

# An Essay About A Dream

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Abstract: I woke up from a strange dream in the early days of April in 2021. I've always been prone to have some vivid dreams, but this one was different. I sat down and wrote out this account of the dream not long after. As it so happened it would mark the beginning of the type of "modal" (eventually "fractal") writing style I've now employed across a few books. Years later the dream would appear to me again, albeit in a slightly different form.

Mode: >.667

8,809:11,704 — 75.3%

The Legible Text ...

The Original Text ...

## The Legible Text

I.

614:793

77.4%

We hadn't been there ninety seconds,  
because it was right as we walked  
in the backyard of the high school graduation party  
that her cousin approached us  
and, without the slightest hesitation,  
asked my girlfriend right to her face—  
'Did you bring my  
tupperware with you?'  
It took perhaps longer than I  
care to confess  
to fully recognize what exactly it was  
she was referencing.  
Oh, the oxtail, I reflected,  
a second or so later,  
as I recalled there being a beautiful,  
wood-covered, piece of glass of tupperware  
sitting in our refrigerator for over a week,  
incubating an oxtail dish  
that had, unfortunately, totally expired—  
it was so far gone  
I was hesitant to even open  
the top of the tupperware container,  
despite the fact  
the top of the container was a beautiful,  
wood finished piece.  
There was no doubt in my mind  
that this oxtail was, at that point,  
not just completely expired  
but essentially a type of meat soup,

a type of liquified corpse,  
which of course disgusted me severely.  
Cleaning it out struck me as a grotesque idea.  
I can't say for certain,  
but it's more likely than not  
that I threw it into the trash—  
tupperware, wood top, and oxtail.  
'Oh, so sorry,  
I'll definitely bring it back soon!' she said,  
and I glanced at her and attempted to decipher  
if she had any idea the tupperware  
and the oxtail were both long gone,  
that both now sat in a garbage heap,  
a pile of trash somewhere,  
at the bottom of a public dump,  
still filled with decayed, grotesque oxtail,  
and that her cousin would never again  
own the privilege of placing her leftovers  
into that piece of tupperware  
with the beautiful wood cover.  
That tupperware was finished.  
Having said that, even the finest piece of tupperware—  
how precious is it really?  
Couldn't we replace it for five dollars or less?  
My thinking at the time was yes,  
that the tupperware was entirely fungible,  
yet as soon as we stepped foot  
into this high school graduation party  
her cousin inquired about the tupperware—  
as if this tupperware perhaps belonged  
to some sort of rare species of tupperware,  
perhaps a species of tupperware  
on the verge of extinction,  
perhaps this was some kind of  
one-of-a-kind tupperware

I nonchalantly tossed into a pile of trash.  
Some people have massive amounts  
of respect for tupperware,  
but I've never been one of them,  
it always eluded me why anyone would  
invest more than one dollar  
into a piece of tupperware, personally.  
To my mind, if a piece of tupperware,  
no matter the level of craftsmanship,  
is priced above one dollar,  
then it's an overpriced piece of tupperware.  
It's just not an item I've personally  
ever viewed as an investment of any kind.  
In my mind, plates and bowls  
are relatively worthwhile investments,  
while tupperware is essentially  
a capitalist ploy to increase the profit margin  
on plastic bags—  
to convince people they shouldn't only  
invest in plates and bowls,  
but also invest in the highest quality plastic bags  
(tupperware),  
that in theory they'll use again and again,  
but in practice they'll lose incessantly  
and constantly have to replace.

II.

696:817

85.2%

'She's never getting that tupperware back,' I said.

'You threw it in the trash?' she said.

'You gave the okay?' I said,

to which she shook her head,

clearly misremembering  
the plethora of times we've thrown out tupperware in the  
past,  
the countless times I've  
seen a piece of well-worn tupperware  
taking up space in our refrigerator,  
asked her if I could throw said tupperware out,  
received approval to throw said tupperware out,  
and thrown out said tupperware.  
'It's not a problem,' I said,  
'we can probably just  
buy her a replacement or something.'  
She agreed but seemed dubious,  
and I felt the same,  
I found myself agreeing with both  
myself and my girlfriend,  
despite the fact we had  
diametrically opposed views on this tupperware.  
My girlfriend and I disagreed on our ability  
to replace this tupperware,  
and I agreed with both of us.  
I sat in a lawn chair a second or so later,  
drinking a glass of Soju,  
explicitly attempting to avoid any  
unnecessary interaction  
at this high school graduation  
until I'd imbibed at least half  
this bottle of Soju,  
doubting my ability  
to come off appropriately cordial  
in a social setting  
sans a minimum of half of a bottle  
of this Soju ruthlessly percolating  
through my bloodstream.  
I sat there, contemplating high school graduations,

contemplating my own high school graduation,  
recalling nothing of my high school graduation,  
contemplating the pervasive idiocy  
of organized education,  
considering how more or less every unique thinker—  
from Socrates stoned by the Athenians  
to Giordano Bruno burnt alive by the Catholic church  
to Nietzsche unread and in an insane asylum  
as he rotted away—yes,  
every unique thinker over the course  
of human history was either intensely ostracized  
or simply assassinated by the systematic educators  
of his or her day. In short,  
I was vociferously drinking this glass of Soju  
when I thought to myself—Isn't it possible  
that we think of the theological philosophers  
as the conservatives, as the ones restrained  
by this so-called conception of God,  
yet it's actually the case that the theological  
philosophers,  
over the course of human history,  
are the most audacious,  
the boldest philosophers we have  
and have ever had?  
How else can we explain Berkeley, I thought—  
easily the most radical skeptic the modern West  
has produced, yet also a Catholic priest?  
Dionysius, for example,  
was actually quite vigorous in his skepticism  
of our ability to know anything,  
his circumlocutions were actually quite radical.  
Whereas our typical secular atheist philosopher,  
while assured of our ability to know there are no Gods,  
is rather neutered in his philosophical speculations  
if the fact that God doesn't exist is left to the side.

Isn't it possible that the so-called theological  
philosophers  
are the most audacious among us?  
The ones who are willing to take the properly radical  
leaps  
necessary when dealing with metaphysics,  
I thought while vociferously drinking this bottle of Soju,  
unwilling to speak to anyone  
at this high school graduation  
until I had thoroughly contemplated  
the true nature of the theological philosopher.

III.

889:1181

75.3%

How else can we explain Kierkegaard?  
The secular philosophers talk our ears off  
and more often than not say nothing  
beyond what their thesis advisors demand to be printed,  
I thought,  
vociferously drinking this bottle of Soju,  
while the apex of the theological philosopher  
truly enacts the notion of philosophizing with a hammer?  
Yet, in our era,  
it seems we more or less  
dismiss all philosophers who choose to believe in God,  
I thought. Is it then possible, I thought,  
drinking my Soju, vociferously,  
that because the theological philosophers  
have been essentially shunned from the modern  
academy,  
that the mere mention of God is anathema  
to the modern academy,

that because the theological philosopher  
has been holistically banned  
from partaking in the modern so-called academy,  
our modern organized educators,  
that they've therefore managed to maneuver  
outside of the stifling bureaucracy of the university—  
and actually engaged with original thought?  
Should we consider that possible?  
That they echo early Christian theologians,  
persecuted by pagan Roman authorities,  
who created elaborate frameworks  
that formed the sui generis  
metaphysical foundation of early Christian thought,  
a sui generis synthesis  
of the canonical Gospels  
with Neoplatonic thought,  
that our modern theologians,  
almost regardless of denomination,  
prosecuted by the atheist university bureaucrats,  
are working within perhaps similarly radical frameworks?  
After all, secular academic philosophers  
are loath to speculate on much of anything in our era.  
In their place we have theoretical physicists  
who employ complex mathematics  
to prove the susceptibility of complex mathematics  
to almost any type of sophistry.  
Frankly, I've never respected mathematicians,  
I should admit that much upfront.  
I suppose, in my own way,  
I've always viewed mathematicians  
as essentially charlatans.  
I view the art of mathematics  
as not only decadent,  
but I also view the concept of number  
as an essentially metaphysical domain.

The mathematician's formulas  
are always derivative  
of the numerical axioms of metaphysics—  
it's always struck me as entirely possible  
that numbers are an impossibility.  
That the introduction of the decimal point,  
of the fraction,  
essentially sank mathematics right in its place,  
in my eyes at least.  
Of course, I'm at bottom a disciple of Palamas,  
for certain, I was inadvertently baptized as a disciple of  
Palamas,  
of course, I fundamentally disagree  
with this modern idea  
that we can comprehend everything  
in a purely intellectual fashion,  
this notion that there's,  
in practice, no limit to the human intellect.  
I find that idea to be one of the most absolutely absurd.  
Sure, of course, we can read, say,  
Parmenides and, while it's impressive,  
it's also entirely absurd, and I personally enjoy it  
immensely,  
but on those merits. I'm not sure I'd base my scientific  
thought on it.  
I'm at least less than certain it'd become  
the cornerstone of my secular intellectual pursuits.  
Parmenides is one of the perfect works of absurdist  
fiction  
written in any language,  
and if we indeed made it a cornerstone of our secular  
intellectual pursuits,  
then at least we'd need to recognize our absurdist  
origins,  
as Dionysius rightfully does.

Yet we've employed Parmenides for centuries  
as a fundamental commentary on allegedly rationalist  
notions.

Allegedly rationalist notions—  
is this not what we find ourselves steeped in,  
more or less night and day?

When I comment on metaphysics  
I do so in a consciously absurd fashion,  
because I recognize the limits of language,  
the limits of language that at bottom are incapable  
of communicating metaphysics in linear and/or rational  
fashions.

It seems somewhat obvious  
that there's a nefarious literalism at play here,  
I think it's safe to say that.

Ever since grade school  
I was positive that I stood in the presence  
of a nefarious literalism.

Even as a young boy, instinctively,  
I knew numbers were, in all likelihood,  
impossibilities, and that my systematic education  
was highly susceptible to,  
if not entirely complicit in, a nefarious literalism.

The education of my youth  
didn't exactly encourage audacious thought.

IV.

805:1077

74.7%

In any case, we can't compose metaphysics  
in a rational sense, can we?

Isn't it always in a between-the-lines sense  
that we compose metaphysics,

in winks and nods that we write metaphysics,  
because we can't write metaphysics  
in a linear and/or rational fashion?  
We take far too much at face value.  
Our literalism is intentionally or unintentionally nefarious.  
Because the reality is nearly nothing  
can be taken at face value.  
Do you really believe the greatest minds of Antiquity  
intended to be taken at face value?  
The Byzantines read Plato  
the same way we read Dostoyevsky,  
whereas we read Plato the same way  
the Byzantines read the Gospels.  
Perhaps both are absurd. Now, sure,  
I'm without a doubt, from a certain vantage point at least,  
a disciple of Palamas, I won't attempt to deny that,  
but we can't take everything  
Palamas put to papyrus at face value either.  
Although Palamas understood  
the shortcomings of Antiquity better than even  
the most progressive modern scholar,  
I'd be the last one to say I take  
everything the saint wrote at face value,  
because I'm far from a literalist.  
The modern scholar, insofar as he keeps his faith in  
rationalism,  
will most likely never come to terms  
with the nature of Antiquity—is that fair to say?  
He'll read Parmenides and take everything literally,  
and in taking everything literally  
he'll inevitably take everything idiotically.  
Isn't it the case that the theologians  
are the greatest skeptics among us?  
We view faith as poison  
as we retain fanatical levels of faith

in our sensory organs.  
We peruse a variety of empirical studies  
that vivisect the grotesque fictions  
of our sensory organs—  
did you know it's now speculated  
human beings didn't see the color blue  
until the latter BC centuries at earliest?  
All around us our sensory organs  
excrete evidence of their utter unreliability,  
yet we view faith as idiocy  
while retaining this fanatical notion  
that our sensory organs  
can and should and must be trusted—  
which is why we're not quite radical enough.  
The modern age retains radical faith  
in its sensory organs in a more fanatical fashion  
than any historical religion known to man.  
Nothing can be taken at face value,  
that much we should agree on,  
which brings me to this,  
a true fly in the ointment, so to speak—  
how is it you arrive at a postulation  
of an essence you cannot know?  
This is the question, is it not?  
How does the mathematician reach  
the postulation numbers are actual and distinct?  
How is it possible, given human capabilities,  
to distinguish the number two  
from the number one point nine repeating  
(1.9999999...) in practice?  
How is it possible to distinguish two  
from one point nine repeating?  
How does mathematics attempt to lay any claim  
to physical space—  
to attempt to claim the ability

to leave the theoretical—  
when it's impossible for us  
to distinguish the number two  
from the number one point nine repeating  
(1.999999999999999999...), in practice?  
It seems impossible for us to know  
that the number two is in fact the number two,  
and not the number one point nine repeating  
(1.9999999999999999...),  
and if we're unable to know the number two  
is in fact the number two  
then how could it be possible  
to assert that mathematics  
has any value outside  
of the purely theoretical?  
By instinct perhaps we feel as though  
the number two is the number two,  
and the number one is the number one, yes,  
the mathematical axioms may feel correct,  
yet the fact remains  
that we lack the perceptual faculties  
to distinguish two apples  
from one point nine repeating  
(1.9999999999999999...) apples.  
When we speak of  
the Essence of all things  
we don't speak any differently—  
with the exception that  
our philosophy of an unknowable Essence  
seeks to put a strict limit on knowledge  
based on instinctive assumptions,  
whereas the philosophy of mathematics  
attempts to indefinitely expand our knowledge  
based on nothing more  
than an instinctive assumption,

the instinctive assumption  
that we can successfully distinguish two apples  
from one point nine repeating  
(1.999999999999...) apples.

V.  
363:468  
77.6%

There's no doubt that we're  
in the midst of something essentially mysterious,  
that when we discuss the essence of life  
we think we can make sense of it all,  
that we're on the precipice  
of making sense of ourselves and our surroundings,  
yet there's still little doubt we remain  
in the midst of something  
essentially mysterious when we begin to think clearly.  
Thinking is perhaps  
the most mysterious act of all.  
Thinking, which we generally believe  
translates material and immaterial experience into  
language—  
into modes that are communicable.  
Thinking, which attempts to take something  
such as consuming a juicy pear,  
an experience that ultimately  
is confined to personal experience,  
and extrapolate it in a communicable format  
to the general populace.  
Sans thinking, consuming a juicy pear  
would be something confined to the private sphere—  
with thinking it's then presumably allowed to enter the  
public domain.

There is, in fact,  
no remaining public domain sans thinking,  
and there's in essence  
no thinking sans a public domain.  
Assuming we consume a juicy pear,  
thinking Wow, this pear is juicy,  
but refuse to write it down,  
to verbally express it to our peers,  
then the thought Wow, this pear is juicy  
remains in the purely immaterial realm,  
it's existence purely speculative,  
both the thought and the physical experience  
remain essentially purely speculative.  
It's only when the thought  
Wow, this pear is juicy enters the public domain  
that it becomes, perhaps not real,  
but at least apparent in a more material manner—  
it's verified as a real experience  
and subsequently verified as a real thought.  
I too consumed a pear,  
and wow it was also quite juicy!  
There's no doubt  
we're in the midst of something essentially mysterious  
here.

VI.  
546:775  
70.5%

It was just a few months ago,  
I dreamt an older female  
engaged me in a liaison,  
perhaps a sexual liaison—  
at first she was an older black woman,

but then she became an older white woman,  
and, as she was white,  
as we sat in an automobile,  
I entered a hotel room to pay  
ninety two dollars for our room for the night,  
then I returned to the car.  
I was wearing a business suit  
and she wore business casual attire,  
there were two small dark, indecipherable forms  
sitting in the backseat,  
and she told me she had to go  
south of the Missouri now,  
and I replied  
You mean south of the Mississippi, right?—  
yet, even setting aside our geographical concerns,  
her statement struck me as something  
I already knew, that I knew she was leaving for good,  
and that her leaving would mark  
a new start for me, so to speak.  
When I woke up I felt as though,  
in an intensely odd and impalpable way,  
my entire life had followed the path of Eastern  
Orthodoxy—  
in a profound manner I felt this,  
I was wide awake in bed,  
gazing at a wall thinking my entire life  
has somehow tracked the tenets of the Eastern  
Orthodox,  
that this dream was equally corporeal  
to any waking experience I've had,  
and now, months later,  
I remain curious with regard to the identity  
of this multi-racial figure from my dream,  
who it seems engaged me in a sexual liaison?  
Despite affirming the mysterious nature

of what we're in the midst of,  
I've never been a believer  
in angels and demons, so to speak—  
yet this figure from my dream, it seems to me,  
shared many characteristics  
with historical reports of so-called angels and demons.  
Of course, assuming it's one of the two,  
which one of the two is it?  
An angel or a demon?  
Who were the dark, nearly formless figures  
in the backseat of the car?  
A person engages me in a sexual liaison,  
but at first is black, but then becomes white,  
then tells me she now has to go quote-unquote  
south of the Missouri,  
I correct her, and then I wake up  
with an intense feeling my life's  
somehow followed the tenets of Eastern Orthodoxy—  
then, this dream's intensity sticking with me  
for weeks and even months on end,  
I question if the figure from my dream  
was perhaps a being of some metaphysical sort,  
perhaps an angel or perhaps a demon.  
I question whether perhaps  
an angel or perhaps a demon entered my dream to,  
in a quite serpentine way,  
point me in the direction of something—  
perhaps Eastern Orthodoxy.  
And I question if this is in fact possible.  
At almost any other time in my life  
I would have considered it an impossibility,  
something totally ludicrous,  
I'd have considered it an embarrassing absurdity  
to even suggest it.  
Whereas previously I would have sat and said

I considered it to be an embarrassing absurdity  
and utter impossibility, now, for one reason or another,  
I actually consider it an embarrassing absurdity  
to find it utterly impossible.

VII.  
237:327  
72.5%

Yet let me explain my thoughts on this issue  
just a little further, if I may?  
Because my thoughts on the topic expanded significantly  
just recently, as a matter of fact.  
It was just last Saturday,  
at a backyard cookout where I sat at a nice enough  
glass table  
next to a bottle of potato vodka imported from Poland,  
I was drinking the potato vodka from Poland  
in a small plastic glass with water and ice,  
and the potato vodka was smooth,  
quite smooth actually,  
when the person sitting across from me made a  
remark—  
he said that he just bought half a dozen  
pre-rolled blunts from a state-sanctioned dispensary,  
that he was planning to step on the sidewalk  
and light up one of these blunts,  
have a puff or two to relax,  
to which he offered me a puff too,  
if I wanted one.  
Well, as it so happened, at the time,  
despite my general ambivalence to marijuana,  
I considered it a decent idea.  
I figured I'd have one puff or two, tops,

that maybe it would relax me.  
I figured, at the time, that a puff or two, tops,  
would have a minimal to moderate effect,  
yet when I went out to the sidewalk  
with this person to take a puff or two  
from his state-sanctioned blunt  
I'd discover that this weed retained  
a potency that perhaps I'd never encountered before.

VIII.  
396:505  
78.4%

The blunts were exquisitely rolled and tasted delicious,  
the first hit went down fine—  
yet as the blunt passed for a final time,  
against my better judgment, deep down acknowledging  
that the one hit was the correct amount of hits,  
that any subsequent hit would be a wholly superfluous  
hit,  
I decided to take a second hit,  
where immediately following my exhale I coughed  
vociferously.  
I coughed vociferously then just moments later time  
began,  
much to my surprise,  
proceeding in a highly abnormal manner.  
I found myself at a family cookout,  
and time was proceeding in a manner  
that struck me as entirely abnormal.  
I was lounging in a nondescript lawn chair,  
except now I found myself unable to experience  
the procession of time in our rudimentary,  
temperate manner. I jumped between disjointed scenes.

People began speaking  
and it was almost as though a person  
hit fast forward on their speech.  
Then the speech would slow just momentarily.  
Additionally, I seemed entirely restricted  
from perceiving how people were perceiving me,  
I felt like I was extremely high,  
in fact I knew I was extremely high,  
and it wasn't exactly the most appropriate venue  
to be that high—at a family cookout—  
yet I was restricted from perceiving  
how high I seemed to the outside world.  
At times it felt like I'd gained access to a cue  
that suggested everyone knew  
I was extremely high, yet this notion,  
that everyone knew I was extremely high,  
remained unproven, impossible to prove,  
it seemed.

Because people  
would at times seem to be treating me  
as if I was hardly high at all,  
despite the fact that I could  
no longer experience time in a purely linear fashion.  
Essentially my own actions became entirely foreign to  
me—  
more than just being extremely high,  
I became disconcerted at the thought  
of what actions I could possibly be taking  
that caused the people around me to cease  
to view me as extremely high.

IX.  
404:534  
75.7%

The only actions of my own I was still aware of  
were actions that seemed to me to be  
of a person clearly extremely high,  
so how could these actions be seen by rational actors  
to be coming from a person  
who was still experiencing time linearly?  
This was, at the time, a question sans an answer.  
In short, it wasn't simply that I ceased to experience  
time in a normative fashion—  
it was the fact my exterior surroundings seemed  
to continue to recognize I passed through time  
in at least somewhat of a normative fashion.  
This was disconcerting, because one would assume,  
if you left the confines of normative time,  
that the people in your vicinity would  
recognize this fact—that you exited normative time.  
But in this case it was almost as if, yes—  
I was no longer present,  
I was experiencing time  
in an entirely asynchronous fashion,  
yet my surroundings still found me to be there,  
for the most part. I was,  
to the best of my perceptual faculties,  
existing in at least two places at once.  
At the family cookout,  
where most people were either slightly high  
or not high at all, and then also  
in a separate iteration of time,  
where I was jumping from period to period,  
indiscriminately.  
There's little doubt now that time,

as we're exposed to it,  
is only one of several iterations,  
yet how many iterations are there?  
It seems impossible for us to say—  
perhaps iterations is the wrong mode  
to discuss types of time.  
It's entirely possible, in fact,  
that time perceives us  
inasmuch as we perceive it.  
Yet once we acknowledge this fact,  
that time has many iterations of producing itself,  
that time may in fact  
perceive us rather than us perceive it,  
then we can no longer blindly state  
that our dreams are just dreams,  
because it would seem to me  
that if time, in fact, takes many,  
if not infinite, iterations,  
then our dreams could in fact be entirely real,  
that they may just exist in different  
iterations of time.  
Our dreams could be  
entirely real experiences,  
just experienced in separate iterations of time.

X.  
458:632  
72.5%

Of course, rationally speaking,  
not that we should speak rationally,  
but rationally speaking we could  
question the merits of adhering  
to Eastern Orthodoxy generally.

Of course we could reference the case  
of Chrysostomos Kalafatis,  
the Metropolitan of Smyrna,  
who unceremoniously had his  
beard ripped off by hand,  
his eyes gouged out,  
his nose and ears cut off  
and was subsequently masqueraded around  
the very city where he acted as a  
Metropolitan until he died from his injuries,  
from having his eyes, nose, and ears removed,  
all of this during  
the height of the Greco-Turkish war—  
as it seems safe to say that  
Eastern Orthodoxy, to some extent,  
didn't fare Chrysostomos well in the end,  
at least from a materialist point of view.  
It's a small sample size  
yet it's compelling to an extent,  
and of course the sample is substantially larger  
when we consider  
the plight of the Orthodox population  
of Anatolia as a whole.  
The truth is the Orthodox haven't fared incredibly well  
in the Near East over the past,  
give or take, one thousand years or so,  
we could even say that following the path  
of Eastern Orthodoxy has perhaps  
been extremely fraught with peril  
in certain regions of the Eastern Mediterranean.  
We shouldn't speak rationally or logically,  
yet if we were to take the case of, say,  
for example, the concept of The One,  
the being that conceptually precedes being,  
that exists in all aspects of time,

but also fundamentally must exist outside of time,  
to a certain extent  
we would almost need to entirely reconstruct  
our conception of time  
to even remotely be able to conceive  
of a Being of that nature.  
Not to say that we could ever conceive a Being  
of that nature in its essence,  
yet to even approach a conception—  
if logic leads us to a First Principle  
that exists within and outside of time,  
then our conception of time is essentially absurdist.  
We would need to reconstruct this conception  
of time as something we exist exclusively within,  
that contains us in a linear fashion,  
that perhaps perceives us  
in a so-called linear fashion,  
because if we are in fact extensions of this One  
who must by necessity exist both  
within and outside of time,  
then there must exist a portion of us,  
as extensions of the One,  
that experiences time in this fashion,  
which is of course an essentially absurdist manner  
of conceiving of time.

XI.  
335:493  
67.9%

I can't think of a thing more absurd  
than conceiving time in a solely linear fashion.  
It seems just—I don't know—  
totally ridiculous to assume time  
proceeds in a purely linear fashion,  
that time wouldn't proceed in whatever fashion  
it chooses,  
that time, eternal as it is,  
would need us to perceive it,  
as opposed to vice versa,  
or even to assume that time proceeds at all,  
that, if it chose to proceed,  
that it wouldn't proceed in the fashion of, say,  
adding percentages as opposed to integers.  
I engaged in a sexual liaison  
with an older female,  
who at first was black, then became white,  
then informed me that she had  
to go south of the Missouri,  
after I'd paid ninety two dollars for a hotel room  
for the two of us,  
as we sat in the medium-sized sedan,  
with two small and formless dark beings  
sitting in the back.  
I partook in the smoking of a sizable blunt  
that a friend of mine purchased from a local dispensary,  
and after taking a mere two hits  
from this blunt I found myself  
inadvisably high at a family function,  
experiencing time in a spurious fashion,  
in a fashion where I was,

on the one hand, apparently present at the party,  
yet simultaneously engaging passively  
in a form of time that wasn't present at the party—  
so I suppose it to be possible  
that at the time I existed at two places at once.  
Yet as foolish as this may sound,  
we should note that even Dionysius said,  
and I quote, 'it may be said to be praising God for his  
foolishness,  
which in itself seems absurd and strange,  
but this foolishness uplifts us to the ineffable truth  
which is there before all reasoning.'  
Because it would stand to reason  
that if reason itself is incapable of ascertaining  
these so-called divine notions,  
then perhaps it's only idiocy  
that remains capable of comprehending  
these historically divine notions,  
of time, of being,  
of placement, of First Causes.

XII.  
418:523  
79.9%

Perhaps what we need is a rigorous idiocy.  
It's entirely possible, as I'm now thinking about it,  
that with regard to these notions  
we should employ nothing except a rigorous idiocy,  
that reason and sound logic  
have absolutely no place here,  
in the realm of metaphysics.  
That in order to wrap our minds  
around these ideas,

like being in two places at once,  
of being both within and outside of time,  
of time being essentially non-linear  
as much as it's essentially linear,  
of time perceiving us  
as much as we perceive it,  
that we must become more idiotic  
than we've ever been,  
that if we continue to attempt  
to pass ourselves off as intelligent—  
well, we'll continue to flounder in the stochastic breezes  
that ripple around these concepts.  
Sans idiocy, these concepts will continue  
to exist in a shroud of mystery,  
not that they can ever be known fully,  
that's unlikely, it's more or less impossible,  
but if we employ the proper amount of idiocy,  
of rigorous idiocy, it's possible  
that the mystery these concepts are shrouded in  
could be ameliorated to a degree.  
We conceptualize a First Cause,  
a One, a concept that may, in fact,  
be necessary for our species to exist,  
at least socially,  
it very well could be the case  
that we can only exist logically  
with this idea of First Cause or One preceding us.  
Otherwise, sans First Cause,  
sans a Beginning,  
we hardly have an argument for linear time,  
and if we're deprived of a  
logical argument for linear time,  
then how can we make sense of anything?  
It's impossible to make sense of anything,  
in the traditional sense, sans linear time.

If time fails to proceed linearly,  
at least for us,  
if we're hopping and skipping  
willy nilly in the fabric of time,  
in purely nonlinear manners,  
then nothing can make sense for us.  
We're literally senseless.  
Sans a First Cause, we're literally senseless.  
Time means nothing.  
Time, it seems to me,  
is something that one can only investigate idiotically.

XIII.

538:727

74.0%

Or am I just being silly?  
Am I simply succumbing  
to a specific type of silliness,  
as I'm apt to do from time to time?  
Most, it should be noted,  
who know me know me to be prone  
to succumbing to silliness from time to time?  
Am I being melodramatic  
by extrapolating my intense impression  
following my waking up from my dream,  
am I melodramatically extrapolating  
that impression just a little too far  
by implying this female,  
who engaged me in a sexual liaison,  
might have been an angel or a demon?  
Yet on the other hand I should note this,  
it was actually quite some time ago,  
so long ago in fact that I was practically,

now that I think of it,  
more or less an adolescent,  
despite being a fully grown man.  
At the time I was looking for apartments with my father—  
the first apartment I'd lease on my own,  
and we were downtown, the two of us,  
looking at an apartment I didn't realize  
at the time was rent-controlled,  
meaning arbitrary caps  
were placed on the income of the tenants  
in order to retain eligibility,  
which of course was the reason  
why the apartments were such a great deal.  
Luckily enough for me my salary  
at that time was insufficient and paltry,  
so I still managed to qualify for the apartment  
despite the rent control requirements,  
had I waited the time necessary  
for one to become available,  
but, while I did add my name to the waitlist,  
I didn't wait the time necessary,  
because I signed a lease  
on an apartment three miles north of downtown  
less than a week later.  
I was standing in a quarter-empty parking lot  
in an area of downtown  
where no less than half a dozen  
privately owned parking lots  
sat side by side by side,  
all with reasonable short-term rates.  
This particular area of downtown,  
at that point in time, was a fruitful area socially—  
there were a plethora of vibrant bars and restaurants,  
also side by side by side,  
that myself and others enjoyed frequenting,

that were routinely packed  
from afternoon to evening.  
Now, by comparison,  
if you walk through that same area of downtown,  
by my count, more than half of those  
bars and restaurants are shut down for good.  
Whereas I used to frequent that part of downtown,  
hopping between two or three or four venues,  
having a fruitful experience socially—  
now it's almost as if  
that area of downtown has aged right along with me.  
As my social activity has waned,  
at least with regard to hopping from bar to bar,  
the activity of this section of downtown  
has waned as well.  
As I've become less likely to pop out  
on a Wednesday afternoon to two or three or four  
places,  
this area of downtown has been  
unable to sustain businesses  
that used to thrive on people popping out  
on Wednesday afternoons,  
hopping from two or three or four places.

XIV.  
535:727  
73.5%

There are, in fact,  
hardly any bars or restaurants  
that are still open on the block.  
There's been a gargantuan  
For Lease sign on the largest venue for years now,  
and the places that should be open for business  
on a late weekday afternoon

are no longer open for business  
on late weekday afternoons,  
whereas in previous years  
every bar and restaurant  
on the block would have been bustling  
with businessmen, eccentrics, and alcoholics, now  
these same venues don't even  
open their doors until later at night,  
if at all.

I've walked through that block multiple times  
hoping to pop into just one old bar  
or one old restaurant for just one drink,  
and I've discovered every single bar  
that's stayed in business on that block  
closed to customers at that time.

A bar in a business district  
really has no excuse for not being open  
by four pm on a weekday.

It's absurd for a bar in a business district  
to be closed for business at that time,  
yet that's exactly what's happened  
to this block, it's now a dead block,  
it's a block that's more or less  
officially deceased socially.

In any case, years ago,  
when I was looking for my first apartment  
with my dad, standing  
in a quarter-empty parking lot  
on this very block,

I sent a text message to a younger girl  
I used to flirt with—  
although we never engaged  
in a sexual liaison,  
but there was perhaps a shared interest  
for a short period,

perhaps we both came to the conclusion  
engaging in a sexual liaison,  
although tempting, was ill-advised,  
that for once in the course of human history  
people should refrain from engaging  
in any sort of ill-advised liaison,  
so we developed a friendship of sorts.  
It was a shallow friendship,  
as most friendships that result from staved off  
sexual liaisons tend to be,  
these are of course the most shallow  
and insipid friendships imaginable,  
they're interminable and asinine,  
but this particular friendship was rewarding  
in its own way.  
So sure, around this time,  
in this parking lot, I sent her a text message to no reply,  
and I knew then, somehow or another,  
instinctually I suppose I knew  
that I wouldn't get a reply,  
that the friendship had run its course,  
that it's purely shallow and insipid nature  
was abundantly evident to the two of us,  
and that the other party,  
this younger girl, had taken it upon herself  
to sever the friendship once and for all.  
I've ceased to communicate with her since,  
yet despite the ultimately shallow and insipid nature  
of this friendship, despite the fact  
we never crossed the line,  
so to speak, for some reason  
I felt a sort of nonsensical deep hurt,  
a painful longing of sorts,  
rooted in essentially nothing,  
standing in that parking lot,

knowing I'd never hear from this person again,  
who I had no physical relationship  
with and who I had an entirely shallow and insipid  
emotional relationship with.

XV.  
337:449  
75.1%

It wasn't that long ago  
that I was reminded of this text message randomly—  
I'd nearly entirely removed this person  
from my memory, just as years prior  
she'd similarly removed me from her memory,  
and I felt an odd pang in my stomach  
as I recalled this text message.  
Wasn't the entire point of turning away  
from engaging in these sexual liaisons  
to avoid such pangs?  
Don't we all just inveterately assume  
that pangs in our stomachs almost exclusively result  
from sexual liaisons?  
And don't we all then avoid sexual liaisons  
purely in attempts to avoid pangs  
in our stomachs?  
Yet in this case,  
a person I maturely  
avoided engaging with sexually, and vice versa,  
of course, who I instead developed  
a completely shallow and insipid friendship with,  
ended up causing me a pang in my stomach,  
all because I sent her a text message to no reply,  
knowing the ankle deep friendship  
we'd harbored had run its course

and come to a conclusion.  
My point in all this is that the first objection  
the average person would raise  
to identifying the being in my dream  
as an angel would be the fact  
the two of us engaged in a sexual liaison,  
yet what I've just described suggests  
that perhaps there's no difference in our relationships  
with people,  
that we can't discriminate  
between relationships based on  
whether or not a sexual liaison occurred.  
That perhaps distinguishing relationships based on  
whether or not they feature a sexual exchange  
has been a gross error on our part.  
That perhaps we shouldn't a priori assert  
that angels don't engage in sexual liaisons with us.  
Because it's entirely possible they do,  
and that there's really nothing wrong  
with an angel engaging us in this type of liaison,  
sexually.

XVI.  
374:474  
78.9%

So we can't rule out entirely  
the possibility that this being—  
despite engaging me in a sexual liaison,  
in a small plethora of racial forms—  
was still, in fact, an angel pointing me  
toward the fact my life, in large part,  
followed the path of Eastern Orthodoxy.  
The mathematician, attempting to infinitely extrapolate

the massive assumptions that are real world integers, is,  
in essence, a complete charlatan.  
For eons we've assumed sexual relations taint  
relationships,  
that once a sexual line is crossed,  
then the relationship will be irrevocably tainted,  
yet we've never considered that tainting  
can and will occur even sans sex.  
Yet perhaps we're making too much of the alleged  
distinction  
between angels and demons as well.  
That just as perhaps  
we've made too much of the distinction  
between sexual and non-sexual relations,  
we're now making too much of the distinction  
between angels and demons.  
It should be noted that even Dionysius noted  
that pure evil, if it were to exist,  
would immediately cease to exist,  
because everything that exists is derivative of the One,  
which is incapable of producing pure evil,  
and that even relative evil is simply  
a function of pursuing aims inappropriate  
to a being's proper function,  
that even demons are only demonic in their distance  
from the One,  
not in a sense of representing pure evil,  
because were they to be pure evil  
they would cease to exist.  
Essentially, this view purports  
that there's no fundamental distinction  
between an angel and a demon,  
just a difference in the appropriateness of their aims.  
Whereas an angel pursues the aims appropriate to it,  
in the proper proportion to its being,

a demon pursues the aims  
more or less inappropriate to it,  
straying from its proper proportions.  
Now as it regards my dream,  
a being  
took multiple racial forms  
yet retained the same essence,  
much like our dual yet monist formulation,  
and then there were two dark  
and formless beings in the backseat—  
perhaps signifying the evil  
that's impossible to exist,  
that is stripped of being as soon  
as it becomes so-called pure evil.  
So perhaps these two dark formless beings  
were the non-existent iterations  
of myself and my companion, possibly an angel.

XVII.  
449:620  
72.4%

Now this being, perhaps an angel,  
or perhaps a demon,  
who took multiple racial forms,  
eventually informed me,  
in this car with the two small shapeless forms  
sitting in the backseat,  
that she had to go south of the Missouri,  
to which I corrected her:  
Don't you mean south  
of the Mississippi?  
Yet we should now consider  
that perhaps my correction was,

in the context of the dream,  
entirely incorrect.  
By employing the phrase  
South of the Missouri  
this being was perhaps directly  
implying that there are no neat distinctions—  
that duality is an illusion,  
that this idea that a state  
can be neatly divided by  
a Mississippi is a misguided approach,  
that this being,  
whether an angel or demon,  
in fact wouldn't emerge on some other side  
precisely because there is no actual other side,  
there's only a separate relative place.  
And when I woke up,  
I felt as though my life had always  
followed the path of Eastern Orthodoxy,  
but in this embrace I was accepting  
the non-dual nature of our existence  
inasmuch as I was accepting anything else.  
I embraced Eastern Orthodoxy  
after engaging in a sexual liaison  
with a being who took multiple racial forms,  
who left me to settle,  
not south of the Mississippi,  
but rather south of the Missouri—  
and opposite of the both of us  
were two small dark forms  
who completely lacked Being,  
signifying the impossibility of pure evil.  
My dream appropriately reproached  
this idea of true duality,  
of pure good and pure evil,  
replacing this absolute duality

with a relative duality within the One,  
of which all Good and all Being originates,  
both in transcendence and immanence.  
I then reconciled myself  
with this being that went south of the Missouri—  
and perhaps this being  
wasn't leaving me  
as much as guiding me,  
giving me hints not on where to go,  
no, she wasn't saying  
where I should go or stay,  
she was instead guiding me  
on how to read a map.

XVIII.  
415:582  
71.3%

Even Dionysius stated outright,  
'One says of God,  
the cause of all good, that he is "inebriated"—  
and with that in mind,  
against my better judgment,  
I poured myself a nice glass of vodka  
last Saturday before my girlfriend  
and I dined out,  
knowing all too well that we planned  
to go to the bar prior to our reservation,  
for a cocktail.  
My significant other agreed to act  
as our designated driver for the night,  
and I'd spent the entire week  
abstaining from every consumable item  
except water, coffee, hearty grains,

and frozen vegetables, and I felt as though  
I deserved a nice, inebriated night.  
I said to myself You know what?—  
you've rigorously denied yourself pleasure this week,  
and you deserve a night  
where you go out and get white girl wasted.  
So I imbibed a cocktail before the cocktail,  
and when we arrived at the bar,  
waiting for our friends to meet us,  
we tried to prolong the cocktail  
and make a perfect segway into the dinner—  
unfortunately, I'd finished  
my cocktail first,  
and incorrectly assuming I had another ten to fifteen  
minutes  
before our friends arrived,  
so I ordered a second cocktail,  
yet as soon as the second cocktail arrived  
our friends also arrived,  
and then we were sat at the table where,  
needless to say, we immediately ordered  
a nice bottle of red wine.  
So rather than savoring my second cocktail  
at the bar and then beginning our bottle of wine,  
I was concurrently finishing my second cocktail  
while also starting our bottle of wine.  
Before I knew it I was thoroughly drunk,  
I became enthusiastically inebriated,  
and I felt as though I deserved it—  
I felt as though I deserved to be inebriated,  
to comment upon a small handful of topics  
that I probably should have remained silent about,  
to babble about and upon a potpourri of issues  
that perhaps would have  
been better left unaddressed.

But sometimes it's important to do things  
solely out of abundance,  
to become completely inebriated,  
to lose all touch with coherency and restraint,  
and to engage in a completely misguided conversation  
purely out of abundance.

The First Cause, no matter what form we give it,  
no matter how its extensions  
may or may not communicate with us—  
is if nothing else superabundant.

## The Original Text

[echoes]:[syllables] [approximate self-similarity]  
8,809:11,704 .753

01—614:793 .774

We hadn't [b]een there n[i]nety [s]e[c]onds, [b]e[c]ause it [w]as r[i]ght as [w]e [w]al[k]ed in the [b][a][c]kyard of the h[i]gh [s][c]hool [g]r[a]du[a]tio[n] [p]arty th[at] her [c]ousin a[pp]roached u[s] and, wi[th]out [th]e [s][i]ghte[s]t hesit[a]tio[n], a[s]ked my [g]irl[f]riend r[i]ght to her [f][a][c]e—D[i]d you br[i]ng my [t]u[p]per[w]are [w][i]th you? It [t]oo[k] [p]erha[p]s longer than I [c]are to [c]on[f]e[s]s to [f]ully [r]e[c]ognize [w]hat exa[ct]l[y] it [w]as sh[e] [w]as [r]e[f]e[r]en[ci]ng. Oh, the oxt[ai]l, I [r]e[f]l[e]c[t]ed, a [s]e[c]ond or [s]o [i]a[te]r, as I [r]e[c]alled there [b]e[ing] a [b]eauti[f]ul, [w]ood-[c]overed, [p]i[e]c[e] of gla[s]s of tu[pp]er[w]are [s]i[t]t[i]ng [i]n ou[r] [r]e[f]r[i]gerato[r] [f]o[r] ove[r] a [w]ee[k], i[n]cub[a]ti[ng] a[n] oxt[ai]l dish th[at] h[a]d, u[n]f[or]tunate[l]y, [t]o[t]a[l]l[y] ex[p]ired—it was so [f]ar gone I was h[e]si[t]a[n]t [t]o eve[n] o[p]e[n] the [t]o[p] of the [t]u[pp]e[r]wa[r]e [c]on[t]aine[r], [d]es[p]ite the [f]a[ct] the [t]o[p] of the [c]on[t]ainer was a bea[ut]i[f]ul, wood [f]i[n]i[sh]ed [p]iece. There was [n]o [d]oubt in [m]y [m]i[n]d [th]at [th]is oxtail was, [a]t th[at] [p]oint, [n]ot just [c]om[p]l[e]te[l]y [e]x[p]ired but [e]ssential[l]y a ty[p]e of m[eat] sou[p], a ty[p]e of [i]q[ui]fied [c]o[r]p[s]e, wh[i]ch of [c]ou[r]s[e] di[s]gu[s]ted m[e] [s]ev[er]el[y]. [C]l[e]aning it out [s]t[r]u[ck] m[e] as a gr[ote]s[que] idea. I [c]an't [s]ay for [c]ertain, but it's more [i]i[k]e[l]y [th]an not [th]at I [th]r[j]ew [i]t [i]n[t]o the [t]r[ash]—[t]u[pp]er[w]are, [w]ood [t]o[p], and [o]x[t]ail. 'O[h, [s]o [s]orry, I'll [d]eff[i]n[itely] [b]r[i]ng [i]t [b]ack [s]oon!' she [s]aid, [a]nd I gl[a]n[c]ed [a]t her [a]nd

a[tt][e]m[p][t]ed [t]o [d][e][c][i][ph]er i[f] she had [a]ny [i][d]ea the [t]u[pp]er[w]are [a]nd the ox[t]ail [w]ere [b]oth [o]ng g[o]ne, th[at] [b]oth now [s][a]t in a gar[b]age hea[p], a [p]ile of tr[a]sh [s]omewhere, at the [b]ottom of a [p]u[b]li[c] [d]um[p], [s]t[i][ll] f[i][ll]ed w[i]th [d]e[c]ayed, gro[t]e[s][q]ue ox[t]ail, [a]nd th[at] her [c]ousin would ne[v]er again [o]wn the [p]r[i][v]i[l]e[ge] of [p][l]a[c]ing her [l]e[f]t[o]v[er]s in[t]o that [p]ie[c]e of [t]u[pp]er[w]are [w]ith the beauti[f]ul [w]ood [c]o[v]er. That [t]u[pp]er[w]are [w]as [f]i[n]i[sh]ed. Having [s]aid that, [e]v[e]n the [f]in[e]s[t] [p]ie[c]e of [t]u[pp]erware—how [p]r[ec]i[ous] [i]s [i]t [r]ea[l]l[y]? [C]ouldn't we [r]e[p]la[c]e it [f]or [f]ive do[ll]ars or [l]e[s]s? My thin[k]ing at the [t]ime was ye[s], [th]at [th]e [t]u[pp]er[w]are [w]as en[t]irely [f]un[g]ible, yet as [s]oo[n] as we [s]te[pp]ed [f]oot in[t]o this [h]igh [s]ch[oo]l [g]raduation [p]arty [h]er [c]ousin in[q]ui[er]ed a[b]out the [t]u[pp]er[w]are—as [i]f th[i]s [t]u[pp]er[w]are [p]erha[p]s [b]elonged to [s]ome [s]ort of rare [s]p[ec]ies of [t]u[pp]er[w]are, [p]erha[p]s a [s]p[ec]ies of [t]u[pp]erware on the verge of ex[t]i[n]c[t]i[on], [p]erha[p]s this [w]as [s]ome [k]ind [o]f [o]ne-[o]f-a-[k]ind [t]u[pp]erware I non[ch]a[l]a[n]tly [t]o[s]sed in[t]o a [p]ile of [t]ra[sh]. [S]o[m]e [p]eop[le] h[ave] [m]a[ss]ive a[m]o[un]ts [o]f re[s]p[ect] for tu[pp]er[w]are, [b]ut I've ne[v]er [b]een [o]ne of them, It al[w]ays e[l]u[d]ed [m]e [w]hy a[n]yone [w]ould i[n]vest [m]ore than [o]ne [d]o[ll]ar in[t]o a [p]ie[c]e of [t]u[pp]er[w]are, [p]er[s]ona[l]ly. [T]o [m]y [m]i[n]d, if a [p]iece of tu[pp]erware, no [m]a[tt]er the level of cr[a]fts[m]a[n]sh[ip], is [p]ri[c]ed ab[o]ve [o]ne dollar, then it'[s] an over[p]ri[c]ed [p]ie[c]e of tu[pp]erware. It'[s] ju[s]t not an [i]tem [I]'ve [p]er[s]ona[l]ly e[v]er [v]iewed [a]s [a]n in[v]e[s]tme[n]t of [a]ny kind. In [m]y [m]i[n]d, [p]l[ates] and [b]owls are re[l]ati[v]e[l]y [w]orth[w]hile in[v]e[s]tme[n]ts, [w]hile tu[pp]er[w]are is e[ss]e[n]tia[l]ly a

[c]a[p]ita[l]i[s]t [p]l[oy] to in[c]rea[s]e the [p]rofit margin on [p]l[a]s[tic] [b]a[gs]—to [c]on[v]in[c]e [p]eo[p]le they shouldn't [o]n[l]y [i]n[v]e[s]t [i]n [p]l[ates] and b[o]wls, [b]ut al[s]o [i]nve[s]t [i]n the highe[s]t [q]ua[l]ity [p]l[a]s[tic] [b]a[gs] ([t]u[p]perware), [th]at in [th]eory [th]ey'll use [a]g[ai]n and [a]g[ai]n, [b]ut [i]n [p]ra[c]ti[c]e they'll [l]ose [i]n[c]e[ss]ant[l]y and [c]on[s]tant[l]y have to re[p]l[a]c[e].

02—696:817 .852

'She's n[e]v[e]r g[e]tting that [t]u[p]perware b[ack],' I [s]aid. 'Y[ou] th[r]ew it in the [t]r[ash]?' she [s]aid. 'You g[a]ve the o[k]ay?' I [s]ai[d], to which [sh]e [sh]oo[k] [h]er [h]ea[d], [c]l[earl]y [m]i[s]re[m]e[m]b[er]ing the [p]l[ast]ic of [t]imes [w]e've thrown out [t]u[p]perware in the [p]a[s]t, the [c]oun[t]e[s]s [t]imes [l]ve [s]een a [p]l[astic] of [w]ell-worn [t]u[p]perware [t]a[k]ing u[p] [s]p[ace] i[n] our [r]efr[ig]e[r]ator, a[s]ked her if I [c]ould th[r]ow [s]aid [t]u[p]perware out, [r]e[c]eived a [p]r[ov]al to th[r]ow [s]aid [t]u[p]perware [ou]t, and th[r]own [ou]t [s]aid [t]u[p]perware. It's n[o]t a [p]r[o]b[lem], I [s]aid, we can [p]r[o]b[ab]ly ju[s]t [b]uy her a [r]epl[ac]e[m]ent or [s]o[m]e[th]ing. Sh[e] ag[r]ee[d [b]ut [s]ee[m]ed du[b]i[ous], and I [f]elt the [s]ame, I [f]ound [m]y[s]elf a[g]r[ee]ing with [b]oth [m]y[s]elf and [m]y [g]irlf[r]iend, [d]e[s]p[ite] the [f]a[c]t we had [d]ia[m]e[t]r[ic]ally o[pp]o[s]ed views on this [t]u[p]perware. My [g]irlf[r]iend a[n]d I di[s]a[g]r[ee]d on our [a]bilit[y] to re[p]l[a]c[e] this tu[p]perware, and I [a]g[r]ee[d [w]ith [b]oth of u[s]. I [s]at i[n] a [l]awn chair a [s]e[c]o[n]d or [s]o [l]ater, drin[k]ing a g[lass] of [S]oju, [e]x[p]l[icitl]y [a]ttemp[t]ing [t]o [a]void a[n]y u[n]nece[s]s[ar]y i[n]te[r]a[c]ti[on] [a]t thi[s] [h]igh [s]chool gr[adua]ti[on] until [l]d im[b]ibed at [l]ea[s]t [h]alf this [b]ottle of [S]oju, doubt[ing] my [a]bilit[y] to

[c]ome off [a][pp]ro[p]riate[l][y] [c]ordi[al] in a [s]oci[al]  
 [s]etting [s]an[s] a [m][i]n[i][m][u]m [o]f half [o]f [a]  
 [b][o]ttle [o]f thi[s] [S]oju [r][u]th[l]e[ss][l]y [p]er[c]o[l]lating  
 thr[ou]gh my [b][l]ood[s]t[r]eam. I [s]at there,  
 [c]on[t]em[p]l[at]ing h[i]gh [s][c]hool [g]radu[a]tions,  
 [c]on[t]em[p]l[at]ing my own h[i]gh [s][c]hool  
 [g][r]adu[a]tion, [r]e[c]allin[g] nothin[g] of m[y] h[i]gh  
 [s][c]hool [g][r]adu[a]t[i]on, [c]ontem[p]l[at]ing the  
 [p]erv[a]s[i]ve [i]di[o]c[y] of or[g]anized edu[c]a[t]ion,  
 [c]on[s]idering how more or l[e]ss [e]ver[y] u[n]i[que]  
 thin[k]er—from [S]o[c]r[a]t[es] [s]t[on]ed by the  
 [A]the[n]ians to Giorda[n]o [B]ru[n]o [b]urnt a[l]l[i]ve  
 [b]y the [C]atho[l]ic [ch]urch to [N]ietzs[ch]e  
 un[r]ead a[n]d i[n] a[n] i[n]sane a[s]y[l]um as he  
 [r]o[tt]ed [a]way—y[e]s, [e]ve[r]y un[i]q[ue] thin[k]e[r]  
 ove[r] the [c]our[s]e of [h]uman [h]i[s]to[r]y was either  
 inten[s]e[l]y o[s]t[r]a[c]ized or [s]impl[y]  
 a[ss]a[ss]in[a]ted by the [s]y[s]temat[ic] edu[c]a[t]ors of  
 [h]is or [h]er d[ay]. In short, I was vo[c]i[f]er[ou]sly  
 dr[i]n[k]in[g] th[i]s gla[ss] of [S]oju when [I] thought to  
 m[y]s[e]l[f]—[I]sn't [i]t po[ss]i[b]le [t]hat we [t]hink of [t]he  
 [t]eo[l]o[g]i[c]al [ph]i[lo]s[o]phers as the  
 [c]o[n]s[er]vatives, as the ones [r]e[s]t[r]ained by thi[s]  
 [s]o-[c]alled [c]o[n]c[e]ption of God, yet it's a[c]tually the  
 [c]a[s]e [t]hat [t]he [t]eo[l]o[g]i[c]al [ph]i[lo]s[o]phers,  
 over the [c]our[s]e of [h]u[m]an [h]i[s]to[r]y, are the [m]o[s]t  
 au[d]acious, the [b]o[d]est [ph]iloso[ph]ers we [h]ave  
 and [h]a[v]e e[v]er [h]ad? How [e]l[se] can we [e]xp[lain]  
 [B]er[k]e[ley], I thought—[e]a[s]ily the [m]o[s]t ra[d]i[c]al  
 s[k]e[p]t[i]c the [m]o[d]ern W[est] h[as] [p]r[odu]c[ed],  
 yet al[s]o a [C]atholi[c] [p]r[ie]st? [D]ionys[i]u[s], for  
 ex[a]m[p]le, was [a]ctually [q]uite v[i]gor[ou]s [i]n h[i]s  
 [s]k[e]p[t]i[c]i[s]m of our [a]b[il]i[t]y to k[n]ow a[n]ything,  
 his [c]i[r]cum[l]o[c]utions were [a]c[tua]lly [q]uite  
 r[ati]o[n]al. [W]hereas our typi[c]al [s]e[c]ular athei[s]t

[ph]i[i]o[s]o[ph]er, [w]hile [a]ssured of our [a]b[i]l[i]ty to k[n]o[w] the[r]e a[r]e [n]o Gods, is rather neutered [i]n h[is] [ph]i[i]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al [s]p[e]c[u]l[at]ions [i]f the [f]act th[at] God [d]oesn't ex[ist] [i]s le[f]t to the si[d]e. [I]sn't [i]t [p]o[s]s[i]ble [th]at [th]e [s]o[-c]alled theo[lo]g[i]c[al] [ph]i[i]o[s]o[ph]ers are the m[o]s[t] [a]udacious [a]mong [u]s? The [o]nes who are [w]illing [t]o [t]a[k]e the [p]ro[p]er[ly] [r]a[d]i[c]al [l]ea[p]s ne[c]e[ss]a[r]y [w]hen [d]ea[li]ng [w]i[th] meta[ph]y[s]i[c]s, I thought [w]hile vo[c][i]f[er]o[u]s[ly] dr[i]nk[i]ng th[is] bottle of [S]oju, un[w]i[li]ng to [s]p[ea]k to [a]nyone [a]t this high [s]c[h]ool gradu[at]i[on] un[t]il I had [th]orough[ly] [c]on[t]em[p]l[at]ed the [t]rue n[a]ture of [th]e [th]eo[lo]g[i]c[al] [ph]i[i]o[s]o[ph]er.

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"How [e]lse can we [e]xplain [K]i[r]k[e]gaa[r]d? The [s]e[c]u[lar] [ph]i[i]o[s]o[ph]ers tal[k] our ears [o]ff a[n]d [m]ore [o]f[te]n than [n]o[t] [s]ay [n]othing [b]ey[on]d what [th]eir [th]e[s]is a[d]visors [d]e[m]and [t]o [b]e [p]r[in]t[ed], I thought, vo[c][i]f[er]o[u]s[ly] d[r]i[n]k[i]ng th[is] bottle of [S]oju, while [th]e a[p]ex of [th]e [th]eo[lo]g[i]c[al] [ph]i[i]o[s]o[ph]er tru[ly] e[n]a[c]t[s] the [n]otion of [ph]i[i]o[s]o[ph]izing with a h[a]mm[er]? Y[e]t, in ou[r] [e]r[a], it [s]e[em]s w[e] more or [l]e[ss] di[s]mi[ss] all [ph]i[i]o[s]o[ph]ers wh[o] ch[oo]se [t]o be[l]i[e]ve in God, I thought. [I]s [i]t then po[s]s[i]ble, [I] thought, dr[i]nk[i]ng m[y] [S]oju, vo[c][i]f[er]o[u]s[ly], that [b]e[c]ause [th]e [th]eo[lo]g[i]c[al] [ph]i[i]o[s]o[ph]ers have [b]een e[ss]en[t]i[a]l[ly] [sh]unned from the [m]o[d]ern a[c]a[d]e[m]y, that the [m]ere [m]en[t]ion of God is [a]n[ath]e[m]a to the [m]o[d]ern [a]c[a]d[e]m[y], that [b]e[c]ause [th]e [th]eo[lo]g[i]c[al] [ph]i[i]o[s]o[ph]er [h]as [b]een [h]o[li]s[t]i[c]a[l]l[y] [b]anned from parta[k]ing in

the [m]o[d]ern [s]o-[c]alled a[c]a[d]e[m]y, our [m]o[d]ern organized e[d]ucators, [t]h[at] [t]h[ey]’ve [t]h[er]efore [m]a[n]aged to [m]a[n]eu[v]er out[s]i[de] of the [s]t[i]fling bu[r]j[eauc]r[a]c[y] of the uni[v]er[s]it[y]—[a]nd [a]c[t]uall[y] engaged with o[r]i[g]i[n]al thought? Should we [c]o[n]s[i]der that po[ss]i[b]le? [T]h[at] [t]h[ey] [e]c[h]o [e]ar[!][y] [C]h[r]istia[n] [t]h[eo[!]]ogia[n]s, [p]erse[c]uted by [p]aga[n] [R]oma[n] autho[r]iti[es], who [c]r[ea]t[e]d e[l]aborate [f]r[amewor]k[s] that [f]ormed the [s]ui gene[r]i[s] [m]eta[ph]y[s]i[c]al [f]ounda[t]i[o]n of early Ch[r]istian thought, a [s]ui ge[n]eri[s] [s]ynthe[s]i[s] of the [c]a[n]o[n]i[c]al G[o]s[p]els with [N]eo[p]l[at]o[n]i[c] [t]h[ou]ght, [t]h[at] o[ur] [m]o[d]ern [t]h[eo[!]]ogia[n]s, [a]l[m]ost [r]egardless of de[n]o[m]i[n]atio[n], [p]r[os]e[c]uted [b]y the athei[s]t univer[s]ity bu[r]j[eauc]r[ats], are [w]ork[i]ng [w]i[th]i[n] [p]erh[a]p[s] [s]i[m]i[lar]l[y] [r]a[di]c[al] [f]r[ame]w[or]k[s]? [A]ft[er] all, [s]e[c]u[l]ar [a]c[ademi]c [ph]i[lo]s[oph]ers are [!oath to [s]p[ea]c[u]late on m[u]ch [o]f [a]nything in ou[r] [e]r[a]. In their [p]l[a]c[e] we have theoret[i]c[al] [ph]y[s]i[c]i[s]ts who em[p]l[oy] [c]o[m]p[lex] [m]athe[m]ati[c]s to [p]rove the [s]u[s]ce[p]tib[i]l[i]ty of [c]o[m]p[lex] [m]athe[m]atics to al[m]ost an[y] ty[p]e of [s]o[ph]i[st]r[y]. [F]r[an]k[l]y, I’ve n[e]v[er] [r]esp[ec]t[ed] [m]athe[m]ati[c]ians, I [sh]ould ad[m]it that [m]u[ch] [u]p[er]f[r]ont. I [s]u[p]p[ose], in my [o]wn [w]a[y], I’ve al[w]a[y]s viewed [m]athe[m]ati[c]ians as e[s]sen[t]iall[y] [ch]ar[!atans. I view the art of [m]athe[m]ati[c]s as [n]ot only [d]e[c]a[d]ent, but I al[s]o view the [c]o[n]c[e]pt of [n]umber as a[n] e[ss]e[n]tia[!l]y [m]eta[ph]y[s]i[c]al [d]o[m]ain. The [m]athe[m]ati[c]ian’s [f]or[m]ulas [a]re [a]lways de[r]i[v]at[i]ve of the nu[m]e[r]i[c]al axio[m]s of [m]eta[ph]ysi[c]s—it’s always [s]t[r]u[c]k me as e[n]tirely [p]o[ss]i[b]le that [n]um[b]ers are an [i]m[p]o[ss]i[b]ility. [T]h[at] [t]h[e] [i]n[tro]d[u]c[t]i[o]n [o]f the [d]ecimal [p]oint, of

the fra[c]ti[o]n, e[ss]entia[l]ly [s][a]n[k] [m]athe[m][a]ti[c]s  
 right [i]n [i]ts [p]la[c]e, in m[y] e[y]es at [l]ea[s]t. Of  
 [c]ourse, I'm at [b]ottom a [d]i[s]ci[p]le of [P]a[l]amas, for  
 [c]er[tai]n, I was ina[d]ve[r]te[n]t[ly] [b]a[p]tized as a  
 [d]i[s]ci[p]le of [P]a[l]a[m]as, of [c]our[s]e, I  
 [f]un[d]a[m]entally [d]i[s]agree w[i]th th[is] [m]o[d]ern  
 i[d]ea th[at] we [c]an [c]om[p]reh[e]nd [e]verything in a  
 [p]ure[ly] inte[l]le[c]tual [f]ashion, [th]is [n]o[tion] [th]at  
 [th]ere's, [i]n pra[c]t[i]ce, [n]o [l]i[m]i[t] to the hu[m]an  
 i[n]te[l]le[c]t. I f[i]nd that [i]dea to be [o]ne [o]f the mo[s]t  
 [a]b[s]o[lu]te[ly] [a]b[s]urd. Sure, of [c]our[s]e, we [c]an  
 r[e]a[d], [s]ay, [P]arame[n]i[d]es and, while [i]t's  
 i[m]p[re]ssive, it's [a]lso entire[ly] [a]b[s]urd, and I  
 [p]er[s]o[n]a[l]ly enjoy [i]t [i]mm[en]se[ly], [b]ut on  
 those [m]erits. I'm not sure I'd [b]a[s]e my  
 [s]ci[ent]ific thought on it. I'm at [l]ea[s]t [l]e[ss] than  
 [c]ertain it'd [b]e[c]ome the [c]orner[s]tone of my  
 [s]e[c]u[lar] inte[l]le[c]tual [p]ur[s]uits. [P]arame[n]i[d]es  
 is one of the [p]er[f]e[c]t wo[r]k[s] of ab[s]u[r]d[i]s[t]  
 [f]i[c]t[i]on wr[itte]n [i]n any lang[u]age—and if w[e]  
 i[n]d[e]e[m]a[d]e it a [c]orner[s]tone of our [s]e[c]u[lar]  
 i[n]te[l]le[c]tual [p]ur[s]uits, then at [l]ea[s]t w[e]'d  
 [n]e[e]d to [r]e[c]ogni[ze] our ab[s]u[r]d[i]st or[i]g[i]ns, as  
 [D]io[n]y[s]ius [r]i[gh]tfull[y] [d]oes. Y[e]t we've  
 [e]m[p]loyed [P]arame[n]i[d]es for [c]entur[ie]s as a  
 funda[m]e[n]tal co[m]me[n]tar[y] on a[l]l[e]g[e]d[ly]  
 ra[tio]n[a]l[i]s[t] [n]o[tions]. A[l]l[e]g[e]dly ra[tio]n[a]l[i]s[t]  
 [n]o[tions]—[i]s th[is] not [w]hat [w]e find our[s]elves  
 [s]teeped in, mo[r]e o[r] le[s]s [n]ight and [d]ay? When I  
 [c]o[m]ment on [m]eta[ph]ys[i]c[s] I [d]o [s]o in a  
 [c]o[n]s[c]iously ab[s]urd [f]a[sh]ion, be[c]ause I  
 re[c]ognize the [l]i[m]i[t]s of [l]anguage, the [l]i[m]i[t]s  
 of [l]anguage th[at] [a]t [b]ottom are in[c]a[p]a[b]le of  
 [c]o[m]muni[c]a[ti]ng [m]eta[ph]ys[i]c[s] i[n] li[n]ear [a]nd/or  
 r[at]io[n]al [f]a[sh]io[n]s. It [s]ee[m]s [s]o[m]ewhat

obv[i]ou[s] [th]at [th]ere's a nef[a]r[i]ou[s] [i]ite[r]a[l]ism  
 at pl[a]y here, I th[i]n[k] [i]t's [s][a]f[e] to [s]ay that. Ever  
 [s]in[c]e grade [s][c]hool I was [p]os[it]ive that I [s]tood  
 in the [p][r]esen[c]e of a nefa[r]io[u][s] [i]ite[r]a[l]ism.  
 Even as a young [b]oy, [i]nst[i]n[c]t[i]ve[l]y, I k[n]ew  
 [n]um[b]ers were, in all [i]i[k]e[l]ihood,  
 im[p]o[s]s[i]b[le]s, and th[at] my [s]y[s]tem[at]ic  
 edu[c]ation was high[l]y [s]u[s]ce[p]t[ib]le to, if [n]ot  
 e[n]t[ire]l[y] [c]om[p]l[et]e i[n], a [n]ef[a]r[i]ous  
 [i]ite[r]a[l]ism. The [e]du[c]a[t]ion of my youth [d]idn't  
 [e]xa[c]tly [e]n[c]ourage aud[a]cious thought.

04—805:1077 .747

[n] a[n]y [c]a[s]e, we [c]an't [c]om[p]ose  
 [m]etaph[y]s[i]c[s] i[n] a rational [s]en[s]e, [c]an [w]e?  
 [I]sn't [i]t al[w]ays in a bet[w]en-the-lines [s]en[s]e that  
 [w]e [c]om[p]ose [m]eta[ph]y[s]i[c]s, [i]n [w]i[n]k[s] and  
 nods that we write [m]eta[ph]y[s]i[c]s, be[c]ause we  
 [c]an't w[r]ite [m]eta[ph]y[s]i[c]s [i]n a [l]inear [a]nd/or  
 [r]a[t]io[n]al [f]a[sh]io[n]? We [t]ake [f]ar [t]oo much at  
 [f]a[ce] value. Our [i]ite[r]a[l]ism [i]s [i]ntentio[n]a[l]l[y]  
 or un[i]ntentio[n]a[l]l[y] [n]ef[a]r[i]ou[s]. [B]e[c]ause the  
 rea[l]it[y] is [n]earl[y] [n]othing [c]an [b]e t[a]k[en] at  
 [f]a[ce] va[l]ue. [D]o you r[e]a[l]ly [b]el[ie]ve the  
 gr[e]atest minds of An[t]i[q]u[i]ty [i]n[t]end[ed] [t]o [b]e  
 [t]a[k]en at [f]a[ce] value? The [B]y[z]a[n]tines r[e]ad  
 [P]lato the [s]ame [w]ay [w]e r[e]ad  
 Do[s]toyev[s]k[y], [w]hereas [w]e r[e]ad [P]lato the  
 [s]ame [w]ay the B[y]z[an]tines r[e]ad the Go[s]p[els].  
 [P]erha[p]s [b]oth are a[b]su[r]d. Now, su[r]e, I'm  
 with[ou]t a [d]o[ub]t, from a [c]ertain vantage [p]oint at  
 lea[s]t, a [d]i[s]ci[p]le of [P]alama[s], I won't a[t]t[em]p[t]  
 to d[e]n[y] that, but we [c]an't [t]a[k]e eve[r]ything  
 [P]alamas [p]ut to [p]a[p]y[r]u[s] at fa[c]e va[l]ue either.  
 Although [P]alama[s] under[s]tood the short[c]o[m]ings

of Ant[i][q]u[i]t[y] better than [e]ven the [m]o[s]t [p]rogre[ss]ive [m]o[d]ern [s][c]holar, I'd [b]e the la[s]t one to [s][ay] I t[a][k]e every[th]ing [th]e [s][ai]nt wrote at [f][a][c]e va[l]ue, be[c]ause I'm [f]ar [f][r]om a [l]ite[r]a[l]i[s]t. The m[o]de[r]n [s][c]h[o]la[r], in[s][o]f[ar] as [h]e [k]eeps [h]is [f]aith i[n] ratio[n]a[l]ism, will m[o]s[t] [l]i[k]e[l]y [n]eve[r] c[ome] [t]o [t]e[r]ms with the [n][a]tu[r]e of An[t][i][q]u[i]t[y]—is that fair to s[a]y? H[e]'ll r[e]ad Parmen[i]d[e]s and ta[k]e eve[r]ything [l]ite[r]a[l]i[y], a[n]d i[n] ta[k]in[g] eve[r]ythin[g] [l]ite[r]a[l]i[y] he'[ll] [i]nev[i]tab[ly] ta[k]e everything [i]d[i]ot[i]c[a]l[y]. [I]sn't [i]t the c[a]s[e [th]at [th]e [th]eologians are the gr[ea]te[s]t [s][k]e[p]ti[c]s am[o]ng [u]s? We view [f][ai]th as [p]oison as we r[et]ai[n] f[an]atical levels of [f][ai]th in ou[r] [s]en[s]o[r]y o[r]ga[n]s. We [p]e[r]use a [v]a[r]iety of em[p]i[r]i[c]al [s]tudies that [v]i[v]i[s]e[c]t the [g]rote[s]q[ue] fi[c]tions of ou[r] [s]en[s]o[r]y o[r]gans—did you k[no]w it's [n]ow [s]p[e]c[u]l[at]ed human [b]e[i]ngs didn't s[ee] the [c]o[l]or [b]l[u]e until the [l]atter [B][C] c[en]turie[s] at ear[l]ie[s]t? [A]ll [a]r[ound] u[s] ou[r] [s]en[s]o[r]y o[r]gans e[x]crete [e]viden[c]e of their [u]tter [u]n[r]e[l]iab[i]l[i]ty, yet we view [f][ai]th as idiocy while r[et]ai[n]i[n]g th[is] f[a]n[at]i[c]a[l] [n]otio[n] that ou[r] [s]en[s]o[r]y o[r]ga[n]s can and should and m[u]s[t] be tr[u]s[t]ed—[w]h[i]ch [i]s [w]hy [w]e're [n]ot [q]uite [r]adi[c]al e[n]ough. The [m]o[d]ern [a]ge r[et]ai[n]s [r]a[d]i[c]al [f][ai]th [i]n [i]ts [s]en[s]o[r]y o[r]gans in a [m]o[r]e [f]an[at]i[c]a[l] [f]a[sh]ion tha[n] a[n]y hi[s]to[r]i[c]al [r]el[i]g[i]on k[no]wn to man. [N]othing [c]an [b]e t[a][k]en [a]t [f][a]c[e] v[a]lue, th[at] [m]uch we should agr[ee] on, wh[i]ch [b]r[i]ngs [m]e to this, a t[r]ue [f]ly i[n] the oint[m]e[n]t, [s]o to [s]p[ea]k—how [i]s [i]t you [a]rrive at [a] p[os]tulation of a[n] e[ss]e[n]c[e] you ca[n]n[ot] k[no]w? Th[is] [i]s the question, [i]s [i]t [n]ot? How [d]oes the [m]athe[m]a[t]i[c]ian reach the

po[s]tula[tɪ]on num[b]ers are [a][c]tual [a]nd [d][i][s][tɪ]n[c]t?
 [H]ow is it [p]o[s]s[i]b[le], g[i]ven [h]uman
 ca[p]a[b]l[iti]es, to [d][i][s]t[i]nguish the [n]um[b]er two
 fro[m] the [n]u[m]ber one [p]oint [n]ine re[p]eat[ing]
 (1.999999...) i[n] [p]racti[c]e? How [i]s [i]t [p]o[s]s[i]ble
 to d[i][s]t[i]nguish [t]wo from one [p]oint nine
 re[p]eat[ing]? How does [m]ath[e]m[at]ic[s] a[t]t[em]pt [t]o
 [l]i[a]y any [c][o]ntradi[c]t[i]on to ph[y]s[ic]al [s]p[ac]e—[t]o
 [a]tt[em]pt to [c]o[n]firm the [a]bi[li]t[y] to [l]i[ea]ve [th]e
 [th]eor[et]ic[al]—when [i]t's [i]m[p]o[s]s[i]ble for u[s] to
 d[i][s]t[i]nguish the [n]um[b]er two fro[m] the [n]um[b]er one
 [p]oint [n]ine re[p]eat[ing] (1.99999999999999999999...),
 i[n] [p]racti[c]e? It [s]eems im[p]o[s]s[i]ble [f]or u[s] to k[n]ow [th]at [th]e
 [n]um[b]er [t]wo [i]s [i]n [f]act the [n]um[b]er [t]wo, and
 [n]ot the [n]um[b]er [o]ne [p]oint [n]ine re[p]eat[ing]
 (1.99999999999999999999...), and i[f] [w]e're u[n]a[b]le to
 k[n]ow the [n]um[b]er [t]wo [i]s [i]n [f]act the [n]um[b]er
 [t]wo then how [c]ould it [b]e [p]o[s]s[i]ble to a[ss]ert th[at]
 [m]ath[e]m[at]ic[s] h[as] any va[l]ue out[s]ide of [th]e
 [p]ure[l]y [th]eor[et]ic[al]? [B]y i[n]stinct [p]erha[p]s we feel
 as [th]ough [th]e [n]um[b]er [t]wo is the [n]um[b]er [t]wo,
 and the [n]um[b]er [o]ne is the [n]um[b]er [o]ne, yes, the
 [m]ath[e]m[at]ic[al] [a]xioms [m]ay [f]eel
 [c]orre[c]t—y[et] the [f]a[ct] r[e]m[ains] that we [l]a[ck] the
 [p]er[c]e[p]t[ual] [f]a[ct]ulties to d[i][s]t[i]nguish [t]wo
 a[pp]les fr[om] [o]ne [p]oint nine re[p]eat[ing]
 (1.99999999999999999999...) a[pp]les. [W]hen [w]e [s]p[ea]k of the
 [E]ss[en]c[e] of all things we [d]on't [s]p[ea]k an[y]
 [d]ifferent[ly]—with the [e]x[c]e[p]tion that our
 [ph]ilo[s]o[ph]y of a[n] u[n]k[n]ow[ab]le E[ss]e[n]c[e]
 [s]eek[s] to [p]ut a [s]tr[ic]t l[i]m[it] on k[n]owledge
 [b]a[s]ed on [i]n[st]it[ut]ive a[ss]u[m]p[t]ions, whereas
 the [ph]ilo[s]o[ph]y of [m]ath[e]m[at]ic[s] a[t]t[em]pt[s] [t]o
 i[n]d[e]f[i]nitely [e]x[p]and our k[n]owledge ba[s]ed on

[n]othing more tha[n] a[n] i[n][s]t[iti]nct[i]ve a[s]sum[p]t[i]on, the in[s]t[iti]nct[i]ve a[ss]umpt[i]on that we [c]an [s]u[cc]e[ss]fully di[s]ti[n]gu[i]sh two a[pp]les fr[om] [o]ne [p]oint nine re[p]eating (1.999999999999...) a[pp]les.

05—363:468 .776

There's no doubt that we're [i]n the [m][i]d[s]t of [s]omething e[ss]ent[i]a[l]ly [m][y][s]teriou[s], that [w]hen [w]e di[s]c[u]ss the e[ss]en[c]e of [l]ife [w]e thin[k] [w]e [c]an [m]a[k]e [s]en[s]e [o]f it [a]ll, that we're on the [p]re[c]i[p]i[c]e of [m]a[k]ing [s]en[s]e of [o]ur[s]elves and [o]ur [s]u[r]roundings, yet there's [s]t[ill] [l]ittle doubt w[e] [r]e[m]ain [i]n the [m][i]dst of [s]omething e[ss]ent[i]a[l]ly [m][y][s]te[r]iou[s] [w]hen [w]e beg[i]n to th[i]n[k] [c]l[ear]ly. Th[i]n[k]i[n]g [i]s [p]erha[p]s the [m]o[s]t [m]y[s]te[r]ious a[c]t [o]f [a]ll. Th[i]n[k]i[n]g, [w]h[i]ch [w]e gene[r]al[ly] be[lie]ve trans[lates] [m]ate[r]ial and i[m]mate[r]ial exp[e]r[i]en[c]e i[n]to [l]anguage—i[n]to [m]odes that are [c]o[m]uni[c]able. [Th]i[n]k[i]ng, wh[i]ch a[tt]em[pts] [t]o [t]a[k]e [s]ome[th]ing [s]uch as [c]on[s]u[m]ing a j[ui]c[y] [p]ear, an ex[p]er[i]en[c]e that ult[im]a[tely] [i]s [c]onfined to [p]er[s]onal [e]x[p]er[i]en[c]e, and [e]xt[r]a[p]olate [i]t [i]n a [c]o[m]muni[c]able [f]ormat to the gene[r]al [p]o[p]ula[c]e. [S]ans thin[k]i[n]g, [c]o[n]s[um]i[n]g a j[ui]c[y] [p]ear would be [s]omething [c]o[n]fined to the [p]rivate [s]p[h]ere—w[i]th th[i]n[k]i[n]g [i]t's then [p]resuma[b]l[y] a[ll]owed to enter the [p]u[b]l[i]c [d]o[m]ain. [Th]ere [i]s, [i]n fa[c]t, no re[m]ai[n]i[n]g [p]u[b]l[i]c [d]o[m]ai[n] sans [th]i[n]k[i]ng—and [th]ere's i[n] e[ss]e[n]c[e] n[o] thin[k]i[n]g [s]ans a [p]u[b]l[i]c [d]o[m]ain. A[ss]u[m]i[n]g [w]e [c]on[s]u[m]e a j[ui]c[y] [p]ear, thin[k]i[n]g [W]ow, this [p]ear is j[ui]c[y], [b]ut [r]ef[er]se [t]o w[r]ite it down, to ver[b]ally ex[p]r[e]s[s] it to

our [p]ee[r]s, [th]en [th]e [th]ought Wow, th[i]s [p]lea[r] [i]s  
 jui[c]y [r]e[m]ains in the [p]urely i[m]m[ate]rial [r]eal[m],  
 [i]t'[s] ex[i]s[t]e[n]c[e] [p]ure[l]y [s][p]e[c]u[l]ative, both [th]e  
 [th]ought and the physi[c]al [e]x[p]e[r]ien[c]e [r]e[m]ain  
 [e]s[s]entia[l]ly [p]ure[l]y [s][p]e[c]u[l]ative. It'[s] on[l]y  
 [w]hen [th]e [th]ought [W]ow, th[i]s [p]ear [i]s jui[c]y  
 enters the [p]u[b]li[c] do[m]ain that it [b]e[c]omes,  
 [p]erha[p]s not real, [b]ut [a]t lea[s]t [a][pp]are[n]t i[n] a  
 [m]ore [m]ate[r]ial [m]anner—it'[s] [v]e[r]i[f]ied as a [r]eal  
 ex[p]erien[c]e and [s]ub[s]e[qu]e[n]tly [v]e[r]i[f]ied as a  
 [r]eal thought. I t[oo] [c]on[s]u[m]ed a [p]ear, and [w]ow it  
 [w]as al[s]o [q]uite jui[c]y! There's n[o] doubt we're [i]n  
 the [m]i[d]st of [s]ometh[i]ng e[s]s[en]t[i]ally  
 [m]y[s]teriou[s] here.

06—546:775 .705

It was just [a] [f]ew [m]onths [a][g]o, I dreamt a[n] [o]lder  
 [f]e[m]ale e[n]g[a]ged [m]e i[n] a [l]i[a]ison, [p]erha[p]s  
 a [s]exual [l]i[a]ison—at fir[s]t she [w]as an [o]l[d]er  
 [b]la[ck] [w]o[m]an, [b]ut then she [b]e[c]ame an [o]l[d]er  
 [w]hite [w]o[m]an, [a]nd, [a]s she [w]as [w]hite, [a]s [w]e  
 s[at] i[n] a[n] auto[m]o[b]ile, I en[t]ered a ho[t]el room [t]o  
 pay [n]i[n]e[t]y [t]wo dollars [f]or our [r]oom [f]or the  
 [n]i[gh]t, then I [r]e[t]urned [t]o the [c]ar. I [w]as [w]earing  
 a [b]us[i]n[e]s[s] s[ui]t and she [w]ore [b]us[i]n[e]s[s]  
 [c]asu[a]l [a]ttire, there were [t]wo [s]mall [d]ar[k],  
 in[d]e[c]i[ph]era[b]le [f]orms [s]i[t]t[i]ng [i]n the  
 [b]a[ck]s[e]at, and [sh]e t[ol]d me [sh]e had to g[o] [s]outh  
 of the [M]issou[r]i now, and [I] [r]e[p]l[i]ed You [m]ean  
 [s]outh of the [M]i[ss]i[s]s[i]pp[i], [r]ight?—yet, even  
 [s]etting a[s]ide our geo[g]raphi[c]al [c]on[c]e[r]ns, he[r]  
 [s]t[ate]ment [s]t[ru]c[k] me as [s]omething I already  
 k[n]ew, [th]at I k[n]ew sh[e] was [l]ea[ving] for [g]ood, and  
 [th]at her [l]ea[ving] would [m]a[r]k a [n]ew [s]ta[r]t for  
 [m]e, [s]o to [s]p[ea]k. [W]hen I [w]o[k]e u[p] I [f]elt

as th[ou]gh, i[n] a[n] i[n]te[n]sely odd and [i]m[p]al[p]able way, my [e]nt[ri]re l[i]f[e] had [f]ollowed the [p]ath of Ea[s]tern Orthodoxy—in a [p]rof[ou]nd manner I [f]elt this, I [w]as [w]i[d]e a[w]a[k]e in be[d], g[a]zing at a [w]all thin[k]ing m[y] ent[ri]re l[i]f[e] has [s]omehow [t]ra[ck]ed the [t]enets of the [E]a[s]tern Ortho[d]ox, [th]at [th]is [d]r[ea]m was [e][q]uall[y] [c]or[p]o[r]eal to any wa[k]ing ex[p]e[r]ien[c]e I've h[a]d, [a]nd now, [m]onths later, [I] [r]e[m]ai[n] [c]u[r]iou[s] with [r]egar[d] to the [i]d[e]ntity of this [m]ulti-[r]a[c]ial [f]igure [f]rom [m]y [d]r[ea]m, who it [s]eem[s] eng[a]ged [m]e in a [s]exual li[a]ison? De[s]pite affir[m]ing the [m]y[steriou]s nature of [w]hat [w]e're [i]n the [m]i[d]st of, I've never [b]een a [b]el[ie]ver in a[n]gels a[n]d d[em]ons, [s]o to [s]p[ea]k—yet this [f]igure [f]rom [m]y dr[ea]m, it seem[s] to [m]e, shared [m]any [c]hara[c]te[r]ist[ic]s w[ith] h[isto]rical [r]epo[r]t[s] of [s]o-calle[d] angels and de[m]ons. Of cou[r]se, a[ssu]m[ing] it's [o]ne [o]f the [t]wo, [w]hich [o]ne of the [t]wo [i]s [i]t? A[n] a[n]gel or a [d]emon? Who were the [d]ar[k], near[l]y [f]orm[less] [f]igures in the [b]a[ck]s[eat] of the [c]ar? A per[s]o[n] e[n]g[a]ges me in a [s]exual li[a]ison, [b]ut at [f]ir[s]t is [b]l[ack], [b]ut then [b]ec[omes] white, then tells [m]e she now has to g[o] [q]u[ote]-un[quote] south of the [M]issou[ri], I [c]o[rr]e[c]t her, and then I [w]a[k]e up [w]ith a[n] i[n]te[n]s[e] [f]ee[ing] my l[i]f[e]'s [s]omehow [f]ollowed the [t]e[n]ets of Ea[s]tern Or[th]odoxy—[th]en, [th]i[s] dr[ea]m's in[t]e[n]s[ity] [s]tick[ing] [w]ith [m]e for [w]ee[k]s and [e]ve[n] [m]onths on e[n]d, I [q]uestio[n] if the [f]igure [f]rom [m]y dr[ea]m was [p]erha[p]s a b[e]i[n]g of [s]ome [m]eta[ph]y[s]ical [s]ort, [p]erha[p]s a[n] a[n]gel or [p]erha[p]s a de[m]on. I [q]u[es]tion wh[ether] [p]erha[p]s a[n] a[n]gel or [p]erha[p]s a [d]e[m]on e[n]t[er]ed my [d]r[ea]m to, in a [q]uite [s]er[p]en[t]i[n]e

way, [p]oint [m]e i[n] the [d]irectio[n] of [s]o[m]e[th]ing—[p]erha[p]s Ea[s]tern Or[th]o[d]oxy. And I [q]uestion [i]f th[is] [i]s [i]n [f]a[c]t [p]o[s]s[i]ble. [A]t almo[s]t [a]ny other [t]i[m]e in m[y] l[i]fe I would have [c]o[n]s[i]d[er]ed [i]t an [i]m[p]o[s]s[i]b[i]l[i]t[y], [s]omething [t]o[tal]l[y] lu[d]i[c]r[ous], I'd have [c]o[n]s[i]d[er]ed it [a]n [e]m[b]a[r]ra[ss]ing a[b]s[ur]d[i]t[y] to [e]ven [s]uggest it. [W]hereas [p]r[e]v[i]ou[s]ly I [w]ould have [s]at and [s]aid I con[s]i[d]er[ed] it to [b]e an e[m]b[ar]ra[ss]ing a[b]s[ur]d[i]t[y] and utter i[m]p[ro]s[s]i[b]l[i]t[y], [n]ow, for [o]ne [r]eason or a[n]other, I [a]c[tua]lly [c]o[n]s[i]d[er] it [a]n em[b]arra[ss]ing [a]b[ur]d[i]t[y] to find [i]t utterl[y] [i]mpossi[b]le.

07—237:327 .725

Y[e]t l[e]t [m]e ex[p]lain [m]y thoughts on th[is] [i]ssue just a l[i]ttl[e] [f]urther, i[f] I [m]ay? Be[c]ause my th[ou]ghts [o]n the t[er]m ex[p]anded [s]i[n]g[i]f[i]c[an]t[i]t[y] ju[s]t re[c]entl[y], [a]s a m[at]ter of [f]a[c]t. It was ju[s]t l[a]st [S]a[tur]day, [a]t a [b]a[ck]yard [c]o[ok]out where I [s]a[t] a[t] a [n]i[c]le e[n]ou[gh] gl[a]ss ta[b]le [n]ext to a [b]ottle of [p]otato vod[k]a im[p]orted [f]rom [P]o[land], I was drin[k]ing the [p]otato vod[k]a [f]rom [P]o[land] in a [s]mall [p]l[a]s[t]i[c] gl[a]ss [w]ith [w]ater and i[c]e, and the [p]otato vod[k]a was [s]m[ooth], [q]uite [s]m[ooth] a[c]tually, when the [p]er[s]on [s]ittin[g] a[c]ro[ss] from [m]e [m]ade a [r]e[m]ar[k]—[h]e [s]aid that [h]e j[u]st [b]ought [h]alf a [d]ozen [p]r[e-]r[ol]led [b]u[n]ts [f]rom a [s]tate-[s]anctioned [d]i[s]p[en]s[ar]y, that [h]e was [p]lannin[g] to [s]te[p] on the [s]idewalk and l[i]ght u[p] one of th[ese] b[u]n[t]s, have a [p]uff or [t]wo [t]o re[l]ax, [t]o [w]hich [h]e o[ff]ered m[e] a [p]uff [t]oo, i[f] I [w]anted [o]ne. [W]ell, [a]s it so h[a]ppened, [a]t the

time, [d]e[s][p]ite my general [a]mbivalence to m[a]rijuana, I con[s][i][d]ered [i]t a [d]e[c]ent [i][d]ea. [I] [f]igured [I]'d have [o]ne [p]u[ff] or [t]wo, [t]o[p]s, that [m]aybe it [w]ould relax [m]e. I [f]igured, at the [t]ime, that a [p]u[ff] or [t]wo, [t]o[p]s, would have a [m]ini[m]al to [m]odera[t]e e[ff]ect—yet [w]he[n] I [w]e[n]t out to the [s]ide[w]alk [w]ith thi[s] [p]er[s]on [t]o [t]a[k]e a [p]u[ff] or [t]wo [f]rom his [s][t][a]te-[s]an[c]tioned blunt I'd di[s][c]over [th]at [th]i[s] weed re[t][ai]ned a [p]o[t]en[c]y th[at] [p]erh[a][p]s I'd n[e]ver [e]n[c]ountered before.

08—396:505 .784

The [b][l]unts were exqu[i]s[i]te[l]y rolle[d] and ta[s]ted [d]e[l][i]c[i]ou[s], the [f]ir[s]t hit went [d]own [f]ine—yet as the [b]lunt pa[s]sed [f]or a [f]i[n]al t[i]me, again[s]t my [b]etter jud[g]ment, [d]eep [d]own a[ck]n[ow]led[g]ing [th]at [th]e one [h]it was the [c]orre[c]t amount of [h]its, that a[n]y [s]ub[s]e[que]n[t] [h]it would [b][e] a w[h]o[l][l]y [s]uperf[ic]i[u]ous [h]it, [I] [d]e[c][i][d]ed [t]o [t]a[k]e a [s]e[c]ond [h]it, where imme[d]iate[l]y [f]o[l]l[ow]ing my ex[h]ale I [c]ou[gh]ed vo[c]i[f]erou[s]l[y]. I [c]ou[gh]ed vo[c]i[f]erou[s]ly then ju[s]t [m]o[m]ents later time began, [m]uch to [m]y [s]urp[r]i[s]e, [p]ro[c]eed[i]ng [i]n a highly ab[n]or[m]al [m]a[n]ner. I [f]ound mysel[f] at a [f]amily c[oo]k[ou]t, and [t]ime was p[r]o[c]eedi[n]g in a [m]a[n]ner that [s][t]r[uc]k [m]e as en[t]ire[l]y ab[n]or[m]al. I was [l]ou[n]ging in a [n]on[d]e[s]crip[t] [l]aw[n] chair, ex[c]e[p]t [n]ow I [f]ound mysel[f] unable to ex[p]e[r]ienc[e] the [p]ro[c]ession of [t]ime in our [r]u[d]i[m]en[t]a[r]y, [t]e[m]p[er]ate [m]anner. I [j]um[p]ed [b]e[t]w[ee]n di[s]j[oi]nted [s]c[ene]s. [P]eo[p]le [b]egan s[p]ea[k]ing and [i]t was almo[s]t as though a [p]er[s]on h[i]t [f]ast [f]orward on their [s][p]eech. [Th]en [th]e [s][p]eech would [s]o[w] ju[s]t [m]o[m]en[t]ari[l]y. Add[i]ti[on]al[l]y, I [s]eemed en[t]ire[l]y

[r]e[s]t[r][i]ct[e]d from [p]er[c][ei]ving how [p][eo][p]le were [p]er[c][ei]ving m[e], I [f]elt [i][i]ke [I] was [e]xtr[e]me[I][y] h[i]gh, in [f]a[c]t [I] knew [I] was [e]xtr[e]me[I][y] h[i]gh, and it wasn't [e]x[a][c]t[I][y] the m[o]st a[pp][r][o][p]r[i]ate ven[u]e to be th[at] h[i]gh—[a]t a [f]ami[I][y] [c]oo[k]out—[y]et I was [r]e[s]t[r][i]ct[e]d from per[c][ei]ving [h]ow [h][i]gh [I] [s][ee]med to the out[s]i[de] world. At t[i]mes it felt l[i][k]e [I]'d gained a[cc][e][ss] to a [c][ue] that [s]ugg[e]s[t]ed [e]ve[r]yone kn[ew] [I] was [e]xtr[e]me[I][y] h[i]gh, yet thi[s] [n]otion, that [e]very[o]ne k[n]ew [I] [w]as [e]xtr[e]me[I][y] h[i]gh, [r]emained un[p]r[oven], [i]m[p]o[ss]i[b]le to [p]r[ove], it [s]eemed. [B]ecause [p][eo][p]le would at [t]imes [s][ee]m to [b][e] [t]r[ea]ting m[e] as if [I] was [h]ard[y] [h][i]gh at all, de[s]p[i]te the [f]a[c]t that I [c]ould no [l]onger [e]x[p]erien[c]e time i[n] a [p]ure[I]y [l]inear [f]a[sh]ion. [E]s[s]en[t]iall[y] [m]y own a[c]ti[on]s [b]e[c]ame [e]ntirel[y] foreig[n] to [m][e]—[m]ore than ju[s]t [b][e]ing [e]xtr[e]me[I][y] high, I [b]e[c]ame di[s]c[on]c[er]ted at [th]e [th]ought of what a[c]ti[on]s I [c]ould [p]o[ss]i[b]l[y] [b][e] ta[k]ing that [c]aused the [p][eo][p]le around m[e] to [c][ea]s[e] to view [m][e] as extr[e]me[I][y] high.

09—404:534 .757

The [o]nly a[c]ti[on]s of my [o]wn I was [s]till a[w]are of [w]ere a[c]ti[on]s that [s][ee]med [t]o m[e] [t]o b[e] of [a] per[s]on [c][l]ea[r][y] ext[r]e[m]e[I][y] h[i]gh, [s]o [h]ow [c]ould th[ese] a[c]ti[on]s [b][e] s[ee]n [b]y [r]a[t]ional [a]c[t]ors to [b]e [c]oming from a [p]er[s]on who was [s]till ex[p]erien[c]ing [t]ime [l]inear[I]y? Thi[s] was, [a]t the [t]ime, a que[s]tion [s][a]ns [a]n [a]n[s]wer. [I]n [sh]ort, [i]t wasn't [s]im[p]ly that I [c]ea[s]ed to ex[p]erien[c]e time in [a] norm[a]t[i]ve [f]a[sh]i[on]—it was the [f]a[c]t my exte[r]ior [s]u[r]roundings [s]eemed [t]o [c]on[t]inue [t]o re[c]og[n]i[ze] [I] pa[s]sed through [t]i[m]e in at lea[s]t

[s]o[m]ewhat of [a] [n]ormat[i]ve [f][a]sh[i]on. Thi[s] was di[s][c]o[n][c]erting, be[c]ause [o]ne [w]ould a[ss]ume, if you le[f]t the [c]o[n][f]i[n]es of [n]ormative t[i]me, [th]at [th]e [p]eo[p]le [i]n your v[i][c][i][n]i[ti]ty would re[c]og[n]ize thi[s] [f]a[c]t—that you ex[i]t[e]d [n]ormat[i]ve time. But [i]n th[i][s] [c]a[s]e [i]t was almo[s]t as [i]f, ye[s]—I was no longer [p][r]esent, I was [e]x[p]e[r]ien[c]ing [t][i]me i[n] a[n] [e][n][t]i[re]ly a[s]ynch[ron]ou[s] [f]ashion, yet [m]y [s]u[r]roundings [s]till [f]ound [m][e] to [b][e] [th]ere, [f]or [th]e [m]o[s]t [p]art. I was, to the [b][e]st of my [p]er[c]e[p]tual [f]a[c]ulti[es], exi[s]ti[n]g i[n] at [i]ea[s]t two [p]l[a]c[es] at on[c]e. At the [f]a[m]i[l]y [c]oo[k]out, where [m]o[s]t [p]eo[p]le were [ei]ther [s][i]ght[l]y h[i]gh or not h[i]gh at [a]ll, and then [a]l[s]o in a [s]e[p]a[r]ate ite[r]ation of time, [w]here I [w]as j[u]m[p]ing f[r]o[m] [p]e[r]iod to [p]e[r]iod, [i]n[d]i[s]cr[i]m[i]n[a]te[l]y. There's [i]ittle [d]o[ub]t [n]o[w] that time, as we're exp[os]ed to it, is [o]nly one of s[e]veral [i]te[r]a[tions, yet how many [i]te[r]a[tions are there? It [s]eems [i]mpo[ss]i[ble] for u[s] to [s]ay—[p]erha[p]s [i]te[r]a[tions [i]s the w[r]ong mode [t]o di[s]cu[s]s [t]h[is] [p]ar[t] of [t]i[m]e. [I]t's e[n]t[ire]ly [p]o[ss]i[ble], [i]n fact, that [t]i[m]e [p]er[c]eives [u]s inasm[u]ch as w[e] [p]er[c]eive it. Yet [o]nce [w]e a[ck]nowledge [th]is [f]a[c]t, [th]a[t] t[im]e has [m]any [i]te[r]ations of [p]ro[du]c[ing] [i]t[s]e[l]f, that t[im]e [m]ay in [f]act [p]er[c]eive u[s] [r]ather than u[s] [p]er[c]eive [i]t, then we can no [l]onger b[l]i[n]d[l]y [s]tate that our [d]r[ea]ms are ju[s]t [d]r[ea]ms—be[c]ause it would s[e]em to [m][e] that [i]f time, [i]n [f]a[c]t, ta[k]es [m]any, [i]f [n]ot [i]nfi[n]i[t]e, [i]te[r]ations, then our [d]r[ea]ms [c]ould in [f]a[c]t b[e] e[n]t[ire]l[y] [r]ea[l], [th]at [th]ey m[ay] ju[s]t ex[i]st i[n] [d]i[f]fe[r]ent [i]te[r]ations of [t]ime. Our [d]r[ea]ms could b[e] e[n]t[ire]l[y] [r]ea[l] [e]x[p]e[r]ien[c]es, ju[s]t [e]x[p]e[r]ien[c]ed in [s]e[p]a[r]ate ite[r]ations of [t]ime.

Of [c]our[s]e, [r]a[ti]onal[l]y [s][p][ea][k]ing, not that w[e] [sh]ould [s][p][ea][k] [r]a[ti]onal[l]y, but [r]a[ti]onal[l]y [s][p][ea][k]ing we [c]ould [q]u[e]st[i]on the m[e][r]i[t]s of adh[e]ring to [Ea][s]tern Orthodox[y] gene[r]a[l]l[y]. Of [c]our[s]e we [c]ould [r]e[f]e[r]en[c]e the [c]a[s]e of [C]hry[s][o][s]t[o]m[o]s [K][a][l][a][f][a]ti[s], the [M]et[r]opo[l]itan of [S][m]yrna, who un[c]ere[m]oniou[s]ly [h]ad [h]is [b]eard [r]i[pp]ed off [b]y [h]and, [h]is eyes g[ou]ged [ou]t, his nose and ears [c]ut off and was [s]u[b][s]e[que]ntly [m]a[s][q]ue[r]aded a[r]ound the ve[r]y [c]ity where he a[c]ted as a [M]et[r]o[p]olitan until he [d]ied from h[is] [i]nju[r]ies, from [h]aving [h]is [e]yes, nose, and ears [r]emoved, all of this during the [h]ei[gh]t of the G[r]e[c]-Tur[k]ish war—as it [s]eems [s]a[f]e to [s]ay that Ea[s]tern Ortho[d]ox[y], to [s]ome e[x]tent, [d]idn't [f]are Chry[s][o][s]t[o]m[o]s well in the [e]nd, at [l]ea[s]t fro[m] a [m]at[er]ial[is]t [p]oint of view. It's a [s]m[all] [s]am[p]le [s]ize yet it's [c]om[p]e[ll]ing to a[n] [e]xte[n]t, and of [c]ourse the [s]am[p]l[e] is [s]ub[s]tantia[l]ly [l]arger [w]hen [w]e [c]on[s]i[d]er the [p]light of the Ortho[d]ox [p]o[p]ulation of [A]nat[olia] [a]s a wh[o]le. [Th]e tru[th] is the Or[th]o[d]ox haven't fared i[n] [c]red[ibly] [w]ell i[n] the N[ea]r [Ea][s]t [o]ver the pa[s]t, give or t[a]k[e], [o]ne thousand y[ea]rs or [s]o, we could [e]ven [s]ay that [f]ollowing the [p]a[th] of [Ea][s]tern Ortho[d]ox[y] has [p]erh[a]ps been ext[r]e[m]e[ly] [f]raught with [p]eril in [c]ertain [r]e[gions] of the [Ea][s]tern Me[d]ite[r]ran[ea]n. W[e] [sh]ouldn't [s]p[ea]k [r]a[ti]ona[l]l[y] or [l]ogi[c]a[l]l[y], yet if [w]e [w]ere [t]o [t]a[k]e the [c]a[s]e of, [s]ay, for exam[p]le, the [c]on[c]e[pt] of The One, the [b]eing that [c]on[c]e[pt]uall[y] [p]r[e]c[ede]s [b]eing, that ex[i]sts i[n] [a]n a[s]pect[s] of [t]ime, but [a]ll[s]o

fun[d]a[m]en[t]ally [m]u[s]t exi[s]t out[s]i[d]e of [t]ime, [t]o a [c]ertain ex[t]e[n]t [w]e [w]ould al[m]o[s]t n[ee]d to en[t]irel[y] [r]e[c]o[n]s[tru]c[t] our [c]o[n]c[ep]tion of [t]ime to [e]ven [r]emotel[y] [b]e [a]b[le] to [c]o[n]c[ei]ve of a [B]e[ing] of that [n]a[t]ure. [N]ot to [s]ay that we [c]ould ever [c]o[n]c[ei]ve a B[e]ing of that [n]a[t]ure [i]n [i]t[s] e[ss]en[c]e, yet to [e]ven a[pp]roach a [c]o[n]c[ep]tion—if [l]ogi[c] [l]eads us to a Fir[s]t [P]rin[c]i[p]le that ex[i]s[ts] w[i]th[i]n and out[s]i[d]e of t[i]me, then our [c]o[n]c[ep]t[i]on of t[i]me is e[ss]en[t]ially ab[s]urdi[s]t. [W]e [w]ould n[ee]d to r[e]c[on]s[tru]c[t thi[s] [c]o[n]c[ep]t[i]on of time as [s]omething [w]e [e]xi[s]t [e]x[c]lu[s]ively [w]ithin, that [c]o[n]tains u[s] i[n] a li[n]ear f[a]shio[n], th[at] p[er]h[a]p[s] p[er]c[e]ives u[s] i[n] a [s]o-[-c]alled li[n]ear f[ashio]n, [b]e[c]ause i[f] we are i[n] f[a]c[t] exte[n]sions of thi[s] [O]ne who m[u]s[t b]y ne[c]e[ss]ity exi[s]t [b]oth w[i]th[i]n and out[s]i[d]e of t[i]me, [th]en [th]ere mu[s]t [e]x[i]s[t] a [p]o[r]t[i]on of u[s], as [e]x[te]n[s]ions of the One, that [e]x[p]eriences time [i]n th[i]s fa[sh]ion, wh[i]ch [i]s of [c]o[ur]s[e] a[n] e[ss]e[n]tially ab[s]urdi[s]t manner of [c]o[n]c[ei]ving of time.

11—335:493 .679

I [c]an't [th]i[n]k of a [th]i[n]g more ab[s]urd [th]an [c]o[n]c[ei]ving time i[n] a [s]olel[y] [l]i[n]ear fashio[n]. It [s]eems ju[s]t—I [d]on't kn[o]w—[t]o t[a]ll[y] ri[d]icu[l]o[us] to [a]ssume [t]ime [p]ro[c]eeds i[n] a [p]urel[y] [l]i[n]ear f[ashio]n, that time [w]ouldn't [p]ro[c]e[e]d in [w]hatev[e]r f[ashio]n it chooses, that [t]ime, e[t]ernal as [i]t [i]s, would n[ee]d u[s] to p[er]c[ei]ve it, as o[pp]osed to [v]i[c]e [v]er[s]a, or [e]v[e]n [t]o a[ss]u[m]e that [t]ime [p]ro[c]e[e]ds at all, that, [i]f [i]t ch[o]se to [p]ro[c]e[e]d, that it wouldn't [p]ro[c]e[e]d i[n] the fashio[n] of, [s]ay, [a]dding [p]er[c]en[t]a[g]es [a]s o[pp]o[s]ed to

i[n][t]e[ɡ]ers. I eng[a]ged in a [s]exual [l]i[a]ison with an older [f]emale, who at [f]ir[s]t [w]as [b][l]a[ck], the[n] [b]e[c]ame [w]hite, the[n] i[n]f[orm]ed [m]e th[at] she h[a]d to go south of the [M]issou[r]i, a[f]ter I'd paid ninety [t]wo dollars [f]or a ho[t]el [r]oom [f]or the [t]wo of u[s], [a]s we [s][a]t in the [m]e[d]ium-[s]ized [s]e[d]an, with two [s][m]all and formle[s]s [d]ar[k] [b]eings [s]itti[n]g i[n] the [b]a[ck]. I [p]artoo[k] in the [s]mo[k]ing of a [s]iza[b]le [b]lunt that a [f]ri[en]d of mine [p]urchased [f]rom a lo[c]al di[s][p]en[s]ar[y], [a]nd [a]f[te]r [t]a[k]ing a [m]ere [t]wo h[its] from th[i]s [b][l]unt I [f]ound [m]y[s]el[f] i[n]adv[i]sa[b]l[y] h[igh] at a [f]ami[l]y [f]unc[t]io[n], ex[p]erien[ci]ng t[ime] in a [s][p]uriou[s] [f]a[sh]io[n], in a [f]a[sh]ion [w]here I [w]as, on the one hand, a [p]ar[en]t[l]y [p]r[es]ent at the [p]ar[t]y, yet [s]imult[ane]ou[s]l[y] eng[a]ging [p]a[ss]ive[l]y in a [f]orm of [t]ime that wasn't [p]resent at the [p]arty—[s]o I [s]u[pp]ose it to [b]e [p]o[ss]i[b]le th[at] [a]t the [t]ime I exi[s]t[ed] at [t]wo [p]l[a]ces at on[ce]. Yet as foo[l]ish as th[i]s may [s]ound, we should n[ote] that [e]ven Dion[y]s[i]u[s] [s]aid, and I qu[ote], 'it may [b]e [s]aid to [b]e praising God [f]or his [f]oolishne[ss], wh[i]ch [i]n [i]t[s]el[f] [s]eems a[b]surd and [s]trange, [b]ut thi[s] [f]oolishne[ss] [u]p[l]ifts [u]s to the i[n]effa[b]le truth wh[i]ch [i]s there [b]ef[ore] all [r]easoning.' [B]e[ca]use it would [st]and to [r]ea[son] that i[f] [r]ea[so]n [i]t[s]el[f] [i]s [i]n[c]a[p]a[b]le of a[s]certaining these [s]o[ci]al[ly] [d]ivine n[otions], then [p]erha[p]s [i]t's onl[y] [i]d[i]o[c]y that remains [c]a[p]a[b]le of [c]om[p]r[e]h[e]n[d]ing these [h]i[s]to[r]i[c]ally [d]iv[i]ne notions, [o]f t[ime], [o]f [b]eing, [o]f [p]l[a]c[e]ment, [o]f Fir[s]t [C]auses.

12—418:523 .799

[P]erha[p]s [w]hat [w]e n[eed] is a [r]i[go]r[ou]s [i]d[i]o[c]y. [I]t's entire[l]y po[s]si[b]le, as I'm [n]ow

thinking a[b]out it, that with [r]e[g]ard to th[e]se [n]otions  
 w[e] should [e]m[p]loy [n]othing [e]x[c]e[p]t a  
 [r][i][g]o[r]o[u][s] [i]d[i]o[c][y], that [r][ea]son and [s]ound  
 [l]ogi[c] [h]ave ab[s]o[l]ute[l]y no p[l]a[c]e [h]ere, in the  
 [r]ealm of [m]etaph[y]s[i]c[s]. That in or[d]er to w[r]a[p]  
 our [m]i[n]ds a[r]ound these [i]deas, [l]i[ke] [b]eing in two  
 [p]l[a]c[es] at on[c]e, of [b]eing [b]oth w[i]th[i]n and  
 out[s]i[de] of [t]i[m]e, of [t]i[m]e [b]eing e[s]s[en]tia[l]l[y]  
 [n]on-[l]i[n]ear [a]s much [a]s it'[s] e[s]s[en]tia[l]l[y]  
 [l]i[n]ear, of time [p]er[c]e[i]v[ing] [u][s] as [m][u]ch as w[e]  
 [p]erc[e]i[ve] it, that we [m][u]s[t] [b]e[c]o[m]e [m]ore  
 [i]d[i]o[c] than we'[v]e e[v]er [b]een, that [i]f we  
 con[t]inue [t]o a[t]t[em]p[t] [t]o [p]a[ss] our[s]elves o[ff] as  
 in[t]e[l]lig[e]nt—[w]ell, [w]e'll [c]on[t]inue to [f]l[ou]n[de]r in  
 the [s]to[ch]a[s]ti[c] b[r]eez[e]s that [r]i[pp]le a[r]ound  
 th[e]se [c]o[n]c[e]p[t]s. [S]ans [i]d[i]o[c]y, these  
 [c]o[n]c[e]p[t]s will [c]o[n]tinue to ex[i]s[t] in a shroud of  
 m[y]s[t]ery, not [t]h[at] [t]hey [c]an ever [b]e known fu[l]l[y],  
 that's un[l]i[k]e[l]y, [i]t'[s] mo[r]e o[r] [l]e[ss]  
 [i]m[p]o[ss]i[b]le, [b]ut if we em[p]l[oy] the [p]ro[p]er  
 amount of [i]d[i]o[c]y, of [r][i]go[r]o[u][s] [i]d[i]o[c]y,  
 it'[s] [p]o[ss]i[b]le [t]h[at] [t]he m[y]s[t]e[r]y these  
 [c]o[n]c[e]p[t]s are sh[rou]d[e]d in [c]ould b[e]  
 am[e]l[i]o[r]ated to a [d]eg[r]ee. We [c]o[n]c[e]p[tua]lize  
 a [F]ir[s]t [C]ause, [a] One, [a] [c]o[n]c[e]p[t] that may, in  
 [f]a[c]t, be ne[c]e[ss]ary [f]o[r] ou[r] [s]p[e]c[ie]s to exi[s]t,  
 at [l]ea[s]t [s]o[c]ia[l]l[y], it very well [c]ould be [t]he  
 [c]a[s]e [t]h[at] we [c]an only exi[s]t [l]ogi[c]a[l]l[y] w[i]th  
 th[i]s i[d]ea of [F]ir[s]t [C]ause or One pre[c]e[d]ing u[s].  
 Otherwise, [s]ans [F]ir[s]t [C]ause, [s]a[n]s a Be[g]inning,  
 we [h]ardly [h]ave an ar[g]ument [f]or linear time, and [i]f  
 we're deprived of a [l]ogi[c]al argu[m]ent [f]or [l]inear  
 time, then how [c]an we [m]a[k]e [s]e[n]s[e] of  
 a[n]ything? [I]t'[s] [i]m[p]o[ss]ible to [m]a[k]e [s]e[n]s[e] of  
 a[n]ything, i[n] the [t]rad[it]i[on]al [s]e[n]s[e], [s]a[n]s

linear [t]ime. I[f] [t]ime [f]ails to pro[c][ee]d [l]inear[l]y, at [l][ea][s]t [f]or u[s], i[f] we're ho[pp]in[g] and [s][k]i[pp]in[g] w[i][l]l[y] n[i][l]l[y] in the [f][a]bri[c] of time, i[n] [p]ure[l]y [n]on[l]i[n]ear [m][a][nn]e[r]s, then [n]othing [c]an [m]a[k]e [s]en[s]e [f]or u[s]. We're [l]itera[l]ly [s]en[s]e[l]e[ss]. [S]an[s] a [F]ir[s]t Cause, we're [l]itera[l]ly [s]en[s]e[l]e[ss]. [T]i[m]e [m]ea[n]s [n]othing. [T]ime, it [s][ee][m]s to [m][e], is [s]ome[th]ing [th]at one can on[l]y [i]nve[s]tigate [i]d[i]oti[c]al[l]y.

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Or am I just b[e]ing [s][i]l[l]y? Am I [s][i]mp[l]y [s]uccu[m]bing to a [s][p]e[c]i[f]i[c] [t]y[p]e of [s]i[l]l[ne]ss, [a]s I'm [a]pt to do [f]rom [t]ime [t]o [t]ime? [M]ost, it should b[e] [n]oted, who k[n]ow [m][e] k[n]ow [m][e] to b[e] pr[o]ne to [s]uccu[m]bing to [s]i[l]l[ne]ss from [t]ime [t]o [t]ime? Am I [b]eing [m][e]l[od][r][a]m[ati]c [b]y [e]xt[r]a[p]o[li]t[ing] [m]y [i]ntense [i]m[p]r[essio]n [f]ollowing [m]y waking [u]p [f]r[om] [m]y [d]ream, am I [m][e]l[od][r][a]m[ati]cally [e]xt[r]a[p]o[li]t[ing] th[at] [i]m[p]r[ession] just a [l]ittle too [f]ar b[y] [i]m[p]l[y]ing this [f]e[m]ale, who e[n]g[a]ged me i[n] a sexual [l]i[a]ison, [m]ight have bee[n] a[n] [a]ngel or a de[m]o[n]? Yet on [th]e o[th]er hand I should note [th]is, it was a[c]tually [q]ui[te] [s]ome t[i]me [a]go, [s]o long [a]go in [f][a]c[t] th[at] I was [p]r[a]c[t]ic[a]lly, now [th]at I [th]in[k] of it, [m]ore o[r] [l]e[ss] a[n] a[d]o[l]e[s]ce[n]t, [d]e[s]p[ite] being a [f]ully grown [m]an. At the t[i]m[e] [I] was looking [f]o[r] a[p]art[m]ents with [m]y [f]athe[r]—the [f]i[r]st a[p]art[m]ent I'd lea[s]e on [m]y own, and [w]e [w]ere [d]o[w]n[t]o[w]n, the [t]wo of us, [l]ook[ing] [a]t [a]n [a]partme[n]t I [d]idn't [r]ea[l]ize at the t[i]me was [r]ent-[c]ont[r]olled, mea[n]ing ar[b]it[r]a[r]y [c]a[p]s were [p]l[ac]ed on the in[c]ome of the [t]e[n]ants in order to re[t]ai[n] e[l]i[g]i[b]l[i]ty,

[w]hi[ch] of [c]ou[r]se [w]as the [r]eason [w]hy the  
 [a]p[ar]tments [w]ere s[u][ch] [a] g[r]eat deal. [L]ucki[l]y  
 enou[gh] [f]or [m][e] [m]y [s]a[l]a[r]y [a]t th[at] time was  
 [i]n[s]u[f]f[i]cient and [p]a[r]tly, [s]o I [s]till [m]anaged to  
 [q]ua[l]ify [f]or the a[p]artme[n]t de[s]p[ite] the [r]e[n]t  
 [c]on[t]rol [r]e[qu]ireme[n]ts, had I waited the time  
 ne[ce]s[s]ary for [o]ne to [b]e[c]ome avai[ab]le, [b]ut,  
 wh[i]le I [d]id add my [n]a[m]e to the w[ai]tli[st], I  
 [d]idn't wait the time ne[ce]s[s]ary, [b]ecause I [s]igned  
 a [l]e[as]e on an apartme[n]t thr[ee] [m]iles [n]orth of  
 [d]o[w]nto[w]n [l]e[s]s than a w[ee]k [l]ater. I was  
 [s]tand[ing] i[n] a [q]uarter-em[p]ty [p]ark[ing] [l]ot i[n] a[n]  
 area of [d]o[w]nto[w]n where n[o] [l]ess than half a  
 [d]ozen [p]r[i]vate[l]y [o]wned [p]ark[ing] [l]ots [s]at [s]ide  
 [b]y [s]ide [b]y [s]ide, all with [r]easona[b]le  
 short-[t]erm [r]ates. This [p]ar[t]ic[ular] a[r]ea of  
 do[w]nto[w]n, [a]t th[at] [p]oint in [t]ime, was a [f]ruit[ful]  
 [a]re[a] social[l]y—there were a [p]l[et]h[ora] of vi[b]r[ant]  
 [b]ars and [r]e[s]taur[ants], al[s]o [s]ide [b]y [s]ide  
 [b]y [s]ide, that m[y]self a[n]d others e[n]joyed  
 [f]re[qu]enting, that were [r]out[inel]y [p]a[ck]ed  
 [f]rom [a]f[te]rn[o]on [t]o [e]venin[g]. Now, [b]y  
 [c]om[p]ar[is]on, i[f] you wal[k] [th]rough [th]at [s]ame  
 a[r]ea of [d]o[w]nto[w]n, [b]y [m]y [c]ou[n]t, [m]ore th[a]n  
 h[a]lf of those [b]ars and [r]estaur[ants] are shut  
 [d]o[w]n [f]or good. Whereas I [u]sed [t]o [f]requent that  
 [p]art of [d]o[w]nto[w]n, ho[pp]ing be[tw]ee[n] [t]wo o[r]  
 thr[ee] o[r] [f]our [v]enues, ha[v]ing a [f]ruit[ful]  
 ex[p]erience [s]ocial[l]y—now [i]t's [a]lm[o]st [a]s [i]f  
 th[at] a[r]ea of do[w]nto[w]n has aged [r]ight [a]long with  
 me. As my [s]ocial [a]ct[i]v[i]ty has waned, [a]t least with  
 rega[r]d to hopping from [b]a[r] to [b]a[r], the a[c]t[i]v[i]ty  
 of th[is] [s]e[c]tion of do[w]nto[w]n has [w]aned as [w]ell.  
 As I've be[c]ome [l]ess [l]ikely to [p]o[p] out on a  
 Wednes[d]ay af[te]rn[o]on [t]o [t]wo o[r] three o[r]

[f]ou[r] [p][a][c]es, this area of [d]o[w]nto[w]n has [b]een una[b]le to [s]u[s]t[ai]n [b]usine[ss]e[s] [th]at u[s]ed to [th]rive on [p]eo[p]le [p]o[pp]ing out on Wednesd[ay] a[f]ternoons, ho[pp]ing [f]rom two o[r] three o[r] [f]ou[r] [p]laces.

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There a[r]e, in fa[c]t, ha[r]dly any [b]a[r]s or [r]e[s]tau[r]ants that are [s]till open on the [b]lo[ck]. There's [b]een a [g]ar[g]antuan [F]or [L][ea][s]je [s]ign on the [l]arge[s]t ven[u]e [f]or [y][ea]rs now, and the [p]la[c]es that should [b]e o[p]en for [b]usi[n]e[s]s on a [l]a[te] [w]eekd[ay] a[f]ter[n]oon are [n][o] [l]onger o[p]en for [b]usi[n]e[s]s on [l]a[te] [w]eekd[ay] a[f]ter[n]oons, whereas in p[r]e[v]ious y[ea]rs eve[r][y] [b]ar and [r]e[s]tau[r]ant o[n] the [b]lo[ck] would have [b]een [b]u[s]t[ai]ning with [b]usi[n]e[s]smen, e[cc]entri[c]s, [a]nd [a][c]c[o]ho[li]c[s], [n]ow th[e]se s[a]me [v]enues [d]o[n]t [e]v[e]n o[p]en their [d]oors until l[ate]r at night, if at all. I've [w]alk[ed] [th]rough [th]at [b]lo[ck] mul[t]i[p]le [t]imes ho[pp]ing [t]o [p]o[p] in [t]o ju[s]t o[n]e o[ld] [b]ar or o[n]e o[ld] [r]e[s]tau[r]ant for ju[s]t o[n]e [d]r[in]k, and I've [d]i[s]c[o]v[er]ed e[v]ery [s]ingle [b]ar that's [s]tayed in [b]usiness on that [b]lo[ck] [c]lo[s]ed to [c]u[s]tomers [a]t th[at] time. A [b]ar [i]n a [b]usin[e]s[s] [d]i[s]t[ri]c[t] [r]ea[l]ly has [n]o ex[c]use [f]or [n]ot [b]eing o[p]en [b]y [f]our [p]m on a w[ee]k[d]ay. It's a [b]s[ur]d for a [b]ar [i]n a [b]usin[e]s[s] [d]i[s]t[ri]c[t] to [b]e [c]lo[s]ed for [b]usine[ss] [a]t th[at] time, yet th[at]'s ex[a]c[t]ly what's h[app]ened to this [b]lo[ck], it's now a [d]ead [b]lo[ck], it's a [b]lo[ck] that's more or [l]ess officia[l]ly [d]e[c]e[as]ed [s]ocia[l]ly. [I]n a[n]y [c]a[s]e, years ago, [w]hen I [w]as [l]oo[k]ing [f]or my [f]ir[s]t apart[m]ent with [m]y d[ad], st[an]ding in a [q]uarter-em[p]ty [p]ar[k]ing [l]ot on this very b[lo]ck, I [s]eent a t[er]xt

m[e][ss]age to a younger g[i][r]l I u[s]ed to fl[i][r]t  
 with—although we n[e]ver [e]ng[a]ged in a [s][e]xual  
 li[a]ison, but there was [p]e[r]ha[p]s a [sh]ared inte[r]e[s]t  
 fo[r] a [sh]ort [p]e[r]iod, [p]erha[p]s we both [c][a]me to  
 the [c]on[c][l]usio[n] e[n]g[a]gi[n]g i[n] a sexual [l]i[a]ison,  
 although [t]em[p][t]ing, was ill-advised, that for on[c]e in  
 the [c]our[s]e of [h]uman [h]i[s]to[r]y [p]leo[p]le should  
 [r]e[ff][r][ai]n [f]r[om] eng[a]ging in any [s]ort of  
 ill-ad[v]ised [l]i[a]ison, [s]o we de[v]e[lo]p[ed] a  
 [f]r[iendsh]i[p] of [s]orts. It was a [sh]a[ll]ow  
 [f]r[iendsh]ip, as mo[s]t [f]riendsh]ips that [r]e[s]ult  
 [f]r[om] [s]t[ai]ved of[f] [s]exual li[a]i[s]ons [t]end to b[e],  
 th[e]se are of cour[s]e the [m]o[s]t [sh]allow and  
 in[s]t[itu]tional friendsh]i[ps] i[m]agi[n]a[b]le, they're  
 inter[m]i[n]a[b]le [a]nd [a]ssi[m]ilable, but th[is] part[i]cular  
 f[r]iendsh]i[p] [w]as [r]e[w]arding i[n] i[t]s own [w]ay. [S]o  
 sure, a[r]ound [th]i[s] [t]ime, in [th]i[s] [p]arking [l]ot, I  
 [s]eent her a [t]e[x]t m[e][ss]age [t]o no re[p]l[y], and I  
 k[n]ew then, [s]omehow or a[n]other, in[s]t[itu]tional[ly] I  
 [s]u[pp]ose I k[n]ew that I wouldn't get a [r]e[p]l[y],  
 [th]at [th]e friendsh]i[ps] had [r]un i[t]s cour[s]e, that  
 it's [p]ure[ly] [sh]a[ll]ow and i[n]s]t[itu]tional nature was  
 [a]bun[d]ant[ly] evi[d]ent [t]o the [t]w[o] of us, [a]nd  
 [th]at [th]e o[th]er [p]arty, [th]is younger girl, had taken it  
 u[p]on her[s]e[lf] to [s]e[ver] the [f]r[iendsh]i[p] on[c]e  
 and [f]or all. I've [c]ea[s]ed to [c]o[m]muni[c]a[te] with her  
 [s]in[c]e, yet de[s]p[ite] the ulti[m]ate[ly] sha[ll]ow and  
 i[n]s]t[itu]tional nature of th[is] friendsh]i[ps], [d]e[s]p[ite]  
 the [f]a[ct] we never [c]ro[ss]ed the li[n]e, [s]o to  
 [s]p[ea]k, [f]or [s]ome r[ea]son I [f]elt a [s]ort of  
 [n]on[s]en[s]i[c]al [d]ee[p] hurt, a [p]ain[ful] [l]onging of  
 [s]orts, rooted i[n] e[ss]ential[ly] [n]othing, [s]tand[ing] i[n]  
 that [p]ar[k]ing [l]ot, k[n]o[w]ing I'd [n]ever hear [f]rom  
 thi[s] [p]er[s]on again, who I had [n]o [p]hys[i]c]al  
 rela[t]ionsh]i[ps] w[i]th and who I had a[n] [e]n[tire][ly]

[sh]a[l]ow a[n]d i[n]si[p]id [e]mo[ti]onal re[l]a[ti]on[sh]i[p] w[i]th.

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It wasn't [th]at lon[g] a[g]o [th]at [I] was [r]e[m]i[n]d[ed] of thi[s] t[e]xt [m][e][s]sage [r]an[d]om[ly], I'd n[ea]r[ly] entire[ly] [r]e[m]oved thi[s] [p]er[s]on f[r]om [m]y [m]e[m]o[r]y, ju[s]t as y[ea]rs [p]r[i]or she'd [s]i[m]i[lar]ly [r]e[m]oved [m][e] from her [m]e[m]o[r]y, [a]nd I felt [a]n odd pang in [m]y [s]to[m]a[c]h as I re[c]alled thi[s] t[e]xt [m][e][s]sage. Was[n]t the e[n]t[ire] [p]oint of [t]urning [a]w[ay] from [e]n[g]a[g]ing i[n] these [s]exual li[a]iso[n]s to [a]void [s]uch [p]angs? Don't we [a]ll ju[s]t inveterate[ly] [a]ss[um]e that [p]angs in our [s]to[m]a[c]hs [a]lmo[s]t ex[c]l[us]ive[ly] res[ult] f[r]om [s]exual r[e]l[ati]o[n]s? And don't we [a]ll then [a]void [s]exual r[e]l[ati]o[n]s [p]ure[ly] in [a]tt[em]p[t]s [t]o [a]void [p]angs in our [s]to[m]a[c]hs? Yet [i]n th[is] ca[s]e, a [p]er[s]on I [m]atu[r]e[ly] avoi[d]ed engag[ing] w[i]th [s]exual[ly], and [v]i[ce] [v]er[s]a, of cour[s]e, who I in[s]t[ea]d dev[e]lo[p]ed a [c]om[p]l[ete]ly [sh]a[l]ow and [i]ns[i]d[er] frie[n]d[sh]i[p] with, e[n]ded u[p] [c]aus[ing] [m]e a [p]ang in [m]y [s]to[m]a[c]h, all be[c]ause I [s]e[nt] her a t[e]xt [m][e][s]sage [t]o [n]o[r]re[p]ly, k[n]o[w]ing the an[k]le d[ee]p f[r]iendship w[e]d [h]arbored [h]ad [r]un its [c]ourse and [c]ome to a [c]on[c]lusion. My [p]oint [i]n all th[is] [i]s [th]at [th]e [f]ir[s]t o[b]j[ec]tion the ave[r]a[g]e [p]er[s]on would [r]aise to [i]denti[fi]y[ing] the [b]e[ing] in my [d]r[ea]m [a]s [a]n an[g]el would [b]e the [f]act the two of u[s] e[n]g[a]g[ed] i[n] a [s]exual li[a]ison—yet what [I]’ve ju[s]t [d]e[s]c[r]i[be]d [s]u[g]ge[s]ts that [p]erha[p]s there's no [d]ifferen[c]e in our [r]ela[ti]on[sh]i[p]s with [p]eo[p]le, that w[e] [c]an't dis[c]rimin[a]te [b]etw[ee]n [r]el[ati]o[n]sh[ips] [b]a[s]ed o[n] whether or not a [s]exual li[a]iso[n]

o[cc]urred. Th[a]t [p]erh[a][p]s d[i][s]t[i]ngu[i][sh][i]ng  
 rel[a][ti]on[sh][i]ps [b][a][s]ed on whether or not they  
 feature a [s]e[x]ual [e][x]ch[a]nge has [b]een a g[r]o[s]s  
 [e][r]ror on our [p]art. Th[a]t [p]erh[a][p]s we shoul[d]n't  
 [a] [p][r]io[r]i [a][ss]ert that [a]ngels [d]on't [e]ng[a]ge in  
 [s]exual [l]i[a]isons with u[s]. [B]ecause it's [e]ntire[l]y  
 [p]ossi[b]le they do, and [th]at [th]ere's really nothing  
 wrong with a[n] an[g]el e[n]g[a]g[ing] u[s] [i]n th[i][s]  
 ty[p]e of [l]i[a]ison, [s]exua[l].

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[S]o we can't rule out entire[l]y the [p]o[ss]i[b]i[l]i[t]y  
 [th]at [th]i[s] [b][e]ing—de[s][p]ite e[n]g[a]g[ing] m[e] i[n] a  
 [s]exual [l]i[a]ison, in a [s]mall [p][l]etho[r]a of [r][a]cial  
 [f]orms—was still, i[n] [f]a[c]t, a[n] angel [p]ointing me  
 toward the [f]a[c]t my [l]i[f]e, in [l]arge [p]art, [f]o[l]lowed  
 the [p][a][th] of [Ea]stern Or[th]odox[y]. The  
 [m][a][th]e[m][a][t]i[c]ian, [a][tt]e[m][p]t[ing] [t]o  
 [i]nf[i]n[itely] ext[r][a]p[ol]ate the [m][a][ss]ive  
 a[ss]um[p]t[i]ons that are [r][ea]l world [i]ntegers, [i]s, [i]n  
 e[ss][e]n[c]e, a com[p]l[ete] [ch]ar[act]er. For [e]ons  
 w[e]’ve a[ss]umed [s]exual [r]e[l]a[t]ions t[ai]nt  
 [r]e[l]a[t]ion[sh]ips, that on[c]e a [s]exual [l]ine is  
 [c]r[oss]ed, [th]en [th]e [r]e[l]a[t]ion[sh]ip will [b][e]  
 i[r]revo[c]a[b]l[y] [t]ainted, yet w[e]’ve never  
 [c]on[s]idered that [t]ainting [c]a[n] a[n]d will o[cc]ur  
 [e]ven [s]a[n]s [s]ex. Yet [p]erh[a][p]s we’re [m]a[k]ing [t]oo  
 [m]uch of the all[e]ged [d]i[s]tin[c]tio[n] be[t]w[ee]n angels  
 and [d]e[m]ons as w[e]ll. Th[a]t just [a]s [p]erh[a][p]s  
 we’ve [m]a[de] too [m]uch of the [d]i[s]t[inctio]n  
 be[t]ween [s]e[x]ual and [n]on-[s]e[x]ual rel[a]tio[n]s,  
 we’re [n]ow [m]a[k]ing [t]oo [m]uch of the  
 [d]i[s]t[inctio]n be[t]w[ee]n angels and [d]e[m]ons. It  
 should be [n]o[t]e[d] that [e]ven [D]io[n]y[s]iu[s]  
 [n]o[t]e[d] that pure [e]vil, [i]f [i]t [w]ere to [e]xist,

[w]ould imm[e][d][i]atel[y] [c][ea][s]e to [e]xi[s]t, because [e]ve[r]y[th]ing [th]at [e]xi[s]ts is [d]e[r]i[v]ati[v]e of the One, wh[i]ch [i]s [i]nca[p]able of [p]ro[d]u[ci]ng [p]ure [e]vil, and that [e]ven re[ati]v[e] [e]v[il] [i]s [s]i[m]p[ly] a [f]un[ct]ion of [p]ur[s]uing aims ina[pp]ro[p]riate to a b[e]ing's [p]ro[p]er [f]un[ct]ion, that [e]ve[n] [d]e[m]on[s] are onl[y] [d]e[m]on[i]c [i]n their [d]i[s]tan[c]e fr[om] the [O]ne, not in a [s]e[n]se of re[p]res[e]n[ti]ng [p]ure [e]vil, [b]e[ca]use were they to [b]e [p]ure [e]vil they would [c]e[as]e to [e]xi[s]t. [E]ssentially, this view [p]ur[p]orts [th]at [th]ere's no [f]und[am]ental [d]i[s]tinction betw[ee]n a[n] angel a[n]d a [d]e[m]on, ju[s]t a [d]i[ff]ere[n]c[e] in the a[pp]ro[p]ri[ati]on of their [ai]ms. Whereas an [a]ngel [p]ursues the [ai]ms a[pp]ro[p]riate to it, in the [p]ro[p]er [p]ro[po]rtion to its being, a de[m]on [p]ur[s]ues the [ai]ms [m]ore o[r] le[s]s ina[pp]ro[p]riate to it, [s]t[r]aying from its [p]ro[p]er [p]ro[po]rtions.

17—449:620 .724

Now as it [r]egards [m]y d[re]am, a b[e]ing [t]ook [m]ul[t]iple [r]acial [f]o[r]ms yet [r]e[t]ai[n]ed the [s]ame e[ss]en[c]e, [m]uch like our [d]ual yet [m]oni[s]t [f]o[r]mu[lat]ion, and [th]en [th]ere were two [d]ar[k] and [f]ormle[ss] [b]eings i[n] the [b]a[ck]s[e]at—[p]erha[p]s [s]igni[fi]ying [th]e evil [th]at's im[p]o[ss]ible to exi[s]t, that [i]s [s]tr[i]pp[ed] of [b]e[ing] as [s]oon as it [b]e[co]mes [s]o[ci]al[ly] [p]ure [e]vil. [S]o [p]erha[p]s these two dar[k] [f]ormle[ss] [b]eings were the non-exi[s]te[n]t iter[ati]ons of [m]y[s]el[f] and [m]y [c]om[p]anion, [p]o[s]sible an [a]ngel. Now thi[s] [b]e[ing], [p]erha[p]s an [a]nge[l], or [p]erha[p]s a de[m]on, who [t]ook [m]ul[t]iple [r]acial [f]o[r]ms, eventuall[y] [i]n[f]o[r]med [m]e, [i]n this [c]ar with the two

[s]mall [sh]a[p]e[l]e[ss] forms [s][i]tt[ɪ]ng [i]n the  
 ba[ck][s]eat, that [sh]e had to go [s]outh of the  
 [M]issou[r]i, to which I [c]o[r]re[c]ted her: Don't you  
 [m]ean [s]outh of the [M][i][ss][i][ss][i][pp]i? Yet we should  
 now [c]o[n]si[d]er that [p]erha[p]s my [c]o[r]re[c]tion was,  
 i[n] the [c]o[n]text of the [d][r]eam, [e][n]tire[l]y  
 i[n][c]o[r]re[c]t. By [e]m[p]l[oy]ing the ph[r]ase South of  
 the Missou[r]i this b[e]ing was [p]erha[p]s [d]i[r]e[c]t[l]y  
 im[p]l[oy]ing [th]at [th]ere are [n]o [n]ea[t  
 [d]i[s]tin[c]tions—that [d]ua[l]ity is an i[l]lusion, [th]at  
 [th]i[s] i[d]ea that a [s]tate can [b]e n[ea]t[l]y  
 [d]iv[i]d[ed] [b]y a [M][i][ss][i][ss][i][pp]i [i]s a  
 [m]i[s]gui[d]ed a[pp]roach, [th]at [th]is [b]e[i]ng,  
 whether an angel or [d][e]m[on], in f[a]c[t] wouldn't  
 e[m]erge on [s]ome other [s]ide [p]re[c]i[s]e[l]y  
 be[c]ause there is n[o] a[c]tual o[th]er [s]ide, there's  
 [o]n[l]y a [s]e[p]a[r]ate [r]e[l]ative [p]l[a]ce. And  
 [w]hen I [w]oke up, I [f]elt as th[ou]gh m[y] [i]f[fe] had  
 always [f]o[l]lowed [th]e path of Ea[s]tern Or[th]o[d]oxy,  
 but [i]n th[i]s [e]mbra[c]e I was a[cc]epting the  
 [n]on-[d]ual [n]ature of our [e]xi[s]ten[c]e inasmuch as I  
 was [a]c[c]e[pt]ing [a]nything [e]l[s]e. I [e]m[b]ra[c]ed  
 Ea[s]tern Orthodoxy a[f]ter [e]ng[a]ging i[n] a [s]exual  
 li[a]iso[n] with a [b]e[i]ng who [t]ook mul[t]iple r[a]cial  
 [f]orms, who l[e]ft [m]e to [s]e[t]tle, not [s]outh of the  
 [M][i][ss][i][ss][i][pp]i, [b]ut [r]ather [s]outh of the  
 [M]issou[r]i—and o[pp]osite of the [b]oth of u[s] were two  
 [s]mall dar[k] [f]orms who [c]o[m]p[re]te[l]y [l]a[ck]ed  
 [B]e[i]ng, [s]igni[f]ying the im[p]o[ss]i[b]i[l]i[t]y of  
 [p]ure [e]vil. My [d][r]eam a[pp]r[op]r[i]atel[y]  
 [r]e[p]r[es]e[n]ted thi[s] i[d]ea of t[r]ue [d]ualit[y], of [p]ure  
 good and [p]ure evil, [r]e[p]r[es]e[n]ting this ab[s]o[l]ute  
 [d]ualit[y] [w]ith a [r]e[l]ative [d]ualit[y] [w]i[t]h i[n] the  
 One, of [w]hich [a]ll Good and [a]ll [B]eing  
 o[r]i[g]i[n]ates, [b]oth [i]n t[r]an[s]cenden[c]e and

i[m]ma[n]en[c]e. I then [r]econ[c][i]led [m][y][s]elf w[i]th th[i][s] [b]eing that went [s]outh of the [M]issouri—and [p]erha[p]s this [b][e]in[g] wasn't l[e]a[vin]g [m]e as [m]uch as [g]uiding [m]e, [g]iving me hints [n]ot on where to go, [n][o], she wasn't [s][ay]ing where I should [g]o or [s][t][ay], she was in[s][t]ead [g]uiding [m][e] on how to r[e]ad a [m]ap.

18—415:582 .713

[E]ven Dion[y][s][i]us [s]t[a]ted outright, ‘One [s]ays of [G]od, the cause of all [g]ood, that h[e] [i]s “[i]n[e][b]r[i][a]ted”—[a]nd with th[at] in [m][i]nd, against [m][y] [b]etter judg[m]ent, I poured [m]y[s]el[f] a ni[c]e gla[ss] of vodka l[a]s[t [S][a]tur[d]ay bef[ore] [m][y] girl[f]riend and [I] [d]i[n]ed out, knowing all [t]oo [w]ell that [w]e [p]lanned [t]o go [t]o the bar [p][r]ior [t]o our [r]eservation, for a [c]o[ck]tail. My [s][i]g[n]i[f]i[c]ant other ag[r]eed to [a]c[t] [a]s our [d]esig[n]ated [d]r[iver] for the [n]ight, and I’d [s]pent the [e]ntire wee[k] a[b]s[t]aining from [e]very [c]on[s]u[m]a[b]le item [e]x[c]ept water, [c]o[ff]ee, heart[y] grains, and [f]roz[e]n v[e]geta[b]les, and [I] [f]e[lt] as though [I] deserved a [n][i]ce, i[n]e[b]riated [n]i[ght]. [I] [s]a[id] to m[y][s]el[f] [Y]ou know what?—[y]ou’ve [r][i]go[r][ou][s][l]y [d]e[n]ied [y]our[s]elf p[l]easure thi[s] w[ee]k, and you [d]eserve a [n]i[ght] [w]here you [g]o out and [g]et [w]h[i]t[e] girl [w]a[s]ted. [S]o [I] im[b]i[b]ed a [c]o[ck]tail [b]ef[ore] the [c]o[ck]tail, and [w]hen [w]e a[r]r[iv]ed at the [b]ar, [w]aiting [f]or our [f]r[i]ends to m[e]et us, w[e] t[r]ied to [p]r[ol]ong the [c]o[ck]t[ai]l and m[a]k[e] a [p]erf[e]c[t s[e]gw[ay] i[n]to the di[n]er—un[f]o[r]tunatel[y], I’d [f]i[n]i[sh]ed my [c]o[ck]tail [f]irst, and in[c]orre[ct]l[y] [a]ssu[m]ing I had [a]nother ten to [f]i[f]teen [m]inutes bef[ore] [r]eou[r] [f]r[i]e[n]ds [a]r[ri]ved, [s]o I ordered a [s]e[c]ond [c]o[ck]tail, y[e]t as [s]oon as the [s]e[c]ond

[c]o[ck]tail [a][r]rived our f[r]iends [a][s]o [a][rr]ived, and then [w]e [w]ere [s][a]t [a]t the table [w]here, [n][ee]d[le][ss] to [s]ay, w[e] imm[e]d[iate][lly] o[r]d[er]ed a [n]i[c]e bottle of [r]ed wine. [S]o [r]ather than [s]avo[r]ing my [s]e[c]ond [c]o[ck]tail at the [b]ar a[n]d the[n] [b]eginning our [b]o[t]tle o[f] [w]ine, I [w]as [c]on[c]urre[n]tly f[i]n[i]sh[i]ng my [s]e[c]o[n]d [c]o[ck]tai[l] [w]h[i]le al[s]o [s]tarting our [b]ottle of [w]i[n]e. [B]e[f]ore [I] knew it [I] was tho[r]oughly [d][r]un[k], I [b]e[c]ame e[n]thusia[s]ti[c]all[y] in[e]b[r]i[at]ed, [a]nd [I] [f]elt [a]s though [I] [d]eserved it—I [f]elt as though I [d]eserved to [b]e in[e]b[r]i[at]ed, to [c]o[m]m[un]it[y] on a [s]m[all] [h]and[f]ul of to[p]i[c]s that I [p]ro[b]a[b]ly should [h]ave [r]em[ain]ed [s]ilent a[b]out, to [b]a[bb]le [a]b[out] and [u]p[on] [a] [p]o[t]p[our]ri of issues th[at] [p]erh[a]p[s] would have [b]een [b]e[tte]r l[e]ft unaddr[es]sed. [B]ut [s]ometimes [i]t[s] [i]m[p]ortant to [d]o things [s]olely out of [a]b[un]d[an]c[e], to [b]e[c]o[m]p[re]h[en]sive in[e]b[r]i[at]ed, [t]o lose all [t]ouch with [c]ohe[r]en[c]y and [r]e[s]t[r]aint, and to e[n]g[a]ge i[n] a [c]o[m]p[re]h[en]sive mi[s]gui[d]ed [c]o[n]v[er]s[ati]on [p]ure[lly] out of [a]b[un]d[an]c[e]. The [F]irst [C]ause, [n]o [m]atter what [f]orm we g[i]ve [i]t, [n]o [m]atter how it[s] extensions [m]ay or [m]ay [n]ot [c]o[m]muni[c]ate with u[s]—[i]s [i]f [n]othing el[s]e [s]uper[a]b[un]dant.