

**Symbols, Myth and Meaning**  
**J.J Artemis**

## **Section 1: A Practical Approach to Existence**

**Introduction**



*Ryōkan by Koshi no Sengai (1895-1958), from Dewdrops on a Lotus Leaf. (1)*

The thief left it behind:  
the moon  
at my window.  
- Ryōkan

In life we are faced with many obstacles; in events and occurrences, most of which simply occur to us and make us feel that we have no choice in the matter, that the cosmos simply throws obstacles our way, one after another, but we have no recourse to it. Life is absurd to be certain, but there is a common thread among everything that occurs in one's perception; the ability to adjust our view of existence. This comes from understanding that everything occurring in one's life is either; in our control, not within our control or within our sphere of influence.

If something cannot be controlled, it is not unfair, life was never created to operate in a manner that followed any rules. What one can do when confronted with an event out of our control is to understand this mentally and cease troubling ourselves over the occurrence, simply see it clearly for what it is.

If something can be controlled or is within our sphere of influence, then it is in our duty to exert what influence is within our power to attempt at coming to a satisfactory conclusion, with the understanding that it may not work out as we expect; but then that it would be simply so; if one gives all the effort and attention that was possible at the time, it could not have gone any other way.

*"It's time you realized that you have something in you more powerful and miraculous than the things that affect you and make you dance like a puppet." – Marcus Aurelius*

Understanding this one operates in a state of natural control, Wu Wei, actionless action. One comes to a point where one does not operate with Wei, with effort or doing, but optimizes the course of events via the most effective action, which is to be actionless in response to our initial impression of events. In this manner one lives life Wei Wu Wei, the inaction committed by understanding on a fundamental level what is in one's sphere of control and influence. In this state of learned natural mind, comes a beautiful clarity in perspective, a person stops grasping at every angry notion or anxious worry which grows from the mind into conscious attention, but simply observes the thoughts and acts on what is in one's control and influence, a flowing state of Wu Wei, simply doing what one can and observing with conscious understanding everything else.

Not having power is not the same as being powerless, you still control that which cannot be disturbed, should you cherish it; your conscious perception: your reaction to the material that is exposed presenting itself as existence. Through conscious effort we create and thus can destroy what is considered insurmountable, then it becomes just what is so, and left then is a rational being who figures a way to transverse what is placed before him, by removing emotions out of the equation and observing the reality that is before them. Not adding emotions, feelings and preconceived notions of how things should be, one becomes more adept at dealing with things how they are, and will do better at putting them to where one wants them to be.

*“External thinks are not the problem. It’s your assessment of them. Which you can erase right now.” – Marcus Aurelius*

There comes a fear from persons who have their entire life given power to their emotions; those that cling and claw at any emotion from which they feel is formed their essence. From this comes another problem: the idea of who you are is also an illusion, one selects moments and inclinations that one was inclined to for no particular reason at one point and creates a character they feel is who they are, but to do so and to really believe that is 'you', is simply not true. We only live in the present, the past only viewed as a memory and the future as a prediction of observed cosmic patterns, you are not a solid unchangeable character, every moment one experiences spontaneous life and it is from what we choose to do to affect our present, which is in our domain, that forms who we are.

You must to some extent act on your own, and release yourself from the grasping constraints of your past and any illusions from which you are acting. Accept your past, don't live in it, accept your thoughts, don't cling to them, accept your desires, don't see evil from a lack of realizing them, trust yourself and who you see in your reflection, it is you, in the now, the mind and body as one structure to the environment, experiencing the void , just so.

The concepts of Ego, ID, Superego, are all concepts that are created from that which is you. To attach yourself to these concepts is to attach yourself to foolishness, one that attempts to know themselves from the creation of illusions will only know the illusions.

If the freudian concepts of the mind are used with the understanding that they are not real, but illusions of the mind; they are harmless, and similar to other illusions useful to a certain degree, but if you attach yourself to these concepts and make them real in your mind, you are bringing yourself into a state of confusion and torment. It is nonsensical to think of yourself other than oneness. This being said the very attempt to clear your mind with your mind is like wiping off blood with blood, it stains the material further, instead it is simply better to allow what will manifest to manifest, but not to grasp and cling, which is not possible as these concepts have no truth in reality, but certainly the conflict in attempting to conjure them will harm you.

## ***In confrontation with conflict***

*"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves." – Viktor Frankl*

It is the small moments that determines how the world interacts with you. If one day you come home to find a precious item stolen, how would you react?

Initially; Anger, Fear and Confusion would be the normal human reactions, and why should one suppress themselves on what occurs spontaneously?

It is from these natural inclinations that one considers the event in terms of reality, this is where you could consider the spheres of control that are available to you; rather than harming yourself with the human ability to magnify negative emotions. It would be best to consider that the thief committed an action which they thought justified stealing your property. It is more likely that they are misled beings warped by illogical ideology and absent in thought of virtue, such persons are to be pitied rather than to be vilified. In approaching this event you would be best to consider;

**What is in my control:** my reaction; my actions to what I can influence and control

**What is not in my control:** my initial feelings, the event, anything I cannot influence the result of

Even if you maximize your attempt to "best" a situation, nothing is guaranteed, the universe was never explicitly created for the triumph of virtuous beings, this is a never ending game.

It's all good and easy to preach this type of mindset, showing how anything else simply causes the being who engages in the action unnecessary pain and confusion, that being said humans are creatures of habit. It is with this gift that one who reflects and engages in this stoic inspired worldview on practicality will experience a great change in their mental functioning and to a degree who they are as beings. It can be recommended for persons to take some time everyday, as a habit, perhaps during a time something is done for certain ; after a lunch meal. To reflect and meditate on your day, and ability to optimally engage with events . Eventually such reflections will be ingrained into your being and a soothing mindless concentration will ensue.

## ***Viewing practical existence***

People often distinguish themselves from others in strong contrasts, either being introverts or extroverts, persons who are inclined towards individualism and those inclined for a harmonious community which speaks as one. What should perhaps be considered that the optimal way of existence is somewhere between both poles. In living ones life in a community we should live as individuals who understand the benefit that we enjoy from being a part of society, thus placing the value of the individual at a high regard, but with a similar view for attempting our best at bettering humanity, as it is from our collaborative actions that anything of significance is achieved societally.

## ***Everything I have said deals quite nicely with how to deal with our perceptions but how does one confront an obstacle/enemy with the stoic inspired philosophy?***

The answer as I see it is to simply live your life following what moral convictions you have obtained using logic and reasoning to avoid biases, and in acting with humanity over ideology as a framework of desired outcomes, to simply live. The opposition that you wish to contend with will confront you, and what is left is to understand what you can influence and what is out of your control, and to exert maximum effort in that which is in your domain, and leave the rest to the wind for you have no quarrel with it.

Perspective should be used in contact with any event in life. It helps to stop looking at events in isolation and remember that the event is simply that and to address what is in our control. It helps to context and remove the importance of the micro in light of the macro and allows us to see rationally what steps might be taken for an optimal outcome. The most harm one can do is try to change things that are not under our control or influence.

Using perception to overcome your initial emotion can help you see the opportunity in any obstacle, even a loss can be used as a moment to learn and gather from defeat, but this can only come if you look objectively with a recognition of all your possible choices in any situation.

The real enemy is any perception that prevents us from seeing the opportunity in obstacles. What must come is decisive action after removing emotions, and initial inclinations on events. One must play most thoughtfully with what little cards she is dealt. If we value the goal more than the obstacle, then all that is left is action.

In the most tremendous of tasks, the success comes from attacking with full intensity what is in the present and confrontable. In doing this one leads themselves to over time attacking the full problem in a manner that is most effective. Unachievable; if the sight is not set to the micro, understanding that is how one will overcome the macro. Bad things will happen, not everything will succeed, but nothing can stop us from trying. Problems are a chance for us to do our best, no matter how much one tries some things may not come to pass, but we have a chance to give every ounce of human energy to its fulfillment.

## ***What is wisdom?***

Wisdom is something one constantly strives towards. A property of wisdom that has practical use to us, is the general stoic foundation of practical virtues;

The first virtue is Prudence or practical wisdom; a knowledge of things that are good , bad or neither. The ability to use reason in directing oneself.

The second virtue is Fortitude or courage; the ability to act and keep true to one's moral foundations, to greet conflict with harmony.

The third virtue is Justice; in Justice one recognizes the being who has the potential for transcendence, to treat others in recognition of their sentience.

The fourth virtue is Temperance; this is actionless action, to have a clear and rational understanding of the world to such an extent, that one does or does not do actions in recognition of the totality of wisdom that one possesses.

The fifth virtue is Faith; Faith is understanding that with our limited ability to understand everything, we construct imaginations from which we believe we can understand the world, but that the cosmos is a beautiful pattern of spontaneous action with bursts of repetition. To this one should construct a reality that aligns with all comprehensible truths, in order to prevent the harm caused by one who attempts to disconnect from the cosmos.

I must confess my hesitation on including a basic collection of virtues in my modern interpretation of stoic inspired thought, there are many philosophers who have spent their lives either working on the perfection of such systems to whom I do injustice, and to further importance, most people do not care about, or will remember any of the aforementioned. Nevertheless I have opted to include it as perhaps it may bring some person value in recollection, or serve as a reminder for further investigations.

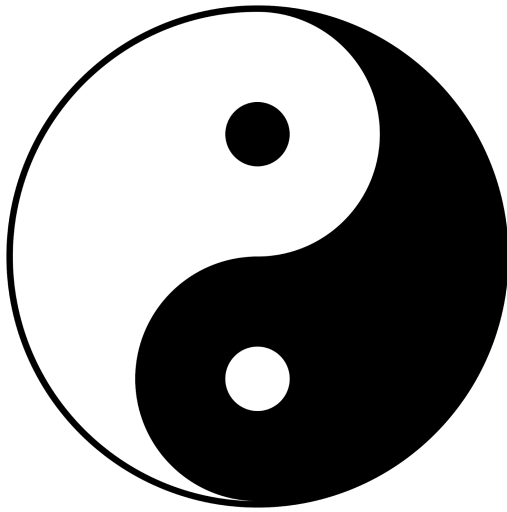


## **What is evil?**

*"I have seen the beauty of good, and the ugliness of evil, and have recognized that the wrongdoer has a nature related to my own—not of the same blood or birth, but the same mind, and possessing a share of the divine." - Marcus Aurelius*

Evil points to someone who has the ability to act but does so lacking the characteristics of virtue. It is in my observance that most persons do not do evil on purpose. They have some information from which they believe their moral code is correct, and honest, and from this commit what we consider Evil acts.

Some persons do act with Evil intents, these people are not lacking in wisdom but choose to ignore it in choice of harming themselves, and other human beings, though this rarely occurs. So how do we confront persons who we consider to be Evil. To be lacking in virtue, or correct logical conclusions on existence? The way is to understand Yin and Yang.



*This is the **Yin-yang symbol** or **Taijitu** (太極圖), with black representing yin and white representing yang. It is a symbol that reflects the inescapably intertwined duality of all things in nature, a common theme in Taoism. (2)*

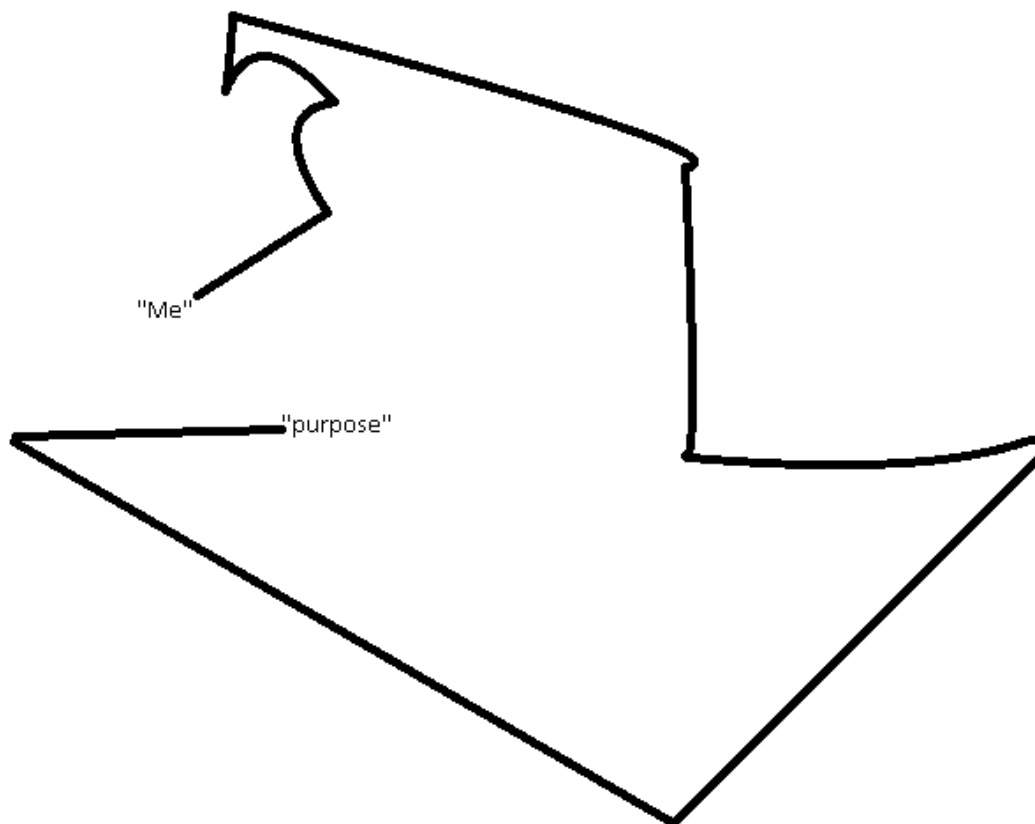
This is the philosophy of unity, we cannot be simply good without evil and evil without any good. In fact anyone who wishes to do the greatest evils must incorporate the good to achieve this outcome, and just as, those who wish to do the greatest good must incorporate the evil; the Jungian inspired shadow. The point being that when one approaches another who we perceive to be evil, it should be understood that they are acting, probably, in what they consider to be good faith, and to approach the other with attitude of 'honor among thieves', to communicate your standards of virtue and understand that to the other; we are just as evil for not following in their path. To make what concessions are possible with this understanding.

Failing to convince the enemy one can simply do what one can, maintain virtue and truth to oneself, and not break one's convictions regardless of the repercussions.

## **Purpose and Action**

*"Our actions may be impeded, but there can be no impeding our intentions or dispositions. Because we can accommodate and adapt. The mind adapts and converts to its own purposes the obstacle to our acting. The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way." - Marcus Aurelius*

'What is your purpose?' is something which is throttled onto children by parents who don't have any idea what it is they are aiming towards. This call to the absurdity of existence is not really a question but a topic of discussion. The human is not a cause and effect, a being is not something which sets about on a journey to a single destination from which it's game over. We are beings who operate with limited knowledge, limited vision and limited understanding of the cosmos, one could almost consider it a miracle we are able to do anything considering the human method of arriving at an unknown destination.



The reality is we don't have any clue whatsoever where we are going and what we wish to achieve. When we take 3 steps forward the fog clears, it's clear as the sky we should have gone left instead of right. The result not being to not take a step recognizing the infinite, but to take a step and expect to be wrong, to know that we can't know everything, but we can adjust our position; take a look around and head a direction that seems to be the right way to go, but to do so living in the present, for that is all there is and if you can't enjoy the journey to where you believe you wish to head toward. Then perhaps consider if the destination is worth attending, if the game is worth the candle.

What of the candle when the game becomes too painful to play? To this why should death be something to be feared, rather than simply a moment in your life, a moment in your existence as a pattern of happenstance which played before your growing into the human body, and that spontaneous pattern which you are a part of, that will continue after death. One should marvel at the whole spontaneous happening rather than to view existence as miserable and without control, from our sentience the universe is experienced.

If one rejects the observations of beauty in the cosmos than to them there is still nothing to fear, why worry about death if it only appears after you are gone? Why worry about a god when there are 500 others waiting in earnest to judge your misdeeds. Indeed, there are many excuses made by persons who refuse to give up fear and view death with a terrible dread.

*"Remember that the door is open. Don't be more cowardly than children, but just as they say, when the game is no longer fun for them, 'I won't play any more,' you too, when things seem that way to you, say, 'I won't play any more,' and leave, but if you remain, don't complain."* (Discourses 1.24.20)

If life is simply too painful to exist, if one cannot possibly bear their burden, then what shame is there in simply letting go, in fact to do so with one's friends and family is a beautiful experience to the individual. The possibility of always leaving the room if the smoke is too much to bear, is something that cannot be taken from human beings. We have the ability to suffer and endure, but with this we also have the choice to suffer and endure. This is a courageous decision made, and if one cannot go further, then they will go on another way.

## ***Our perception and natural inclination***

Most humans do not do evil knowingly, we are born limited beings, we have the ability to perceive certain things, using our body to interact with the world around us, but what we don't have is the ability to see that which we cannot sense. If one acknowledges that humans utilize mechanisms such as telescopes or audio devices to magnify the senses, or technology to view radio waves which are invisible to the human; it is easy to concede that we can't absolutely know everything and due to our limited perception, it is difficult to know what we don't know.

In nature to the reality for a human to not absolutely comprehend everything, as we don't have complete information, in some sense or another faith is utilized by all. We have faith that our perception of reality is correct. The scientists don't actually deny this, but argue that the faith made from information utilizing scientific methods, to know as much as we can about the natural world, is superior to faith made on unfounded assumptions.

This is true, a follower of most religious faiths has no direct connection to an omniscient being, and given that there are hundreds of religions with similar texts, all claiming to be the true deity one must worship. The absolute rejection of logic required to fall into blind faith requires much devotion and reflection indeed.

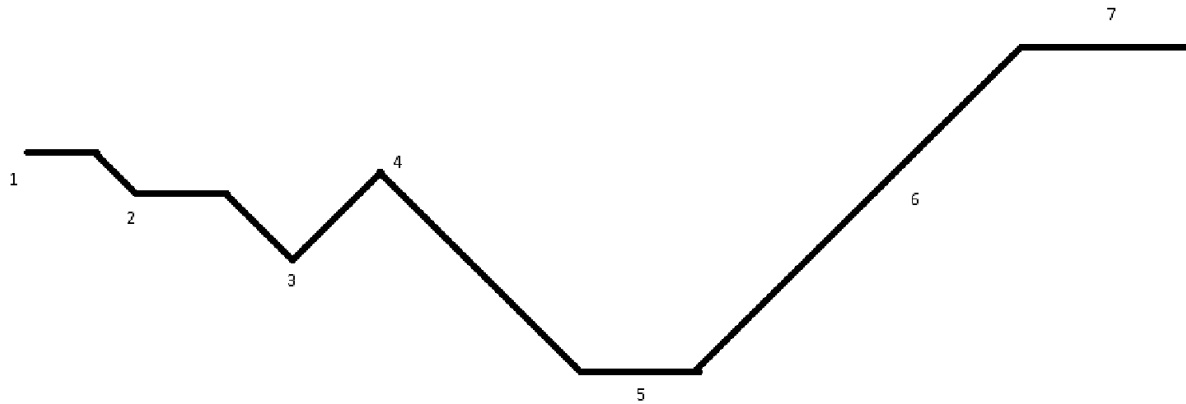
Perhaps we should allow our minds, which have in the popular modern times been stolen by one side or the other, to have a moment to consider why it is we place such rigidity in our understanding of the cosmos. The very words and expressions that are utilized by humans are simply logical abstractions, but what guarantee is there that this logic operates 2 galaxies over? The way we form words and numbers, the methods we utilize to divide the universe have been very useful to us. They have helped to: innovate, think logically and with extreme abstraction, but they have also taken something from us, that is the understanding of the unity that the cosmos embodies, and in this unity is a real practical beauty if one takes a moment to look for it.

Events occur with a spontaneous nature, from the mutations that formed the replicator from which evolved life itself, to the billions of asteroids travelling through the galaxy with no purpose in mind. To this spontaneous nature there is also a steady pattern of the cosmos, a repetition that occurs; from the orbit of the earth to the concentration of gravity, some occurrences seem to have repetition to them. In fact from these small repetitions is formed much of scientific knowledge of the cosmos.

To claim DHARMA: a doctrine which is has an indisputable claim to reality, is to turn away from nature, the undivided universe in which one can simply see the transcendence of the individual; to place humanity over ideology, and turn to human constructed ideals and moral structures, which in my observation of humans will never be the same. As discussed people are usually not misled on purpose. What then occurs is that these people who operate behind a collective, pick up the mask of the collective ideology and place the individual in chains. From behind the mask then they engage in actions in which they destroy themselves, and everything sacred to humanity.

The Jungian cry for the assimilation of the shadow was in recognition of this, that those who could sit together as criminals, in recognition of the evil which forms all of us, humans would still; kill, rape and steal from one another, but then they would not go further. They would not destroy cities with a click of their fingers. Humans may be vile, but an individual who is not operating behind the mask of a collective ideology would have no reason to destroy everything. A real individual has the ability to look at the enemy, with her eyes, rather than butcher everyone in her path with eyes transfixed to a false transcendence.

## Section 2: Utilizing symbolic representation to interact with important issues of existence



No life is the same, but just as the cosmos is not exact, there are patterns which repeat over and over through the lives of many people, regardless to colour or creed. These patterns are understood by wise men, who utilize these recurring stages in the life of a human being, to help the society around them. Most of these messages are hidden, shrouded in art and mysticism. The reasoning for this cloaking of knowledge is twofold; First: most of human history is marked with the blind destruction committed by followers of a collective ideology, or religion. Any outright distribution of offensive wisdom would likely be met with violence and destruction of the information. Second: humans are curious creatures, one of the best ways to teach a child is to do so via a game, the complexities and patterns contained in art and literature are simply a playful game, created by the united wisdom from thousands of men and women before us, should we be willing to play.

This small diagram(above) created represents a phase of development in a human being, a pattern that will be of use to consider in our investigation. I should add if not considered, one may be, or start at any phase of the pattern and not all patterns are universal. This is simply one common repetition that occurs over a humans life:

1. We start the journey with an idleness, this is the part of life, when you do not know you have a problem to contend with, or are not sure what may be in store. In this stage one can think of themselves laying on the ocean, just floating idly.

2. Here we are encountered with something that brings one to attention, some issue comes up in life. As one floats idly perhaps the weightlessness and calm ocean is interrupted by the cries of a seagull, you recognize this foreign thing which disturbs you, and from which you become more real.

3. Encountering some difficulty initially one is unaware how to deal with the problem, but with what they know, one throws all human efforts of will and imagination, one begins to swim, now disturbed, unable to float as before.

4. Initially what occurs is failure, the reasons for this initial failure of a human in any endeavour to correctly face an issue are too many to number. One simply does not have the knowledge at the outset of encountering the unknown to most effectively deal with it. One swims into water that now has the ability to move, and as you have only ever floated, how can you expect to swim in such an environment? You drown, sometimes slowly, sometimes with a quickness, but the ocean brings you under and your innocent naive self dies.

5. One enters the underworld, here one is in hell, the lowest most miserable place that a human can be, but if one takes a moment , ignoring the sharks and beasts of the deep which itch and claw away at you. It can be seen that it is at this lowest of places where one is closest to god, to the universal patterns of humanity, to truth and wisdom.

6. The pit where one is cast into becomes your redeemer as you are intertwined with it. Pain and suffering, your redeemer, forces you to face truth. In transcendence one rises, a farewell to the soul that died in that place. The artwork and mythology of this redemption can be found in most religions and children books alike, to one degree or another.

7. Here one reaches a departure from hell, and now transcended has the ability to annihilate that which once destroyed them, you now have a submarine and nap while you make your way, but this is not an "end", for there is never an end. This is simply the waiting period before your encounter with THE SIBERIAN ITCH, or a typhoon if it suits you better, and once again you are disturbed.



- Gustave Doré's illustration to Dante's *Inferno* (1857) - (3)



I can only speak from the present and allude to the past as I can't help but to be biased in my reflections. It seems to me that the current state of technological progress and advances in all fields have sped up to such a whirl that it is hard to fathom what may come in the next 10 years, I know, I know I am simple, I have heard these musings myself from every other human who has made similar observations... perhaps for the last 100 years!

Still, I maintain that we have developed to such an extent that in modern times many people have the luxury of being able to live in relative comfort and simulation with little to no effort. The majority of the work that was once done by humans now simply handed over to machines. Which in the year of 2018, have the ability to make simple human calculations and decisions, never tire and 'think' quicker. The advances of A.I technology surely will be something which will either destroy us, or being the leaping board for humanity's great years to come.

It has become easier than ever for youth to be both genius, with the modern collection of worldwide intelligence accessible to any person, and at the same time to be utterly lost as how to go about engaging with the world in a beneficial manner. It is amazing how both absolute poverty and excess go hand in hand. It is in my understanding of these reflections that the modern youth in the year of 2018, should allow themselves to be awoken from the self induced trance of unbenifical entertainment, a gluttony willingly engaged in as the value of the individual is for the first time in human history at the highest regard, in most societies, which naturally creates an upset and confusion among the population, as recent traditional knowledge at the surface level does not seem to point how one transverses these modern obstacles. As I will endeavour to explain, it is in my understanding that the most primitive knowledge is intertwined with hidden wisdom, which is of infinite value to us, especially in such important times for humanity.

As explained previously, the idea of a " purpose " , similar to the idea of " god " , is not something to strive to understand or even to get to; the reality is that how humans are inclined to function is not to seek an ultimate goal and simply reach it. Consider the absolute absurdity of it all, we humans are narrow minded , target oriented creatures, this is the natural understanding, how then can one simply reach a target? We are not missiles who explode upon contact with becoming a rocket scientist(example), only that some knowledge is acquired and there you stand donned in your rocket scientist hat. A purpose is not somewhere to get to, just as one can really only understand "god" if one throws away all notions, scripts and ideas (belief).

How then should we approach goals? As we understand we don't really have any idea what we want truly, for the human mind is fickle, and with our limited senses there is only so much we understand, so what is the best way to approach the setting of some plan?

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