

Psoid Froid

Essentialized.

ATTENTION.

COMPLEXITY.

HYPER-

COPING.

ESSENTIALIZED. (Sample)

MODERN LIFE IS COMPLEX. WHY? IT'S... COMPLICATED.

Over-the-top book analyzing the complexity that caused the Meaning Crisis. It also explores how people focus their attention in a world overwhelmed by superficial meaning and complexity. Fittingly, the book is made of scattershot essays. First, the book explains how the world became more complex. Second, it explains how we simplify things to deal with that complexity. Third, it showcases how those simplifications end up making the world more complex and making it harder to assign responsibility. In short, interpolation inhibits investigation. By the time you figure out what someone meant, they are no longer in the room. That makes dialectic solutions quite difficult—if we can't agree on rough definitions and basic facts.

The book also introduces a new psychological framework for satisfaction called The Fulfillment Games, based on a see-saw dynamic between control & release.

The official blurb is over. So now... The snake oil salesman pitch:

A BAWDY AND EXCITING TALE INTRODUCING A BRAND
NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY TO SHOWCASE THE
PITFALLS OF COMPLEXITY, RESPONSIBILITY, EDUCATION,
SADOMASOCHISM, AND MORE, PAINSTAKINGLY
DECORATED IN ORNATE LANGUAGE TO PLEASE THE
AESTHETIC, EMOTIONAL, SPIRITUAL, AND RATIONAL
SENSIBILITIES, TO BENEFIT A GLORIOUSLY FLAWED SOCIETY.
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THE GENERAL GIST

This book has a lot of flavour, but not everyone might like the taste.

That's fine, some people don't like sushi.

Do I understand those people?

Absolutely not.

Do I dislike those people?

No, why would I? More sushi for me!

The world isn't as we would like it to be. There are two main ways we can deal with this problem:

1. We can change our environment so it better fits us.
2. We can accept the environment as it is.

It's a dynamic between control & release, between a clenched fist and an open hand. If your fist is always clenched, you might feel powerful, but stress will spread throughout. If your hand is always open, you'll go where the wind blows—and you might not like the direction your life is heading. Thus fulfillment is a see-saw; you have the most fun when you go both ways.

Then, the book focuses on how the world became more complex and how we as a society deal with that complexity. It also argues this complexity and our ways of coping with complexity stand in the way of fulfillment.

In short, we expanded our control over the environment by extreme specialization which makes everything more complex. As individuals, it also makes us feel like we're constantly balancing on the edge of a knife; as if we're a tiny flame in an ever-encroaching dark forest.

It is a strange paradox: How can we collectively do so much, when our individual power always seems so small? We're not lazy nor stupid; there's just not enough time to do & learn things, and there's more to do & learn every day!

To cope with these problems, we simplify things down to their essence—to rules of thumb and abstractions. But there's another problem: You can simplify so much that you lose your ability to communicate. For example, you might call up a good friend and say:

'I need something to protect me from the rain and *wink* *wink* it's

my birthday in a couple of days...’

Perhaps your birthday present will be an umbrella, a raincoat, or—if your friend is feeling particularly generous—a car. All will protect you from the rain, but they’re obviously not the same thing.



Speaking of a car, it’s a truly magical thing: You just press a button, *vroom vroom*, and off you go. It’s a lot of fun until... It breaks.

So you go to a mechanic...

Who calls the manufacturer...

Who calls the supplier...

...Whose line is currently unavailable. ‘Please leave your message after the tone.’

It’s frustrating. When the car breaks down, it reveals the hidden complexity. Our modern society depends on a huge network of parts working together seamlessly. People and objects you don’t personally know nor understand, yet *must* put your trust in. Strangers, each with their own values, motivations, interests, and quirks.



Humanity is more powerful than ever.

With our collective power, we direct our destiny.

The supernatural is done and dusted—God is dead.

So who do we blame when things go wrong in our lives?

When everything that befalls you, good or bad, is something a Human
somewhere caused?

A Human whose name you'll never know.

A Human you can never curse or thank.

A cog, like you, in the ever-churning machine of Humanity.

A background hum drowning out your voice.

A drum unceasing.

Itself beaten.

Hoarse.

DEDICATED TO IGNAZ SEMMELWEIS

I want to highlight the silent hero Ignaz Semmelweis. He was a Hungarian doctor who popularized anti-infection procedures. Ignaz was not the type of guy you'd get a nice cup of tea with, but he might have saved your mother's life.

He observed that simply washing your hands reduced infections from 18% to 2%, and suggested his colleagues do the same. Did they immediately embrace his simple insight?

Quite the contrary, his colleagues initially mocked him; "why would washing my hands help prevent disease?", they said, "It does nothing to ameliorate an imbalance of the four humours..."

But Ignaz persisted. He published a book on his findings and responded with great passion to his critics; how could his fellow doctors not see that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure? Why did thousands and thousands of people need to suffer and die, if it could be prevented by simply washing your hands? Surely someone would notice the madness and finally listen?

His colleagues finally did listen and decided to take action. They declared he had a nervous breakdown, committed him to a mental asylum where he was beaten by the guards, and where he died of an infection shortly after.

Today, Ignaz Semmelweis is rightfully viewed as a medical pioneer that saved countless human lives. That's great and all, but it would have been better if he was recognized while still alive. Have things improved?

Well, yes and no. We live in an unprecedented time where information can be instantly spread over the globe, but that doesn't mean people would be convinced by good arguments—and adapt their behaviour. Why?

To begin, there are a lot of facts... Many of those facts happen to be opinions...

Some opinions make me feel bad about myself—those opinions are wrong.

Some of those opinions make me feel good and righteous like the Chihuahua you're about to see—those opinions are scientific.

Sure, you (or someone else) can double check the facts/opinions, but that makes me feel... Bored. The worst feeling of all.

Anyhow, the promised Chihuahua:



Portrayed: The Chihuahua basking in the glory of its own greatness.

ESSENTIALIZED.

CHAPTER 1: RAVINGS OF A MADMAN

Psoid Froid is a wordplay based on the misspelled words “Pseud”, short for pseudo-intellectual, and “Freud”, the psychoanalyst. Sigmund Freud’s ideas became so popular and widely accepted, we only remember his personal peccadilloes—and the remaining ravings of a madman.

VINO VIDI VICI

Only the fool has the power to speak truly...

Goodness gracious, why are people so quick to whinge & whine when something is said—out of line. Perhaps, too much wine?

No. The worst thing you ever said represents you the best. That is how depraved you are—if only you knew it!

We shall ban and protest everything we disagree with; everything potentially offensive—whether true or not—shall be made illegal or shall, at the very least, be socially shunned—the wet dream of Thatcher.

Thus, our popular entertainment sets new standards of inoffensive escapism—not even the gladiatorial arena, that beautiful touchstone of our common culture, is safe from critique. *Agh*, society is becoming more dull by the day! The bread is expensive and the games are lacking. Everyone's so bleak & dreary all the time. And whatever happened to being a reasonably content Human being?

I understand there is much to hate, but for heaven's sake, isn't there much to love also? Can we not be grateful for the things that *do* go right—and they are plenty. To pretend our current world is more miserable

than ever is a disservice to all those who have sacrificed and continue to sacrifice their lives for the greater good.

Emotions are an important factor in decision-making and passion is the impetus for perseverance—but to be angry about everything all the time it... *Well it must surely be exhausting.* Lighten up your life a tad, will you?



I was here to write philosophy and crack jokes—and I'm all out of jokes; comedians are in dire straits for the world has become a parody! Not to speak of philosophers who must, at all times, espouse the opposite of how people act. What is left for me? Poetry?

Hmph. Yes. Poetry.

POETRY OR SOME OTHER BULLOCKS

Say it simply, if possible. Or, in the words of a bloviator struck by mad cow disease: 'A coalescence of verbose convolution, veering on imperceptibility, impinges upon a plain proclamation an apparent profundity.' Dear reader, I promise you, if my prose becomes complicated, it is because I cannot state the idea any simpler — or am in dire need of style.

A dreadful ringing.

Oh, bother me not.

Slam the clock and sleep tightly!

Buzzing through the street, here and there with my chair.

I shall sit where I damn well please!

My belly-button gobbled up a whole lot of mutton!

Bobbing with my bodily buoy.
The bath can't contain the sea.

A lump of rock laying there.
No whither-how, no whether-what.
Just the laying there.

Heading home in the rain, drenched by worries.
Each drop a reminder:
Nothing can drag me down.

Spitting on the ground out of pure spite.
Good riddance!

In rue of humanity.
Then, a nicety.
Nothing much, yet nothing has ever meant so much.

Months of burden.

Hours of pain.

Minutes of crying.

It's worth enduring a smile.

IN-BETWEEN, JOY IS FOUND

The universe is feeling increasingly strange.

The familiar unhinged.

Detract the distractions, what is left?

Right here in the now and the real?

In the beginning, there was Elegance. From Elegance sprang both order and disorder, for one cannot exist without the other; opposites require contrast. Both influences wish to destroy the other, but destroying one destroys both; victory is defeat, so they eternally struggle over the gradations in-between.

Such is also the way with our awareness; there is consciousness and unconsciousness; one cannot exist without the other; they cannot be disjoint. It's like asking whether glass is solid or liquid. The answer is both and neither; glass is the gradation in-between. To be is to be liminal. To exist is to exist in-between.

Such is also the way with our drives; we want control and we want

release. We want to individuate and we want to integrate. We want to pursue our curiosity and be blessed with serendipity. We want to spread values and have those values validated. Thus life is full of ups and downs. To be is to be a see-saw. To exist is to go both ways and be neither completely.

Such is the Elegance of Being. All its joys and its toils.

SOMEHOW, IT INVOLVES A TEDDY BEAR

'All is what it is not.'

Oh, what a dreadful thought.

For if all is what it is not...

...Then what is what?

Nothing, as it seems.

We're all children at heart.

We tend to overvalue the immediate & visible, ignoring what is under the surface.

To deal with uncertainty, we start judging things on how they *appear to be*, rather than how they *are*.

There's an obsession with image; to signal what one is by broadcasting its superficial characteristics.



We all want things now.

We want the shortcut, even if some things simply take time.

There is pressure to perform; to be ever more successful, ever faster.

The pitfall is this: Instead of developing yourself, you learn how to *pretend to be*.



Everything looks alike: Phony and fake and repetitively inauthentic.

We're imprisoned by the thought that nothing is as it appears to be.

So then, to value anything is to value nothing concretely.

Nebulously, we drift off.

To where?

A place of pretend.

Perhaps Teddy is not so cuddly.



Portrayed: A Bear not to be trifled with.

FAUST AND FURIOUS

Gotta Go Fast!

Unable to figure out what *is* important, we don't know whether we're doing well or not.

By many measures, the world has never been better.

Poverty is decreasing...

Diseases are getting cured...

Life expectancy is rising...

And yet, for many, there's a lack of optimism. An abysmal dreariness pervades the culture.

It's as if we're all going nowhere. Increasingly getting there faster.

Did we get progress at too great a cost?

Did we take a Faustian gamble to get a pyrrhic victory?

Did we, to overcome the hurdles of our existence, develop the tools of our own destruction? Nukes, biowarfare, killer robots...



It's like we're about to drive off a cliff. Instead of slowing down, we double down—to make it to the other side, somehow. We don't know what the other side is, but we're even more afraid of the abyss!

Perhaps we dream of going further—to the stars. Perhaps we should look at them. For what is long dead can yet be beautiful.

Ah, with those dreadful thoughts again! Here I was trying to be optimistic and yet...

Grey clouds looming, gathering storm, toxicity—the end of the world, as we know it.



I think that's partially what causes our pessimism; we want to know how the world works, but the more we discover, the more we realize we don't know very much at all. We're all narrow-minded specialists, walking on the edge of a knife. We'd like to broaden our understanding, but there's too much to learn and too little time to learn it in. Plus, the total amount of knowledge is increasing at a rate which vastly outpaces the rate at which we can digest it.

Not to mention, we become increasingly dependent on people we don't even personally know!

How can I, as a Human, trust in a system? Besides, is a

depersonalized system not the antithesis of Humanity?

Are we not born to be wild? To rebel against the system?

Doesn't it get you angry, from the very core of your being, to be a paltry pawn in an overwhelming system?

Always feeling held back—by someone, somewhere, somehow?



Nothing new under the sun.

Humanity is a fury, ever chasing the horizon.

'The candle that burns twice as bright burns half as long.'

Well, buy more candles, then. You fucking idiot.

AN INCREDIBLE FEAT

You are incredible, dear reader! Truly remarkable, you can find excuses for anything! Always! And you believe in them, too!

Now, if it were anyone else, you'd call them out on their bullshit—but you. *Ah*, you are most convincing to yourself; you can't be a liar when you believe in your own lies; you can only be delusional. So then, remember: You were once bad at making excuses, but with enough practice, you can get better at anything!

Jolly-good, then!

LOGISTICS RULE YOUR LIFE

Today, most people live in big cities. Why?

In a word: Logistics; getting stuff from one place to another at a good price.

A whole book can be written about the logistical reasons why people live in big cities. I'll only briefly sketch the broader context because I am more interested in the consequence of that fact.

Starvation was historically one of humanity's biggest problems. Nowadays, there are more obese people than starving people which is probably a good thing. The best amount of starving people in the world would ideally be 0, and there will always be people who enjoy eating boatloads of food; Laughing Fat Buddha Statue cosplayers are legion.

Food is still unequally distributed. The tricky thing about distribution is that people are where goods aren't; food is produced in a different place than where it is consumed.

For example: Agriculture requires large stretches of undivided land for efficient cultivation and extraction. How do you produce more food per area? With poop! But poop smells. The Dutch use greenhouses,

artificial fertilizers, and vertical aquaculture farms to create incredible amounts of food per horizontal area. I'm a bit of a bougie, so I find Dutch food tastes bland (probably because aquaculture lacks the micronutrients found in the ground), but it certainly beats starvation! Tasteful food is a luxury I hope everyone can eventually enjoy. For now, the only aquaculture I enjoy is the the Mediterranean Sea.

People don't want to live near large-scale (food) industry due to noise & pollution, but they do want the cheap products of that industry. So... The goods... You gotta move it, move it. From one place to another.

With containers. On ships! Because sea transport with containers is the cheapest way to move goods. Arguably, Russia invaded Ukraine because it wanted access to a seaport that doesn't freeze over in winter. All of that to say, efficient distribution is incredibly valuable.

At the same time, service industries work most efficiently when people live closely. For example, when you need a doctor, it's better if that doctor lives nearby. It's also much cheaper to distribute goods to a central location (supermarket) rather than delivering it to individual homes.

Bringing it all together, roughly speaking, throughout the world, most of the horizontal space tends to be used for food production and other industries. People move to big cities because that's where services (and work and innovation) are.

Yet, for most of human history, people lived in small tribes. This book is concerned with the question: How do we communicate trustworthiness in a big city and on the internet? It's an especially relevant question because Human long-term happiness relies on personal trust.

HOW IT IS DONE

'Human behaviour is fully described with: "Control & Release." The rest is commentary.'

Editor's Note: As part of our publishing arrangement, Psoid Froid received 3 vetoes. I, the Editor, cannot remove a single word in a vetoed chapter. He said, and I quote: "Befitting anyone who falls short of that much-lauded designation 'genius', as a consolation prize, I demand to have three wishes, reminiscent of the Genie from those old saharan stories." Unfortunately for you, Psoid Froid applied his veto on the current chapter. My suggestion, as always, is to skip. Read at your own peril.

The quaint people of West-Flanders in Belgium have a quaint saying: 'De boog kan niet altijd gespannen staan', which roughly means: 'You can't keep up tension.' Sometimes you simply need to release. That precise dynamic is at the core of Human fulfillment; the interplay between control & release, of science & religion^{[1][2]}, of grasping & letting loose.

They share a superficial resemblance to the universal ideas of order

& chaos; order can be brought into chaos through control, but sometimes you must submit to the chaos—because it's outside of your control.

Balance in all things; you don't want to tip the scales too heavily to one side, or your balance will be broken—and you will feel unfulfilled. ^[3]
In other words, fulfillment is a see-saw; to keep things fun, you want it to go both ways.

The extreme of control: Alone at the top.

The extreme of release: Careless, comatose dust.



'How should I orient myself in the world?'

Towards the fulfillment games, of course! You can't escape them, so you might as well advance progression in them; anything else would be self-destructive.

Unfortunately, it's not that simple nowadays; modern life has severely complicated it. Not coincidentally, this book is about the ways in which contemporary life has complicated a proper functional framework.



You are my worst addiction.'

The most common heterosexual love dynamic is that of the Puppetmaster and the Beast.

The Puppetmaster wants to harmonize the Beast with the environment; she wants to control the Beast while maintaining the Beast's potency; she does not want a tame & innocent Puppy; it is precisely the process of taming that gives her fulfillment. The Puppetmaster, residing in a precarious relationship with the Beast—who can easily overpower her—must continually outmanoeuvre him to maintain an ally. The Beast, on the other hand, aims to expand its control on the environment, including the Puppetmaster, but the Beast faces a problem: The Puppetmaster will only submit to the Beast's control when she herself gains fulfillment; in other words, to gain control he must partially submit to her; he must show that he is capable of integrating his power into the larger fabric.

Movies like *Twilight* & *Fifty Shades Of Grey* perfectly exemplify the tension between the sexes; in *Twilight*, a plain girl who, by virtue of her plainness, perfectly fits in with the environment, is saved by the Beast. She would not be alive without the Beast; she must learn how to use the Beast for her own benefit—to be powerful by proxy.

In *Fifty Shades Of Grey*, a plain girl who, by virtue of her plainness, perfectly fits in with the environment, learns to grapple with the mechanisms of control & release. Crucially, she makes the choice to be controlled; she chooses to submit so he may expand his control. The relationship is viewed as somewhat abusive, but that is a critical misunderstanding of what abuse is; abuse is the *involuntary* submission to control; she *chooses* to engage in sadomasochism because the Beast is

worthy of her. She would not engage in sadomasochistic sex with a Puppy—though that would also be a kind of bestiality.

And of course, let us not forget *The Beauty And The Beast*, where the Puppetmaster learns that she also has a need for control, and where the Beast learns that he also has a need for release. The Beast will only show his inner prince when he respects his princess, and the princess will only respect the Beast when he learns to harmonize his power.



[1] There is more to science than purely control, there is more to religion than purely release. Still, I think we ought recognize that the main concern of science is control and the main concern for religion is release; science has trouble accepting the incomprehensible thus the uncontrollable, religion has trouble accepting Humans' unrelenting desire for more control. The two keep each other in check, though they overlap at times; a religious version of chemistry is alchemy, a secular version of religion is stoicism. As Humans gained more control over their environment through technology, science gained the upper hand. Yet there are still rules we must unconditionally uphold to prevent an individual messing up the fulfillment games for all.

[2] There is only one known cure for nihilism: 'Erotic asphyxiation'. Therein, the subject asks a trusted person to simulate the conditions of a restrained breath, to improve a subjects' ability to cope with such an uncomfortable situation. For then, the subject causes the conditions of feeling externally suffocated rather than being a mere subject to the

careless whims of fate. Non-psychopaths have a desperate emotional need to assign blame when situations are dire—an absent God doesn't move in mysterious ways. So, when the subject voluntarily orders and submits to the uncomfortable conditions of a restrained breath, the fault lies within. The goal is to control the blame by causing the blame. Hopefully, finding the fault is punctuated pleasantly; if one lives life on the edge, one is prone to fall off... But then, a coward risks not living, too.

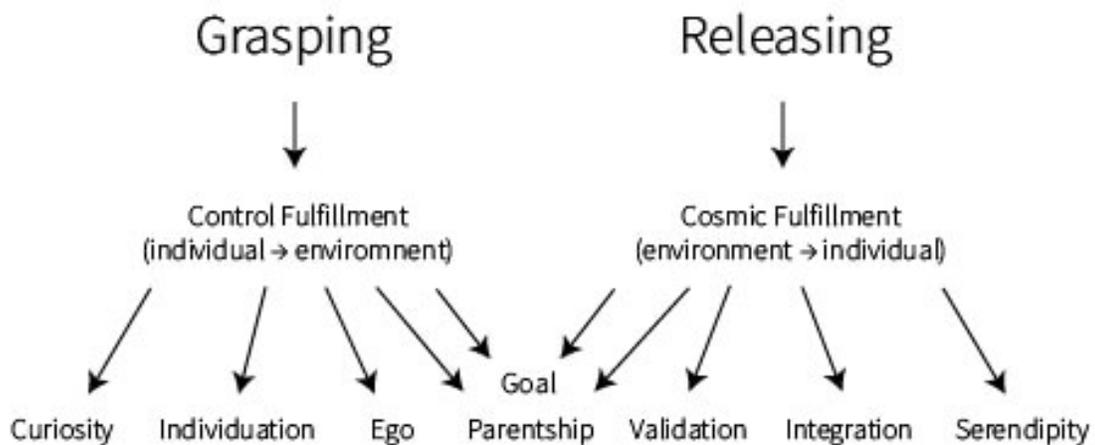
[3] It is possible to reset the balance once broken, but addiction is rather hard to treat. Still, perhaps the quintessential Human quality is that of hope. In desperation, hope is a palliative; there is always some hope for the unfulfilled; hope is the one thing people hang on to when things are outside of their control. Thus, to release hope it... Well I wouldn't recommend it; a life without any semblance of hope doesn't strike me as much of a life.

SATISFACTION THEORY: THE FULFILLMENT GAMES

‘Tell me now! What are the Fulfillment Games?’

Indeed, let the games begin!

The Fulfillment Games



The Control Fulfillment Game

The fulfillment derived from expanding the control of self upon the environment, from self-actualization, from sculpting the world in your image, from forging your own path...

The Cosmic Fulfillment Game

The fulfillment derived from harmonizing with the environment, from self-transcendence, from figuring out your role in the larger cosmos, from accepting your place in the world...

The Curiosity Fulfillment Game

The fulfillment derived from pursuing what's interesting, from increasing the understanding of the unknown, from resolving hunches, from figuring things out, from imagining what could be...

The Individuating Fulfillment Game

The fulfillment derived from demarcating the self from environment, from emerging out of the environment, from increasing autonomy, from setting & enforcing boundaries...

The Ego Fulfillment Game

The fulfillment derived from expressing the self into the environment, from spreading your values, from leaving your mark on the world...

The Goal Fulfillment Game

The fulfillment derived from pursuing goals.

Without 'individual soul' in a goal, there can be no long-term control fulfillment. Without 'common heart' in a goal, there can be no long-term cosmic fulfillment.

A mystical explanation perhaps—true nonetheless; mysticism does not preclude validity; an ambiguous statement can be the clearest articulation.

The Parentship Fulfillment Game

The fulfillment derived from being a parent, from being a role model, from teaching others^[4], from vicariously seeing the world through fresh eyes again...

The Validation Fulfillment Game

The fulfillment derived from the environment validating your values, from feeling important, from feeling understood, from getting attention...

The Integration Fulfillment Game

The fulfillment derived from seamless absorption into the environment, from merging into the environment, from yielding autonomy, from

bridging boundaries...

The Serendipity Fulfillment Game

The fulfillment derived from feeling lucky, from feeling blessed, from trusting you are in good hands despite the precariousness of existence...



You can expand on the theory by noting the extremes of fulfillment are forms of addiction: The extremely curious person is a conspiracy theorist. The extremely individuated person is a freak. The extremely egoistic person is an obnoxious preacher. The extremely goal-driven person mistakes the ends for the means and forsakens the pleasure of the journey. The extreme parent sacrifices themselves for their kids; the noblest of the addictions in my opinion. Extreme validation is a histrionic personality disorder. The extreme of integration is a complete conformist (complaining to those not involved in the situation as a way to cope). And finally, the extreme of serendipity is a gambler.



There are three requirements for fulfillment:

1. You must have values.

2. You must be capable of interacting with other people.

3. You must have a reasonable degree of trust in those people.

Values are mainly threatened by nihilism, globalization & relativism, deconstructive thinking, and factor isolation of things that cannot be split—wholes in ulterior binds; the death of God has destroyed traditional networks of shared values found in religious communities, globalization has exposed how much values really differ thus their validity is ever questioned, deconstructive thinking often neglects lived experiences in pursuit of cold rationality.

Finally, to understand complex values, we isolate or remove factors that cannot be disjoint. (Chesteron's Fence)

Trust is mainly threatened by the proliferation of intermediation resulting in the over-reaction of image-obsession, which increases the opportunities of chicanery, which all further increase complexity, and increase the difficulty of linking actions to results.

As above, so below; the preceding paragraphs are a hyper-essentialization of the whole book.



[4] Fulfillment is derived when the knowledge and skills gained by the pupil are perceived as valuable by both the teacher and the learner.

TELL ME WHY

It is an odd, self-destructive characteristic of Human being(s) that we want to be more than what Nature defined us to be. A Mole derives fulfillment from digging a tunnel, Dogs like fetching balls, Beavers enjoy building forts; why can't we enjoy fulfilling ourselves?

We enjoyed playing for its own sake when we were children—indulging in the autotelic. Why does there now need to be *more* to everything? Why must the child soon start asking 'Why'?

Why this?

Why that?

Why me?

I want it that way: The Genuine Autotelic Experience.

APPLE PIE AND GEESE

Just because some apples are rotten to the core, does not mean you should ban apple cake or burn down orchards. Society will always have its failures; any system inherently contains some kind of oppression & exclusion; even the most tolerant people need to be intolerant towards people who are against their tolerance in order to maintain the most tolerant possible society.

Taking that into account, it is crucial to decide what is tolerable. In this author's strong opinion, free speech & free inquiry must be tolerated. The reasoning is unusually simple: Censorship of dissenting opinions rarely helps the powerless—they are not in a position to censor others.^[5]

The current flock of silly geese are those who advocate for diversity of appearance without diversity of thought. Anything which prevents that superficial appearance-based diversity is taken as an attack against diversity itself.

And of course, being offended on someone else's behalf is also quite silly.



[5] It takes intellectual courage to intentionally meet powerful minds who disagree with you.

ALL THE WORLD'S A ZOO

“All the world’s a stage,” Shakespeare said, and it has never been more true. Social media has democratized the access to information and emphasized the importance of at-glance appearances. Thus, even incredibly successful mass-media personalities are expected to act humble & approachable—anyone could theoretically take their place (the only exception is Duntaya Flipper, more on that later). As if life is lived and valued through a camera lens. Truly, this might be the second strangest thing historically. We could even call it a social innovation—the productization of everyone’s uniqueness through mass-customization. In doing so, we also start feeling like commodities—something to be sold at the market rate—so you better improve yours! Or, avoid sticking out so you don’t seem part of the market.

It is difficult to measure the value of something innovative. How are you

going to relate it to others? By what standard are you going to judge it? What present problem can it be used for? If it cannot be used yet, why should I trust *you*, you reprobate?

“Well... What is *that thing*?”

“It is something valuable in the future...”

“Can I eat it?”

“No.”

“Can I use it right now?”

“No.”

“Well, go scam someone else, then.”

“Jeesh, thanks.”

“Hey if you don’t like it, you could try working a stable job.”

“Which stable job?”

“The one with the horses. I tell you, people like horses. Simple as that. Who, in their right mind, would *ever* replace their horses?”

“*What?!*”

“I tell you, quit the whining already; you’re competing with plenty of horses there! If you want to stand out, you’ll have to do better than nastily tweeting *who* to blame? Honestly, *who* gives a *hoot*? Blame the birds for all I care. Particularly persnickety are such owls; anyone can find a fault in everyone.

“What a waste, to treat life like a cinema; to bathe in a self-righteous projection while sitting in the dark; the bitter taste of flaws is closest near one’s own throat.

Ah yes, you are familiar with that extreme, too. Self-pity. Poor old you, all world-weary; time to screw it all! There's no *blubbing* place for you here; stick it to the fate that has ill-treated you so! Your plan is to drown in the pleasure of your own sorrows? Don't bother; the fishes have mastered the liquids already. No wonder you're so exhausted when you compete with the whole zoo!

Can you not see it plainly? What good will it bring you, to compare your circumstances to others, or compare it to an unrealistic ideal? Self-righteousness and self-pity are self-fulfilling prophecies that will leave you entirely unfulfilled; destinations without doubt or humility; comfortable, unsatisfying yet tempting traps.

You, like no other, can curse your ability to enjoy what you do have, and prevent you from becoming a person who solves the very problems that bother them so. Act accordingly. It's a deal, then! The one you're given."

"Jeesh, Louise."



Anyhow, all of that to say, the singer Duntaya Flipper has an eternally-endearing Dolphin-like smile. In the star charts, it was written, a choice lays before her: At the ripe age of 73, shall I be completely transformed into a plastic doll with anorexia, or shall I finally embrace my raspy voice and make sultry soul-music like Amara Winaloha? It is a difficult choice for anyone, but it is particularly challenging when you have an

understated penchant for shittalking—Dolphins are known for this. Yet the lure of plastic embellishment persists. Since time immemorial, the formula for a singer’s success has been made amply clear: You need less cheek fat, a person who loves you for what you are not (increasingly plastic), more glamorous blitz, and bigger—



Portrayed: The ideal form of a pop singer.

On the telly, Flipper suggested a place for the taste-conscious bon-vivant: Rolf’s Ice Cream Parlour, a somewhat uppity establishment in Paris where you can delight in frozen deserts. Thanks Duntaya. Here’s my suggestion in return: When in Camden, visit Andy’s Greek Tavern. I would gladly join you on this trip—it’s always better in person, that’s the conclusion of my dense nonsense book, really.

Indeed, life is the unlikeliest thing to ever happen. Beyond that,

anything is possible in this grand zoo. So go ahead, ask a pop star on a date, and become the spirit animal you were always meant to be. For me, that's a flamboyant Owl, unfortunately."



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