

On The Present Moment

Red Pill Theory | 19 June, 2017 | by Avery

And those who were dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.”- Nietzsche

The tiger doesn't wonder whether Sarah really likes him for who he is. The snake doesn't imagine a better future driving a Lamborghini. The raccoon doesn't lament that life, “is a tale. Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”



“To be or not to be, that is the question.”

We humans are uniquely gifted with the ability to plan the future and learn from the past. We can decide to pursue a high-paying career to someday enjoy the benefits of material wealth. We can imagine ourselves five years from now driving a Lamborghini, model in tow, with a satisfied grin on our face. We can prepare ourselves for a better, brighter future. But how often do we appreciate the present?

Shouldn't we be stricken with awe every time we see the sunset? Shouldn't we lose ourselves in bliss every time we look into our lover's eyes? Hell, why isn't driving a Honda Accord a transcendent experience?

Why does it seem so absurd that a daily commute in a low-end car could be a portal to the sublime? Because, when we drive our Accord, we know it's just a Honda Accord (definitely not a Lamborghini). Yet, if your brain weren't comparing everything that is to everything that could be, you might just slip away into rapture every day on your way to work (yes, even if you drive a crappy Honda).



If it weren't for noisy thoughts of the future, you would be captivated by the music in the present: the pale sky, the sprawling city, the cool air. You could spend your days marveling in wonder at the tapestry of present-moment sensations.

Why does this thought experiment register as satirical? Why does it seem so false?

Because we spend all our time in the past and the future. We are constantly rear-ended by negative thoughts. We constantly wonder, "Would I be happier if my girlfriend was a model?" "Will I ever get that promotion?" "Why does Sam drive a Lamborghini while I'm stuck in this shitty Accord?"

These thoughts are well-intentioned. It makes logical sense that thinking about a promotion, a new lover, or a better car would help us get those things, and by extension, make us happier. Our brain is a problem-solving supercomputer. It is unrivaled in its ability to solve problems.

With enough time and thought you may date that model, get that promotion, or drive that Lamborghini. Unfortunately, although your brain is a talented problem-solver, it has one fatal flaw. It can solve a million problems, but most of those problems aren't worth solving. You won't be happy until you ask the right questions.

Your thinking is limited by your context. We live in a society that has a profit motive to inundate you with the idea that happiness lies around the corner. Supercomputer that it is, your brain is constantly learning how to navigate around that corner to find the promised happiness.

Unfortunately, your mind doesn't know that it's in a rat race. It doesn't understand that although you might find your way around that corner, you won't find happiness. You'll only find a piece of cheese: a temporary, unsatisfying reward for your efforts. Besides, once you're done nibbling on it, there's another piece of cheese for you to scurry towards.

Our society's values (money, achievement, sex) are the maze leading us towards the next dopamine-releasing chunk of cheese.



It does look good though....

You can't expect a rat to leap out of its maze. It doesn't understand that freedom exists outside those thin walls. Similarly, you can't expect your brain to look for salvation outside the value systems that it has been conditioned to believe are objective reality.

That's why the thought of experiencing transcendence while driving a Honda Accord seems satirical. That thought exists outside the maze that is society's values.

Yet, if you acknowledge the possibility that your mind is being limited by society's rat race, something changes. You are left to wonder, what if there's something better than this exhausting struggle for scraps of future pleasure? What would happen if I decided to play a different game? What if looked for a way over these walls?

The thought would be terrifying. And liberating.

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