diagnoses have been dished out to them like candy to trick-or-treating children on Halloween night; diagnoses that will follow them around for all future doctor visits, parent phone calls, and friend-led, armchair-therapy sessions as the ultimate default for any hair of imperfection when viewed from the outside-in; really just doing your best to convince them that a world made for others, by others, without any others, is naturally made to not be friendly towards any of the others.

Really though, what you do, what you *actually* do, is you assure them that their voices are heard, their uniqueness is seen, their feelings are valid, their contributions are overlooked, their wisdom is irreplaceable, and that their presence *is* in fact serving a purpose–whether they know of it or not; actually causing real change for real people living in a real world with real experiences, real feelings, and real ideas that are just as real as anybody else's real.

But I mean, realistically, what you do–and the only thing that you *can* do–is you give someone else hope in an otherwise hopeless world by sharing a message of love and not war, by modeling it for yourself in your own way for others to see for themselves, and by doing your best to make sure that even just a single other living soul in this plane of existence knows that someone–**ANY**one–sees them as the unique, inspiring, and beautiful individual that they have become; accepting them for exactly where they are instead of where they ought to be.

No but seriously, what you do–what you ***have*** to do–is you have to drop this whole fictional character act about gods, apples, and some guy named Joe, and finish an actual book with just a single sentence that is meant to carry the weight of all the words that have come before it. And so, having no option left at this point, here's my best attempt:

Love yourself; you are yourself.

Salud.

I hope to see you all on the other side, where one of you fuckers owes me a shot of vodka.

□

To sum up my entire book into just a single sentence for all you dirty cheats that skipped ahead (or you poor souls who are still looking for that bitcoin link)... don't worry, just breathe; it's the only thing that you can do.

As for the rest? Well, the rest is the rest.

It's time for you to find out for yourself.

Enjoy

:)

Closing remarks

"Quick, everyone turn around! The whole thing was just a money grab!" Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't; all I know is that being broke isn't as much fun as you might think it is. That being said, no one likes a beggar nowadays, so I'll leave you with a quote instead of a plea...

"I do it for the money, man I am such a hooker,
and freedom was my girl, until they fucking took her"
- Lil' Wayne

Church.

Venmo / PayPal / Cash app: @DominicVicharelli
Bitcoin wallet: bc1qcq8dedxjxrhjkt0pw2q4g2wvemmcfpt8hyuz56

If you got here by reading this book from start to finish, a genuine thank you from my heart to yours. Without an audience that's willing to listen to all of my absurdistic, bombaciubastic, charismæticulous dominic-isms, every feeling given (hypothetically) is just kiboshed lacklusterly, making my main message's meaning's manifestation mostly moot, null, or perhaps, questionably romanticized; suiting this universe's version where xenophobia yields zero-zenithed, zodiac-zombified, zest-zapping zealotry. You xnow?

If you instead got here by skipping over the entire text because you already knew that it was absolutely perfect in every way, shape, and form possible without even having to read a single word of it–and are just scratching at the neck to find a donation link so that you can dump your entire life savings into the wallet of someone who you've never even met before–then thank you for coming to your senses early on without having to waste either of our time.

And finally, for anyone who just has something to say, say it. I'm all ears.

paradigmshift.dv@gmail.com

Have a great life everybody; it's time for me to do so myself.

∴

