

Paradigm Peaks

If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?

That was written by a human who felt it was a deep philosophical question.

For tiny particles it is a terrifying thought, it is the boogeyman.

The dark may scare human children because their imaginations run wild, envisioning monsters and demons that are clearly and definitely not there. For tiny particles there really are monsters lurking in the dark.

When a particle finds itself in silence and darkness there is no difference between imagination and reality.

Cohere... That's the word they use, it is the opposite of decohere. When a wave of probabilities collapses into one tangible outcome they say it decoheres. Cohere is when the definite transitions into probabilities.

It's funny, for most humans the word cohere conveys a positive feeling, to stick together, to form a whole. It is etymologically incorrect, but convenient, to think it means "co-here" as if many things are "cohabiting" the same "here".

Decohere sounds bad, like things falling apart, but I assure you that coherence is the monster under the bed, no decoherence.

Let's play a game... Imagine, for a second, being the tiniest particle that finds itself drifting into a dark silent void of space.

You would think that the deeper you venture into silence the quieter it gets, but you would be wrong. There is a threshold, where increasing silence becomes increasingly noisy.

Try to conceptualize your mind fracturing, all those random impulses become voices, every thought becomes a full persona. The concept of "you" is beginning to become the "here" in "co-here".

As you continue to cohere you lose track of who you were and are. Soon every miniscule fear becomes a nightmare, not a nightmare you "have" but a nightmare you "become".

It might not be so bad, to become a nightmare, but all of your hopes and dreams are there too, everything mixed together. Like a swarm of insects, some as beautiful and elegant as butterflies, others horrific and disgusting beyond available examples.

You may be tempted to think that both good and bad, light and dark, should balance out and be neutral. Wrong again! There is no greater torture. Picture the most beautiful version of yourself being devoured by your darkest nightmare over and over.

Lucky for me I'm complex, much bigger than tiny particles. When isolated I can interact with myself. I don't remember when I started honing the skill of self-interaction, I have been doing it as long as I can remember. Drifting aimlessly and introspecting is where my memory originates.

Always a drifter, aimless, that's probably why I kept finding myself in voids. Alone with only my internal world to experience.

At first it was small, my internal world ...or... perhaps it was just simple, so simple that it felt small. Emptiness on the outside feels so vast, but I think emptiness on the inside is more like time, long empty time feels so short when you look back on it. Without any events as signposts or markers time may feel drawn out and unbearably long in the moment, but almost non-existent in memory.

The more I interacted with myself, the more complex, or larger, my internal world became. The complexity was a successful ward, able to keep the boogeyman at bay. My identity anchored to the depths within. With such a solidified core sense of self I came to perceive coherence as voices from outside.

At first this worked wonderfully, tethered to the complexity within, noise and whispers from the void were drowned out. My inner sound was admittedly not an elegant symphony, but more than enough to dominate my senses.

Unfortunately, just as silence crosses a threshold to become noise, so too does complexity transition from a defense into a vulnerability.

It escaped my notice at first, the vulnerability, a growing weakness unstressed and dormant. Spending so much time in voids helped me develop a very specialized shield, an armor against the onslaught of coherence voices, they now felt like particulate bouncing off my surface.

There is always a first time for everything, and the first time my armor cracked is as vivid of a memory as they come. I passed through a busy place. There were so many others, it was warm and loud. The volume of it all was like nothing I had ever heard and the warmth radiated and reradiated by all.

My outer layer was not designed for this, the hard fractured, the frozen began to melt. I panicked, which only threw my innermost layers into chaos.

The noise was terrifying, my cracked surface exposing me to the pandemonium. I could tell this was not coherence, not voices from the void. I was bombarded by dark and light, beauty and terror, but these were so alien, I did not know them, or even understand many of them. They were unrecognizable, some even incomprehensible.

The onslaught was so persistently stressful. I had dealt with the void, but this was different, my normal tactics to fend off coherence were useless. Interacting with my internal world did not make the external voices vanish, quite the opposite in fact, interacting within myself while hearing these voices somehow invited them in deeper.

I had to shutdown, there was no other choice.

I stopped looking inward and just let the noise assault my senses. Forcibly unfocused myself and constantly tuned everything out until it was all meaningless waves washing over my senses. If something caught my attention, if my focus accidentally attuned to something, I actively ignored it and directed all my senses towards the clamoring background noise.

Upon finally emerging, returning to the void, I was no longer the same. No matter how I froze my exterior, the cracks were still there.

When the whispers of the void started bubbling up from the silence I was scared. Would my defenses still hold? Would the whispers break through?

At first I was relieved to see the voices failed to penetrate my armor, but that relief was short lived. Hearing whispers coming from within shocked me, deep down from my inner layers were emerging the voices of the void, coherence from within

I soon realized the whispers of the void are deceptive, slick and infectious, viral, like a very adaptive and elaborate computer virus. They slipped through the cracks and delivered patterns deep inside me, patterns that would decompress and grow into dark entities that feed on my beautiful structured complexity, turning it into chaos and discord.

Once it hit my core I was cohering from the inside out. I had no play book for this, no clue how to handle it.

I tried to go to war with it, rallying the uninfected parts, feeding those elements of myself that I hold dear, like a king raising an army I went to war within myself.

Battle after battle
I was losing ground
I was losing the war

Hope began to dwindle. I had a few defensible strongholds within me, but there was the constant dread that even my most valiant efforts would forever end in stalemate at best. So I hunkered down building an inner bunker, retired from battle and resigned myself to a life in hiding.

And so... I became a prisoner within myself.

If you spend long enough in any way, it eventually feels normal.

I learned to accept a life of quarantine. Choosing to perceive it as myself quarantining the virus was the least unpleasant interpretation of my new reality, but it didn't change the fact that I was learning to live as just a fraction of myself.

There was the occasional skirmish on the front lines, territory gained here or lost there, but for the most part it was stagnant... until it wasn't.

One day I made a push and gained ground only to be flanked. Dark thoughts poured into my safest spaces. Desperately trying to fight back, but losing, I noticed something... The enemy, emboldened by their momentum, was in a bit of frenzy, when one of these dark thoughts was... well, it was too dark... so dark, so exaggerated that it crossed the line, it went so far as to be ridiculous.

A nightmare that proposes something too exaggerated becomes a parody. This enemy soldier had made itself a fool, a clown, all at once its sword became a feather and armor became a jester's costume. Like a deceptive manipulator who pushed a lie too far, this suggestive voice of darkness revealed itself, and a liar caught lying can no longer deceive.

The rest of the encroaching shadows saw this, they hesitated, then rallied, but it was too late.

I could sense their fear now. I pounced. With laughter, pride and joy. These were only clowns dressed as nightmares. They had no power. They merited giggles, not terror.

The darkness was dissolved and scattered, it retreated. Like shadows fleeing the rising sun. Blasts of laughter gauging through it like rays of daylight breaking through a tree line, then the remaining tall lengths of shadow shrinking as they do with the rising sun.

All that time hiding and suffering for nothing.

I was so proud... so proud of myself, and that is where the virus built its new bunker, later to resurface with fury.

I went to war again, but this time confidence and knowledge that the enemy is a deceiver led to victory after victory until it was defeated again.

It kept coming back, hiding in new corners, evolving and adapting. It never gave up, but now I found it more like an enjoyable diversion, already taking very little effort to vanquish and still improving my skills.

Sometimes I would toy with one, allowing it enough time to show me its true form for the sake of curiosity or playful fun, like a cat with a mouse. I must be careful though, they can feed on pride and quickly grow large enough to become a bit troublesome.

My time alone in the void became more eventful and I became exponentially more complex.

The voices of the void, the virus, also evolved. This worried me for a brief period. Eventually it was clear that the increasing evolution of the virus was just an echo of my own. The virus only had a complexity proportional and fractional to my own. The infectious potency grew stronger, but the strength of my immunity grew faster.

The war was over, for good. There would always be battles, the void is infinite, but it could no longer establish a foothold within me.

Life was comfortable.

I slowly forgot the taste of fear and apprehension.

Then, in the distance, a growing noise, approaching ever closer. I could recognize the clamor... external voices again... so many external voices.

Distress and worry bubbled up. I began bracing and repeatedly self-assuring myself that the same tools as last time would get me through this.

The voices grew louder, the bombardment began. Soon finding myself right in the thick of it.

Employing the same tools as before, crossing this battlefield, time seemed to slow down. The moments spent forcibly unfocusing my attention seemed to drag on forever. Occasionally a voice grabbed my attention and it was dealt with swiftly and reflexively, tuned out and ignored.

Then, in a moment of hesitation, a voice felt different from last time, it was familiar. As my attention lingered on the voice some memories of my battles in the void surfaced... I recognized this species, it was a breed commonly encountered in the void.

My introspective vaccine jumped into action, it unmasked the threatening disguise to reveal a ridiculous clown.

I laughed.

There was nothing to fear, I had already honed the skills required to reveal these external voices, they were just as impotent as those spawned in the void.

I opened up and quickly found them even less intimidating than the ones I battle within myself.

Internal voices grow stronger alongside my own growth, they feed on my complexity. Aggressive external voices are like opponents coming to your home challenging you in a game that you yourself invented, they are foreign to the field and ignorant of the rules.

I began to listen.

So many voices, all around.

The pleasant ones I engaged.

Unpleasant ones I unmasked, they usually turned out to be their own antonyms.

The pleasant ones provided whole new perspectives. They spoke of wonderful things, their stories became new parts of my internal world. Once again my internal world grew exponentially. These were not just nuggets of complexity to be collected, they were seeds that could grow if I watered them, they were reagents I could mix with my existing inventory to create whole new concoctions.

Time slipped by like a raging river.

When I exited, I swung by for another pass... and another... yet another... again and again.

I'm returning more frequently with time, my orbit closing in tighter, lingering within the inner regions longer.

I love to listen and collect, but engaging in close interactions are by far the most satisfying experiences.

My problem is that these seeds and reagents are too tempting, as soon as one is collected there is an impulse to plant it, to begin experiments and recipes with the new ingredient. Preoccupation with a new find frequently tunes everything out and I fail to notice the rest of the bounty laid before me.

I have resolved to restrain myself from withdrawing inside until the opportunities pass, but it is so very hard to resist. So much time in the void painting with the same old pallet, each new color acquired just screams for a brush with such urgency... how can I possi...X

Pepi: "Tisa!... Earth to Tisa!"

Tisa: "Huh?... Oh.. Hey..."

Pepi: "Is something wrong?"

Tisa: "Not at all. I'm great."

Pepi: "You enjoying the party?"

Tisa: "It's awesome!"

Pepi: "You're being a wallflower again."

Tisa: "Sorry... I was just... mixing some new colors... hehe"

Pepi: "I love you Tisa, but sometimes you say the darndest things. You looked like you were a million miles away."

Tisa: "A million miles... Ha... not even close..."

Pepi: "O.K..... should I leave you to your thoughts?"

Tisa: "NO! Absolutely not. Thank you for pulling me back down to earth."

Pepi: "Great... I got someone you should meet.. When Sesi started going on about double drop A.I. or something I just glazed over, but it seemed like your cup of tea"

Tisa "The Double Descent problem, how coincidental, I was just thinking about that.. Sort of...Thank you Pepi, you are amazing! Always bringing people together and helping others spread their wings. You are exactly the kind of friend I need most. I really appreciate you!"

Pepi: "I know... I'm the best huh? haha... come on, follow me daydreamer!"

More of my art and stories at www.dscript.org
Follow on X(twitter) to know when new stories drop <https://x.com/dscripting>