



Epsilon Theory

## Things Fall Apart (Part 3) - Politics

November 19, 2018



### “As Above, So Below”

“As Above, So Below” is the central principle of the ancient philosophies known as hermeticism, philosophies that had an overwhelming impact on the ancient Greeks, early Christianity, the Renaissance, the Reformation ... i.e., Western civilization. I know it’s weird to imagine, but this little phrase has been one of THE most influential ideas in all of history.

“As Above, So Below” means that our social lives are organized as a *fractal*, that when there is disorder in the heavens or the seats of worldly power, so is there disorder in our communities, our families, and our personal lives. It means that when Pharaoh hardens his heart, whether he lives in a marble palace on the Nile or a white house on the Potomac, so do OUR hearts harden, as well.

It means that the widening gyre, which we can see represented most clearly on a national scale and in national elections, is no less potent and no less present in our everyday lives. It means that Things Fall Apart in ways both large and small. Always and in all ways.

I see this fractal nature of alienation and polarization in my friend, Neb Tnuh, who [I’ve written about before](#) but will reintroduce here. I bet his story is familiar to you.

Neb has a hard time talking with real people these days. Neb just doesn't ... connect ... the way he used to. He doesn't have much to say. He mumbles a lot. He imagines long and involved conversations with people in his head, but that's where they stay. In his head.

Sartre famously said that hell is other people. **For Neb, hell is other people who want to talk about markets or politics.** Neb is just so WEARY of being lectured for the umpteenth time on why Trump is so awful or why Trump is so great, why Bitcoin is going to \$100,000 or why Bitcoin is going to zero, why the "fundamentals are sound" or why the fundamentals are sound EXCEPT for this one thing which will bring the whole house of cards tumbling down ANY DAY NOW, why the Fed is the source of all evil in the world or why the NRA is the source of all evil in the world or why the Democrats / Republicans are the source of all evil in the world.

So obviously Neb is a real barrel of laughs at parties, which he shuns today even though he remembers that he used to like parties. The circle of real people that he actively feels comfortable being around has shrunk and shrunk and shrunk until he can count them on his fingers, and even here Neb increasingly has a hard time connecting with these non-rhinoceros friends. He increasingly talks past and through the people who are the most important to him, like his wife and daughters. And that makes Neb saddest of all.

He's lost friends over the widening gyre, lost over the event horizon of black hole Trumpdom or lost in the blare of doubleplusgood DemSoctalk. He's lost family, too.

On the flip side of that coin, it's easier and easier for Neb to talk with complete strangers on social media platforms. It's all so easy for Neb to lose himself in this ocean of social abstraction and Turing tests, because he's fluent in the symbolic languages of mathematics, history and pop culture. **And so he swims in that ocean, compulsively even, until he's forgotten whether or not there was ever a shore.**

It's not just what I see in my friend Neb. I see this fractal nature of alienation and polarization in the men and women I meet everywhere I go in the world. I bet their story is familiar to you, too.

Everywhere I go, and I travel a LOT, I see men and women solving little puzzles, righting little wrongs, seeking little truths. As best they can. Two steps forward and one step back, for sure, but always with good will. And yet everywhere I go, I see these men and women of good will unfulfilled by their small good works. Everywhere I go, I see these men and women of good will deceived by their State and their Oligarchs, their autonomy of mind enchained by words and stories *willingly* taken as shackles.

In a thousand different ways, I see these men and women of good will *nudged* into believing that their small good works are not enough, that in order to find fulfillment as right-thinking and right-behaving modern humans, they must pledge their service, yes, but even more so their mindfulness to the Nudging State and the Nudging Oligarchy. I see them told that their individual acts of good will, all performed on millions of tiny stages far away from the collective gaze of the modern Panopticon, are not enough. I see them told that what they do on these small stages is of no importance in the grand scheme of things.

**I tell you it is EVERYTHING.**

I tell you it is so, because all of this has happened many times before. This game has been played over and over again throughout history, sometimes won and sometimes lost. Let us be winners.

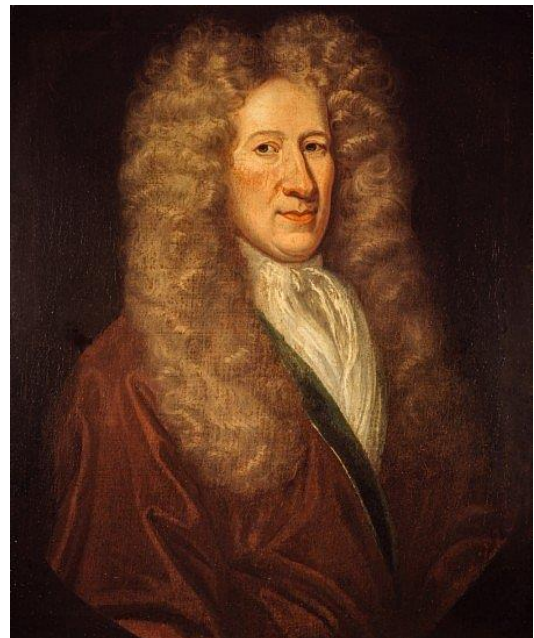
I tell you there is a way forward, a way to reverse the widening gyre of the body politic and the body personal alike. The way forward rests on this simple truth: *fractals work the other way, too.*

### **“As Below, So Above”**

How do we tend to our nation and our world? By tending to ourselves and our pack. By playing OUR metagame and forcing the Powers to seek OUR attention and bend to OUR form, rather than surrendering our Identity for **a scrap of their attention** and **the thin gruel of schadenfreude**.

Andrew Fletcher, a Scottish patriot of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century who I’ll write a lot more about one day, famously said, *“Let me write the songs of a nation, and I care not who writes its laws.”*

By tending to ourselves and our pack ... by playing OUR metagame ... by forcing the Powers to seek OUR attention and bend to OUR form ... we become patriots once again, but in a modern context of modern media and modern technology. We create a self-sustaining movement that works from the bottom up, not the top down. We will not be writing laws. We will be writing songs. These are the songs of Identity. These are the songs of an autonomy of mind. These are the songs of solving little puzzles, righting little wrongs, and seeking little truths. These are the songs of individual acts of good will, far from the gaze of the State. We’re not going to be embarrassed by our lack of “importance”. We’re going to celebrate it.



And those songs will spread, fractal-like. First we will sing them as individuals. Then we will sing them as packs. Then we will sing them as communities, both geographic and epistemic. Then we will sing them as a nation.

It will take a long time. It may take a lifetime. Or two. And that’s fine. That’s as it should be. **The Second Foundation** knows how to play the long game.

*As Below, So Above.*

I’ve got three songs to sing. Three songs of playing OUR metagame and not playing THEIR metagame. Three songs of recognizing the difference and acting accordingly.

Each song has a common beat. It's the beat of *resistance*. It's the best of *refusal*. We refuse to vote for ridiculous candidates. We refuse to invest in ridiculous securities. We refuse to borrow ridiculous sums. We refuse to sell our birthright for a mess of pottage.

**We refuse to play THEIR game.**



Like all great comedy, it's political and it's subversive without wearing its politics and its subversion on its sleeve. It's Groucho Marx, not John Oliver and the rest of the late-night Comedy Scolds. It's Damon Wayans' Homey the Clown, a con out on parole trying to make his way in a suburban white world stacked against him. A world designed to humiliate him even more than the clown costume he wears. But when pressed to ridiculousness, he and we must answer this:

**Homey don't play that.**

Know who's even MORE subversive than Damon Wayans? This guy.

And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?"

But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?"

They said to him, "Caesar's."

Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

— **Mark 12:13-17**

**Jesus don't play that.**

Do we withdraw from the world? No. We render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. We pay our taxes. We work hard at our jobs. We drive our cars and buy from Amazon and cheer the circuses.

*But those things that are OURS? Those things that Caesar has STOLEN from us?*

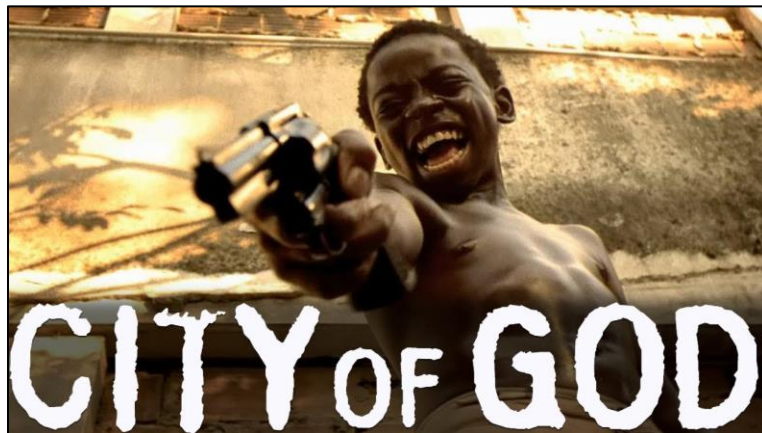
**We're damn well going to take them back.**

We're going to take three things back from Caesar. We're going to sing three songs of resistance.

**Take back your vote.**

**Take back your distance.**

**Take back your data.**



“Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are.”

“Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility.”

— **St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God* (426 AD)**

I'll be quoting a lot from Augustine throughout this note, because no one understands where we are today in 2018 better than Augustine did in the freakin' fifth century AD. Augustine watched the long fall of Rome. *One thousand six hundred years ago*. Augustine watched Rome steal what I call our clear eyes and full hearts, and what he called our perceiving minds and our loving hearts. Augustine also called it our soul, but he was a saint and I'm not.

Are you angry about what's happening to our world? Are you pissed off that you and your children and their children are immersed in a widening gyre without end? Good! Now find that other daughter of Hope and let's get started. Her name is Courage.

*As Below, So Above.*

## Take Back Your Vote

This is the section that will make a lot of people angry, because a lot of people will think I'm saying you shouldn't vote. I'm not. I'm saying you should vote *for the right reasons*. Or better yet, let's start with a simpler notion. Don't vote for the wrong reasons.

What are the wrong reasons? They are instrumental reasons. They are because you have been told that your vote matters in who wins or who loses. They are because you have been told that you might make a difference in the outcome. This is a lie. You will never determine the outcome of any election that's big enough to get television coverage, and you should never vote to "make a difference" in that election.

See, I told you this section would make you angry.

The **Clear Eyes, Full Hearts process** requires, among other things, that we understand Estimation, that we understand the role of chance in our lives. And that understanding tells us one crucial thing when it comes to voting – *our individual vote does not matter*. It really doesn't, not for any election above, say, your local dogcatcher. And not because the odds are so long that you'll own the winning lottery ticket in a stadium packed with more people than any stadium you've ever seen. No, it's because – and this is really hard to wrap your head around – *the actual result of any modern election of size is a range, not a single number*. Every final vote count of an election that's big enough to televise is wrong. Guaranteed. Meaning that every time you recount that vote, you will end up with a very slightly different number. We call it quits and publish a "final result" because our society requires that sort of faux certainty, but it is definitely faux. Even if a miracle happens and the observed result is a tie, it's not really a tie. That's just the immediate observation of the statistical range. Take another observation and you will get another result. That result where your single vote made a difference? Do a recount and watch that difference disappear. Your difference-making is a mirage. Guaranteed.

Am I telling you that you can't "make a difference" in an election? No, I'm not. You can make a difference through your *non-voting political participation*. You can make a difference by putting a sign in your yard. You can make a difference by knocking on doors. You can make a difference by getting voters to the polls from areas where you think citizens are more likely to support your candidate. All of these things can and do make a difference in ways that your actual vote cannot.

What I am telling you is that your specific vote will never make a difference in the outcome of an election.

What I am telling you is that your political participation is not defined by your vote. In fact, your vote is the smallest bit of your political participation, and you should think of it that way.

**What I am also telling you is that you should vote anyway.**

Not to impact the outcome, which you won't, but to express your identity, which you will. This is what it means to vote for the right reasons. You're not a bad person if you don't vote. Really. But you will be a better person if you do.

**Voting to express your identity means voting FOR a candidate, never against a candidate.**

Voting for “the lesser of two evils”? Nope, you’re really voting against the other “more evil” candidate. That’s not a right reason. That’s not voting FOR identity. The only reason to vote for a lesser evil is if it keeps the greater evil out of office. *Your vote won’t make a difference either way.* So don’t vote for the lesser evil. QED.

Holding your nose “for the good of the party”? Nope, this is the quickest way to *lose* your identity, not gain it. It’s the Big Lie of Instrumentalism that we MUST vote for a sorry raccoon like Roy Moore because how else will “our” party keep control of the Senate and get “our” Supreme Court nominee appointed. It’s the Big Lie of Instrumentalism that we MUST vote for a sorry raccoon like Bob Menendez because how else will “our” party prevent the other party from having a 60-vote procedural majority. And btw, if you think there’s a lick of difference between Roy Moore and Bob Menendez *in any respect* other than their political affiliation and their accent, then you’re just not paying attention.

We can do this. We can vote like my home state of Alabama voted in the special Senate election earlier this year, where Republican Roy Moore was *defeated* in a statewide election that polls something like 70% Republican, because a critical mass of Republican voters said NO to the Big Lie of Instrumentalism. They refused to vote for either candidate, either by staying home or casting a write-in vote, because they could not vote FOR either candidate. Doug Jones won that election by 21,000 votes. There were 23,000 write-in votes for a Roy Moore alternative.

Kinda nice to see Alabama leading the country in [Clear Eyes, Full Hearts](#) civics, not just alphabetically.

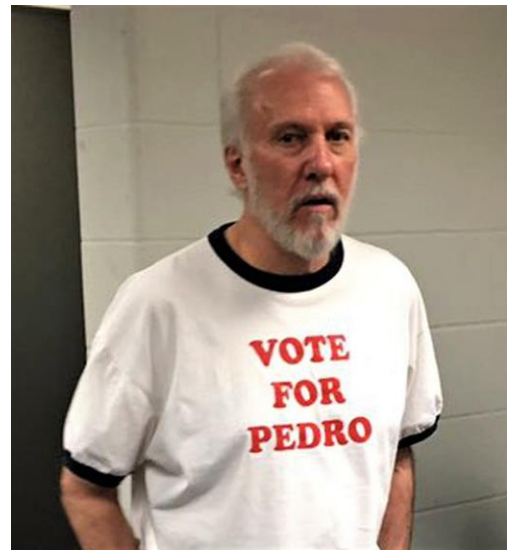
**Write-in votes are the short-term answer to voting FOR identity.**

You will be told that you are “wasting your vote” if you don’t act instrumentally in service to the party line. You will be told, over and over again, that if you don’t vote for the ridiculous candidate of THEIR choice, then OMG the world will come to an end. Bollocks. THEIR little game will be more difficult if this ridiculous candidate is defeated. YOUR metagame will be just fine. Because there will be another election. And over time, THEY will bend to YOU.

*Want your political party to put forward better candidates?*

**Then stop voting for the crappy ones.**

**Vote for Pedro.**



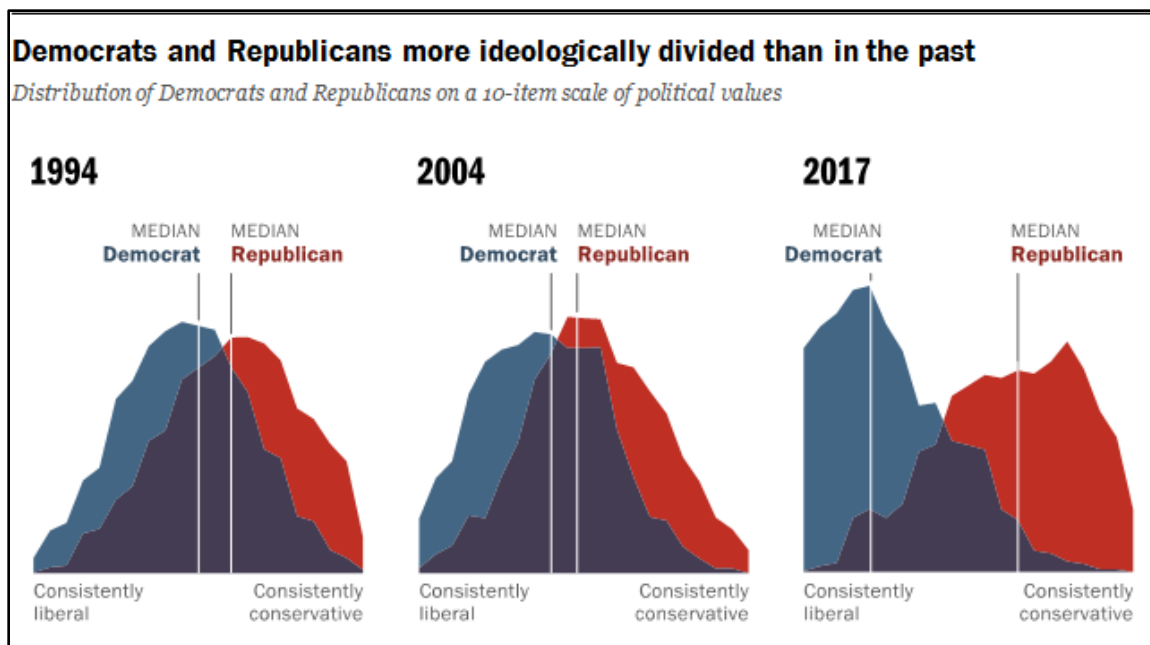
That’s the tagline from *Napoleon Dynamite*, and that’s San Antonio Spurs head coach Gregg Popovich rocking the t-shirt. I love Pops almost as much as I love write-in votes.

Is there more we can do to make our vote matter in an identity-affirming way? You said that write-ins are the short-term answer in taking back our vote. What's the long-term answer?

The long-term answer is structural change in the electoral process. **The long-term answer is breaking the stranglehold that a two-party system has in a first-past-the-post voting choice system within a geographically-based representation system.** The long-term answer is creating an electoral structure that encourages a wider range of viable candidates and viable political parties, so that YOUR identity and YOUR values find more direct representation. So that you can find a candidate you can vote FOR.

I say this without knowing what your identity and your values are. I say this knowing full well that I'll find some of those viable candidates and viable political parties to be personally abhorrent, and that some of these personally abhorrent candidates WILL be elected. I say this knowing full well that structural change in the electoral process happens through Constitutional amendment, and once that snowball starts rolling downhill it can end up in an avalanche that swamps us all, an avalanche that makes things worse – maybe much worse – rather than better.

That's why this is the long-term answer. That's why we need TIME before pushing for structural change. Second Foundation will push for structural change. But first we want to arm a critical mass of citizens with songs of individual autonomy, as opposed to the weaponized songs of State and Oligarch now in heavy circulation from both the left and the right. **The widening gyre is not a mean-reverting phenomenon.**



This is a chart of the party faithful, where the purple center does not hold. But is there still a silent majority of citizens stuck in the purple middle, abandoned by both parties moving to the extremist wings and invisible in this chart? Yes, I think there is. But they need to hear a new song to become mobilized and visible. Not a song of a third party imposed from above, but a song of autonomy coming from below.

*As Below, So Above.*



## Take Back Your Distance

When I say distance, I mean establishing a healthy physical separation from the Nudging State and the Nudging Oligarchy, as well as a healthy mental separation.

Reclaiming your geographic distance means just that. It means physically separating yourself from the seats of power and their instruments. It means finding some way out of the physical belly of the beast. I realized this when I was reading Saint Augustine. Because he's not just Saint Augustine. He is Saint Augustine OF HIPPO. Of a sleepy backwater town in Northern Africa, what is today Algeria, far far away from the grandeur and glamour that was Rome. Augustine was no stranger to Rome. He made a career in Italy and didn't convert to Christianity until he was 31 years old. He was a player in every respect of the word. **But he got out.**

What happened when Augustine got out? What happened when he created an actual physical distance between himself and Rome? *He could see Rome clearly.* He could see the City of Man for what it was and write *City of God*. He could see *himself* for who he was and write *Confessions*. Augustine wrote these two books almost 1,600 years ago, and yet they read as if they were written yesterday.

"I recall how miserable I was, and how one day you brought me to a realization of my miserable state. I was preparing to deliver a eulogy upon the emperor in which I would tell plenty of lies with the object of winning favor with the well-informed by my lying; so my heart was panting with anxiety and seething with feverish, corruptive thoughts.

As I passed through a certain district in Milan I noticed a poor beggar, drunk, as I believe, and making merry. I groaned and pointed out to the friends who were with me how many hardships our idiotic enterprises entailed. Goaded by greed, I was dragging my load of unhappiness along, and feeling it all the heavier for being dragged. Yet while all our efforts were directed solely to the attainment of unclouded joy, it appeared that this beggar had already beaten us to the goal, a goal which we would perhaps never reach ourselves. With the help of the few paltry coins he had collected by begging this man was enjoying the temporal happiness for which I strove by so bitter, devious and roundabout a contrivance. His joy was no true joy, to be sure, but what I was seeking in my ambition was a joy far more unreal; and he was undeniably happy while I was full of foreboding; he was carefree, I apprehensive. If anyone had questioned me as to whether I would rather be exhilarated or afraid, I would of course have replied, "Exhilarated"; but if the questioner had pressed me further, asking whether I preferred to be like the beggar, or to be as I was then, I would have chosen to be myself, laden with anxieties and fears. Surely that would have been no right choice, but a perverse one? I could not have preferred my condition to his on the grounds that I was better educated, because that fact was not for me a source of joy but only the means by which I sought to curry favor with human beings: I was not aiming to teach them but only to win their favor."

**Neb, meet Augustine. I think you'll have lots to talk about.**

Geography matters. We don't think it does in the age of the Internet and Amazon and Whole Foods and global supply chains and all the rest. But it does. Your geography is a critical driver of your Identity, both its formation and its development, at every age and at every stage of life.

But geography doesn't have to be measured in miles. It can be measured in square feet.

“So long as you write what you wish to write, that is all that matters; and whether it matters for ages or only for hours, nobody can say. But to sacrifice a hair of the head of your vision, a shade of its colour, in deference to some Headmaster with a silver pot in his hand or to some professor with a measuring-rod up his sleeve, is the most abject treachery, and the sacrifice of wealth and chastity which used to be said to be the greatest of human disasters, a mere flea-bite in comparison.”

— Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929)

Woolf has her own notion of the Oligarchy and the State to contend with, a whole lot less smiley-face and a whole lot more male than mine. I get that. Yet her “greatest of human disasters”, the self-censoring of our voices in “deference to some Headmaster with a silver pot in his hand” is EXACTLY what I'm talking about in this note.

Our primary adversary in maintaining our autonomy of mind is not censorship from above. Our core problem is not government “national security” prosecutions or Facebook expulsions or Twitter bans or university snowflake mobs. I mean ... yes, these are problems. I'm probably as close to a free speech absolutist as you're likely to find, and it bothers me to no end that our virtual Speakers Corners – i.e., Facebook and Twitter and the like – have been subsumed by the Oligarchy. But I'm really not that worked up about some slippery slope between shutting up pathetic little raccoons like the InfoWars crew or an adjunct professor of Self-Hatred Studies and silencing the next Thomas Paine. I'm really not. That's not how pervasive censorship works. That's not how any of this works.

What I AM worked up about is the same thing that Woolf is worked up about. It's the *self-censorship of thought and deed* that the Nudging State and Nudging Oligarchy have instilled in all of us, and I do mean all of us. It's the profoundly powerful meme that everything of true value and importance in this world is mediated by the State or the Oligarchs, that YOU don't matter and what you DO doesn't matter if it can't be located within the context of a grand contest between this statist organization and that statist organization or between this commercial oligopoly and that commercial oligopoly.



Wanna feel invisible? Wanna feel lost? Wanna feel abandoned? Take a job where your seat has power in this contest of markets or politics. Maybe it's an allocator's seat for a pension fund. Maybe it's a CIO seat for a decent sized RIA. Maybe it's a seat in the state House. Maybe it's a seat in Congress. Maybe it's a

seat at the *Wall Street Journal* or the *New York Times*. Now hold that seat for a few years ... it won't take that long, four or five years at most. Four or five years before you start to believe that it's YOU who are special, that it's YOU who gets your phone calls answered, that it's YOU whose jokes are funny. Now leave that job ... not because you've got another seat lined up, but because you are special and want more.

Now watch How. It. All. Stops.

Because you may truly be special. You may actually deserve more. But once you're out of the game, once you leave that seat ... no one cares. You are no longer useful to the players *still* in the game. You are no longer instrumental. You no longer MATTER.

I can't tell you how many times I've seen people confuse themselves with their seat. I can't tell you how many times I've seen formerly seated people befuddled and confused by no longer mattering. I think Neb may have experienced this. I'll have to ask.

He says yes.

Whether or not you've ever been defrocked, whether or not you know what it feels like to go from mattering to not mattering, you know what I'm talking about. You know that there is **a pecking order dominated by contests of statist organizations and commercial oligopolies**. You know that there are games that must be played and forms that must be followed to advance in that pecking order. You think about playing those games – *Caesar's games* – morning, noon and night. You wake up thinking about how to advance your company's interests. You go to bed thinking about social media and national politics. You think it is *natural* to think about Caesar's games morning, noon and night.

I tell you it is NOT natural. I tell you THIS is the self-censorship that stunts the world, that we do not ALLOW ourselves to engage in ideas and practices away from Caesar's games.

When I think about all the *talent* that is spent playing these games of State and Oligarchic competition ... when I think about what this talent could DO if even a fraction were devoted to solving little puzzles, righting little wrongs, and seeking little truths ...

As the kids say, I can't even.

I'm not saying that you should stop playing Caesar's games. I'm not saying that "taking back your distance" means getting off the grid. I'm saying that you need a safe space where you can disengage from Caesar's games, mentally and physically, so that you can stop censoring yourself. So that you can explore YOUR art and YOUR science and YOUR puzzles that need solving and YOUR wrongs that need righting.

**I'm saying that you need what Virginia Woolf said you need – a room of one's own.**

Find a *space* for yourself. Find a *space* for your pack. Remove everything that, in Woolf's words, gives mental deference to Team Elite and the measuring rods they have up their sleeves. This is where you will write your own songs. This is where you will change your own world. And then everyone's.

You know, we talk a lot about the “crumbling infrastructure” of this country, the roads and bridges and airports that everyone knows that everyone knows desperately need a State-directed and Oligarch-partnered program to rebuild. Again, I say bollocks.

There IS an infrastructure that needs rebuilding in this country and every country, and it has nothing to do with transportation. It has no need to be mediated through the State or the Oligarchy, even though they would desperately like to.

**The most critical infrastructure in America is the public library and the public meeting room.**

Every *local government* – urban, suburban and rural alike – should rebuild and build out a public library system. Every *civic and charitable organization* should build a public meeting room, preferably where people can create, not just socialize. Like a maker space. At a public library.



This is the main reading room of the Birmingham public library. Or at least it was. I don't know if people still actually read here or not. It's probably been turned into a bloodless “research area” because, you know, it's too “fine” for the hurly-burly of actual reading. But I remember it as my father's favorite place in the entire world, and we'd come here every other week or so. I remember every single one of those wall murals and the stories that they told. I could check out any book I wanted, on any subject I pleased. What power I had!

Want to change the world, Mr. Billionaire Philanthropist? Want to fight for something that truly matters, Ms. College Graduate?

**Libraries and maker spaces. Build them. In every community in America. Particularly poor communities, urban and rural. Give every American the *space* to make and create. And stand back.**

*As Below, So Above.*

## Take Back Your Data

It doesn't have to be like this  
It doesn't have to be like this  
It doesn't have to be like this  
Killer whales, killer whales

— Car Seat Headrest, “Drunk Drivers / Killer Whales” (2016)

“Step by step they were led to things which dispose to vice, the lounge, the bath, the elegant banquet. All this in their ignorance they called civilization, when it was but a part of their servitude.”

— Tacitus (56 – 120 AD), Roman senator and foremost historian of the Julian empire, describing how his father-in-law, Agricola, truly subjugated the British tribes after defeating them on the battlefield.

“Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms?”

— St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God* (426 AD)

We have so many little kingdoms in our world today, each part of Caesar’s world, each perpetuating a robbery on us. These are mostly technology companies, small essentially-sovereign states in their own right. I’m talking about the little kingdoms of Apple, Amazon, Google and Facebook for starters. But there are many others. When they take our personal information – *particularly our location data, where we are and where we go and who we go with, both physically and virtually* – they are robbing us of a critical part of our identity. They’re just taking it. **I’d call them raccoons**, but they’re far larger than any raccoon, and they rob us in a far more elegant way. They are giant, elegant predators. They are killer whales.



Now I’m no Luddite, and I’m no ascetic hermit. I understand the value of my personal location data, and there are times when I am quite happy to share my identity with Caesar’s little kingdoms for the luxuries they provide. I happen to LIKE the lounge and the bath and the banquet ... all those trappings of civilization that Tacitus notes, quite rightly, possess the power to entrap us without our noticing. Well, I’m noticing, but does that mean I have to stop going to Whole Foods or ordering from Amazon Prime? Because that seems like a tough call. A really tough call. Can we be civilized without being constantly robbed? Not

robbed of our money (although that, too). But robbed of something for more important: our identity and our autonomy of mind.

The answer – *and this is the same answer that Augustine came up with 1,600 years ago* – is YES, we can live IN the City of Man without being OF the City of Man. We can participate in an unjust world without losing our souls.

*How? Through our God-given capacity for self-control.*

We don't have to hide our movement and our behavior in the City of Man. We have to be *responsible* for our movement and our behavior in the City of Man. We have to *own* it. We have to *self-control* it.

I understand why people delete all of the data that Facebook and Google and the rest of the little kingdoms collect on them. **I'm saying that we deserve more.** I'm saying that we deserve to have the data collected by Facebook/Google AND to have that data secured away from Facebook/Google AND to choose when or if that data is released in limited form to the little kingdoms as payment for their services.

When I say we have to take back our personal data of identity, I'm not saying that we must hide it or destroy it. **I'm saying that we must self-control it.** And that means doing three things.

- 1) We take our location data back;
- 2) We secure it;
- 3) We release it when we want to release it.

The crux of this demand is the securing of location data away from Facebook and Google and the rest. Again, I'm not talking about the ability to prevent Facebook/Google from collecting the data. We have that (kinda sorta). I'm talking about forcing Facebook/Google to *continue* collecting their physical and virtual location data AND forcing them to pipe that data away from them and into an inviolable and unique repository of our choice.

It will take a law to force the little tech kingdoms to do this.

**But they WILL do it.** They will scream bloody murder about how this is unfair, about how they will be forced to discontinue services, about how they're going to start charging big bucks for the things they do for free today. And then they won't. Because there will be some competitor who will. Because they've got too sweet of a gig to pick up their ball and go home. It's just like the global oil company that says they "own" the oil fields in some foreign country. They really don't. And when those oil fields are nationalized, which they always are, the global oil company always stays to do the same work, just less profitably. Because that's what global oil companies DO.

In exactly the same way that political parties tell us that OMG the world will come to an end if we don't play THEIR metagame and vote for THEIR crappy candidates, so do commercial oligarchies tell us that OMG the world will come to an end if we don't play THEIR metagame and acquiesce to THEIR robbery.

And in exactly the same way that political parties will bend to OUR will and put forward better candidates if and only if we play OUR metagame with resolve and the courage to refuse, so will commercial oligarchies bend to OUR will and put forward a better service.

**If and only if we play OUR metagame with resolve and the courage to refuse.**

*I think we can get that law passed.* I think that other than [an infrastructure spending bill](#), the only source of bipartisan agreement in America today is to find new and novel ways to stick it to the little tech kingdoms. The great robbers today are looking to put down the little robbers, and I'm okay with that!

That's how we get our data back. We nationalize it, to use the oil field analogy, and by nationalize it I mean we personalize it. Now where do we secure it? Where do we pipe the data? What is the inviolable and unique repository of our choice?

To answer that question, I first need to back up a second.

I've expressed a very constrained opinion about Bitcoin in *Epsilon Theory*. I've written that I think Bitcoin is *art* ... wonderfully elegant and subversive art, but art all the same. I say that as high praise, not as condemnation, because the pursuit of elegant and subversive art is EXACTLY what I want to encourage with these songs of autonomy and resistance. I think Bitcoin is [a novel and artful twist on an old idea, the bearer bond](#). I also think it's a corner of the financial world that is irretrievably infested with [raccoons – the hucksters and con men who cajole and steal money from us marks](#), but let's leave that aside for now. *From a fundamental point of view, I don't believe that Bitcoin is a "store of value" per se, except as any work of art is a store of value, and I don't believe it's money.*

But I also understand that there are many truth-seekers and allies of *Epsilon Theory* who do believe it's money, who very much see Bitcoin-as-money as an instrument of defense and resistance against the robbing State and the robbing Oligarchy. I sympathize with and agree with so much of this impulse. But here's why I believe that your focus on Bitcoin-as-money is a misguided focus. Here's why I believe that a focus on Bitcoin-as-money is a metagame fail.

**Everything to do with money – and by everything I mean everything, including banking and credit, not just the currency itself – belongs to Caesar.**

Money is why Caesar exists. *Money is the sole foundation and the sole provenance of the City of Man.* This was true for Augustine. This was true for Jesus. This is true for us. If you challenge Caesar on money ... if you fail to render to Caesar the ONE THING that is inextricably and undeniably his ... then you WILL lose. Bitcoin-as-money is the wrong answer to the test of the Pharisees. Bitcoin-as-money is a catchy tune. It's just not an anthem that can win the metagame.

We all sing along  
But the notes are wrong  
— Matt and Kim, "Get It" (2015)

*So let's get the notes right.*

**Let's use the elegant and subversive art of Bitcoin – the distributed ledger technology known as blockchain – as the global infrastructure for taking back our personal data.**

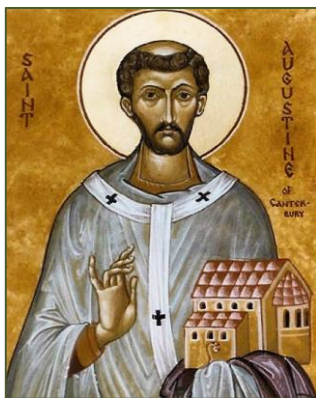
Let's not play Caesar's games – the games of money – with blockchain. Let's play OUR games – the games of identity and the games of an autonomy of mind – with blockchain.

A distributed ledger infrastructure combined with encrypted personal keys doesn't just secure our personal data away from the State and the Oligarchy. It's not only an instantiation of our self-control over the collection and security of our data. It's also – and this is critically important – an instantiation of our self-control over the *release* of our data. Yes, we refuse to allow the kingdoms to steal our identities. AND we refuse to allow the kingdoms to ignore or block our identities.

How do we pay for all this? By engaging with the City of Man ... there are many commercial oligarchies and statist organizations with zero love for the little tech kingdoms, and the enemy of my enemy is my friend. As a wise dungeonmaster once told me, being lawful good doesn't mean being lawful stupid.

This is a metagame we can win. The tools are there to make this happen. The money is there to make this happen. The anger is there to make this happen. All we need is that other daughter of Hope. All we need is Courage.

*As Below, So Above.*



I'll close this note with one last St. Augustine quote, maybe my favorite.

*"God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination."*

**The time to act is now.** The time to act is ALWAYS now. As wise as serpents and as harmless as doves ...

**Take back your vote.**

**Take back your distance.**

**Take back your data.**



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