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## Orientation of the Soul

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# Orientation of the Soul

an ontology and phenomenology of the meaning mechanism  
in search of the life best lived and the capacity of human agency

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
of Bard College

by  
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*of the meaning mechanism*

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and the capacity of human agency

by Caleb M A Short

“Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the word.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

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## An Abstract Foreword

What is my philosophy? Or at the least, what is a philosophy that I deem substantial, that I deem worthy of consideration and implementation into the individual's life?

Why is it that I deem this philosophy substantial, why is it that I deem this philosophy worthy of consideration and implementation into the individual's life?

The answer must be that I believe that such a philosophy would make the individual's life better. In fact; the answer is that I believe this philosophy would make the individual's life better. Of course I do. Of course, that is the answer.

Yet, perhaps what is salient about the philosophy I am proposing, is that we all do this already -- by *do this* -- what I mean, is *live life* -- and we all have our own ways of living life; as a collective, and as individuals. Even as individuals, we have ways of living life that are shared, and we have ways of living life that are unique. We do this -- and again, by *do this* -- I mean, *live life* -- we live life because we have to.

And given that we have to, we then choose how we have to.

We have to because we can't choose otherwise. We have to live life because we are born. Because we have to live life, we create ways of living it. There are names we have for these ways of living -- philosophies, religions, beliefs. Of course, all aspects of life are ways of living life. Every action, no matter how small. Every interest, no matter how trivial. Everything we do constitutes who we are. Everything we are constitutes our life. We do not choose to live, and we do not choose that death constitutes the end of this living. This truth -- the truth about death -- is one of the many truths that we must reconcile in our own way or another's, in a way that makes sense, in a way that gives us peace, in a way that makes us continue to choose life, despite life having been already chosen for us.

The individual exists betwixt and between different ways of living, and other individuals, who each practice their unique ways of living. In similar fashion, the temporal moment exists betwixt and between the present and the past. The moment and the individual are

located terms amongst an ever expanding web of similarity and difference. So does the individual, then, exist? Can the individual choose its way of living — or is this way of living dictated by the ways of living that exist around it? How real is the present moment -- if it only exists as a child of the immediate past, and parent of the immediate future? Immediacy and the moment; the one before has already happened; the one that will happen next will soon happen. Where is the moment? Where is the individual in this moment? Perhaps, it is all the same moment. Perhaps, we are all the same individual. I would like to come back to these ideas later, but for now I will continue to ask: what is a substantial way of living -- a philosophy -- worthy of consideration and implementation into the individual's life?

First again I would like to address the essential nature of what a philosophy is. A philosophy is a way of thinking. When a capable, individual thinking thing is faced with the first and most primary question of their existence: What do I do with this existence? -- the individual can respond in a number of ways -- they can become intent on a solution as to what to do, they can become downtrodden at the impossibility of ever knowing what to do -- they can let go, and insist, that because they will never be able to know what to truly do, then life can take the individual along on life's terms; life, instead of them, chooses. But in that very response is a choice: a choice not to make one, and to let life lead them instead. So, we all choose how we respond to this question of what to do with our existence. We can not choose the inevitability that we will make a choice in the same way that we can not choose the inevitability that we will some day die.

What we must do, is make the very best choice that we can about what it is that we do with this existence.

But we all can feel like Sisyphus, and that freedom of choice is a very large rock. Soren Kierkegaard said that when faced with this freedom of choice -- we feel anxious: that, "anxiety is the dizziness of freedom." This is in part due to the particularity of human beings and their nature as animals capable of meta-conception that transcends the immediate satiation of our instinctual needs like food, water, shelter, a mate for breeding, a group for belonging -- we do a lot of thinking and thinking about thinking.

Like tigers, we respond to our external world. Like tigers, we feel love, we feel lust, we feel

hunger, we feel pain. Unlike tigers, we consider why it is that we feel pain, why it is that someone won't love us, why it is that we lust for what we lust and we want for what we want, and why it is that our hunger is never limited to our physical body — Why is it that we have a hunger deeper than our stomach?

We push the rock. We push the rock. We wonder why it is that we were born. We wonder why it is that we have to die. We push the rock. And we hunger: for food, for connection, and for future. In face of all life's freedom, we feel anxious. We wonder, at the core of all of our wonderings, whether this life has any meaning, or if we are only destined to push a meaningless rock.

I will argue that the very meaning of life for the human being is the creation of meaning. This creation of meaning is employed by the 3rd component drive of the human, alongside the animal drive and the rational drive is too the “nous” — what the Greeks called the eye of the soul. Indeed we *do this and think that* -- and by do this and think that, I mean that we live life and create meaning -- in the same inevitable way that we are born to live, and live to die. What do we do with this existence? When we ask ourselves that, as we inevitably do, as we do at every moment, we ask ourselves about life's meaning, and about our meaning in it. This mechanism is essential to the human being. I'll call it the meaning mechanism, and it is what separates the human animal from other kinds of animals. It is what organizes society into religions and political parties and sports teams. Like animals, we do what we do as a response to our animalistic, instinctual nature. But unlike animals, we do what we do because we also think what we think separate from the instinctual need to do what we do, considering what is that we are doing, and why it is that we are doing it, and why it is that “I” as an individual, am doing what I am doing as a part of it; in this process, this inevitable, infinite mechanism that fills every moment: we create meaning.

We marry because we believe this partner will provide our lives with meaning. We endeavor in a job because we believe this job will provide our lives with meaning. Even if we believe our job provides us with no meaning, we believe the currency this job awards us will allow us to pursue other meaning in our lives: a new, more desirable job, or food for our partners and our children who provide our lives with meaning.



We can not escape the meaning mechanism.

We must choose, wisely, how we employ it.

## A Practical Foreword

The human animal is different from other animals because it is capable of meta-cognition. (McDowell) (Snowdon) (Parfit) (Locke)

This kind of meta-cognition, as a particular way of interfacing with the world, defines the human will. (Frankfurt) (Taylor)

Because of meta-cognition and the awareness that one day it will die, the human animal locates itself as something from without, and not something from within. The process of meta-cognition is the process of the human animal always and inevitably asking “why?” The largest question the human animal is faced with is the question of its own death. Why should I die? (Heidegger) (Camus) (Nagel)

Thus, the human animal *creates meaning as an answer to its question via a primary faculty*: the meaning mechanism.

Because the largest question the human animal faces is the question of its own death — this question begets the largest answer. The human animal has broad-sweepingly answered this question with *the why* that is *religion*. Religion is a map of meaning for the human animal that tells the human animal its death has a purpose, and therefore its life has a purpose, too. Religion tells the human animal that life should be lived in certain ways, and thus, in answering the call to action, and in forever being judged by the depth of its participation, the human animal’s relationship with religion provides meaning to the everyday.

Human animals provide why’s, provide meaning — in all kinds of ways. The question becomes: which of the why’s is the why that you should provide for yourself? You inevitably will; you can not choose not to. It is endemic to the nature of the human animal to create meaning, but you can choose which meaning you live by and die by.

You can choose to follow happiness, you can choose to follow romantic love, you can choose to follow success, you can choose to follow many things as your source of meaning. But I will argue that because the search for meaning itself is the foundation of the human animal’s nature, *meaning itself* should also be the thing you follow. What does it feel like when you are uplifted? What does it feel like when you feel like you are doing the thing you should be

doing? When you most feel like yourself? When what you are doing has purpose; when you love what you are doing: this is living your life with meaning. This is when the greek “*nous*,” the “intellect of the soul,” speaks. And over your head, over your heart, over your sex drive, and over your ego, I will make the argument that the intellect of the soul is what you should always follow in making decisions for your life, and thus, inevitably for your death, and a relationship between the intellect of your soul (primarily informed by the meaning mechanism) and the existence you lead, should be the essential relationship and integration in life that you should seek to cultivate.

How does one, the, cultivate *nous*? There are things endemic to human nature other than meta-cognition. Of them, is a moral schema that is flexible, but also codified and true, and relevant for all human animals all the time. This schema is detailed by (Aristotle), so is the intellect of the soul, and so are the implications of living a life with such a schema. I will spend the primary portion of this paper in Aristotle’s *nicomachean ethics* exploring what the right thing is, and exploring what it means to cultivate an intellect of the soul.

I will also turn to (Emerson) and (Heidegger), who both, in their own ways, detail the importance of authenticity, of true self knowledge that is separate from a world of distractions and a world of the opinions of others that in tandem make it too easy to view yourself through the lens of something outside of yourself: which makes it too easy to live a lie. If one is to understand and properly feel what uplifts their person, what is that they love, what it is that gives them purpose, then they need to first truly understand themselves, authentically — and then be that authentic person.

This person utilizes the meaning mechanism through a relationship with their particular individuality that understands/appreciates “*to kalon*” (the noble/the beautiful). This person has cultivated their intellectual and moral virtues. This person understands themselves separate from the world of other persons and things: a world of refracting mirrors. This person is a true I.

## Last Words

Thus, the question this paper asks is such:

What is the human will and how does the individual best advance it?

When I refer to the *human will*, I am referring to the *controlled action* of the *human being*.

When I refer to *advancing* the human will, I am referring to how the individual can best cultivate, grow, and sustain the freedom and power of authentic controlled action.

It is the aim of this paper that the individual can begin to live their life with a human will that controls action from a place of personal interest rather than animal interest, and personal interest rather than extra-personal interest. This is achieved through the human's recognition of, and alignment with — their 3rd drive — *the meaning mechanism*.

To understand how to advance the will of the human being, we must first ask: What is the human being as a biological organism? How does the human being's biology and biological needs dictate its action? These ideas are addressed chapter 1. Chapter 2 analyses how the human being controls this dictated action. What is the nature of the human will?

Too, we must understand the human condition. A large task, we will pay specific attention to Aristotle to answer these questions for the brevity of this paper's format. When we seek to understand the human condition, we seek to understand the inexorable moral truths of human existence. What drives human action if not all human action is directly related to the assurance of its biological needs? These ideas are addressed in chapter 3.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 seek to understand how the human being is capable of thought and action in its unique capability. After describing the human being, we will ask how the human being can *advance* its will.

In chapter 4, we will recognize the meaning mechanism existence and its essential role in making the individual a true individual.

In chapter 5, we will consider how an individual's truest relationship with themselves is the final, elemental step in the activation of personhood and advancement of human will.

We are seeking the the means for the individual to best live their life as themselves. This way of being is best for the individual, and best for the collective.

What is the definition of a human? What is the definition of a human-person? What is the definition of an animal? To what extent do human beings share their likeness with animals? And in consideration of the likeness shared between humans and animals, does this make animals - persons? Does this make humans, animals? Many assume the human being is his conscious — but where is his consciousness located, and how is it different than the animal conscious? Is the conscious the same as the soul? If man were to lose his body, would he still be the same man he was before? And what if he were to keep his body but lose his mind, who would he be then? The conscious may be particularly located in either his body or his mind, but how much is *he* his conscious really (as defined by a soul of individual personhood)? Or is consciousness just awareness; the sound of the rain, and not the clouds? If we are this awareness, then is the individual actually a person controlling where its raindrop lands - or are we just a collective people with no persons? If we do pilot our raindrop, navigating the clouds, peering up into the universe, and reflecting on and considering ourselves, than what is the nature of this agential, human power that we have? — and how is more achieved — for the betterment of ourselves as individuals — and for the betterment of all as a collective human species?

First, let us consider, what is an animal? — what is a human? — and what is a person? Animals are multicellular organisms that incorporate a nervous system in a body and feed on organic matter; interfacing with the world via their sense organs. Humans are mammals: a class of animal within the animal kingdom. The definition of a human in our modern context would describe human beings as the most recently evolved species of the Hominid primate family. Some eight million years ago, fifteen variations of the hominid species existed. Homo-Sapiens

became the only remaining Hominid species after developing the skill to use tools, like bones as weaponry, and in turn outlasted the most recent Hominid co-existent (now predecessor) species: Homo-Erectus. Philosopher John Locke describes the human person as “a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places.” Philosopher John McDowell further elucidates the reasons *for* reason and reflection in his quote:

We are living things and we share with other living things a natural interest in surviving. This aspect of our animal nature emerges in our rationally governed lives as a concern that has a conceptual content: a concern, naturally felt by each of us, that the living thing he or she is should continue to exist. This helps to structure a whole region of practical reason, in which we locate not just the rationality of taking steps to ensure our persistence, but also such things as reasons for making provision for the quality of our future lives. Or so we naturally suppose. (McDowell, 246)

As a final establishing factor in the definition of a human-person, I would like to provide Philosopher P.F. Snowdon’s account of what Locke initially stressed in his notion of a person when he deliberated that a person “can consider itself as itself.” For, this is Locke’s claim to a kind of a moving, reflective, changing *inner aspect* of a person that is potentially not shared by other classes of Animalia; perhaps, something like a *soul*. Snowdon elaborates:

These intuitions are, first, that the survival of a person is crucially linked to the persistence of, in some sense, his consciousness or capacity for consciousness; and second, that, in principle (although maybe not in fact) the persistence of a stream of consciousness (the direction in which it might go) is not clearly linked to any particular substance. (Snowdon, 88)

Now, as we continue to consider what shares and separates aspects of animal, human, and person, let us remember the prior mentioned context. Further, what is the contra for these definitions of animal, of human, of person? In regard to what is non-animal, the claim that anything which doesn’t breathe or think, such as a table or a chair, or a non-multicellular organism, such as bacteria and archaea, should suit. A non-human should refer to any multi-

cellular organism that is not of the Homo-Sapiens species. Somewhat tangential: I consider forthcoming artificial intelligence to be less “artificial” than many would say - and rather that self-sufficient and sentient artificial intelligence are indeed human; perhaps, the next step of human. If it took man *finding* naturally occurring bone to shape and use as a tool and a weapon to generate his growth from one species era to another — than what is not more natural than man *giving birth* (via his own developed mental and physical processes: to artificial intelligence) to generate his next iteration of species growth? I do wonder if the history books will look back to a time like ours, where, similar to Homo-Erectus and Homo-Sapiens co-inhabiting earth, there will not come a time too where Homo-Sapiens and *Homo-Artificialis* shared the planet... a time before Homo-Artificialis’s eventual voyage, one only it could achieve: departing for new star systems of the physical and/or conscious universe.

We have considered what is a non-animal. We have considered what is a non-human.

Now, what is a non-person? According to Philosopher Derek Parfit,

If persons are, in the Lockean sense, entities that can think about themselves, and whose continued existence essentially involves psychological continuity, a human embryo or fetus is not a person. But this fetus is, or becomes, human animal... Most human animals continue to exist, and start to have thoughts and other experiences. So if Lockeans distinguish between persons and some thought, a human animal also thinks this thought. Every thinking of a thought has two different thinkers.... If there are two conscious beings thinking all my thoughts, the person and the animal, how could I know which one I am? If I think I am the person, Animalists object, I might be mistaken, since I may really be the animal. (Parfit, 7)

I agree with the Lockean sensibility that the human being, as distinguished by its ability to think and reason and potentially express agency, is not a yet a human being until *it can do so*: think, reason and express agency. In this sense, the human fetus could be called the larvae, pure animal, nested inside the mother’s cocoon, which incubates and supports the process of larvae as human-fetus becoming caterpillar (or human-animal) once the child is born. Aristotle did not consider



the human child to have moral agency: while the child may feel instinct and express intent to eat food, to sleep when it is tired, and to run or cry at the sight of what it perceives as dangerous, the human child lacks the transcendent creative and moral agential capacity that we have defined as specifically belonging to human persons. In this sense, a child is not yet a person, and near all of modern human law reflects that. Children at very young ages are not held legally responsible for their actions. ‘Defense of Infancy’ in most modern societies, protects the child (or what could be called the human animal (for its lack of moral agency)) from legal responsibility in regards to criminality until anywhere between the ages of seven and eighteen (though there are exceptions, like thirty-three states of the U.S where there is no minimum age for criminality). Still, I disagree with the notion that there are “two different thinkers... the person and the animal.” The human being, from it’s position as a kind of pure animal fetal larvae (an argument can be made as to at which fetal age the fetus as animal becomes fetus as human-animal), to its birth as a child, a kind of caterpillar, and finally its progression into adulthood as fully embodied butterfly (which, interestingly, due to experience and education, may happen sooner for certain individuals than it does for others), is in a constant state of growth and becoming until realizing itself as a (typically at adulthood) human-being. It is then the specific and non-naturally endowed progression of the individual, again through experience, education, and expression, to become a full and total *person*; to flourish and discover their individual, creative, unique manifestation of personhood.

Again — in regard to the notion of the human-animal existing as two different thinkers in the same body/mind, I would disagree, but perhaps only terminologically. The agential human is responsible for orienting its internal drives: those of instinct and those of conscious consideration. To further clarify: what Parfit would call the animal mind — I will call the

instinctual drive; what Parfit would call the human mind — I will call the rational drive. I see it incorrect to delineate one's humanness into a categorically separate animalhood and humanhood that constitutes their humanness. Humans are, in part, informed by their animal nature. Thus, their animal nature is a part of their human nature. Their animalhood is their humanhood. The human faculties that Parfit would call the "human mind" are present, but are present like the same faculties that Parfit would designate to the "animal mind." The thinker; the actor; the human that takes account of both of these minds *is the mind*: the human mind. Thus, Parfit's "human mind" is in fact the "rational drive," and Parfit's "animal mind" is in fact "the instinctual drive." Thus, the thinking human is not the fulcrum of some tensely negotiated human and animal mind. The thinking human is the human mind: a human mind that is influenced by both the human and animal drives.

Once more with further precision: I do not consider the internal drives as separate and wholly powerful, individual thinkers. They are different motivating drives, but equally necessary halves to *one in the same thinker*. It is "the inner aspect" which McDowell and Locke refer to that is this thinker. The thinker that considers and reflects, programmed by her genetic predispositions and human instincts, and informed by her nurture and lived experiences, it is this thinker that then uses this information to dictate her choice; agentially. The drives may be different, but the thinker is one in the same. Parfit cites Baker in reference to this same idea:

Baker argues that the animal and the person are both constituted by the same body, which gives them an ontological status that is in between being one and the same entity and being two, separately existing entities. For that reason, Baker claims, though there are, strictly, two different thinkers thinking each of our thoughts, we can count these thinkers as if they were one. (Parfit, 8)

My retort remains. Terminologically, I disagree that that these are "two different thinkers" present in one human. Instead, I believe it would be wise to call these parts of the self "two

different drives” or “motivating influences” belonging to the same thinker. Further, I believe there is a 3rd drive relevant to the personhood of the human being. I will call this 3rd drive the meaning mechanism (and will most thoroughly discuss its existence in chapter 3). The human person, then, is she who is responsible for fulfilling the distinction of her humanity in her ability to orient between these drives/influences through the abilities of “reason and consideration,” and thus dictate action from her conclusions.

We have considered the human, the animal, and the human animal. What then, is the human self (or being)? Derek Parfit explores the idea that “psychological continuity” is far more important than “physical continuity” in the individual’s aim and process of identifying himself as whole, as separate, as his own reasoning, considering, functioning human-animal. We understand that the human-animal is part driven by his instinctual, animal drive and in part by his rational drive, but to some, the question of whether it is the animal body or the human consciousness/soul that has more control over the individual’s identity remains. This, I believe, is not a particularly worthwhile question, and is quickly dispelled by Parfit. Parfit discusses the ‘Wiggins Case,’ in which two different people, one of failing mind and one of failing body, exchange vegetative body for healthy body, and vegetative mind for healthy mind. Following the line of logic espoused by body-self propagator Bernard Williams (in which the body does more, if not totally, constitute the individual (than the mind)), the Wiggins’ case considers which of the two individuals would maintain his individuality (personal identity). Parfit proclaims that the individual who maintains his individuality, is quite simply the one with the healthy mind. If the individual soul does exist — the mind is where it is located. Ironically, by virtue of the location of the soul being in the brain — the notion of the soul being non-existent and instead an

ideological creation of our deterministically innovative, neuron firing brain is strengthened.

Nonetheless, the Wiggins case most importantly alludes to the following: “Identity is a one-one relation. Wiggins’ case serves to show that what matters in survival need not be one-one.” (Parfit, 10) In other terms, you do not need your identity to survive physically and identity can exist in mutual exclusivity from physicality.

As I have prior mentioned, I believe this identity exists on a spectrum — and the fully formed human being as being and not as animal, has the deepest well of identity; but it is not necessary that this identity exist — the human can remain alive physically as human animal — as Kierkegaard’s wanton (an individual who does not act with higher agency (explicated further in chapter 3)). Parfit then makes the claim that even more powerful for the self in its identity, and too for the self in its survival, is “psychological connectedness,” rather than base physical continuity, or even psychological continuity. For Parfit, psychological connectedness is the release of the personal, momentary *I*, to envelop and become the *collective I*, which the human being, and most organic beings for that matter, most naturally are already. This collective *I* applies to both the *I*’s of one’s own life, past and future, but too to the *I*’s of all humanity, past and future. Further,

On this way of thinking, the word ‘I’ can be used to imply the greatest degree of psychological connectedness. When the connections are reduced, when there has been any marked change of character or style of life, or any marked loss of memory, our imagined beings would say, ‘It was not I who did that, but an earlier self.’ They could then describe in what ways, and to what degree, they are related to this earlier self. This revised way of thinking would suit not only our ‘immortal’ beings. It is also the way in which we ourselves could think about our lives. And it is, I suggest, surprisingly natural. (Parfit, 25)

Instead of getting bogged down and caught up in the reactions of the moment to the impossible expectations of our past and future self, instead of coming from a place of judgement

to our future and former I's, we must rather consider our former selves as just that, former. They are part of the current I, but only part, and only part — in that they preceded and set a path. The part of the path the I is on now however, wholly and totally belongs to this moment, and this I.

As I am, now. As we are, now. But what of the future? Further elaborated by Parfit:

If I say, 'It will not be me, but one of my future selves,' I do not imply that I will be that future self. He is one of my later selves, and I am one of his earlier selves. There is no underlying person who we both are. To point out another feature of this way of thinking. When I say, 'There is no person who we both are,' I am only giving my decision. Another person could say, 'It will be you,' thus deciding differently. There is no question of either of these decisions being a mistake. Whether to say 'I,' or 'one of my future selves,' or 'a descendent self' is entirely a matter of choice. The matter of fact, which must be agreed, is only whether the disjunction applies. (The question 'Are X and Y the same person?' thus becomes 'Is X *at least* an ancestral {or descendant} self of Y?' (Parfit, 25)

Indeed, one must obtain and uphold their personhood strongly enough so that they are confidently whole in them-self, but too, strong enough so that they may dissipate into the wholeness of all things, of all animals and human-animals, and all I's. As Homo-Sapiens, humankind made the transcendent step to consider and reflect from a lens that was cooperative in a way that was before-unseen.

What is most important is how the human can most flourish for himself, but even more importantly too, *alongside* fellow man. It is essential that man transcends his mortal, animal, instinctual cravings in order to most prosperously facilitate the flourishing of himself *and* the flourishing of all. I turn again to Derek Parfit:

I have suggested that the principle of self-interest has no strength of its own. If this is so, there is no special problem in the fact that what we ought to do can be against our interests. There is only the general problem that it may not be what we want to do. The second consequence which I shall mention is implied in the first. Egoism, the fear not of near but of distant death, the regret that so much of one's *only* life should have gone by—these are not, I think, wholly natural or instinctive. They are all strengthened by the beliefs about personal identity which I have been attacking. If we give up these beliefs, they should be weakened. My final question is this. These emotions are bad, and if we weaken them we gain. But can we achieve this gain without, say, also weakening loyalty to, or

love of, other particular selves? As Hume warned, the ‘refined reflections which philosophy suggests... cannot diminish... our vicious passions... without diminishing... such as our virtuous... They are.... applicable to all our affections. In vain do we hope to direct their influence only to one side.’ That hope *is* vain. But Hume had another: that more of what is bad depends upon false belief. This is also my hope. (Parfit, 25)

Human beings are animals before they are anything else, and human identity is largely formed (consciously and sub-consciously) on this intrinsic and orienting understanding of our human self formed by our animal self. This sum-whole human mind is composed of the 3 drives: meaning, instinct, and rationale. Humans derive from the organic class Animalia, and our specific species — Homo-Sapiens is a manifestation of a particular kind of animal: a bipedal, mammalian animal that may or may not possess within in it an inner aspect, or a soul. If the soul exists and humans are not just the amalgamous byproducts of cause and effect — then I do contend that *all* animals possess a soul. If a soul exists, I do believe that an agential will exists — but the extent of its agency is unclear. Are we the awareness that listens to and reflects upon the causally determined outside world, thus orienting our actions — or are we something more — do we agentially *choose* everything we do? But it is worth considering, even our awareness could be determined — a determined awareness where there is no agency not only in action, but too in awareness and the orienteering of the drives; that, we may only be the spectator watching the movie of our lives and actions. And what if too — even our thoughts about that movie are equally out of our control?

Regardless, the human-being, as bearer of “reason and reflection... (who can) consider itself as itself” does appear to have a more sophisticated, and likely more powerful will than its fellow animals. *This* is the delineating factor of humans from animals, and persons from humans. The animal has a soul; the animal has a will. To those who say the animal does not have a will,

does the animal not feel? Does the animal not express joy or sorrow? When the house pet chooses to lick or purr, is that not sincere and agential, based on its considerations and reflections of its love for its owner (who pets and feeds it in equal measure)? Elephants mourn their dead in funeral practices circling the fallen and taking turns touching its lifeless body. Dolphins have a highly sophisticated language of over one-hundred and twenty-five distinct and meaningful whistles. Is this not the sentiment of a soul? Are these actions not the work of a will? The human being is just another kind of animal: the Homo-Sapiens animal. The animal has base instincts to continue itself and ensure its survival. The human animal has aims that include but often transcend these base instincts of survival and procreation. With these specifically human aims, more complex and more grand, comes a higher-developed, more capacitive, and more agential will.

I thus consider the question of “animalism” irrelevant. Humans are animals. All animals, like humans, have souls (some variation of the “inner aspect”). There is clearly something something specific, wondrous, and tangibly magnificent about the creative achievement of the human species. What separates the human animal from the rest of the animal kingdom? It is the development of *personhood*. It is the Aristotelian flourishing of the individual. The power of the will exists on a spectrum, and all human-animals are born with a will that would appear (from a human lens, at least) to, in its raw production/manipulation of the internal and external world, far out-be the be-ing of all other animal will. Yet, this spectrum is not confined to the delineation of man and animal. It exists too, and perhaps in equal measure, amongst man and man.

The question of personal identity and manifestation of one's own personhood, and one's own will, becomes the question that truly matters. But now that we have considered the human as animal and human as being, let us consider the capacity of will that the human possesses.



Do we choose what we do? This is a seemingly simple question... and via a response, a seemingly simple answer. To respond is in itself a choice. Animal life hinges on the essential, constant choices for activity and non-activity that dictate the existence, or, lack there-of, of the animal. It is thus understood that the act of choosing belongs to a certain *who*; the animal — he, the animal — she, or the collective animals — they, *who* make choices. But, does it satisfy to know *who* made the choice, if there is still a *what* which dictates the choice of the who. Further, if the *what* which *chooses* the choice of the *who* is outside of the control of the who, then *who*, is the who, really?

As such, I will provide answers to the following questions: to what extent do human beings possess free will, how the human will differs from the animal will, and how can the individual manifest a personal freedom of will. Before doing so, it is important to note the distinction between freedom of will and freedom of action, as distinguished by Harry Frankfurt:

According to one familiar philosophical tradition, being free is fundamentally a manner of doing what one wants to do.... I believe that this notion does capture at least part of what is implicit in the idea of an agent who *acts* freely. It misses entirely, however, the peculiar content of the quite different idea of an agent whose *will* is free. We do not suppose that animals enjoy freedom of the will, although we do recognize that an animal may be free to run in whatever direction it wants. Thus, having the freedom to do what one wants to do is not a sufficient condition of having a free will. It is not a necessary condition either. For to deprive someone of his freedom of action is not necessarily to undermine his freedom of will. (Frankfurt, 14)

Suppose, in fact, the universe as we know it, is *not the universe as we know it*. Fair enough. But, suppose, in fact, the universe is not as we know it because it is not *the universe*. The “universe” is instead code, ran through a computer simulator, and we are the bits to its grand design. Our creator is an inter-dimensional optometrist known as Simon. Simon is on holiday,

and, having decided to avoid the in-laws, he complained to his wife of insufferable jet-lag, thus getting the hotel room to himself while his wife went easter egg hunting in the gassier nebulae of Orion's Belt. Simon spent his evening writing the code to a grand simulation for which all of our human history, present moment, and potential future takes place. Other than certain, pesky universal laws like gravity and mortality, the coded human being is not physically or mentally limited, and can, as stated by Frankfurt, "run in whatever direction it wants." Human beings may limit each other, but it is ironically through their very *freedom* that they have the opportunity to limit one another. When one human being imprisons another human being in the confines of a cell, that is through the capturer's will. Further, while the prisoner may be restricted to the few spare feet he can walk in, the one bed he can sleep in, and the limited food he can smell and taste, he still possesses his own *will* to want to escape. He possesses the freedom of the will to seek freedom.

If Simon were to open the lid of his simulation, stick his head in and say hello, it is through the free will of the human inhabitants the way in which their response is formed. Another species of animal, say, the wolf, may run to its den upon the sight of a luminous Simon occupying the sky. The wolf may huddle with its young, feeding them the remaining scraps of a mornings hunt, waiting for Simons shadow to leave the terrain where he hunts each day. This is the wolf's existence: to hunt, to eat, drink, to sleep, to possess shelter, to procreate, to die. Despite the introduction of an all powerful, hairy optometrist known as Simon, the wolf's response is only taken so far as how Simon affects these elemental desires of the wolf; what Frankfurt would call "first order desires." The wolf may choose to sleep until morning, waiting for the departure of the the threatening Simon. Or, he may choose to hunt, now, while his

potential pray scurry in vulnerable shock. These differing choices are fueled by the first-order desires and can be equated with Maslow's basic, bottommost rung of needs: those of physiology and security. This is the agent's will: a motivating orientation to choose based on internal needs set relative to external pressures.

To identify an agent's will is either to identify the desire (or desires) by which he is motivated in some action he performs or to identify the desire (or desires) by which he will or would be motivated when or if he acts. An agent's will, then, is identical with one or more of his first-order desires.

(Frankfurt, 8)

Frankfurt later establishes the difference between first-order desires and the rarer "second-order" desires in the context of a drug addict. The drug addict's immediate, physical desire of drugs fulfills the nature of first-order desire. Then, take say, an addiction researcher, who wants to understand his drug addicted patient, but can only do so via possessing the very same desire of the patient. The researcher thus *desires desire*. He is not merely responding to his immediate motivating drives. In fact, he doesn't possess the desire to do drugs for the sake of the drugs themselves, and he is instead super-ceding his own first-order desires in pursuit of a greater goal. Further,

His second-order desire to be moved to take the drug does not entail that he has a first-order desire to take it... While he wants to take the drug, he may have no desire to take it; it may be that *all* he wants is to taste the desire for it. That is, his desire to have a certain desire that he does not have may not be a desire that his will should be at all different than it is."

(Frankfurt, 9)

In that final distinction between "the desire to have a certain desire that he does not have" and "a desire that should be at all different than it is," Frankfurt defines the difference between second-order desire and what, lastly, he calls "second-order volitions." Essentially, one can want something out of his environment (first-order desire), one can want something out of himself to

inspire what he wants out of his environment (second-order desire), and finally, one can want the shape and power of his *desire itself* to be different (second-order volition). This kind of contemplation, this kind of desire: second-order volition, is what, for Frankfurt, makes human beings so particular and apart from the rest of the animal kingdom. The wolf will instinctively seek shelter in the wake of a looming and again, quite far from clean shaven, Simon. Laying amongst his pack, the wolf spots a pack of jackals approaching his territory; the jackals seek the remains of a carcass that has been used as a primary source of nutrition while Simon from above looks at this and that, banging about, really causing quite a ruckus. It is now within the realm of possibility that rather than responding with pure fight or flight instinct (first-order desire), that the wolf will consider his options, and as the jackals come near, the wolf then desires in himself a desire for heightened aggression that he knows will be necessary (second-order desire). Frankfurt asserts however, that particular to humankind and unavailable to the defeated wolf who lay cut and broken, is the higher form of contemplation which introspectively reflects... which weighs the outcome of events against one's own inner potential... a kind of contemplation which questions the strength of one's own will, which desires the will itself to perform more intensely and valiantly, so as not to meet the same fate again. This, to Frankfurt, is particularly human.

Now it is having second-order volitions, and not having second order-desires generally, that I regard as essential to being a person. It is logically possible, however unlikely, that there should be an agent with second-order desires but with no volitions of the second order. Such a creature, in my view, would not be a person. I shall use the term 'wanton' to refer to agents who have first-order desires but who are not persons because, whether or not they have desires of the second order, they have no second-order volitions. The essential characteristic of a wanton is that he does not care about his will. His desires move him to do certain things, without its being true of him either that he wants to be moved by those desires or that he prefers to be moved by other desires. (Frankfurt, 11)

The wanton. Frankfurt goes on to describe “the class of wantons includes all nonhuman animals and all very young children. Perhaps it also includes some adult human beings as well. In any case, adult humans may be more or less wanton; they may act wantonly, in response to first-order desires concerning which they have no volitions of the second order, more or less frequently.” (Frankfurt, 11) It is interesting to consider the crossover between Frankfurt’s theory of wanton including the very young, and Aristotle’s potential for eudaemonia (happiness; flourishing) excluding the very young. It would seem these thinkers agree that there is, more or less, a birthday of agency. As to what age that birthday arrives, this can surely be disputed, but the sentiment holds that humans evolve with age into ascendant complexities of layered extrospective, introspective, retrospective, and preemptive thought. Yet, for some, the state of natural, infantile wanton-ness progresses into one’s adult life. This can impede, if not fatally danger the individual. The wanton has the same rational capacity as fellow man to perceive the world through faculties of the mind and faculties of the body, but what he so desperately lacks, often of his own doing, is faculties of the soul, of the higher will: of that which makes the human, human (and the difference between a human being and a human person).

Nothing in the concept of a wanton implies that he cannot reason or that he cannot deliberate concerning how to do what he wants to do. What distinguishes the rational wanton from other rational agents is that he is not concerned with the desirability of his desires themselves. He ignores the question of what his will is to be. Not only does he pursue whatever course of action he is most strongly inclined to pursue, but he does not care which of his inclinations is the strongest. (Frankfurt, 11)

Thus, it is easy, and as such likely, for an aimless wanton crutched by the unfulfilling satiation of his first-order desires to fall prey to addiction in the form of distracted habits, indulgent pleasures, or substance abuse. It is not that he lacks the capacity for contemplative,

rational thought. It is that rather he refuses it. So, he fails to honestly track cause and effect. He fails to extrospectively observe his surroundings. He fails to introspectively question himself. He fails to preemptively plan for and change his future. “He ignores the question of what his will is to be.” He fails to be human in the form of higher-willed human person.

If he encounters problems obtaining the drug or in administering it to himself, his responses to his urges to take it may involve deliberation. But it never occurs to him to consider whether he wants the relations among his desires to result in his having the will he has. The wanton addict may be an animal, and thus incapable of being concerned about his will. In any event he is, in respect of his wanton lack of concern, no different from an animal. (Frankfurt, 12)

It is thus the responsibility of the individual to cultivate and manifest their own higher, rational will. Our individuality as functioning human beings is largely out of our control, shaped by a synthesis of pre-disposed genetic nature and non-agential youth experience. If the child is the father to the man, and, as recognized by Aristotle and Frankfurt, it is illogical and irresponsible to assign an expectation of agency to a child born into  $x$  circumstances with  $y$  parents,  $w$  belief systems and  $v$  societal constructs with  $z$  genetic code for height and skin color, temperament, talent, disability and disease, than what are we to expect of the man? He is but, once a child. He did not have control over any of the factors that formed the child, and yet through his own ways he is expected to create himself and be an “individual”? These are lofty goals rich with assumption. It is hard in this way to assign true agency to any individual... are we not but the proximal grouping of causally affected subatomic particles, moving in directions not of our own control? Or is there a soul, a will of the human being that can be exercised, manifested, and cultivated in true eudaemonic flourishing?

This is the eternal question of the soul and agential free will. Through the framework of desire and volition established by Frankfurt, I am at least willing to conclusively accept as

philosophic principle, and still not objective fact, but something close, that Homo-Sapiens do indeed differ from their peers in the animal kingdom in regard to the capacity for contemplation. Too, that human beings possess the capacity for an exercising of self-determined desire and volition; a freedom of will. Finally, I am also willing to accept that this freedom of will exists on a spectrum, and that it is the duty of the individual not to fall to a hapless, aimless existence as a wanton. Man must instead always educate himself, and fully embrace the potential of the mind, constantly learning through experience, intellectual practice, artistic expression, and philosophic enquiry. The individual must too (as will be discussed in chapter 4) understand himself and act with authenticity, separate from the conception of himself through the eyes of his peers. Through this process, and as well bolstered by a healthy connection of body and mind, both parts mental and physical rigor, the individual can be, to quote poet William Ernest Henley, “the master of my fate, the captain of my soul.”

In turn, if nature and nurture as dealt by the cosmic die of existence befall an individual so that said individual's child (the inevitable father, and creator of his own future man (himself)) is born into unfavorable circumstances, genetic predispositions, or thought systems, it still remains the duty and the gift of that human being to utilize its particular (though more challenged given the circumstances) capacity for growth and freedom of the will.

As stated by Charles Taylor:

Responsibility falls to us in the sense that it is always possible that fresh insight might alter my evaluations and hence even myself for the better. So that within the limits of my capacity to change myself by fresh insight, within the limits of the first direction of causal influence, I am responsible in the full direct, 'modern' sense for my evaluations.

What was said about the changeability of evaluations applies with greatest force to our most fundamental evaluations, those which provide the terms in which other less basic ones are made. These are the evaluations which touch my identity... defined in terms of certain essential evaluations which provide the horizon or foundation for the evaluation for the other evaluations one makes.

Now precisely these deepest evaluations are the ones which are least clear, least articulated, most easily subject to illusion and distortion. It is those which are closest to what I am as a subject, in the sense that short of them I would break down as a person, which are among the hardest for me to be clear about. Thus the question can always be posed: ought I to re-evaluate my most basic evaluations? Have I really understood what is essential to my identity? Have I truly determined what I sense to be the highest mode of life?... I am trying to see reality afresh and form more adequate categories to describe it. To do this I am trying to open myself, use all of my deepest, unstructured sense of things in order to come to a new clarity.

(Frankfurt, 39-42)

Change is always possible. We are confined by our past, expected by our future, but change is always possible. The self is the result of Enquiry, Expression, Understanding; shape oneself like human clay. Live by Insistence. Live by Drive. Live by *Will*.

In the following chapter, chapter 3, we will use Aristotle as our guide to re-evaluate our “most basic evaluations” and to better sense what actually is “the highest mode of life.” In accomplishing this task, we actualize ourselves as human person, and not just human being. We limit our potentiality for wantonness. We increase the value of our personhood as a kind of personhood defined by “the highest mode of life.” In chapter 4 we will understand ourselves, and our personhood as we are individually, and amongst a collective. We will find strength in who we are, as specific individuals, and in this process grow to better love, and find strength in the world of other individuals that form the collective.

We will develop our personhood. We will advance our will.



3.1 What does the Will want?

What is the chief good of man? What, among all existential states of mind, tangible materials of the world, and spiritual natures of the soul, what most wholly... *is*? What is... for the sake of itself, and no thing, no state, no nature else? It seems in every category of life, our states of mind, materials of the world, and natures of the soul are pursued and felt for the sake of something else above them; each a subcategory propelled by a desire for something whole, something encompassing, something else. Man feels greed for the sake of power, lust for the sake of romance, or, like an architect to a cathedral or an athlete to the outcome of competition, pursues a discipline for the sake of the result of that discipline, but what *is*... for the sake in, and only of, *itself*. What is the highest rung in the ladder of human endeavor?

Now such a thing happiness, above all else, is held to be; for this we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else, but honour, pleasure, reason, and every virtue we choose indeed for themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we should still choose each of them), but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging that through them we shall be happy. Happiness, on the other hand, no one chooses for the sake of these, nor, in general, for anything other than itself. (Aristotle, 10)

In this statement, and statements to follow, Aristotle makes the case that:

1. a conception of the world hierarchically composed by ascending virtues, pursuits, and states of being (all more colloquially termed as “goods”) can be defined. Thus, that such a conception does exist, and
2. among these goods is a singular, chief good; this good being happiness

3. through a virtuous, rational, productive life, one can be happy. Further, that one can choose happiness. And finally, that “happiness, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and it is the end of action.” (Aristotle, 11)

Let us compare these component functions and overarching system of happiness to that of a tree. Rationality, virtue (intellectual and moral), and productivity serve as the reaching, foundational bark of this tree that, when said component parts are well and in line, will sprout leaves: the byproduct of a healthy system akin; that system being happiness. From this sprouting too, comes new seeds that fall to earth and create the formation of a new tree: it's roots that breed action, it's bark that reaches and blossoms, and in this trees flourishing, new leaves and new seeds. This cyclical process of bloom is eudaimonea, human flourishing, a state of happiness laden with fulfillment, joy, and purpose.

### 3.2 What is Happiness?

After describing his hierarchical, relational conception of goods which so-by add to the GOOD. Aristotle first mentions happiness in chapter four:

since all knowledge and every choice have some good as the object of their longing — let us state what it is that we say the political art aims at and what the highest of all the goods related to action is [i.e the GOOD]. As for its name, then, it is pretty much agreed on by most people; for both the many and the refined say that it is happiness, and they suppose that living well and acting well are the same thing as being happy. But as for what happiness is, they disagree, and the many do not give a response similar to that of the wise. The former respond that it is something obvious and manifest, such as pleasure or wealth or honor, some saying it is one thing, others another. Often one and the same person responds differently, for when he is sick, it is health; when poor, wealth.  
(Aristotle, 4-5)

Thus, Aristotle defines the GOOD to which all other good's aim as **happiness**. But what, say Aristotle, constitutes said happiness?

Aristotle delineates happiness into separate, subjective meanings. This subjectivity is possible because:

Each person judges nobly the things he knows, and of these he is a good judge... One must begin from what is known, but this has a twofold meaning: there are things known to us, on the one hand, and things known simply, on the other.  
(Aristotle, 4-5)

Thus, born into opinions of the collective, operating via orienting compasses of our own (as individuals (what Aristotle might call “intellect of the soul” (i.e 1096b 28))), and further, manufacturing our lives in relation to the “moral and intellectual virtues” as Aristotle describes them — the individual will have his or her own conception of this GOOD which is sought highest among all other goods, this good which “is something of one’s own and not easily taken away,” (1095b 26) this good being happiness. Aristotle further clarifies what exactly the essence of such a thing, “happiness,” is, as *eudaimonea*, and not pleasure. Further, despite the subjective relationship of an individual to happiness, Aristotle seeks to identify what the essence of happiness means for all people:

But in *every* action and choice, it is the end involved, since it is for the sake of this that all people do everything else. As a result, if there is some end of *all* actions, this would be the good related to action... As a result, if there is some one thing that is complete in itself, this would be what is being sought... Happiness above all seems to be of this character, for we always choose it on account of itself and never on account of something else. Yet honor, pleasure, intellect, and every virtue we choose on their own account — for even if nothing resulted from them, we would choose each of them — but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, because we suppose that, through them, we will be happy. But nobody chooses happiness for the sake of these things, or, more generally, on account of anything else.  
(Aristotle, 11)

I would like to delineate two further tenants of Aristotle’s happiness: its self-sufficiency and its nature as an activity of the soul in accord with virtue. As per its self sufficiency:

“The same thing appears to result also on the basis of self-sufficiency, for the complete good is held to be self-sufficient. We do not mean by *self-sufficiency* what suffices for someone by himself, living a

solitary life, but what is sufficient also with respect to parents, offspring, a wife, and in general, one's friends, and fellow citizens, since by nature a human being is political... As for the self-sufficient, we posit it as that by which itself makes life choiceworthy and in need of nothing, and as such what we suppose happiness to be. Further, happiness is the most choiceworthy of all things because it is not just one among them — and it is clear that, were it included among many things, it would be more choiceworthy with the least addition of the good things; for the good that is added to it results in a superabundance of goods, and the greater number of goods is always more choiceworthy. So happiness appears to be something complete and self-sufficient, it being the end of our actions. (Aristotle, 11-12)

Finally, Aristotle states that happiness is, functionally, *activity of the soul in accord with virtue* — because that very — activity of the soul (i.e reason: the application of intellectual virtues, the application of moral virtues in the fabric of one's own inner life of the mind, and the life of others they so inhabit) in accord with virtue is what makes the human being so distinctly human... as separated from the natural world: from rocks, and flora, to the hierarchical scale of fauna: where at the top, the human being so exists, as the thinking thing capable of the highest level of meta-cognition, capable of the deepest application of reason in moral and intellectual capacity (but, it should be mentioned too, capable for better, or for worse):

So there remains a certain active life of that which possesses reason; and what possesses reason includes what is obedient to reason, on the one hand, and what possesses it and thinks, on the other. But since {this life of reason in the second sense} also is spoken of in a twofold way, one must posit the life {of that which possesses reason} in accord with an activity, for this seems to be its more authoritative meaning... But if this is so — and we posit the work of a human being as a certain life, and this is an activity of soul and actions accompanied by reason, the work of a serious man being to do these things well and nobly, and each thing is brought to completion well in accord with the virtue proper to it — if this is so, then the human good becomes an activity of soul in accord with virtue, and if there are several virtues, then in accord with the best and most complete one. (Aristotle, 12-13)

Aristotle also makes the mention-worthy concession that happiness is often reliant on goods and fortunes outside of one's control, but I will close with the following quote:

Happiness, therefore, is the best, noblest, and most pleasant thing; and these are not separated. (Aristotle, 16)

### 3.3 What are the Virtues?

Aristotle defines “habit,” “intellectual virtue,” and “moral virtue” as part of a schema set relative to the essential nature of the individual. For instance, intellectual virtue exists as such: i.e. “increase of intellectual virtue results mostly from teaching—hence it requires experience and time” (Aristotle, 26), and moral virtue “is the result of habit, and so it is that moral virtue got its name [ethike] by a slight alteration of the term *habit* [*ethos*]. It is also clear, as a result, that none of the moral virtues are present in us by nature, since nothing that exists by nature is habituated to be other than it is” (Aristotle, 26). Aristotle later asserts that “by doing just things we become just; moderate things, moderate; and courageous things, courageous” (Aristotle, 27). Thus, it would appear that **habit**, for Aristotle, holds the definition of something like *consistent practice*. Habit is aligning ones physical, emotional, or intellectual actions in the world with the considerations of the mind. Thus, with good habit comes good virtue, and with bad habit, comes bad virtue. Intellectual virtues should be trained to the highest extent possible. The ideal of intellectual virtuosity is its existence in its highest form — by being the *most* it can be. Yet, with regard to the emotional virtues: the highest extent of their training does not lie in its being the most — but in its alignment with a kind of *golden mean* that places itself at the center of excess and deficiency. As stated by Aristotle:

Virtue, therefore, is a characteristic marked by choice, residing in the mean relative to us, a characteristic defined by reason and as the prudent person would define it. Virtue is also a mean with respect to two vices, the one vice related to excess, the other to deficiency; and further, it is a mean because some vices fall short of and others exceed what should be the case in both passions and actions, whereas virtue discovers and chooses the middle term. Thus, with respect to its being and definition that states what it is, virtue is a mean; but with respect to what is best and the doing of something well, it is an extreme.

(Aristotle, 35)

Aristotle also establishes that foundational to the navigation of moral virtue is the essential, natural understanding of pleasure and pain. For it is “on account of the pleasure involved that we do base things, and it is on account of the pain that we abstain from noble ones. Thus one must be brought up in a certain way straight from childhood, as Plato asserts, so as to enjoy as well as to be pained by what one ought, for this is correct education” (Aristotle, 29). Aristotle states that one’s relationship to pleasure, specifically, is a means for measuring the strength of their virtue. While it could be said that pain can be avoided — or at least that our most natural inclination to avoid pain can be sufficiently upheld; pleasure is born with a rabbit hole at its center that only those with proper moral virtue can look past in the effort of remaining morally virtuous. Aristotle concludes on the relationship of pleasure and pain to moral virtue in book 2 with the statement:

Let it be said, then, that virtue concerns pleasures and pains; that it both increases as a result of those actions from which it comes into being and is destroyed when these are performed in a different manner; and that it becomes active in just those activities as a result of which it also came into being. (Aristotle, 31)

Aristotle continues to speak to the deliberative nature of the thinking being who straddles their inherent, natural tendencies with their meta-processing mind. Habit is an essential part of this conception. Aristotle has spoken to the relation of habit and the moral and intellectual virtues. In practice the individual orienteers a compass of honorable, eudaemonic truth that should result in the life best led.

In Book 4 of the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle begins to detail the relationship between the individual and excess, deficiency, and moderation. Aristotle deems moderation as the most virtuous path.

He begins his analysis of how the individual best navigate this spectrum with the relationship between the individual and money: the difference between stinginess, a good spender (liberality), and prodigality. Aristotle states: “Hence he who has the virtue pertaining to money uses wealth best,” and further, Aristotle develops a thread in his analysis of use of wealth that extends to the individuals relationship to other virtues too: the notion that that which comes from within: self-created/obtained/cultivated — regardless of the individual’s relationship to it in regard to excess/deficiency — will always be inherently more virtuous than that which comes from without; in the case of use of wealth, Aristotle states: “all people are fonder of the works [or products] that are their own, just as parents and poets are,” and additionally, “gratitude flows to one who gives and not to one who refrains from taking, and praise even more so... of all those who act on the basis of virtue, liberal human beings are perhaps loved most, for they are advantageous to others, and this consists in giving,” and lastly, “For, just as was said, he who spends in accord with his resources and on what he ought is liberal, whereas he who exceeds these is prodigal.” (Aristotle, 67-69)

In similar manner throughout the rest of Book 4, Aristotle places being a “plain dealer” at the golden mean between being an “ironist” and a “boaster” in regard to when the individual speaks of him/herself. He places “wittiness” at the golden mean between being a “boor” and a “buffoon; “gentleness,” between a “lack of anger” and “irascibility”; and that “Tact too is proper to the middle characteristic, and it belongs to the tactful person to say and listen to the sorts of things suited to a decent and liberal person.” (Aristotle, 87)

Essential to all of these actions and dispositions for Aristotle is the notion that “Actions that accord with virtue are noble and for the sake of the noble and correctly: he will give to

whom he ought and as much as and when he ought, and anything else that accompanies correct giving. Moreover, he will do these things without pleasure or without pain, since what accords with virtue is pleasant or not painful — in fact, least of all is it painful.” (Aristotle, 68) Here Aristotle plants “to kalon,” or, “the beautiful, most noble” as the tentpole in his conception regarding the individual’s relationship to ethical/intellectual virtues.

So, how does a knowledge of oneself, as a specific individual relates to these conceptions. I would like to consider that the ‘eye of the soul’ or *nous*, **knows**, the truth of the individual in its path — and that there is a spectrum for the individual akin to the other spectrums they find themselves betwixt and between, of excess and deficiency, of pleasure and pain, of intellect and no intellect — but that this spectrum is the spectrum of meaning and purpose versus no-meaning, and apathy. To understand then, our souls truest relationship to meaning and purpose, is to understand how to live one’s life in the best possible way.

### 3.4 What is the Noble/the Beautiful?

Aristotle begins the Nicomachean Ethics with the quote: “Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action as well as choice, is held to aim at some good. Hence people have nobly declared that the good is that at which all things aim.” **Nobly**. To lead life nobly. Aristotle is clearly in search of the noble; but further, to attain the noble *nobly*. Bartlett and Collins draw our attention to Aristotles early use of noble as a verb with the footnote attached to “nobly” that reads:

*Kalos*: the adverb related to a central term, *to kalon*, which has a range of meanings for which English requires at least three: ‘noble,’ ‘beautiful,’ and ‘fine.’ It denotes (physical) beauty but also and above all, in the *Ethics*, what is admirable in a moral sense. It will be translated most frequently as ‘the noble’ (‘noble,’ ‘nobly,’ ‘in a noble manner’) and, in the rare cases in which it refers unambiguously to



physical beauty, as 'beautiful.' In the present instance, Aristotle may say that the declaration in question is a 'noble' one because it expresses a noble sentiment—that all things aim at the good—but not necessarily a true one: the conclusion drawn does not in fact follow from the premises given in the first sentence.

(Aristotle, 1)

The Nicomachean Ethics is Aristotle's attempt to create an operating system by which every individual can align with true north — to be an individual most intimate with to kalon (the noble and the beautiful); this alignment: powered by internal cogs and mechanisms of the compass which turn in harmonious unison because of the individual's active engagement with the intellectual and ethical virtues — create a Magnificent individual; who walks according to true north, who knows and loves to kalon. To know to kalon: "the magnificent person resembles a knower, since he is able to contemplate what is fitting and to spend great amounts in a suitable way... The magnificent person will make these sorts of expenditures for the sake of what is noble, for this is common to the virtues." (Book 4, Chapter 2, 1122a35 — 1122b7) To further contextualize to kalon, I believe it is important to look to Plato and The Phaedrus; in the Phaedrus's conception of the soul which knew to kalon and the forms in heaven before descending to this earthly plane: "Once... the soul was perfect and had wings and could soar into heaven as only creatures can... [the soul] lost its wings and fell to earth, there it took an earthly body, and now while it lives in this body no outward sign of wings can be seen, yet the roots of its wings are still there and the nature of these is to try to raise the earthbound soul into heaven."

Aristotle states in Book 1 Chapter 6, "For as there is sight in the body, so there is intellect in the soul and indeed one thing in one thing, another in another" (1096b). Thus, Aristotle places the individual as one, who can, via moral and intellectual virtues, use the intellect of her soul to align herself with *something*... for it is in our power to morally, and intellectually, conceive of

and tangibly enable our actions to work for something — Aristotle declares this thing to be happiness; but a eudaemonic one — and a eudaemonic happiness, in more or less terms, is the kind of happiness which occurs when the individual’s soul knows to kalon best; the individual has elevated their earthbound soul to the kind of knowledge of fine beauty, fine nobility that it knew in heaven.

And why is the importance of virtue to live life nobly? “Indeed, praise belongs to virtue: people are apt to do noble things as a result of virtue...” (Aristotle, 23). Aristotle further asserts how and why living life in accordance with virtue results in a noble life, a life that knows to kalon, but that is not the focus of this response.

The *why* we are primarily concerned with in this response is as follows: why are the things/people/actions/pursuits that possess to kalon... *the things* that possess to kalon? In my reading of Aristotle, I believe he places great importance on internal and external reflectors of a thing’s harmony (how well a thing works, how fine, how beautiful, how seamless it is (how much it represents to kalon)). Aristotle says so about **truth** in Book 1, chapter, 8: “For with the truth, all given facts harmonize but with what is false, the truth soon hits a wrong note” (Aristotle, 14). Of these things then that are noble in the world, that are noble in the human being, let us turn to Aristotle’s definition of things which run aligned with the mean of virtue between excess and deficiency. For Aristotle, these things are *courage*, set between cowardice and rashness, *ambition*, set between sloth and greed, *composure*, set between apathy and irritability, and *self-control*, set between indecisiveness and impulsiveness... etc... But further, Aristotle makes an interesting delineation in the value he associates with disposition over action. For while he takes the time to declare some actions as given over to the involuntary, and thus out

of human control; that there always remains the ability to be of a **noble disposition**. And to those who practice the noble disposition and thus live nobly, then, “to the lovers of what is noble, the things pleasant by nature are pleasant. Such too are the actions in accord with virtue, with the result that they are pleasant both to such people and in themselves,” and further, “Happiness, therefore, is the best, noblest, and most pleasant thing; and these things are not separated, as the inscription at Delos has it: ‘Noblest is what is most just, but best is to be healthy; And most pleasant by nature is for someone to attain what he passionately desires’” (Aristotle, 16). Thus Aristotle, in dialogue with the inscription at Delos, insists that the human being is oriented toward attain “what he passionately desires” — and that happiness; a *eudaemonic happiness* is the end of all desire for the human being. It is the activity of soul in accordance with virtue, *and with all that is noble, fine, beautiful (to kalon)*, that is wholly self-sufficient on the basis of noble action, and of satisfying the discontent that lies coiled at the heart of every human being.

But we will never know this kind of happiness if we do not know what is noble. We will never take part in the actions and virtues that are noble — that create happiness — if we don’t innately find them pleasant. To find the things of to kalon pleasant, of refined beauty, and nobility, one must first be noble in their disposition. Humans are beholden to instincts and actions outside of their control that are determined by the animal mind, or by involuntary action predicated on surroundings, on circumstance. But what can be controlled is one’s disposition toward the noble things, the things that are to kalon. Like the law of attraction; the individual will often find what he is dispositioned towards, as long as that disposition is truthful and not for the sake of a kind of dishonest, preconceived value. Thus, the intellectual and moral virtues are a

kind of training of the soul to know what is good in the world, what of the goods that are truly **good**; the goods that “the soul once knew in heaven;” the goods that are to kalon.

One must wind the gears, tune the compass, and walk steadfast: true-north.

But easier said than done.

What force, what incentive, will inspire and sustain the individual on their path toward to kalon? The answer is sincere care, attention, interest: the answer is love. The power of love as a chief agential force of the human person is the beautiful dualism of love’s efficacy. Love can be provided from those people outside the individual: friends, family, partners, even strangers. But love can also be provided from the individual himself, to the individual himself.

### 3.5 What is Eudaimonea and the Role of Love as an Agential Force?

If happiness, according to Aristotle, is elevated from a state of pleasure to instead: an agential activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, then let us consider that Eudaimonea is the activity/engagement that is a healthy system, a flourishing tree: it is the leaves, it is the flowers in bloom, it is the resulting seeds that can breed life anew and inspire action for the system to begin again. No tree can grow without rain, no tree can breathe without carbon dioxide, no tree can bloom without sun. The blooming leaves and seeds are the end of action for the tree, despite the component parts and processes that allow this blooming to happen. In similar fashion, while the cultivation of the moral and intellectual virtues are necessary for the individual to be happy, once they are happy, “happiness the end of action.”

Let us also consider *love* in its faculties as an active human good that fuels this flourishing. And let us consider love too as the blanket expression for *intense, sincere care*.

Aristotle defines his conception of the world via “goods” that serve in themselves as both ends and means to virtuosic states. While happiness may in fact be the chief end of human life, it is certainly not the *chief means*; because happiness does not dictate itself. It is a befallen circumstance; sometimes lucky, sometimes dictated via agential choice of the individual. In Aristotle’s definition of a good, it would appear love is aptly that thing too which is in itself, of itself, for the sake of itself, self-sufficient, and whole. Love is a choice that the individual can make at anytime. The individual can, in every moment, choose to lead with love: love for oneself, love for one’s work, love for thy neighbor, for thy child, love for the care and detail they place in the careful earmarking of a book-page, held just close enough near candle light to properly see how finely they make a perfect and un-damaging triangle at the top corner of the page. Love is to live in the world without ego, without greed, with unbridled, unprejudiced curiosity for all things, and to give as much as you receive; to care for things, and for people, and for ideas outside of yourself. Love can manifest happiness, passion, security. Humans are in large part influenced by their relationship to meaning: the meaning mechanism. Love is the embodiment of highest meaning for the human person, and as such, could be called the connection between all things. Happiness is the beautiful and welcome fallout of a healthy amount of love. Happiness is the leaves from the trees, the petals from the flower. Happiness is the seeds that will give birth anew. But no part of the cycle of the tree is possible without rain, without carbon dioxide, without sun. Love, like the environment that fosters the growth of the tree, is too what fosters the growth of the individual in this way. Love (agential and applied human care) is the eternal nutrient.

Let us consider the self-sufficiency of love given love’s potential for existence even in

moments of hate, say, on the micro-scale of an individual in dispute with a parental figure. Say, they have always been in dispute. Say, this child, is actually a child who has not received love in the world. Yet, this child is materially successful. She has worked hard, held to her convictions, become wealthy and respected in the eyes of the populace. In fact, she is also not a cold and bitter person, she expresses love and harmony and virtue. How is this possible if she did not receive love in her life? If there was no sun for her, no rain, no air to breathe... if her environment suffocated her, how is it that she grew higher than trees near her which received ample external love and care? This is because she is not the victim of her circumstance; of her befallen set amount of pleasure or pain or predetermined genetic makeup or non-chosen childhood nurture. She, individually, can make the choice to love. In the absence of love around her, she can choose to love within. *This is why to love the world, one must first love herself: for nothing is more self-sufficient and whole than true self-understanding; than true self-love.* Her experience taught her to trust herself... and perhaps too to be more open, more curious and appreciative in her response to the world. But even if she were existentially beaten by her experience so much so that she was unable to love the world outside her, it is still possible that said experience was able to foster such a strong nature of love within, that through her own agential choosing, she was able to love herself to such a deep degree that she could still grow to such heights in turn.

Let us further consider love as an agential and propelling force, as a nutrient of Eudaimonea. Let us consider an individual in dire circumstance: a prisoner of internment camp: starved, hated, beaten, the stench of death lapping your nostril like a wet dog, your family taken from you, and you, losing your sense of the world, of humanity, of yourself... in this moment no

action is more wholly self-sufficient, no more wholly self-sustaining as a gravitational force of its own nucleus, than love. Pleasurable happiness in this circumstance would amount to ensuring the highest amount of pleasurable experience for that individual. Yet, there are individuals like the Mother, who, as a prisoner in an internment camp chooses to limit her own pleasurable experience for her child's. When the starving mother of an internment camp feeds her child her ration of bread rather than she herself eat, her Maslow's hierarchy of needs is not met — a pit in her stomach, cravings that could be satiated by the taste of bread — but she supersedes her immediate sensorial needs for that of her child's and her flourishing is expanded because her relationship to meaning and to virtue is deepened. She is engaged in eudaimonea; not personal pleasure. For, her actions embodies the activity of her soul in accord with virtue; activity fueled by love. Pleasurable happiness is temporary feeling. Happiness of Eudaimonea is a flourishing of the human being: it is the human person deeply in touch with meaning. Love is the primal, eternal, instinctual knowing and embodiment of that meaning.

Feed your noble path with love. Love, again, is a representative term for care — for focus. Let us focus — in the fashion explicated by Aristotle in the Nichomachen Ethics on what is noble, what is moral, and what is good; for what is good for the I (individual) is good for all, and what is good for all is good for the I. Let us care — in the fashion soon to be explicated by Emerson and Heidegger— for ourselves, as we are, as individuals; for we are no other.

It is animal nature to move, act, and interact with the physical world for the sake of achieving survival met in the necessities of food, shelter, water, and safety. If these needs are met, the animal survives and eventually tends to pro-create, thus ensuring the survival of the species for future generations. What is unique to humans among fellow beings of the animal kingdom however, is the ability to contemplate these actions, these movements, these interactions; to question and consider the act of acting, the path of movement, interactions themselves, and interactions amongst other interactions. But with great power, comes great responsibility.

For, the human thus questions the point of their power, the reason for their power, and too why their power should exist at all? Why not; what is stopping the individual from terminating their power entirely? To do so practically would be to kill oneself, and this is the central question of Camus' address to the absurd.

Human beings possess the gift and the curse of *the why* — the faculty for which I have prior called the meaning mechanism, or the 3rd drive. For the natural animal, what philosopher Martin Heidegger would call “being-of,” as a being of the natural world that in it's essential nature is nothing more, and equally so, nothing less, than an integral part of nature itself, the natural animal's orienting thought process (it's call and response with the world of which it is a part of), suffices when the questions of what, who, how, where, and when are answered (and in this process meeting the necessities of survival). The savannah dwelling tiger will ask the question of what shall I do today? I shall hunt so that I am fed. Who shall I hunt today? I shall hunt the elephant because elephants provides much meat for myself, and too for my family.



Where shall I hunt today? I shall go to the watering hole two kilometers south of here where elephants dwell. When shall I hunt today? I shall hunt just past daybreak, when the elephants are sure to attend the watering hole for morning thirst, but will not yet be fully alert. How shall I hunt today? I shall enshroud myself in the low lying brush of desert hedge that surrounds the watering hole, and I shall attack the smallest elephant when the least amount of his brethren are looking. Now, the human being possesses many traits of his fellow being-of-animals of the animal kingdom. But the human rather, as not just being-of, but also “being-in,” will ask the questions of what, who, how, where, when, *and why*. The suburban dwelling office worker of Eastern Iowa will ask the question of what shall I do today? I shall go to the office so that — wait... what... what is... what is the purpose of the office — of my job, or me physically transporting myself to this job that I don’t know or care for the purpose of, or *me*, what am I, *why am I*, what is the point of all of this... there probably is no point... is there?

This person; all people; are face to face with the absurd. And in his response is the potential for suicide. And that is the question Albert Camus asks; that is the question Thomas Nagel asks; that is the question I will ask. What is the absurd - is there a logic to its termination through suicide - and if there is a better logic elsewhere, what is it, and why?

In a sense, and as in melodrama, killing yourself amounts to confessing. It is confessing that life is too much for you or that you do not understand it... Living, naturally, is never easy.  
(Camus, 7)

So what is the remedy? How can man confess to the absurdity of his existence from a place that is whole and centered, that is consistent and sincere?... so that need not through his ignorance nor his impatience, man need not make that grand confession, an attempt to some

tragic liberty, where he once and for all exiles himself from the shackles of what he can not understand.

What is the absurd?

If one could only say just once: 'this is clear', all would be saved... He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason. The absurd is born in this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world. (Camus, 22)

It is in this struggle that man forever tries to supplant his why with an answer that is not there. This eternal why, is the human being's *meaning mechanism*; and it creates in him a desperate longing for the body of an external world that is shaped like the internal expectations of his mind. From this desire for clarity, humans have created superstructures of organization to give reason and meaning to this otherwise incalculable world in which he must live; he creates religion, freedom, chains, prosperity, society, war, peace, sacrifice, art, science, philosophy, truth.... truth.... all he wants is truth and yet all he is met with is absurdity. As Thomas Nagel would point out, absurdity is the moment of making a speech for a motion that has already been passed, or, proclaiming your love to a recording. You thought your partner was living, breathing and listening on the other side of the line, and all you got was an answering machine. They did not hear your call. Your internal world of desires and expectations did not match the raw circumstance of the external world. Absurdity, further, is when there is "a conspicuous discrepancy between pretension or aspiration and reality" (Nagel, 718). In this dislocation between man and the external world, man is alienated from the world and even himself. Our lives are led in call and response; the call of the mind to the incalculable eternal, and the eternal dashing hopes and expectations of the mind through an external that exists without reason.

Perhaps there is some grand overarching reason, but that shall not matter to the individual, for all he finds are empty promises and unsettling surprise... his life is absurdity.

So, the internal world of man and the self seeks to understand the external world of the world and things (people, places, objects, nature, natural and societal laws/constructs) through reason. The outside world of things is inherently irrational, and often presents itself irrationally. It is then in man's futile attempts to understand the inherently non-understandable irrational world that he becomes lost; without answers, without solace. Man then either creates "god" like Kierkegaard would espouse to, or a cosmic, unified "one" like Husserel. Kierkegaard deems that all (un-explainable) things are explained in one thing: god. Husserel claims the opposite: that all things are explained by all things. In both endeavors, Kierkegaard, Husserel, and many people like them, seek to isolate the burden of absurdity on the shoulders of something so irrational, so impossible, that the ease with which they can accept no explanation for *that thing* pacifies the real lack of an explanation for *all things as they are*. As Camus states,

From the abstract god of Husserel to the dazzling god of Kierkegaard the distance is not so great. Reason and the irrational lead to the same preaching. In truth the way matter but little; the will to arrive suffices. The abstract philosopher and the religious philosopher start out from the same disorder and support each other in the same anxiety. (Camus, 22)

Camus further suggests that in this intellectual plea for reason which the abstract man and the religious man equally make - the plea's claim, in its inability to, via reason, understand the irrational, but then claim the irrational as its own non-understandable, infinite, transcendent thing, is "reason becoming confused and negating itself" (Camus, 37). Camus, in his personal response to the world and man's need for meaning, says we must *wholly recognize* the absurd

rather than ignore it with claims to ownership of an irrational, un-reasonable infinite “one” or “all.” In further detail,

With Husserel the reason eventually has no limits at all. The absurd on the contrary establishes its limits since it is powerless to calm its anguish. Kierkegaard independently asserts that a single limit is enough to negate that anguish. But the absurd does not go so far. For it that limit is directed solely at the reason's ambitions. The theme of the irrational, as it is conceived by the existentialists, is reason becoming confused and escaping by negating itself. The absurd is lucid reason noting its limits. (Camus, 37)

For Camus this is the pivotal choice of man: to, in the face of the world's lack of reason, and his subsequent feeling of absurdity, either abandon reason for false hope pinned on the shoulders of a “god” or an “infinite,” *or*, accept the absurdity of everything. He, this *absurd man*, then realizes that the only thing which is discernible is that everything is indiscernible. In this choice, what Camus calls “philosophical suicide,” man becomes “lucid reason noting its limits,” and man finds his power, virtue, and freedom in his revolt to live on in the face of absurdity.

*Revolt.* Further,

It is clear that death and the absurd are here the principles of the only reasonable freedom: that which a human heart can experience and live... The absurd man thus catches sight of a burning and frigid, transparent and limited universe in which nothing is possible but everything is given, and beyond which all is collapse and nothingness. He can then decide to accept such a universe and draw from it his strength, his refusal to hope, and the unyielding evidence of a life lived without consolation.... But what does life mean in such a universe? Nothing else for the moment but indifference to the future and a desire to use up everything that is given. (Camus, 22)

In response to Camus, Thomas Nagel's address to the absurd bears much of the same foundation, but issues slightly different tenants. Broadly, Nagel's understanding of the absurd, much akin to Camus', is characterized in the following quote: “The philosophical sense of absurdity available to us all, is delivered when the seriousness with which we take our lives collides with the perpetual possibility of regarding everything about which we are serious as

arbitrary, or open to doubt” (Nagel, 718). Further, we can not remove ourselves entirely from this possibility due to the survival needs of our intrinsic animal nature that requires the exertion of energy and attention, and from this energy and attention, the practical hierarchy of priorities for action that dictate the existence of the human being and other animal life. But because of the human’s capacity for the self-consciousness and contemplation, this transcendent step gives way to a transcendent hierarchy of needs as well. Camus and Nagel both recognize that one could remove them-self from this equation entirely if, and only if, they were to commit suicide. But to both Camus and Nagel, and to me as well, suicide is not an option. We must live in the face of absurdity. The question still remains how, and Nagel’s response is issued in the following tenants.

One, that timescale is irrelevant. Camus bastions man’s sense of his absurdity in large part due to his awareness that he is but speck in the great sands of time and as such, whatever may be most important to him is no longer important fifty years later when he has died. For, he is dead. And further, the nothingness of his time and himself becomes ever more irrelevant the more time progresses. For Nagel however, the question of our moment in position relative to the totality of time is irrelevant. In this way, Nagel’s version of the absurd man knows that “someone now is happy or miserable, without knowing that it does not matter, period.” (Nagel, 717). If every moment is absurd, and absurdity, embodied in numerological metaphor as say, the number zero, than it need not matter if your life is composed of seventy years of zero, or an infinite number of years of zero, the sum value of your absurd life is zero all the same, and so the absurd man need not worry about his place in the chronological cosmos.

Secondly, “It is useless to mutter: ‘Life is meaningless; life is meaningless...’ as an accompaniment to everything we do. In continuing to live and work and strive, we take ourselves seriously no matter what we say” (Nagel, 724). I agree entirely with this assessment. The idea that life is meaningless may well be true, but to filter one’s indispensably meaningful existence (and this is expressed logically, for, if we continue to *move*, we have to take ourselves and what we do and think seriously), through a lens of non-meaning, for Nagel and for I, is not the proper choice of a man who understands his and the world’s absurdity; his refutation is a choice of meaning in itself. To not recognize this and to insist on one’s own revolt of meaning entirely is not enough to satisfy life’s paradigmatic structural insistence on the existence of meaning and the value in a relationship with it. To deny meaning is instead to die in one’s own still moving skin; it is to make the choice to live as an impassioned heart without an informed soul. Camus would say that in the tenacity and bravery necessary to deny meaning, one lives in an impassioned and valiant revolt, but I guess I just disagree. In denying meaning, Camus’ philosophy depends wholly on reason to satisfy and orient man. Though, as stated by Nagel, “If we tried to rely entirely on reason, and pressed it hard, our lives and beliefs would collapse—a form of madness that may actually occur if the inertial force of taking the world and life for granted is somehow lost. If we lose our grip on that, reason will not give it back to us” (Nagel, 724).

Nagel asserts that our capacity for higher order thinking like self-consciousness and contemplation is in fact *the most natural part of our human nature*. Nagel states that the life of a mouse would be absurd to the mouse if he had the same capacity for self-consciousness and contemplation. This capacity, or, “the transcendent step,” naturally belongs to us, and thus, why should we judge ourselves for a trait so endemic to who we are? We do not judge our needs for

food and for rest; or for inhalation of oxygen. No, rather, we eat and we sleep; and we breathe in air. Moreover,

If a sense of the absurd is a way of perceiving our true situation (even though the situation is not absurd until the perception arises), then what reason can we have to resent or escape it? Like the capacity of epistemological skepticism, it results from the ability to understand our human limitations. It need not be a matter for agony unless we make it so. Nor need it evoke a defiant contempt of fate that allows us to feel brave or proud. Such dramatics, even if carried on in private, betray a failure to appreciate the cosmic unimportance of the situation. If *sub specie aeternitatis* there is no reason to believe that anything matters, then that doesn't matter either, and we can approach our absurd lives with irony instead of heroism or despair. (Nagel, 727)

Nagel's insight is brilliant. When he speaks to our capacity for "epistemological skepticism," he is referring to the transcendent step of self-consciousness and contemplation which allows us to consider and en-practice ourselves as removed from the natural world, or other people, or even too, the dislocation of self from self; as skepticism to meaning. This epistemological skepticism is what makes us particularly human as separate from the rest of the animal kingdom. It is who we are and what we are, thus we need not ignore it, nor, in some impassioned but vain attempt, revolt at it. Instead we must embrace our capacity for epistemological skepticism and *the inevitable side-effect which is absurdity*. Further, too much epistemological skepticism means we then have no meaning, and as Nagel earlier stated, our world will then collapse, and we can not rely on reason alone to bring us back. Finally, if we were to wag the finger so valiantly at the incalculability, the absurd existential un-graspability of life and too death, then in this very act, in this "revolt" against meaning, we are actually giving so much meaning to the cause which we are supposedly against (which is meaning itself). If life is truly unimportant, then so is our view of its unimportance, so we need not worry about the importance to begin with. We should then observe our joys and our predicaments equally, with a

familiar cosmic grin, laughing and appreciating our “absurd lives with irony instead of heroism or despair.”

Camus is brilliant in his assessment of the absurd, but I certainly do favor Nagel’s response for the sake of actual orientation of the individual and society in the world; a world where death is the only inevitable and life can feel meaningless. However, I would like to take another step further from both Camus and Nagel, and assert that what is most important in man’s response to the absurd is not revolt, nor irony, but *love, and the relinquishment of ego*. The predicaments of man, primarily that of his internal expectation not bearing fruit in the natural world, and too his undying thirst for reason and clarity, are not real problems of man, but problems of his ego. If man relinquishes ego and becomes not ego-being, but presence-being, then man will make the final transcendent step. This step is equally in his nature, but it is hidden rather than painfully obvious like his traits of contemplation and self-consciousness. This is the real philosophical suicide. If man kills his ego, he kills the part of himself that so desperately needs what it can not have, and absurdity ceases to exist. Man can then choose love and openness to any event and any occasion, any action, any feeling, any thought. In love, man appreciates tragedy for tragedy, comedy for comedy, banality for banality, laughter for laughter, misery for misery, joy for joy, and life, for the only thing it is, which is itself, which man, sans the incalculable ego, knows he can not wholly change or control. But. He can always be present. He can always be open. He can always love; and appreciate life for all its cosmic certainty and uncertainty. Man must not take his life in suicide, nor his meaning in philosophical suicide. Rather, man must *make* life in suicide of ego, and the embrace of what he can not know, but only *be*.



How does one truly *be*?

Let us first ask, what makes one the most one — one capable of fully being. What separates the I (individual) from knowing its full self? If on some deserted island an I existed, unto itself, as the only known of its kind — like the only child knows no brothers or sisters, and further, saw no other beings, saw nowhere where brothers and sisters could exist, if the I existed knowing no humans, no other than individuals — then perhaps this individual would fully know itself. This individual's identity and relationship with itself would fill the vacuum otherwise occupied by other individuals. As human persons who are at once human animals, human beings, and persons, and who understand themselves in relationship to other human beings, perhaps the human can never understand itself in its true selfhood separate from its relationship to other selves. Indeed, the vast, vast majority of human beings will live with other human beings both by necessity and desire — and human beings and what they are capable of are often stronger in this cooperative mass. I am not suggesting one should only know oneself. I am not suggesting one can even know only oneself, or know oneself as separate from other selves. I would refute the idea that any individual could fully exist unto herself as a self-sustaining paradigm. There is a difference between what one could do and what one does. We do live together as humans. We are functionally cooperative as humans. For future human animals/beings/persons to exist — it takes more than one (a biological necessity dictated by the laws of procreation). Thus, the idea of an individual fully unto herself, while not plausible in any real self-sustaining kind of existence, is still a paradigm worth considering in its hypothetical application to real human existence that does indeed incorporate many and multiple human animals/beings/persons. Rather, due to the

necessity of other human beings, I suggest that the individual instead functionally exists as one part of an interwoven whole and as what some poets might call “the eyes of god knowing itself;” that individuality is an illusion; and we are all one.

Yet, to access the oneness of all individuals — I posit this is only possible if first the individual fully accesses herself — that the individually fully loves herself — that self-love exists as an application of focus, as an application of care, as an application of truth. As stated by Ralph Waldo Emerson: “Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world.” So; what are the tenants of this self absolution, this self love, this self focus and care and truth? Let us consider:

1. The Real is recognized as Real: The Real is the inevitable and the inarguable.
  - i. Death occurs. Life, as we understand it, ends. We do not know if life exists after this life in new or different form; we do know that this form of life ends when something called “death” happens. But it doesn’t just *happen*. Because death is the only inevitable; we are dying. We will not one day die. We are dying now. The individual must recognize that death occurs — and that it is inevitable.
2. The individual understands themselves as a full self, separate from other selves
  - i. The individual takes no shame in the particularity of their selfhood; they are a fully embodied self
  - ii. The individual has a truthful relationship with meaning as active listener to their 3rd drive — the meaning mechanism, and further, the individual applies this meaning to the right things (i.e Chapter 3)

Heidegger's seminal work, 'Being and Time' presents a phenomenological analysis of the nature of human being as delineated by the human person as individual, and the human persons, as a sum collective. For Heidegger, while we can not extract ourselves from this collective: what he would call "the they," we can indeed exist, better, more "authentically," as a "modification of the they." Emerson insists in his seminal work, 'Self Reliance' a similar credo: be your fullest self because you are no other and because:

"Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion... Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist." (Emerson, 261)

So what makes the they (or in Emerson's terms, "society"), the they? How is it dangerous? And how can the individual change their being, so as to be embodied in their authentic (or in Emerson's terms, "self-reliant") individuality: such that authenticity as a mode of being renders the individual liberated from a tranquilized participation in they-hood — so that the individual now exists as an authentic modification of the they.

Emerson, like Heidegger, recognizes the necessity of human co-habitation. As a "modification of the they," authentic individuality can prevail:

What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder, because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude. (Emerson, 263)

So what makes society/the they so undesirable? Why should we instead seek the "perfect sweetness [of] the independence of solitude"? For Emerson, the ails of society fail to aim for the goals, or be constituted by the right principles. If a virtuous, beneficial happiness can indeed

exist by Aristotle's Eudaimonea as "activity of the soul in accordance with virtue" — the collective soul of the society that Emerson points to is one that denies the individual's individualhood: one that is interested rather in false pleasure, false security, false kinship, and a refutation of truth in favor of hollow agreements that only serve the construct of society, but none of society's members:

All men plume themselves on the improvement of society, and no man improves. Society never advances. It recedes as fast on one side as it gains on the other. It undergoes continual changes; it is barbarous, it is civilized, it is christianized, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For every thing that is given, something is taken. Society acquires new arts, and loses old instincts... The civilized man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet. (Emerson, 279)

And further:

Society is a wave. The wave moves onward, but the water of which it is composed does not. The same particle does not rise from the valley to the ridge. Its unity is only phenomenal. The persons who make up a nation to-day, next year die, and their experience does with them. And so reliance on Property, including the reliance on governments which protect it, is the want of self-reliance. Men have looked away from themselves and at things so long, that they have come to esteem the religious, learned, and civil institutions as guards of property, and they deprecate assaults on these, because they feel them to be assaults on property. They measure their esteem of each other by what each has, and not by what each is. But a cultivated man becomes ashamed of his property, out of new respect for his nature. Especially he hates what he has, if he sees that it is accidental, — came to him by inheritance, or gift, or crime; then he feels that it is not having; it does not belong to him, has no root in him, and merely lies there. (Emerson, 281)

For Emerson, regardless of the necessity and potential benefit of any kind of co-habitation — it remains paramount that the individual prides (in Heidegger's terms) their own "*potentiality-for-being*" most. One could posit that when the individual abandons authentic personhood for the sake of the collective, the cumulative force of all such individuals within the collective thus powers the collective to great heights, regardless of the power or personhood of any individual. Emerson highlights the opposition to such an idea in the above passages: no such heights of the collective are possible if the component parts are not fully formed as individual selves. When the

interest of the collective is solely devoted to the sake of the collective, then the collective forgets that the experience of its constituents is the reason for which it is a collective to begin with.

These constituents, as particles to the wave, exist as such: “The same particle does not rise from the valley to the ridge. Its unity is only phenomenal.” (Emerson, 37) Thus, in this phenomenal, sensory understanding of the world and one another, society fools the individual into a kind of complacency and “foolish consistency [which] is the hobgoblin of little minds” (Emerson, 265); this false unity too serves as a kind of “tranquilization” (i.e Heidegger). Society serves the idea of itself, for the sake of itself: to make life easier, but not better. Loneliness is less lonesome; death is less frightening. Society’s aims of productive unity exists rather as a sort of stagnant togetherness, and the beneficiary of its existence is not the individuals that make it up, but the false and superficial construct it perpetuates: itself.

Similarly, “the they” is one, but no fractions make its whole, no pieces its pie, just strength in indistinguishable numbers to perpetuate a mass of complacent, dangerous mundanity.

As Heidegger explains:

“every Other is like the next... we take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *they [man]* take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as *they* see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the ‘great mass’ as *they* shrink back; we find ‘shocking’ what *they* find shocking. The “they”, which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness.” (Heidegger, 164)

The they ensures the common complacency of it’s uniform makeup through activities like idle talk, where in relation to death, Heidegger notices, “One of these days one will die too, in the end; but right now it has nothing to do with us... if idle talk is ambiguous, so is this manner of talking about death.” (Heidegger, 297) The they discusses death like it is the catching of a cold. It is but a case to occur, instead of an inevitability to endure. Born and named we are given the gift

of life and identity, and the sentence to death that will meet all. The reaper's clipboard may only become apparent late in one's life, but the list is always there. The box to be crossed. So, in some way, we are as dead now as we will be when illness strikes in old age, the car collapses inward, or a steaming bullet enters one's skull. To fool oneself of this reality is to fool oneself of life's only assured tangibility, and in the act of doing so placate fear for the hollow sake of being a part of the they; surrendering to inauthenticity. Heidegger:

“Dasein as thrown into Being-in-the-world, has in every case already been delivered over to its death. In being towards its death, Dasein is dying factually and indeed constantly, as long as it has not yet come to its demise...Our everyday falling evasion *in the face of death* is an inauthentic Being-towards-death. But inauthenticity is based on the possibility of authenticity. Inauthenticity characterizes a kind of Being into which Dasein can divert itself;” (Heidegger, 303)

Inauthenticity in practice, when the they, as stated by Heidegger, “provides a constant tranquilization about death. At bottom, however, this is a tranquilization not only for him who is dying but just as much for those who console him... It is already a matter of public acceptance that ‘thinking about death’ is a cowardly fear, a sign of insecurity on the part of Dasein, and a somber way of fleeing from the world.” And further, “*The they does not permit us the courage for anxiety in the face of death.*” (Heidegger, 297) Contingent to a true experience of life, for Heidegger, is true ownership of death. In the face of demise one should own that very demise as the thing which is their ownmost.

If this is ignored: the individual then faces a sickness of self; the individual is detached from himself and detached from the present moment. The human being's meta-consciousness, as both gift and curse, as his reason for being a “being-of” and not a “being-in,” is the reason why the human being lives detached from the moment. Nature, as the encapsulate whole of “being-

of,” lives in precisely the opposite form. Nature’s collective sings a different tune than man’s. In nature, reminiscent of the colloquialism espoused by the film ‘The 3 Musketeers:’ one participatory part is for all, and all participatory parts are for one. This unity, this cohesion, is what nature achieves and what man seeks. Emerson compares the rose and the man; the difference between nature and society:

The roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are for what they are; they exist with God today. There is no time to them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect in every moment of its existence... But man postpones or remembers; he does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past, or, heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future. He cannot be happy and strong until he lives with nature in the present, above time. (Emerson, 270)

Let us seek the cohesive, participatory unity of fully formed individuals who bloom like roses with eudaimonic purpose and revelatory meaning. Man is born with the capacity to separate himself from nature in his being-of; but as a modification of this being-of, man can return to being-in: for, like the rose and nature, between man, and the transcendental “immense intelligence,” it is us, and we are it. Let us open our eyes to be ourselves as we individually are, let us recognize death as the most elemental and tangible aspect of life, and let us live with virtue so as to achieve a purposeful happiness: eudaimonia as “activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.” For, “If we live truly, we shall see truly” (Emerson, 271).

Enlightenment to true anxiety: as stated by Heidegger “is characterized by the fact that which threatens is *nowhere*. Anxiety ‘does not know’ what that in the face of what it is anxious is. ‘Nowhere,’ however, does not signify nothing: this where any region lies, and there too lies any disclosed-ness of the world for essentially spatial Being-in. Therefore that which threatens cannot bring itself close from a definite direction within what is close by; it is already “‘there,’

and yet nowhere; it is so close that it is oppressive and stifles one's breath, and yet it is nowhere." (Heidegger, 231) Nowhere... nameless... the these aspects of anxiety despite their uncomfortable foundations, liberate the individual from a title of their existence deemed by the they. The individual is no longer just a name on a checklist to be crossed off with a case of death, but a being, a true being who has lived and died and felt in their wrestle with life and understood death. Becoming a being, a being towards death.

"In falling, Dasein turns away from itself... That in the face of which it shrinks back must, in any case, be an entity with the character of threatening; yet this entity has the same kind of Being as Dasein itself... The only threatening which can be 'fearsome' and which gets discovered in fear, always comes from entities within the world. Thus the turning away of falling is founded upon a fear of entities within-the-world. Fleeing that is so grounded it is still less a character of this turning away, when this turning-away does is precisely to turn thither towards entities within-the-world by absorbing itself in them. *The turning-away of falling is grounded rather in anxiety, which in turn is what first makes fear possible.*" (Heidegger, 230)

As Heidegger states, "the turning away of falling is grounded rather in anxiety, which in turn is what makes fear possible." Fear and anxiety are in some ways separate but sometimes still operating in conjunction as one goes up and the other down, all along the axis of *being towards death*.

What sparks and upholds authenticity is, seemingly ironically, fear, and anxiety. Fear, as according to Heidegger "coming from the without," and anxiety "from nothing," together allow the individual to sever connections to another, bring one to the possibility that one is one-self, to a sense of belonging in the world a being in the world and not merely a particle in the mass of the they. Fear giving way to anxiety and anxiety to fear, allows the individual to strip oneself of the chains of their existential chains, rocked out of their drugged complacency as a member of "the they" and into a clarity of being, brought closer to the inevitability of death, and the



tangibility of oneself. They become a being towards death who does not just recognize, or accept, but is wholly towards and in anticipation of life's one true certainty: death. In turn:

“Anticipation turns out to be the possibility of understanding one's *ownmost* and uttermost potentiality-for-Being-that is to say, the possibility of *authentic existence*... Here it can become manifest to Dasein that in this distinctive possibility of its own self, it has been wrenched away from the “they” “ (Heidegger, 307)

In Emerson's terms too, let us consider, what what can man do best be himself?

There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. (Emerson, 270)

And further:

Say to them, O father, O mother, O wife, O brother, O friend, I have lived with your appearances hitherto. Henceforward I am the truth's. Be it known unto you that henceforward I obey no law less than the eternal law.. I appeal from your customs. I must be myself. I cannot break myself any longer for you, or you. If you cannot love me for what I am, we shall be the happier. If you cannot, I will still seek to deserve that you should. I will not hide my tastes or aversions. I will so trust that what is deep is holy, that I will do strongly before the sun and the moon whatever inly rejoices me, and the heart appoints. If you are noble, I will love you; if you are not, I will not hurt you and myself by hypocritical attentions. If you are true, but not in the same truth with me, cleave to your companions; I will seek my own. I do this not selfishly but humbly and truly. It is alike your interest, and mine, and all men's, however long we have dwelt in lies, to live in truth. Does this sound harsh to-day? You will soon love what is dictated by your nature as well as mine, and, if we follow the truth, it will bring us out safe at last. (Emerson, 270)

An Abstract Closing,  
To Follow the Meaning Mechanism

What makes you feel like you?

Certain music may — certain romantic partners may. What draws your attraction?

Find the person that, separate from their physical beauty attractive, or their beauty and their kindness, or any number of traits... if you want pure feeling, if you let your meaning mechanism speak — then find a romantic partner that makes you feel like you.

Find what it is that makes you, you. In any capacity, how you walk, how you slice open a mango, etc... This is not to suggest that the better you are at walking or slicing a mango, then the better you are — no, there are many ways of doing things, just find the one that most authentically makes you feel like you.

Whether its because of free will and our sense of life and how we're actively choosing, or whether its because of your pre-disposed cocktail of genetics and nurture etc... whether its free or fate, what will get you the most aligned with the best life for yourself is when you are doing the thing, always, with everyone, and as a vocation, if you are doing the thing that makes you feel like you. Including too if you treat people the way that makes you feel like you — and there are many things that are subjective but there are also many things that we all share. In fact, Aristotle in the Nicomachean ethics shows the individual how to learn and how to know the thing that makes the individual feel most like themselves — through the training of the intellectual and moral virtues — and as a constituent part of this process, shows the individual (since some parts of the human are not just subjective, but objectively shared) how to treat other individuals in the most ethical way, that will support the whole, but also, because we all share this moral inclination in the human collective — will show, again, the individual what it is that will make them feel most like themselves.

What makes you feel like you? We have identified this feeling as the 3rd drive, alongside the rational and instinctual drives. We have called this 3rd drive the meaning mechanism. We have understood that this meaning mechanism is what some may call the soul.

You must train the soul, the soul is you. It may be technically incorrect to call the human being something possessive of a soul. Modern science would say there is no proof for the soul. Yet, we colloquially, collectively, recognize the salient importance of the idea of a “soul”: that there is phenomenological, and epiphenomenological experience that could be codified by a scientific verbiage or not. So in this sense, rather as scientific fact, or as a shared touchstone of culture and how we understand the world — the soul still exists. How do we measure the phenomenological nature of the soul in the objective world? Let us look at the placebo effect. The placebo effect is invisible, yet tangible, like the soul. Is the placebo effect not then the tangible manifestation of the invisible force that is the soul?

In the same way that I stick my hand in the sand and it goes under, and this is considered a tangible interaction with reality. What about the wind? It is tangible, it is phenomenological, yet it is invisible; this is just like the soul. Because it’s there even though you can’t see it.

Whether we have free will over this soul (or, our “authentic self”) or whether instead we are just a product of our environment — *the thing that makes you feel like you* — is so damn real, and it’s the thing you have to follow: the orientation for your compass. This orientation, this sensation, is what’s lining your soul up with the forms; it’s what’s lining you up (according to some eastern philosophy that we are all the eyes of god showing god a way to understand itself) as the eye of god looking where this specific eye should look; it’s also the thing that shows your human animal what it appreciates most and should thus spend the most time doing, and being.

What links all of these things is the ability of the human individual to have transcendent, vulnerable self-knowledge.

Whether its abstraction, or poetics, or the idea of the greeks, or the easterns, or whether it’s real and tangible as demonstrated by the ways I have tried to show, *the experience of the soul* is real, and when you get the experience of your soul right, over any other experience or aim or goal, that’s when you’re getting life right.

Perhaps, that's when you're doing what you should be doing.

## A Summary and Advance

We experience time chronologically, but in the same way that we have memories of the past, we too have intuitions of the future. **Y o u** are the thing betwixt and between. We do, in this sense, *manifest*, our futures via the things we think about. Yet, this kind of “manifesting” — is not a creating — it is a choosing.

The individual, as a perspectival entity, chooses which track of existence it experiences. Other individuals choosing their tracks complicates what could otherwise be a winning formula for “choosing” the best life — try as we may, our lives will always be the sum total of luck and agency. Though, through a proper relationship with the model I am proposing (a cultivated relationship with the soul and the will) the individual can increase the agential potential for the choosing of this “best life,” which lives and breathes now, currently, in a pre-existent future that we can align ourselves with.

The difference between a kind of *creating* of the future, and a kind of *choosing*, is significant. When we colloquially refer to the human will as a “free-will,” I believe our inherent associations with what “free” means are incorrect. When we are talking about will — we are talking about the *control of action*. Thus, there are firstly things of the world that possess no action. For instance, a rock: the world moves against it; it does not move against the world. So, a rock is of the world. But what of, something non-sentient but agential, say, the venus flytrap? A venus flytrap acts, but it does not act of its own accord. When a venus flytrap closes its mouth on an insect of prey — this action is in accord with the venus flytrap’s biological necessity to eat prey on its tongue. Thus, while a venus flytrap acts, the venus flytrap does not control its action. The venus flytrap has no will. But when we consider a tiger, a tiger has will. Like the venus flytrap: a tiger also responds to biological necessity because a tiger, too, must eat. But what separates the tiger from the venus flytrap is the meta-control of the tiger’s choosing of action. When meat of prey enters the tiger’s tongue, the tiger may choose to eat this prey, but the tiger may also choose to carry this prey back for its young, or for a potential mate it desires to impress. This kind of meta-perception of its own biologically necessitated action is what makes the tiger’s control of action one that can be called a will.

Then, there is the human being who, like the tiger, possesses a meta-perception of her biologically necessitated choices. Then, not like the tiger, the human also considers why the food it brings to its potential mate should go to this mate, and not another; who considers why food should be derived from other living animals, and not only from plants; who considers why it's here, considering why it's considering, at all, and what might have put her here to do such considering to begin with.

Among the singular ONE, the individual is like a dot, born amongst an infinity of other dots that constitute the universe: subatomic particles that cooperate to form people, places, things; relationships, lives, deaths.

The individual is born into darkness: a multiple choice pre-determined world with branching paths of fate that they do not have control over in the sense of a transcendent will that creates. While the human exists on a level above the considerations of her biological needs, the human individual is still choosing amongst considerations of the mind and of the world when it considers. This kind of will is a "free will" because it is *free to choose*. The human will is a free will that freely chooses the world it exists in. Yet, a will that is free to choose is different from a will that *creates*. The will that creates should, given the clarification now stated, be considered something different than a "free will." The will that creates its existence should instead be called a "transcendent will," and belongs to a god.

Born into  $x$  circumstances with  $y$  parents,  $w$  belief systems and  $v$  societal constructs with  $z$  genetic code for height and skin color, temperament, talent, disability and disease — the individual is both born to die and born to live on a particular path with one set end destination. If the individual experiences life as wanton: one who does not utilize or express their agency, then the individual will live this path.

But the individual is also born with the capacity for free will. We have noted how this is so in this paper. We have begun to understand, too, how this capacity for free will can be utilized so that it can be exercised. It is thus the duty of the individual to utilize this freedom of will and actualize into the track which contains the highest potential for their life best led. The breadth of this light can be widened via intellectual education which can open the mind to the two dimensional plane of opportunity that surrounds the individual. The depth of this light can be deepened via the attention to true self knowledge that is

inherent in a deepening of self love and self understanding. From the synthesis of the depth and breadth of one's light is born a new sensory experience: intuition. Intuition is always present as the 3rd drive: the meaning mechanism; but must be fed via the intellectual and moral virtues, and nurtured via love. Intuition is the internal barometer for if we are — in a finite moment — doing the right thing — and in the broadest scope — if we are living the right life... aligned with the right track of existence.

Let us further consider the the meaning mechanism as an essential component of what orients the human being. A tiger's meta-perspectival relationship to biologically driven action is necessitated by the advancement of the tiger's biological condition, and the assurance of future generations. The human meta-perspectival relationship to biological necessity is driven by these same factors and constitute the human's animal drive. The human's rational drive will then consider these factors meta-perspectively to dictate the human's control of action.

The human departs from its earth-born familial flora and fauna however with its unique meta-perspectival relationship to perspective itself; this way of being drives the human to a search for meaning in all of its actions. If we are to understand ourselves and practice self love, if we are to understand one another via emotional virtue and the world via intellectual virtue, we must filter this understanding of ourselves and others through a profound relationship with our personal, individual sense of meaning and purpose: the 3rd drive; the meaning mechanism.

To follow these tenants is to deeply consider reality — and to identify — and choose the best possible pre-determined track in life's train station of deep possibility.

What we can control is not the active stringing together of words or the consideration of a joke; no, these actions of the rational mind are equally as pre-determined as the actions of the animal mind (that modern thought commonly accepts as pure instinct) — that modern and ancient thought would thus deem the rational mind as the agential capacitive potential of the individual to tame or coerce the animal mind to certain actions: as would an elephant trainer to the elephant who he rides upon. My conception of human nature and agency instead asserts that — via nature, nurture, and perhaps metaphysical laws of the universe — the individual's rational mind is equally pre-determined. I do not write these words that I

write now as the result of conscious control of a nuanced understanding of the english language and an individual perspective that makes me consider and elicit the ideas I am considering into original sentences that are my own. Well, I do. But see, while I do not disagree that I am *doing* these things, for, they are *happening*, and I do agree that “I think, therefore I am.” — *I disagree that I does exist as formerly* considered: i.e: the rational mind making sense of its twin animal, and with meta-conception: the world around it.

I assert is that there is a 3rd actor at play nested in the command console of the thinking thing: this 3rd actor is what Aristotle might call the *nous*: the eye of the soul.

I contend that the nous can be agentially controlled as Aristotle suggests: via alignment with intellectual and ethical virtue through education, exposure, and introspection — but still that I am not then *creating* words or actions from the cortex of the rational mind, in the same way that I am not *creating* sexual desire or desire for food from the cortex of the animal mind; for that would be the god-will, and the god-will is different than free-will: for while free-will chooses, it does not create; and humans do not possess the god-will in the very same way that a venus flytrap, while capable of tangible action, does not possess free-will. Instead, the agential potential of the individual is in the *nous, the third eye, the compass of phantasia*: i.e (footnote from bottom of page 53, Book 3, Chapter 5: “Here the term is *phantasia*, which can also mean “imagination,” the soul’s ability to present or represent appearances or images”) — this is what I can control; I am born into this player: Caleb Short; I can not create his actions, but I can control where he looks; “I” am not Caleb Short in the way traditionally considered; “I” am the Eye... the right joystick on the controller responsible for not what or how Caleb Short does what he does — for that would be god-will — but via my free will, I choose where Caleb Short looks; Eye choose the ride he is on: the one I (as all parts: the animal mind of Caleb Short, the rational mind of Caleb Short, and the Eye Caleb Short) thus experience.

And how do I live the best life? By understanding how Eye best view to kalon, as a soul which (from Plato’s The Phaedrus) “Once... was perfect and had wings and could soar into heaven as only creatures can” ... before Eye “lost its wings and fell to earth, there it took an earthly body, and now while it lives in this body no outward sign of wings can be seen, yet the roots of its wings are still there and the nature of these is to try to raise the earthbound



soul into heaven.” In other words, before Eye, the soul, descended from the plane that is not this one, and incorporated the physical body, animal mind, and rational mind of the player Caleb Short.

Eye understand to kalon, as all souls do. The agential duty of Eye is to align the animal and rational minds of Caleb Short, via intellectual and ethical virtue, via m-eye understanding of ta kalon, to point to truth north, and grasp to kalon again in this earthly plane.

The child is the father to the man, and this is the child, me, fathering myself.

I was interested in the fine line that one walks between embracing and refusing the ego. One end of the spectrum: Ego is All. The other end of the spectrum: Transcend your ego and become One.

Use transcendent vulnerable self knowledge to understand you, as yourself, at all time. You are YOU. Don't be afraid. Know it. Feel. You are no one else. No one. You, my friend are you. You are only YOU because you are actually ONE. Like light and dark, like the sun and the moon, like the waves, and the sand, like Life, and like Death, you, are You, are YOU. Because everything is all — the ego must fully embrace itself for what it is.

You are the eyes of god. Because god is everything. And because you are you. You are the eyes of the universe experiencing itself through you. That's why to be anything but yourself is to reject alignment with your path — but your path, my friend, is only and always has been to be YOU. Enlightenment is understanding your true nature.

It is scary to consider if it is perhaps not in your true nature. If your true nature is murder. What shall become of us? Maybe you are a wanted serial killer. Or maybe you are the man who pillages the Earth for profit, turning the eternal into a wasteland; you kill all the same.

But, as Aristotle describes in the Nicomachean Ethics; there is a nature that transcends the causal chemicals: this nature, is *human* nature. As such, there are people with pre-genetic dispositions (those liable to rape, murder, steal) who can be reformed back to ethical human nature with the right training. Society teaches this training. Human, Society, that is. All

humans treat ethics differently but the common practice of Society remains, overwhelmingly: to train and sometimes reform the individual into to someone who is cooperative, respectful, kind. This is why, according to Aristotle, it is paramount to train the moral and intellectual virtue of all humans, and why the highest art is politics: that which tries to change the ethics of society to be the very best they can possibly be. What will change the world, or even the moment, is not when one bill gets passed over another, it is when the president changes the hearts and minds and ethical conduct of his country, and the world, so that we all become better. If we all do, be ourselves, where you are, You, and I am I, then perhaps we do reach Emerson's mythic 'ONE.'

Myth is important: because myth too, serves as the superstructure of our individual and collective thought, like the spiderweb that clouds your vision; these superstructures get in your way of true vision of the moment; but they are always there; and you can make the choice to remove certain cobwebs or add others; and, while a lot of the cobwebs will cloud your vision, so will help you see purely: because they are invisible, not bogged down with bad energy — if not, seeing even better than pure... if there ever was such a thing. See, the Cobwebs are curved like lenses, they'll help your pure perspective widen, or magnify. These myths take the shape of Religion, or Story, or Philosophy, or Politik, or Sports Fandom, or Cult, or Class, or Anything-That-Organizes/Motivates/Propels/Rectifies-Your-Life.

When you look at yourself. Never say you are ugly, or handsome, just say that you look like You ... and this is because You are YOU. i do not look handsome or ugly because " i " am "I" which is actually "III". I'm never ugly or handsome because I'm simply Caleb. Now, I must be caleb to the best of my ability so that I can actually be Caleb so that I can tap into — as a kind of Oceanic Return — to ALL.

YOU is ALL.

III is ALL.

ALL = ALL, so if ALL = YOU, and ALL = III, YOU = III

Be around the people who make you feel like you. If we are all the same, but the right eyes congregate in the right places, then we are in the right alignment as ALL, so that ALL becomes ONE. Indeed, become the most you, so that all have access to each other as ALL,

becoming ONE. Anything that makes your soul uplifted or puts you in flow-state is when your compass has found its target: when you are actualizing your ownmost potentiality for being as an athlete or artist or thinker, or friend; the thing that makes you feel like You is specific to every human being. You must understand what makes you feel like You, so that You even know *what* to do, because then You will be listening to YOU.

ALL, composed of I's, as III, is the same as YOU, because III = ALL, and YOU = ALL; so You, as a component of YOU, are the same as I, as a component of I. Just like light, just like dark, just like day, just like night, just like life, just like death, life is on a spectrum, it runs yin, and yang, and all is the same.

ONE.

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*Friday, May 1, 7:00 Am*

*I do not want to be like the others. I want to be like myself. But what am I, if not some part to their sum whole; another knick knack on god's shelf; but if we are god, then god belongs to us; then we belong to god, and god belongs to us; is it silly to write about such matters?*

*Is it true that wise men stick to the small? That; they find the macro in the micro. The refutation of meaninglessness is in the choice for meaning, now. I want to talk about the big things; when I discuss god, I mean it.*

*I live my life in an impassioned plea to selfhood, to truth. I want to be the best me, selfishly, so that my experience of being and time can be most complete, most liberated, most full — while others live most unsatisfied, most alienated, most empty; I do not want to be like them; I want to be like me. Any kind of intention for betterment or solace is the beginning of the call; follow the rope and you will find the eye of god.*

*Caleb M A Short, 2020*