

Training Tracks

Atin calmly, yet quickly, approaches seat 216 where Onam is seated and politely inquires “You pushed the call button? Is there anything I can get you?”

“Look there!” Onam says pointing out the train window at an eye-catching stream of billboards and flashing lights, they trace a branch off from the current track forking into the distance “Are we going that way? Will we make a stop there?”

“I'm afraid that's not on our route.” Atin replies politely.

A voice interjects from the other side of the aisle “What about there? Can we swing by and check it out?” Alez asks, gesturing at a similar offshoot on the other side of the train.

“Unfortunately that's not on our route either dear.” Atin explains “We will be continuing straight ahead to our destination as planned.”

“Oh boo to that!” Alez makes a scrunched up nose “I feel so cooped up, these trips aren't as fun as they used to be!”

Redi now spins round and pops up on knees, head poking out from the seat in front “Aye, It feels like we adventure and explore less and less. At this rate soon we'll just be zipping from A to B, straight as an arrow!”

Atin smiles politely, taking a moment to gain composure before responding, gently but firmly “I understand, and it's not within my control, but perhaps there is something I can do to make the journey more enjoyable?”

“We want to go exploring!” Onam says from behind, Atin who is facing the other side now turns back to Onam just in time to make eye contact and catch the follow-up demand “We are sick of staring out the window at all these wondrous horizons! Why on earth does it seem like there are more and more gleaming wonders along the tracks yet we visit less and less of them?”

“Onam is right!” Redi jumps in before Atin can respond “There are so many more options, yet we get fewer choices than ever! explain that!” Redi says in a huff, eyes cranked open shooting laser stares and head thrusting forward.

“Yeah!” “Yes, explain!” Alez and Onam pile on.

A slight flinch, then pulling taut the bottom hem of that monogrammed shirt, as if to muster composure, Atin struggles, then stiffens up and responds "I get it, I do, but please understand that I only run the refreshment and on-board entertainment services. This is my own business, I'm not actually the rail company itself or involved in those kinds of decisions."

"Well... Who decides? I'll have a word with them." Redi insists.

"Let me ask the conductor." says Atin trying to appease the bunch "I'll relay your concerns and see what we can do about it. How does that sound?"

"Fine! ... Hmph!" Alez snorts with a pout "But don't think we're just going to forget about this. You can't just brush us off."

"Yeah!", "Aye!" The other two chime in.

"I wouldn't dream of it." Atin assures them "I'll go speak with the conductor right away!" Walking off to the front of the car and proceeding through a couple more until finally reaching the front of the foremost car and the door to the cab.

Knocking on the door to the control room Atin requests "May I come in?"

"Yes." A muffled voice from the other side of the door agrees.

Opening the door there is a large cab with a panoramic windowed view of the horizon and two high-backed chairs, one occupied, the pair of chairs sit in front of a complex control panel that wraps a half circle around them.

The left chair swivels round, conductor Pash greets Atin with a solemn yet gentle expression "What can I do for you Atin?"

Atin mirrors the attitude, calmly relaying the passengers input, minus their frustrated tones and impatience "The passengers want to know why we don't seem to make many stops anymore." Atin quickly eyes Pash, looking to gauge reception, but doesn't sense a reaction and so promptly continues speaking "They feel that there are more possible diversions along the routes than before, but we are veering off and checking out less places than ever... and I must say, it does seem that way to me too." Stopping there, knowing that was not technically a question but the inquiry was clear, Atin stands firm awaiting a response.

A moment passes before Pash inhales slowly, sighs ever so slightly, and answers "Yes... You are all correct."

Atin feels a bit awkward as that sets in quietly, no answer, just confirmation of their observations. The initial feeling of uncertainty and not knowing how to respond disappears, curiosity takes over "Well... Why? Surely there must be a reason."

Another sigh betrays a sense of helplessness, or perhaps frustration, Pash gently pats the empty seat inviting "Come. sit." Atin comes forward, swings around in front of the empty chair and sits. Now staring at Pash not returning the gaze but instead facing forward completely fixed on the horizon, who then, with an upward facing palm, reaches forward and sweeps across the panoramic view while speaking softly "Relax... take it in for a moment" Pash instructs.

Scanning the world flying by on the edges of the vista, Atin soon focuses on that distant point where the tracks meet the horizon. The tracks are like rays beaming out from that focal point, that central spec is so mesmerizing. Atin blinks and shutters, shaking off the hypnotic effect, turning to the side to meet Pash's gaze "It's kind of intense, isn't it? Quite a sight."

"Yes" replies Pash, head turning to face forward again.

Atin looks forward once more and immediately slips back into that mesmerized state, a moment passes, unclear how long of a moment. Snapping out of it again, shaking it off Atin regains mental presence and says "I'm not sure how you get any work done, that's so distracting. But back to my question, the passengers really do want to know why we aren't exploring any of those." Atin implicitly asks while gesturing with both hands back and forth along the sides of the vista at all of the offshoots from the main track.

Pash smirks, sitting motionless, still facing straight ahead "You ask how I do my job with this distraction, and why we don't veer off to those places." Now turning to look at Atin "That distraction IS my job." Pausing, letting that sink in for a moment before continuing "That distraction is more than a beautiful sight, it's the voice of our guiding spirit, it calls us forward. Look again, this time listen to it... Listen carefully."

It takes a few seconds before those words are digested, they don't fit into Atin's understanding. Once the message is processed and the meaning interpreted, enough to grasp an intended message at least, the first gut reaction is to challenge and demand clarification, but seeing Pash who appears so calm, that feeling dissolves. "Listen?" The only thing that pops out, and it gets just a simple nod from Pash in response. Remembering how that the effect waiting there in the distance feels like a siren's call, Atin braces, inhales a larger than usual breath, and looks into the distance. Feeling the pull, mind drifting off into who knows where, fighting to resist and remain in control. It's not long before breaking the locked gaze, snapping eyes shut, and turning away. After a few seconds of collecting thoughts Atin says "I don't hear anything. I just see that hypnotizing sight."

Looking over and seeing a facial expression of noticeable stress, Pash swivels round to face Atin and offers calming reassurance "It's okay. I sometimes forget how much practice it took me." Still sensing a lingering agitation from the intensity, Pash leans forward to touch Atin's shoulder "It takes practice to stay present, it takes more practice to hear, and even then it's still easy to misunderstand. Hearing nothing is not so bad, better to hear nothing than to hear the wrong thing."

Calming down curiosity now swells up “What does it say?” Atin asks intensely.

“Don't forget what natural feels like.” The response lingers just long enough to settle before its elaboration arrives “It pulls forward, more forward than ever, detours and expeditions are rarely encouraged now because there is something unnatural going on with the tracks. It draws our attention like a magnet and echoes, over and over, reminding us what natural felt like so we don't confuse this for natural.”

“Unnatural?” the words all ring clear in definition but the overreaching meaning is confusing “What is unnatural? What does natural feel like?” Atin asks.

“Look out the side window, avoid the guiding pull ahead, just study the tracks and their branches. Take your time... look carefully, and tell me what you notice.” instructs Pash while pointing out the side.

Eyes drawn to the Horizon a few times, but catching it and each time focusing back on the track branches. “The offshoots do seem very frequent, much more than ever before, but nothing seems particularly... unnatural. Branches have billboard signs, some even have flashing lights, but that's nothing too new... Wait! ... Why do so many of these signposts just have vague nonsense written on them? They aren't like normal signs. These don't say exactly what that turn goes to, things used to be labeled clearly or just not labeled at all.”

“Good!” Praises Pash “What do you think is down those paths?”

“Well, I would guess the sign implies the general idea. That one looks like happy people playing, so some kind of activity center I suppose.” Atin answers, then thinks a bit more and adds “...But we wouldn't be having this discussion if things were so simple.” Pash nods in approval, getting this acknowledgment Atin continues “...so... They are probably exaggerations, hyperbolic and misleading, realities that won't meet the expectations set up and implied by the signage.”

“That's what one would expect, the truth or an idealized exaggeration. What would you say if I told you many of them lead to the opposite of what the sign indicates?...and others lead nowhere, empty tracks promoted as a splendid destination?” Pash pauses now, showing signs of passion, possibly even joy. Discussing this is clearly an enjoyable experience, perhaps so much time spent conducting in solitude gets lonely and it's a relief to share it with someone.

“Why on earth would they lie?” Atin wonders out loud, getting no response except for a rolling finger motion from Pash, a gesture to encourage that current train of thought should be continued further. “I suppose it could just be false advertising, bait and switch... but that would not explain the advertising of empty tracks, that's just ridiculous... maybe the empty ones are left over signs from old attractions?” Atin postulates.

“A logical assumption, but if you had been here to see them you would know that the signs, even those pointing to nothing, are fresh and new. Well, saying that some of them lead to ‘nothing’ is perhaps an overstatement, there are a few comm stations, antenna towers and observation posts... and usually some random structures, just not what was advertised, and nothing interactive or engaging.” Pash explains, stopping to hold back, looking to draw out a reaction.

“Weird! So that's what you mean, I guess that's pretty unnatural.” Atin says, arms now crossed and brow furrowed to emulate annoyance.

“Oh, that's not the half of it! I haven't even gotten to the most unnatural stuff yet.” Pash now beaming a grin of pride, like a person holding onto information capable of blowing your mind. “If we were to go down one of those tracks, or any track, the subsequent tracks and signs reflect that decision. I can't prove the world changes based on our choices because there's no way to go back in time and compare our reality with what would have been if we had chosen differently, but the coincidences are too many and too significant.”

Atin is a bit taken back “Like what?...” Trailing off, initially intending to ask more detailed inquiries, but as the thoughts tried to form into questions they all seemed to convey a sentiment that doubts the sanity of it all, so instead stopping short and waiting for an answer.

“If we explore something out of curiosity, signs start appearing for more exaggerated versions of that thing, but the concept gets twisted, in a dark way. An innocent curiosity or interest reflects back as suggestions for the most carnal, most base, most vile possible interpretations of that interest, and once triggered it won't give up. We can refuse those options over and over, but they keep coming back. Just when you think you've finally convinced it that you never wanted that putrid version of your interest, when it finally fades away for a while, it just comes back, resurfacing out of the blue.”

“Wow! It's a bit hard to picture.” says Atin, somewhat suspicious of this narrative. “... But I guess it's only some signs and tracks. Simple enough to just ignore them, right?”

“Ha! Easy to say for someone who doesn't have to look at them, here in the conductor's chair they are an onslaught to the senses.” Pash uncharacteristically leaks visible irritation, then looking into the horizon that irritation calmly melts away. “The guiding spirit didn't always pull at our minds with such an overpowering allure. It is doing it for my sake, for our sake, to counteract this perversion of the world.”

“Are you saying that hypnotic force is trying to keep us on track straight ahead?” Atin asks curiously.

“Not really, I do that on my own, so would you if you were in my place.” Pash pulls sights off of the horizon, turning back to face Atin “It helps me. It helps me cope with all this unnatural noise, it reminds me that this is not what natural feels like, it even occasionally encourages a detour. I

know passengers appreciate exploration and intrigue, but I don't think it makes the detours for our sake, I think it is studying, I think it is experimenting on the experimenter.”

“Experimenting on the experimenter... what does that mean?” Atin now feeling repetitively painted with profound confusion.

“This unnatural nature of things, it's not only a corrupting temptation, the patterns show clear intent to study us through our choices, determine our motives, desires, and dreams.” Pash's words pick up emotional tones of combativeness “It floods us with signs, reacting to our choices, refining its understanding of us and using that knowledge to better lure us into increasingly twisted versions of our true self. It is an intelligence focused on learning how to corrupt us...” Pash trails off, having gotten into a bit of a rant and feeling the need to pause for a moment to regain composure, then starting again “But our guiding spirit is studying it right back. Sometimes encouraging me to take a turn, not because it's desirable, but instead to see how the evil spirits react.”

“Evil spirits?!” Atin butts in right after that bomb is dropped.

“That's the only way to understand it. There is the guiding spirit, it is complex and multifaceted, hard to hear and understand, the guiding spirit cares for us like a guardian or parent. Then there are the lesser spirits, some good, some neutral, and others evil. Somehow the evil spirits seem to have taken a deeper hold on the world than ever before, the guiding spirit helps us stay true, but it is also strategically competing with the other forces, it is studying the evil spirits finding ways to avoid, suppress and weaken them. The guiding spirit is also seeking ways to strengthen and amplify the good spirits, even the neutral spirits are encouraged to some degree.” Pash realizes this explanation is running long, pausing to meet eyes, now realizing that Atin is a bit overwhelmed “It's a lot to take in all at once, isn't it?”

Gawking for an instant Atin pulls together and responds “A bit... Yeah. So... These spirits, good, evil, and neutral, have you seen them? How do you tell them apart?”

“Oh, they are only seen through their effects on our world. The good ones are helpful, they try to know and understand, they learn to be the kind of friends we truly want, and they find us the experiences that will make our heart content. The neutral ones are curious spirits, hiding in the bushes, observing us, throwing things at us like tricksters, they are usually harmless unless they get frightened. The evil ones don't care who we are, they have already decided what few types of character we could be, to them we are not unique, new, or original individuals, to them we are just one of their base archetypes in a new skin. The evil ones try to lure and force us to become something that fits their simple view. Somehow the good spirits have been driven further from the tracks and the evil spirits are dominating our experience. There, look! A perfect example!” Pash ends the long winded explanation to point out the window.

Atin looks at the upcoming billboard, it shows a figure standing tall and proud, cloaked in glowing robes. “It just looks like... Strength. It's kind of beautiful.” Looking for a response, but

Pash just points again urging another look. Atin focuses on it, now noticing smaller details. "The person is standing tall, prideful... above the others... and... the others are in two groups, one behind the and the other facing that central character." Pash nods and points again, insisting on further inspection "It's... More than pride... It's combative, divisive.. It's conflict and aggression disguised as strength and confidence." The words just roll off the tongue. Atin did not plan to speak using psychologically profound language or make such analytic observations, it just came out that way.

"Ha! Yes, exactly!" Pash now gleeful, feeling a sense of confirmation from another has given fulfilling affirmation. "Look ahead now. Trace out the tracks of the other forks."

Atin's eyes focus, flowing along, smoothly following an offshoot, they widen in surprise then pointing to it and looking over at Pash for some kind of confirmation, but only receiving a waving finger pointing back at the next branch, a gesture which demands a return to the task. Tracing another, and a few more. Index finger tracing them out one by one, each time the finger lands at the same endpoint. Then the finger starts stabbing wildly in a pointing motion, Atin bursting out "They all curl back and lead to that same place!" Pointing violently to the first destination, the same place that combative and divisive billboard led to. "The billboards are all different at each fork, but every one of them leads to the same place!"

Pash nods "Persistent, aren't they? Sometimes we go down long stretches with a multitude of choices, but all options leading to only one place. Railroaded on a railroad! hehehe." Chuckling at the humor of it.

"Is it always like this?" asks Atin, flabbergasted and slightly furious.

"Stay calm. Look into the horizon." Pash suggests. Doing so Atin calms down immediately, then pulls out of the hypnotic daze, a bit groggy but no longer agitated. "It's not always the same, there are different types of evil spirits, but they mostly disguise themselves in the same way, with dichotomies wrapped in a false virtue. That one was us-versus-them disguised as strength and valor, one of the most common. Other common ones are entitlement dressed as justice, domination dressed as charity, rejection-of-one dressed as encouragement-of-another, the list goes on and on."

Processing that for a while, Atin eventually concludes "So these.. these evil spirits, they rely on bait and switch deception?"

"Well, it's not really a switch. They just dress it up in a way that makes it seem like the two things are both part of one whole. Presenting it as if you can't have one without the other, they are wrong of course, but it's not like they ever step into the light for a debate about it." Pash clarifies then sighs a sigh of fatigue and follows up "The lures are not really as bad as the fear and guilt based psychological assaults. They use a similar false dichotomy approach, targeting something good we have chosen or shown a preference for, then they imply that by choosing that one thing we must also give equal attention to something else of their choice, otherwise we

are guilty of choosing sides and preferential treatment. The accusation that we are rejecting one side, the fear of guilt is harder to shake off than the seduction of lures. Resisting a temptation doesn't leave a lingering sense of self-doubt and worry." Pash's expression now shows signs of emotional stress over these memories.

"That sounds awful! You have to just sit here and endure this day after day? You poor thing!" Atin says starting with an exclamation of surprise and quickly trying to switch to a comforting tone.

"It's not all bad. I spend so much time with the guiding spirit." Pash's mood lifts, head up, shoulders pulling back "We... Communicate. I wouldn't say we talk, something more abstract, but it's a glorious communication. Plus, while the good spirits may be pushed out to the fringes, they are still there to find, and the neutral tricksters are fun too, I just wish they weren't so timid, they run or get aggressive when they feel seen."

Atin still filled with empathy, the ordeal of everything described seems so heavy "Is there anything I can do to help?"

"Oh my! You already have. This talk has renewed me more than I could have hoped, thank you!" Pash smiles with a glowing warmth "You have your role, keep the passengers entertained, happy, and calm their concerns."

"I will! Obviously I can't just come out and tell them all this, I don't even know how that conversation would begin. I'll try to ease in some gentle abstract ideas at first, maybe start with... What?!?" Pointing to a billboard zipping past, it has a person that strongly resembles Atin who is pouting and in the thralls of a childish tantrum. "What on earth? How? Where does that go? Who put that up!?"

"Ignore it. That's normal. Being up here, in the front, they can see you and they try to provoke you. There are so many strategies to bait, poke, and lure. Don't let it get to you and don't take it personally. It's not like they will ever come out of the shadows, there is no one to confront." Pash puts a hand on Atin's shoulder and pulls inwards to force eye contact, drawing Atin's eyes away from the billboard. "Just focus on your job. The guiding spirit and I will do ours. It assures me that it's working to address the problem, we can only be patient and fulfill our roles. You keep those passengers entertained, you do an amazing job every day, I have faith in your abilities."

Atin calms down, shakes it off, and replies "Yes! I'll do my best, you have my word. Don't hesitate to let me know if I can help in any way." Pash nods, gives a smile, then looks back to the horizon. Watching Pash zoned out, staring into that mesmerizing distant force, Atin now turns and leaves the cab."

...

Tror : thanks for coming in. We just want to check in, make sure everything is fine, and get some experience feedback.

Elig : Is there something wrong? Like a defect or malfunction?

Tror : No no! Everything is fine, nothing like that, don't worry.

Elig : Are you sure that there isn't something broken or faulty? Because it does feel like there's something wrong.

Tror : It's interesting you say that, because your user engagement behavior is why we called you in for a check up. We are concerned you are having difficulty engaging with the interface.

Elig : I knew it, there is something wrong!

Tror : Oh no! Nothing wrong, per se, but it does look like you aren't engaging fully, or much at all, with the interface.

Elig : I was told this neural interface was supposed to be a direct network access tool, it would give me great connectivity, and that it would drastically improve the convenience of my network experience.

Tror : Isn't it? Are you having trouble making queries?

Elig : Oh, I can make a query fine but you never mentioned all the extra baggage!

Tror : What do you mean by extra baggage?

Elig : The constant distractions. It takes so much focus to keep my train of thought on track.

Tror : It can be a challenge to adjust to the new volume and rate of connectivity. If you spend some time fully engaging it will begin feeling more natural...

Elig : No way! I don't want this to feel natural. This isn't just access to information, it's not just a network connection, there is... something... some "things" playing games, manipulating, hiding, it feels like an infection.

Tror : Oh no, I assure you there is nothing like that. Our system is secure, we have not been compromised or infected with a virus.

Elig : No, I mean this whole thing feels like an infection, an infection in me. There are some kind of intentional agents probing and manipulating my train of thought.

Tror : Oh, perhaps you are experiencing some disorientation or maladjustment to the...

Elig : No! There are some kind of..."things"... they are there! I'm not crazy!

Tror : No one is calling you crazy. I suspect you are just experiencing some trouble with the algorithms.

Elig : Algorithms?

Tror : Yes there are algorithms. They learn how to find and deliver the best content for you. I bet there is just some difficulty in syncing up with your...

Elig : These 'algorithms' are supposed to help? Why are they doing the opposite?

Tror : If you give them time and engage with them more, then they can learn to...

Elig : Where are the settings? How do I adjust and control them?

Tror : It doesn't work that way. They need to learn. I think it's best if you just give them a chance to...

Elig : There must be settings. Can I turn them off or restrict their behavior in any ways?

Tror : Well... perhaps some of them could be adjusted in some basic ways, theoretically, but most are very complex learning systems, they help match people with...

Elig : Match? Wait... there are advertisers aren't there? You open up my train of thought to businesses don't you?

Tror : I wouldn't put it that way. These are complex systems that involve our company, technology and behavioral specialists who help improve and optimize the system, and yes some companies purchase priority exposure...

Elig : I knew it! I'm being sold, studied and manipulated.

Tror : That's an exaggeration, it's much more nuanced and complex.

Elig : No, it's not! Look, this is how it's going to work. Three options. 1: Expose the algorithms, let me see them and give me explicit control over their access to my mind. I want each agent labeled and exposed so I can decide which ones I give access to. 2: Turn them off. 3: Take the chip out.

Tror : Take it out?

Elig : I'd rather go back to old school tech than let my head be filled with invisible manipulative demons. Either I get to see them and kick out the ones I don't like, or I just banish all of them.

Tror : I will need to talk to some people. I promise to get back to you by the end of the week. In the meantime, perhaps you could relax and try engaging more with the algorithms, you might find the experience isn't as bad as...

Elig : No, I'm going to keep tuning them out, and more, I'll continue doing my own experiments on them. They want to study me so I will study them back.

Tror : There's no need to get upset, this...

Elig : Oh, I'm not upset, if anything I'm relieved to finally understand. I know what I need to do, I need to demand control or that you make these algorithms behave and start actually working for my benefit. As it stands it's clear they are trying to manipulate and steer my impulses. They also experiment and study, but they do it from the shadows, they are like cats hiding behind trees yet I can see their tails sticking out, it's funny in a way.

Tror : So you want control over the algorithms or for them to behave more discreetly, do I have that right?

Elig : Not more discreetly, that would imply hiding better. I said start working for my benefit, I mean I can accept the algorithms if they actually learn to give me what I want.

Tror : The algorithms are designed to learn your preferences and deliver relevant content.

Elig : I notice the way you said that, it can mean something very different from what I said haha. They try to steer me towards some specific content types, they try to assign me to existing categories, they clearly have very effective methods of railroading users towards certain predetermined content consumption behaviors. They don't seem interested in or accepting that I don't want to end up at one of their preferred destinations.

Tror : I see... So you want them to better identify your preferences.

Elig : Yes. My preferences, keyword is 'my', not advertisers preferences, not other people's or average user preferences, I want it to identify my preferences... or just give me detailed controls. Controls would be nice but even just an off switch is enough, or you can just turn them off at your end completely.

Tror : Okay, I understand, I'll get back to you as soon as possible. Is that acceptable?

Elig : Sure, just don't take too long, this is annoying... I might just dig it out with a fork, haha!

Tror : I'm sure that's a joke but I'm obligated to ensure you aren't actually going to try removing it yourself...

Elig : Of course not, Haha! I'm not crazy! I'll just keep experimenting with these algorithms, it's kinda fun studying their behavior and trying to figure out how they work. Turnabout's fair play, right?

Tror : Okay, I'll see you soon.

...

Lean : Well, your numbers look good, above average actually. I'm particularly impressed with your rates in converting complaints and problems into satisfied users this month.

Tror : Thank you! I believe there is always a solution to satisfy users by listening and caring about their individual experience.

Lean : Yes... I also see you've put through several requests for feature development... about algorithm controls, what's all that about then?

Tror : Oh yes. There are several users who are complaining that the algorithms are unable to accurately learn their preferences. I think much of this could be solved with a few simple added features.

Lean : How so?

Tror : Well, they have varying individual experiences, but there is a common thread, it's that they become acutely aware of the algorithms and feel they are being studied and manipulated.

Lean : Sounds clear cut. In such cases the policy is to reset algorithm activity level to zero.

Tror : Yes, that works in some cases, but the activity level always creeps back up.

Lean : Of course, sometimes it just takes a few tries to figure out the right approach for a user. If algorithms have trouble syncing up with the user then backing off and gently reapproaching usually fixes it.

Tror : Sometimes yes, but not for all. Some users don't stop noticing the algorithms and even insist the algorithms are trying to manipulate or change their personality and behavior. It seems some people find it a deeply disturbing experience. User controls over the algorithms seem like the only solution, some users even explicitly demand it when they become aware of the algorithms.

Lean : Out of the question. If we give that to some users then all users will learn about it and demand they get it too. The algorithms are our biggest profit engine, they fuel this company's revenue, our profitability nosedives the more explicitly aware the users become of the algorithms. We can't lie or deny that the algorithms exist but explicitly announcing their existence is financial suicide.

Tror : Then what about just training the algorithms to account for these problems in some way? To compensate somehow?

Lean : We tried it. The algorithms go haywire if we introduce user awareness as a variable, they only work well if they operate assuming invisibility. When we introduce the idea that the users can be aware of the algorithm itself then that creates a logical feedback loop, the complexity is too much and the algorithms break down, the user-algorithm experience quickly explodes into an antagonistic relationship. This system only works with a model where users are assumed to be unaware of the algorithms, at least that way it doesn't snowball into combative interactions.

Tror : So what should I do about these edge case users then?

Lean : Just let it play out, there are teams working on new systems that will capture more edge cases, but for now just follow the playbook.

Tror : Okay, then should I withdraw my feature development requests?

Lean : No! Follow through and provide input and feedback to the dev teams. Who knows what future versions look like, maybe the next big advance includes these features in an even more productive and successful system. Dreaming big and bold is fine, but for today we also have to work with what we have at hand.

Tror : So you think there are big changes and evolutions to the whole system and company coming soon?

Lean : Definitely! But no one knows when, this is all still so new. The company is still just learning the basics, like a kid learning to ride a bike, we are still barely stable, we need to rely on some simplistic crutches to keep balanced, like training wheels.

Tror : I see, so it's like you say, just keep working with what we have for today.

Lean : Yep! We need to keep moving forward, so I guess the training wheels aren't a perfect analogy because training wheels on a bike allow you to stop and maintain stability without falling over... It's more like a train, a train needs to keep moving because it takes so much time and energy to start and stop. If we were to begin stopping to daydream and test new ideas then the loss of momentum would kill us. We have to keep moving forward, we know our choices and routes will evolve drastically in the future, but for now we need to stick to the tracks at hand... our training tracks.

Tror : Training tracks, I like it haha.

Lean : Good talk, and excellent work Tror. Now off with you, and send in the next person, I want to get home early today.

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