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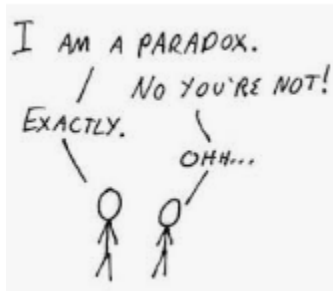
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## Intro



## par·a·dox

/ˈperəˌdäks/

*noun*

1. a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well founded or true.  
"in a paradox, he has discovered that stepping back from his job has increased the rewards he gleans from it"

Similar:

contradiction

contradiction in terms

self-contradiction

inconsistency

incongruity

anomaly

conflict

absurdity

oddity

enigma

puzzle

mystery

conundrum

oxymoron

antinomy

- a statement or proposition that, despite sound (or apparently sound) reasoning from acceptable premises, leads to a conclusion that seems senseless, logically unacceptable, or self-contradictory.  
"a potentially serious conflict between quantum mechanics and the general theory of relativity known as the information paradox"
- a situation, person, or thing that combines contradictory features or qualities.  
"the mingling of deciduous trees with elements of desert flora forms a fascinating ecological paradox"

How did this book come about



A few weeks ago my wife and I were talking to my daughter Aleia. Somehow the conversation turned to how life has many kinds of paradoxes.

What is the truth is fiction and what is fiction is truth?

We start by naming several examples of how life is a paradox.

Somehow this got the ball rolling inside of me. I thought it would be a great idea to write and do research on paradoxes.

The more I research paradoxes the more incredible I see the miracle that we are alive.

Come and join me on this journey. You will not be disappointed.



What you want you don't need

What you want you don't need

What you need you don't want

## Zen and Paradoxes



The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.

The name that can be named is not the eternal name.

The nameless is the beginning of heaven and Earth.

The named is the mother of the ten thousand things.

Ever desireless, one can see the mystery.

Ever desiring, one sees the manifestations.

These two spring from the same source but differ in name; this appears as darkness.

Darkness within darkness.

The gate to all mystery.

The next chapter will go into the latest find of this truth for the milky way.

According to Osho the whole teaching of Zen consists of only one thing: <sup>1</sup>“how to take a jump into nothingness, how to come to the very end of your mind, which is the end of the world.” Zen says : “**When you are silent, it speaks; when you speak, it is silent.**” This is the Zen paradox.

I say many times that we are so busy texting on the freeway of life that we have totally forgotten our true nature.

You are the universe and you just don't know it.

A wise man understands in order to be in harmony with nature and the universe one must learn how to live in silence.

Once upon a Time when I was in India many moons ago, I heard this phrase. The hardest thing to conquer in the entire universe is your own mind.

This is a practical journey. The Zen Buddhists have an expression, chop wood and carry water.

This means to have your feet on the ground and your head in heaven.

This is a paradox within a paradox.

This is from Osho's book Zen: The Path of Paradox, Vol 1

A great Zen Master, Bokoju, used to say, 'How wondrous this. How mysterious. I carry fuel, I draw water.' 'How wondrous this. How mysterious.' Carrying fuel, drawing water from the well and he says, 'How mysterious.' This is the Zen spirit. It transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary. It transforms the profane into the sacred. It drops the division between the world and the divine. That's why I say it is not a theology. It is pure religion.

Heaven is a state of mind. One of my favorite mottos is you are your own chemistry set. The divine elixirs of life exist inside of you.

Guru Nanak once said everyone knows the ocean contains drops of water.

But only a wise man understands a drop of water contains the entire ocean.

This is another paradox. We were born to live in a state of constant wonder. We were born to be drenched in the mysteries of the universe.

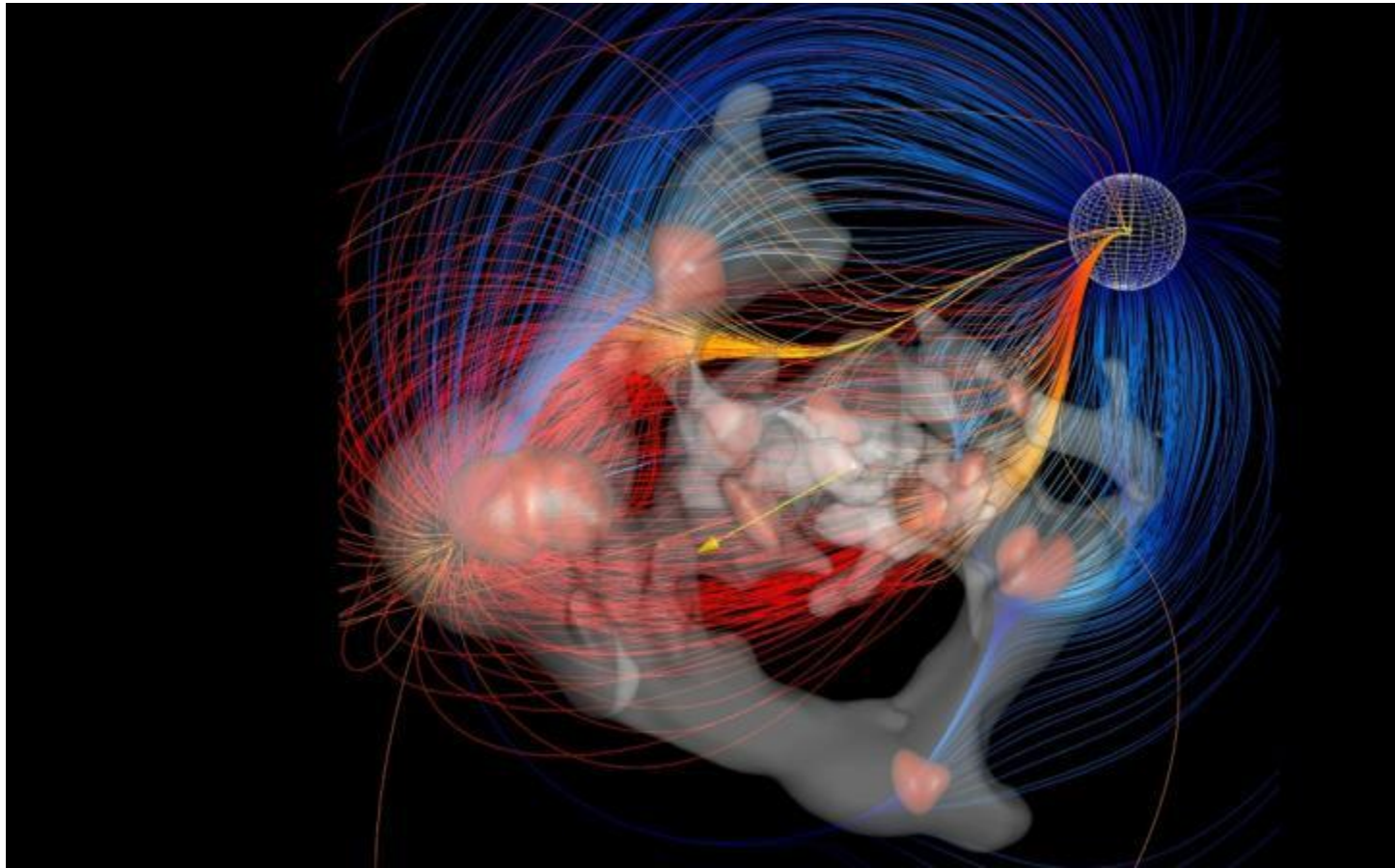
Unfortunately, we pay more attention to social media that we have ignored our true nature.

# Push and pull How the Milky Way flies

AFP | DECCAN CHRONICLE

Published Jan 31, 2017, 7:37 am IST

Updated Jan 31, 2017, 12:14 pm IST



<sup>2</sup> This computer generated image released shows a visualization of cosmic flows: blue streamlines converge on the Shapley Attractor, red streamlines trace back the velocity field to its divergent point. (Photo: AFP)

It may not feel like it, but our Milky Way galaxy is barrelling through the Universe at more than two million kilometres (1.24 million miles) per hour.

On Monday, astronomers said they had discovered a void in deep space that helps explain the direction in which we are headed, and our speed.

It turns out our galaxy is not only being pulled by galactic forces, but pushed as well, they wrote in the journal Nature Astronomy.

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<https://www.deccanchronicle.com/science/science/310117/push-and-pull-how-the-milky-way-flies.html><sup>2</sup>

The earth may feel steady under our feet, but humanity's small corner of the Universe is subject to an array of forces.

The Earth spins on its axis at about 1,600 kilometres per hour and around the Sun at some 100,000 km/h.

The Sun, in turn, travels at 850,000 km/h as it orbits the centre of our galaxy, zipping through the expanding Universe.

But how?

For a long time scientists have assumed a dense region of the Universe was drawing the Milky Way toward it through gravitational pull.

In the 1980s, suspicion fell on an area called the Great Attractor -- a cluster of half-a-dozen galaxy clusters some 150 million light years from the Milky Way.

"But the direction (of the attraction) was not quite right," study co-author Daniel Pomarede of France's Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) told AFP.

So astronomers turned their attention some 600 million lightyears beyond the Great Attractor to an area of more than two dozen galaxy clusters called the Shapley Concentration.

This still did not sufficiently explain the Milky Way's speed or direction.

On Monday, Pomarede and a team said they had found the missing link: our galaxy is not only being pulled, but pushed as well.

By constructing a 3D map of the flow of galaxies through space, they discovered a previously unknown, large region mostly devoid of galaxies which they believe is repelling the Milky Way and its neighbouring galaxy Andromeda.

They have called it the Dipole Repeller.

"In addition to being pulled towards the known Shapley Concentration, we are also being pushed away from the newly discovered Dipole Repeller," said co-author Yehuda Hoffman of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

"It has become apparent that push and pull are of comparable importance at our location."

## Zen Kōans Learning to Live with Ambiguity and Paradox

September 14, 2020

<sup>3</sup>How do we explain the unexplainable? It's a question that's existed since time immemorial and given rise to legends, myths, and religious practices around the globe. A group of Chinese priests back in the 13th century decided to take this question a step further. **They essentially asked: *What if we didn't need an explanation for everything?***

This question gave rise to the birth of Zen kōans. Short statements (or questions) that are often a paradox, Zen kōans came about for the purpose of fostering contemplation. Used primarily in the Soto tradition of Zen Buddhism, they're seen as a meditative technique to be used during zazen, Zen's seated practice (3).



For our thinking minds designed to solve, kōans can be tough to wrap our heads around. And that's exactly the point. They posit that there's value in questions themselves without any answers, which runs counter to our logical way of thinking.

Essentially monks sit for extended periods of time contemplating these puzzles that can't be solved. In this way, **kōans serve to help monks live with ambiguity and paradox.**

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<https://choosemuse.com/blog/zen-koans-learning-to-live-with-ambiguity-and-paradox/><sup>3</sup>



They also serve to help achieve a central tenet of Buddhism: letting go of binary thinking. Instead of focusing on right and wrong or black and white, kōans helped monks avoid clinging to answers or outcomes—because they lack them.

It's in the practice of simply sitting and contemplating, that Zen monks believe they will learn **bigger truths about themselves and the world** (2).

[Learn more about the Principles of Zen >](#)

### Perspectives on Zen kōans

Kōans themselves are meant to **break the thinking mind** and explanations of them can sound equally mind-boggling. It can be helpful to turn to Zen masters, authors, and contemporaries who've sat with kōans to hear their perspectives on what the puzzles are intended to do and the effects they've had on those trying to solve them.



### Don Dianda

Author Don Dianda of *See for Yourself: Zen Mindfulness for the Next Generation*, offers his perspective:

“The kōan serves as a surgical tool used to cut into and then break through the mind of the practitioner... Kōans aren't just puzzles that your mind figures out suddenly and proclaims, “Aha! the answer is three!” They wait for you to open enough to allow the space necessary for them to enter into your depths—the inner regions beyond knowing (2).”

Philip Kapleau

Zen Master Philip Kapleau shares that the period of despair is usually not short. **Meditating on a kōan could keep a student sitting for hours, weeks, or months in contemplation.**

“The role of the kōan is not to lead us to satori (enlightenment), but, on the contrary, to make us lose our way and drive us to despair (3).”

Alan Watts

The British-American philosopher Alan Watts helped bring these brain enigmas to a wider audience through his Zen-haiku-kōan infused beat poetry. He wrote that the kōans are not about asking impressive questions, but rather about guiding the student toward self-discovery:

*“..not by looking out of the corner of your eye to see if everybody else is getting the same results as you or by trying to find out what others have already discovered. It is achieved by going down into one’s own inner, secret place, and asking there for a direct encounter with the world, independent of convention (3).”*

[Learn more about the Most Prolific Zen Masters >](#)



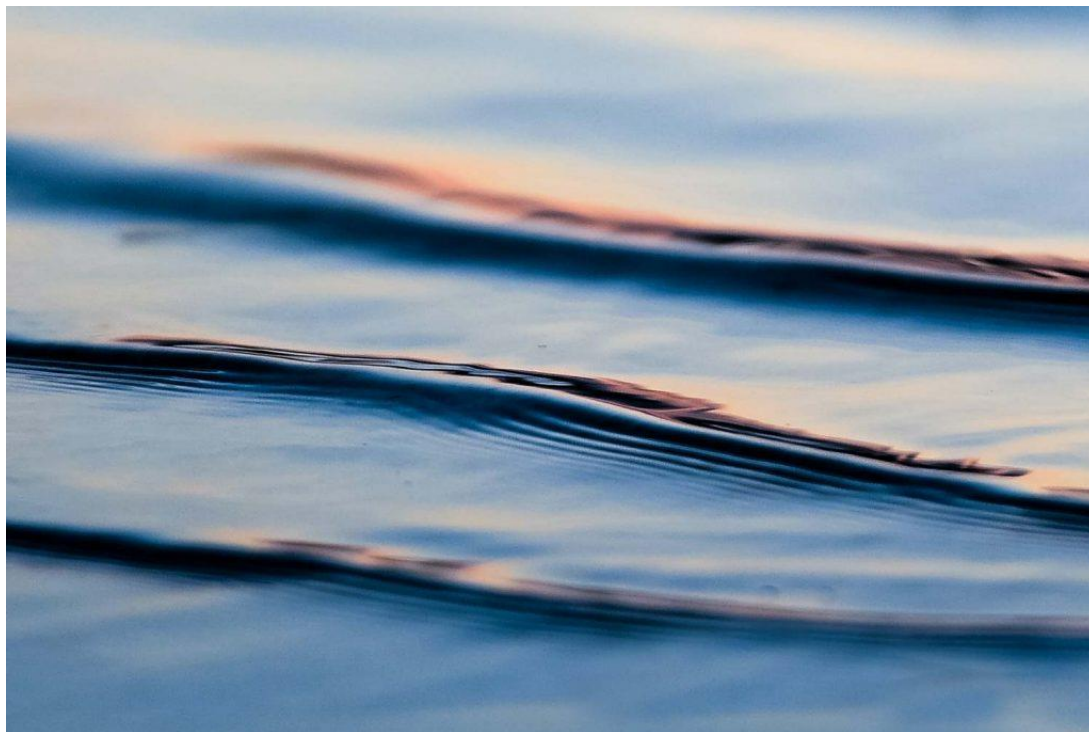


## Examples of popular Zen kōans

Of the 1700 kōans, you could spend a lifetime attempting to consider all of them (and perhaps another lifetime choosing where to start). There are a few popular kōans that can help you get your feet wet:

- *When both hands are clapped a sound is produced; listen to the sound of one hand clapping (1).*
- *Out of nowhere, the mind comes forth (2).*
- *Two monks are arguing about a flag. One says, “The flag is moving.” The other, “The wind is moving.” A third walks by and says, “Not the wind, not the flag; the mind is moving (3).”*

There is an idea in Zen that from emptiness, there is clarity. Koans are one tool to help you get to a place of emptiness. In this state, Zen Buddhists believe you’re able to see that the sense of self, for example, is only an idea (5). If you’ve ever been in a “flow” state, you may have felt something close to this. And though “flow” is not the same thing, there’s a similar feeling of selflessness and presence.



## Dive deeper into your Zen practice

To continue your Zen journey, inside the Muse app our Zen teachers offer different perspectives and practices for living with more calm, happiness, and presence. In our **Zen Collection**, learn how to sit in the Zen style, explore the teachings of the Buddha, and discover how to apply these practices to your everyday life.

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### Zen and Paradox - Buddhism Randomly series

Joseph Rhinewine • 46 views

How is a glass not a glass? I begin to attempt to convey some rudimentary understanding of the role of apparent paradoxes in...



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# Find the Wisdom in Paradox

BY KRITEE | NOVEMBER 4, 2021

*If we don't embrace the often-paradoxical complexity of societal ills, the actions we take to solve them will be merely "Band-Aids." Kritee on getting to the root of a problem.*

*Photo by Markus Spiske.*

Sit with the paradox—this fundamental teaching from my Rinzai Zen training guides me in these coronavirus times.

In our Zen tradition, students are asked to work with paradoxical stories, dialogues, or questions called koans. As an example, here is a Zen koan: How will you blow a lit candle that is a thousand miles away? While it is not a part of Zen literature, virgin and pregnant mother Mary is a koan.

*Does the healing of our society require us to be unyielding, or do I have to be yielding and ready to compromise to create bridges in this divided and polarized world?*

There are differences, but in general teachers test the students for their ability to sit with a paradox without falling into the trap of analyzing it intellectually. This process of staying with a koan might involve letting go of specific kinds of fixations, opinions, or attachments, or rushing to find solid and linear yes–no or right–wrong answers.

My life as a climate scientist-activist and grief-ritual facilitator also confronts me with life koans. It involves sitting with wild paradoxes like these:

Do I root myself in gratitude at this moment or allow myself to grieve the state of the world?

Some activists say things are getting better and better, but others say things are getting worse and worse. Which is true?

Does the healing of our society require us to be unyielding (because one has to say no when faced with systemic oppression), or do I have to be yielding and ready to compromise to create bridges in this divided and polarized world?

Facing systems of harm requires that we join communities of caring action so the community's ancestral wisdom and resilience can guide us. But all communities expect conformity or loyalty and are prone to dogma, conservatism, or patriarchy. What do I choose?

Carl Jung highlighted the need to appreciate paradox for spiritual growth. According to him, paradox presents a more faithful picture of the fullness of life than is possible through our use of logic or reason. To quote Jung, paradox, in encouraging us to hold the tension of opposites, "widens consciousness beyond the narrow confines of a tyrannical intellect." To awaken to the unknowable "Self" ("Big Mind" in Zen tradition), we need paradox—the irrational nonlogic that allows for the expression of transcendental truth.

For me, this pandemic and Black Lives Matter protests have evoked the bewildering paradox of embracing death and sickness while doing our best to avoid sickness and death. Can we surrender to the reality of death while energetically trying to reduce suffering especially for those who are most vulnerable? Or are they mutually exclusive?

Once again, the point is not to choose an answer by intellectual analysis, but to stay with the paradox. When we rush and don't embrace the complexity of a paradox to go beyond koans' superficial duality, we bypass the full emotional and spiritual impact of what is happening around us. This bypassing results in shallow "Band-Aid" actions that don't address the root and systemic causes of any problem, both at individual and societal levels.

Our current crises can be our spiritual teachers and portals to a kinder and more just world—if we are not afraid of paradoxes in our lives. I invite you to sit with and learn from your paradoxes.

# What Are The Paradoxes In Quantum Mechanics?

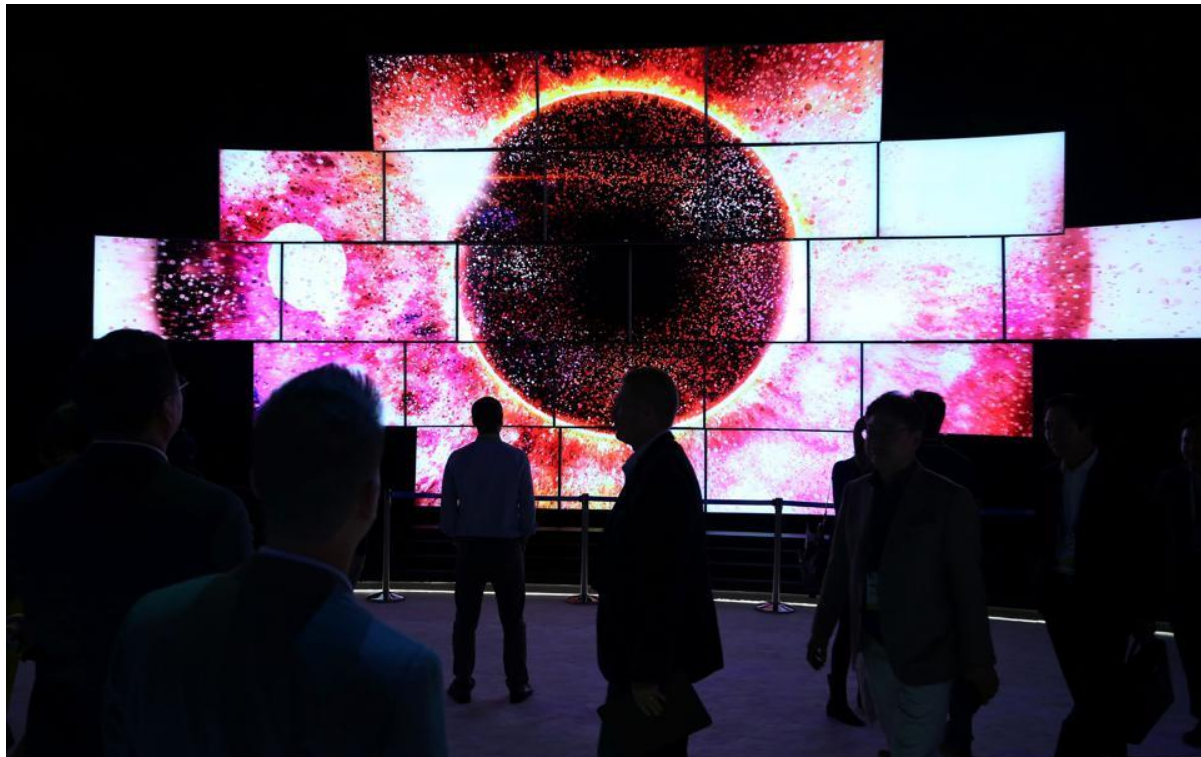
Quora

Contributor

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Nov 3, 2016, 01:00pm EDT

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(Photo: DAVID MCNEW/AFP/Getty Images)

<sup>4</sup>*[What are the paradoxes in quantum mechanics?](https://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2016/11/03/what-are-the-paradoxes-in-quantum-mechanics/?sh=72e9e3d512d6) originally appeared on [Quora](#): the knowledge sharing network where compelling questions are answered by people with unique insights.*

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<https://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2016/11/03/what-are-the-paradoxes-in-quantum-mechanics/?sh=72e9e3d512d6><sup>4</sup>

**Answer by Allan Steinhardt, PhD, Author "Radar in the Quantum Limit", Formerly DARPA's Chief Scientist, on Quora:**

What are the paradoxes in quantum mechanics? I can give you five, all of which have been experimentally confirmed. Some are already commercial products, other may be soon. As quantum is rapidly entering commercial markets, it is insightful to approach the question as in "what are the **capabilities** that quantum mechanics can provide in the real world that most laymen would interpret as startling, or impossible, based on intuition?" I then close with some comments about paradoxes writ large and why they arise in Quantum. In each case I provide links to science literature, usually to original sources.

PROMOTED

**1) Teleportation:** Quantum technology allows us to "beam" an exact replica (down to quantum numbers i.e. superposition state) of one system at point A to another system at point B, arbitrarily far away. This topic is discussed in this paper [\*Experimental quantum teleportation\*](#), and also [this answer on Quora](#).

**Caveat:** We must first send clumps of matter, i.e., ship raw matter to "clone" from point A to point B. We also must learn, and communicate, the desired state of this matter (i.e. the superposition state) through a "standard" (though suitably conditioned) comms channel, at less than or equal the speed of light. This probably will destroy the original system, being, human, whatever. So there is no violation of light speed constraint on information transfer. Read more here. The "paradox" here is that teleportation even of living humans is theoretically feasible, though (likely) technically impossible or impractical.



**2) Remote detection of eavesdropping:** This is the basis of secure quantum encryption. Using entanglement we can detect whether a (quantum) message between Sender and Receiver has been intercepted in transit. It makes no difference how far away the eavesdropper was, the mere impact of his/her measurement is detected.

**Caveat:** Sender and Receiver must compare notes, no speed of light violation. See [Quantum cryptography without Bell's theorem](#). The "paradox" here is we can learn if someone somewhere read a private message without knowing who or how, even though we cannot access the reader!

**3) "Spooky" calculation:** Here we use superposition to obtain more equivalent computations than hardware and clock cycle enumeration would suggest is feasible. This "hack" exploits the fact that quantum states can be in superposition and in so doing can "remotely" interfere with each other. Thus we can store, in a quantum computer, ones *and* zeros, and do calculations simultaneously on both without duplicating hardware. See [Quantum Computing since Democritus](#).

**Caveat:** Only some problems can be sped up this way. As of February 2016, we have no quantum computers that are faster than regular computers for any compute problem, but that is expected to change. Protein folding has been shown to be among the class of problems where quantum can help. It would be great if we could actually get there commercially. The "paradox" here is that we can have, in one computer, more calculations in one nanosecond than there are atoms in the universe! See [What is a quantum computer?](#).

**4) Interaction free measurement:** The best way to explain this is that we can measure something in quantum without measuring it. Of all the animals

in the Quantum Zoo this is the most exotic! See: [PHYSICS ILLINOIS](#), and [How does the quantum zeno effect work?](#).

**Caveat:** We need to get the object "near" the sensor, we just don't actually allow the sensor to disturb the object in any way. This *does* allow us to measure things that normally would be harmed through measurement, such as cold atoms. The "paradox" here is that we can measure things remotely in ways that, while limited, defy our sense of time and space.

**5) Life extension of particles:** Because quantum causes particles to interact with each other in weird ways we actually can slow down the decay of particles. Note: this is **not** special relativity here, the particle remains at rest, it just "feels" time differently, unlike its surroundings. See [nist.gov](#).

**Caveat:** Unlike time dilation in relativity, this effect is limited to particles that evolve through state superposition. The "paradox" is we can selectively slow down time "simply" by interacting with a (certain type of) dynamic system.

Note for Nerds: [Paradox](#) is an ambiguous word. Unresolved ambiguity in language usage makes quantum impossible to explain satisfactorily without defining terms. (The quantum particles are in a state of superposition, don't let our language follow suit!) Paradox can mean one of three things: (i) we get different contradictory answers using logic, (ii) we **appear** to get different contradictory answers using logic, and (iii) we observe something that **defies common sense**. We **always use paradox in quantum in this third sense**. There is **never a logic paradox in quantum**. If (i) occurred in any branch of mathematics this would be an epic event. If it were possible to get two different answers in arithmetic using two different solution paths we would need to dismantle and rebuild math from scratch. Item (ii) occurs all the time in "pure" math and math as applied to physics. But as the word



"appear" suggests this is a subjective event, unlike (i), which is about **math** not **us**. As a child we are puzzled by things we perceive later as "obvious" as an adult. Like (ii), (iiii) is subjective. But unlike (ii), item (iii) is about our **sense** of the **physical realm**, not our sense of **theory**. When laymen say there is a paradox in Quantum they never mean "*hey the Hermitian operator in Quantum appears to give contradictory results when I select different basis functions in Hilbert space*". If they did we would be at paradox definition (ii) [if resolvable], or (i) [if unresolvable]. In Quantum (sans strong gravity) the paradox is always physical, i.e. case (iii). The fact that we call Quantum paradoxical is a testament to (A) its awesome predictive power and explanatory success, and (B) its deep mathematical basis. No one ever accuses, say, cell biology, or social science, of being paradoxical!

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#### Zeno's Paradox & The Quantum Zeno Effect

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"A moving arrow is at rest." This is obviously a nonsensical contradiction. But Zeno, a Greek philosopher famous for his ...

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# 20 Paradoxes That Give Us Wisdom and Perspective



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<sup>5</sup>Paradoxes may seem logically impossible, but they're often true. Paradoxes reveal the essence of the human condition, while pushing us to question what's really true. From everyday tips to poignant life lessons, paradoxes can teach us how to navigate the world in a wiser fashion.

## 1. The best things in life are free.

We've all heard this phrase, but it's somewhat paradoxical. Most of the time, we have to pay for value. The more valuable something is, the higher it costs. But many of the most satisfying things in life can't be bought. They are freely available to anyone who is wise enough to seek them out.

Take away: Don't get caught up in chasing material possessions.

## 2. The more choices we have, the more paralyzed we become.

In today's world, we often think that having everything at our fingertips makes life easier. In some ways it does. However, when faced with a multitude of choices we often become stressed and unable to make a decision.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/20-paradoxes-that-give-wisdom-and-perspective.html>

Take away: Don't drive yourself crazy with what-ifs. Just do what you think is best.

### 3. Stop looking for happiness if you want to find it.

Often referred to as the Paradox of Hedonism, the idea is that we tend to find happiness when we aren't actively searching. Happiness is elusive, and we don't always find it in the places we'd expect. Happiness isn't a place, but rather a state.

Take away: Let happiness come to you when it's ready.

### 4. The best ideas come when you're thinking about something else.

Inventor Philo T. Farnsworth purportedly came up with the idea for television while plowing a potato field. Among smart and successful people, these peculiar stories are common. Great thinkers think abstractly, leading their minds to connect seemingly unrelated things.

Take away: If you're ever running dry of ideas, try doing something completely unrelated to the task.

### 5. We don't appreciate what we have until it's gone.

It is an unfortunate tendency, but sometimes we can't recognize the value of something until we notice its absence. You probably wouldn't be thankful for your roof unless it collapsed one day. It takes effort to appreciate what you already have because it's hard to imagine life without it.

Take away: Consciously keeping track of what you're grateful for is a great way to stay humble.

## 6. The more you multitask, the less you get done.

Research has shown that the human ability to multitask is technically nonexistent. Well...that's embarrassing. All this time we thought we were being more productive, but our brains can only focus on one thing at a time. So if you are multitasking, you may just be doing lots of things poorly or partially.

Take away: Put your individual focus and effort into important projects.

## 7. You get what you give.

When people are generous, they naturally attract the generosity of others. People who are selfish and always looking out for themselves repel generosity. Kindness and selfishness doesn't go unnoticed.

Take away: Be generous. Give to others and you won't have to worry about receiving.

## 8. The more you try to control a situation, the less control you have.

Everyone knows a control freak or two, and you may have even seen firsthand how ultra planning can backfire. Most things in life are uncontrollable, and when we try too hard we can actually make things worse. The only thing we can definitely control is ourselves.

Take away: The best way to handle situations is to accept change and adapt to it.

## 9. The things that deeply move us don't exist.

Philosophers call it the Paradox of Fiction. Humans have always been affected by stories, art, and literature. We can be influenced and inspired by characters that aren't real and events that never occurred. Why is it that some of our strongest and most profound emotional reactions are driven by things that never existed?

Take away: Fiction has the power to change reality. Now go read a book!

## 10. Insanity is rational.

A study showed that certain mental illnesses may allow people to be more logical than the average person. When given a quiz full of logic questions, schizophrenic participants performed far better than participants without the illness.

Take away: Never underestimate someone just because they're different from you.

## 11. The longer you sleep, the more tired you are when you wake up.

Why is it that sometimes we sleep 5 hours and wake up refreshed, while other times we sleep 10 hours and wake up feeling like a plane hit us? This is a common problem, particularly for people who get little sleep on weekdays and too much sleep on weekends. This happens when your circadian rhythm is thrown off.

Take away: Adopt a steady sleep routine to feel more energetic.

## 12. We can only change when we accept who we are.

“The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.” -Carl Rogers

When we spend our time and energy hating ourselves and wishing we could change, it uses up the energy that we could be using to change.

Take away: Accept yourself and work hard. Change will come naturally.

## 13. The faster you run from your problems, the quicker they catch up.

Sure you can run away, travel across the world, or backpack through Europe. But if your main goal for leaving is to solve problems, you will end up disappointed. Most problems arise from who we are, not where we are. If you run, your “baggage” will be right there with you- at the baggage claim.

Take away: Face your problems head on so they don't become worse.

## 14. The institutions that teach us equip us to question those institutions.

“The paradox of education is that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.” -James Baldwin.

While we need institutions to teach us, they often teach us best about the things we reject or want to change about them.

Take away: Learn all you can from others, but think for yourself.

## 15. We can eat more and lose weight?

If you are overweight and consistently dieting with a piece of lettuce for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, you may actually be contributing to the problem. Under-eating can slow your metabolism, meaning less energy consumed and less burned. As long as your diet is clean and healthy, frequent meals are the way to go.

Take away: Eat often and eat real food to stay healthy.

## 16. If you want a faster commute, shut down a traffic route.

Named after the mathematician who discovered it, Braess' Paradox refers to the odd phenomenon that occurs when towns block off a main road. One would think that this would worsen traffic, but it often improves it. Since faster routes become more attractive to drivers, this can increase commute times for everyone, even those on other routes. Check out the full explanation [here](#).

Take away: Don't rely on shortcuts, they aren't always what they seem.

## 17. If you want to find love, stop looking.

"I walked into the coffee shop, expecting to meet my true love, and there he was!" Have you ever heard someone say this? Didn't think so. That's because we tend to fall for people when we don't expect it. Although difficult for lonely people, it is smarter to be patient rather than desperately search for soulmate.

Take away: Be yourself, do what you do, and the right person will naturally come along.

## 18. The more you wait the longer things take.

Who hasn't sat in math class, staring painfully at the clock as it slowly ticks forward? Although it's only a perception, the more conscious waiting we do, the longer things often seem to take. Time flies when you're having fun, so you are better off trying to make the best of long division while you're stuck doing it.

Take away: Try to make the most out of things you dislike. It will only make them pass quicker.

## 19. People who talk the most say the least.

There is a longstanding suspicion that chatterboxes talk a lot and say little, which is sometimes true. While packed with verbiage, their speech is often devoid of substance. Meanwhile, people who hold their tongue are often lauded for their profound speech.

Take away: Speak to be understood, not to impress or gain attention.

## 20. Cats and toast don't mix.

The infamous [Buttered Cat Paradox](#) is perhaps the most mind-boggling of all.

The premise: Buttered toast is known to fall face down when dropped (Yes, it was determined by physicists.) Cats are known to land right side up, as long as the fall is far enough from the ground. So the question arises: What would happen if we strapped toast (butter side up) to a cat's back, and the poor cat was dropped from several feet up? Some speculate that just before reaching the ground, the kitty would begin spinning indefinitely. However, no one is willing to endanger their cat to find out.



Take away: Nothing. This one can't help you at all.

# 20 Paradoxes That Are True

<sup>6</sup>Some of the most important truths in life are contradictory on the surface. They seem like impossibilities, yet experience proves them to be obvious over and over again. It isn't until you look a bit deeper, beneath the surface contradictions, that the real grains of wisdom emerge. Below are 20 paradoxes I've come across which are, paradoxically, still true:

- 1. The more you hate a trait in someone else, the more likely you are avoiding it in yourself.** Carl Jung believed that characteristics in others that bother us are reflections of the parts of ourselves that we deny. Freud referred to it as “projection.” Most people call it “being an asshole.” For example, the woman who is insecure about her weight will call everyone else fat. The man who's insecure about his money will criticize others for theirs.
- 2. People who can't trust, can't be trusted.** People who are chronically insecure in their relationships are more likely to sabotage them. Call it the *Good Will Hunting* syndrome, but one way people protect themselves from getting hurt is by hurting others first.
- 3. The more you try to impress people, the less impressed they'll be.** Nobody likes a try-hard.
- 4. The more you fail, the more likely you are to succeed.** Insert inspirational famous person quote here. You've probably heard many of them. Edison tried over 10,000 prototypes before getting the lightbulb right. Michael Jordan got cut from his high school team. Success comes from improvement and improvement comes from failure. There's no shortcut around it.
- 5. The more something scares you, the more you should probably do it.** With the exception of genuinely life-threatening or physically harmful activities, our fight-or-

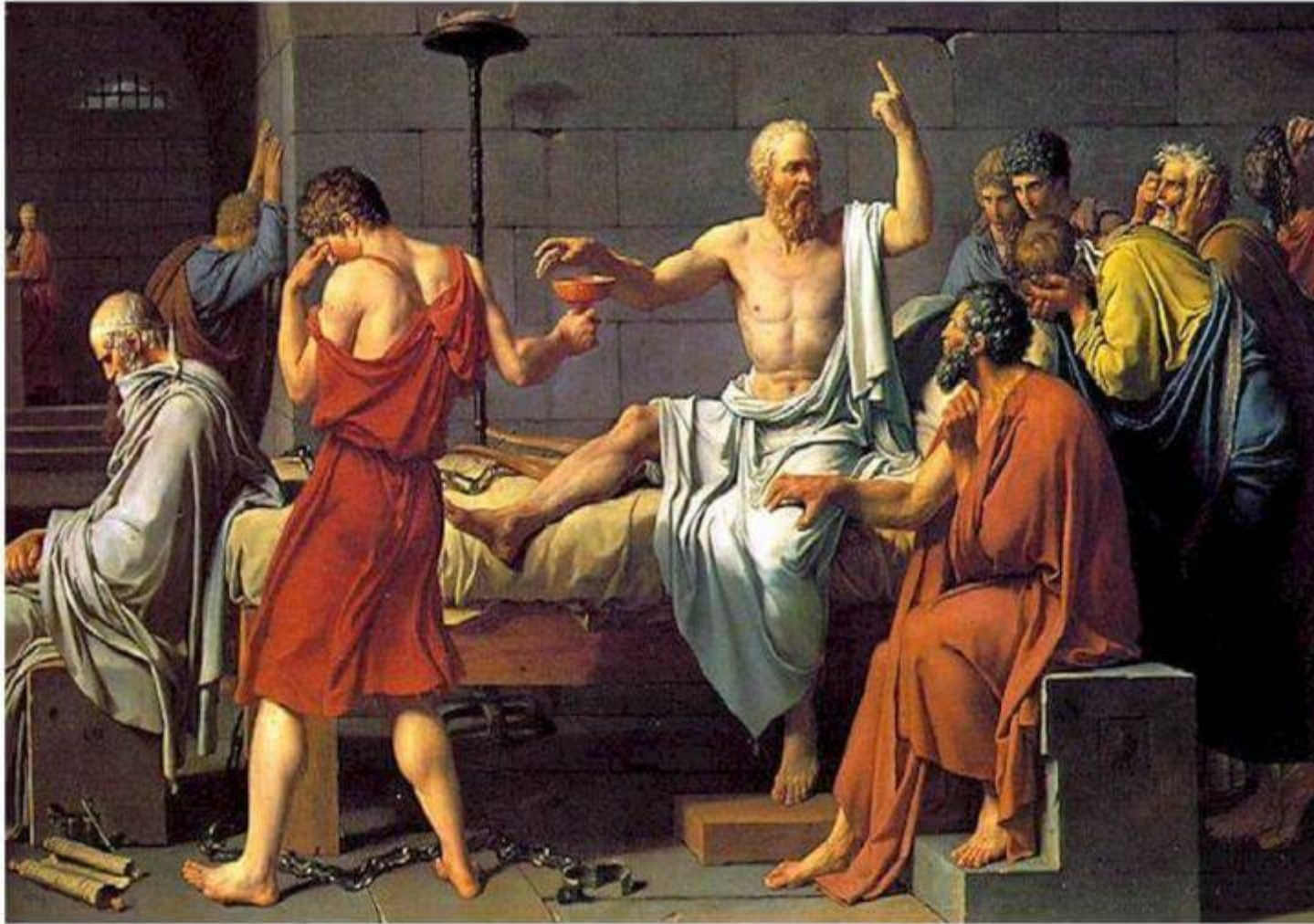
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<sup>6</sup> <https://markmanson.net/paradoxes-that-are-true>

flight response kicks in when we're confronted with past traumas or actualizing the self we dream of being. For instance: speaking to an attractive person, cold-calling someone to get a new job, public speaking, starting a business, saying something controversial, being painfully honest with somebody, etc., etc. These are all things that make you scared, and they make you scared because they are **things that should be done**.

**6. The more afraid you are of death, the less you'll be able to enjoy life.** Or as one of my favorite quotes puts it, "Life shrinks and expands in proportion to one's courage."

**7. The more you learn, the more you realize how little you know.** The old Socrates adage. Every time you gain a greater understanding, it creates even more questions than it answers.



My man Socrates dropping some knowledge bombs about the uncertainty of knowledge. He knew what was up.

**8. The less you care about others, the less you care about yourself.** I know this may go against every perception you've ever had of a self-serving asshole, but people treat people the way they treat themselves. It may not be apparent on the outside, but people who are cruel to the people around them are cruel to themselves.

**9. The more connected we get, the more isolated we feel.** Despite being in more constant communication than ever, research finds an increase in loneliness and depression in the developed world over the past few decades.

**10. The more you're afraid to fail, the more likely you are to fail.** See: self-fulfilling prophecy.

**11. The harder you push for something, the harder it will feel to achieve.** When we expect something to be difficult, we often unconsciously make it more difficult. For instance, for years, I assumed starting a conversation with a stranger was something that was highly abnormal and therefore “difficult.” As a result, I spent a lot of time strategizing and studying ways to relate to people I didn’t know. Little did I realize all I had to do was say “Hi” and then ask a simple question; that would get me 90% of the way there. But because it *felt* hard, I proceeded to make it hard for myself.

**12. The more available something is, the less you will want it.** Humans have a strong scarcity bias. We unconsciously assume things that are scarce are valuable and things that are abundant are not. This is *not the case*.

**13. The best way to meet someone else is to not need to be with someone else.** The defining theme of my *book on dating* was non-neediness and how that plays out in our relationships. The fact remains that the best way to find a sexual relationship — committed or otherwise — is by not needing a sexual relationship to be happy and investing more in yourself.

**14. The more honest you are about your faults, the more people will think you’re perfect.** The amazing thing about *vulnerability* is the more comfortable you are about not being that great, the more people will think you are.

**15. The more you try to keep someone close, the further away you’ll push them.** This is the argument against *jealousy* in relationships: once actions or feelings become obligations, they lose all meaning. If your girlfriend feels obligated to spend her weekends with you, then the time you spend together has become meaningless.

**16. The more you try to argue with someone, the less likely you are to convince them of your perspective.** The reason for this is that most arguments are emotional in nature. They come from someone’s values or self-perceptions being violated. Logic is only used to validate those pre-existing beliefs and values. It’s rarely about the objective or logical truth as much as it is repairing people’s worldviews. For any real debate to truly exist, both parties must be making an honest concession to put their egos aside and only deal with the data. This is rare, as anyone who’s spent any time on an *internet forum* could tell you.

**17. The more choices you have, the less satisfied you are with each one.** The old “paradox of choice.” Research shows that when we’re presented with *more* options, we become *less* satisfied with any particular one we go with. The theory is that when



we have so many options, we have greater opportunity costs to selecting each particular one; therefore, we're less happy with our decision.



Pick one. C'mon, PICK ONE!!!

**18. The more convinced someone is that they're right, the less they probably know.** There's a direct correlation between how open a person is to differing perspectives and how much that person actually knows about any given subject. Or as the philosopher Bertrand Russell once said: "The trouble with the world is that the stupid are cocksure and the intelligent are full of doubt."

**19. The only certainty is that nothing is ever certain.** This realization almost made my head explode when I was 17.

**20. The only constant is change.** One of those little banal statements that *feels* really profound but doesn't actually mean anything. But it's still true!



## 13 Paradoxes You Can Use To Improve Your Life Today

Life isn't as logical as we may think



Photo by [Hans-Peter Gauster](#) on [Unsplash](#)

A lot of the most important truths in life are those that are contradictory on the surface.

While they may appear to be impossible, with time they are often proved right through experience.

I would class myself as a logical person, so when presented with some of these paradoxes I was initially sceptical.

But the truth is, life is often illogical, paradoxical, and just downright strange.

There are a lot of things in life that don't appear to make much sense on the surface. But once you get under their skin and take a closer look, you realise that there is some substance there after all.

Reality is not bound to logic. There are limits to logic, and this is where paradoxes come into play.

There are a number of times I have looked back on events in my life and wondered how things transpired when it would appear they should have turned out differently.

A lot of these moments were due to the paradoxes I describe below. They may be counter-intuitive, but they hold true when they are put to the test.

If you can understand these paradoxes and use to them your benefit, your life will be all the better for it.



### 13. The Pursuit of Happiness makes you unhappy

I have written previously about [my struggles with happiness](#), and whether I will ever achieve it.

I pursued happiness like an addict pursues their next hit. I tried everything to try and be happy, but no matter what I tried, it didn't make happy.

In fact, the opposite happened, it made me miserable.

I was pursuing happiness for the sake of it, there was no meaning behind my pursuit. I just wanted to be happy, but you can't be happy simply by chasing it.

I think the best way to describe happiness is from this quote by Eleanor Roosevelt.

*Happiness is not a goal...it's a by-product of a life well lived.*

### 12. Social media disconnects us from each other

The term social media is misleading.

What is social about sitting at your desk or going through your phone and browsing other people's profiles, or [flicking through your Instagram feed](#)?

Social media is a fantastic way to keep in touch with friends from around the globe, but for that are closer to home, it often drives us apart more than it brings us together.

We are in more constant communication with each other than ever before, but that communication is digital and not face to face.

It's no wonder more and more of us are feeling depressed and isolated.

We need to relearn to connect with each other on a human level, rather than through the medium of social media.

## 11. Solitude makes you more sociable

This is a funny one when you first come across it, but the more you think about it, the more it makes sense.

While solitude may appear to make us less sociable, it is during this time that you learn to be comfortable with yourself.

*This is key to becoming sociable.*

Once you are comfortable being alone with yourself, something a lot of us aren't today, you will have less trouble being comfortable around others.

Time spent alone and reflecting is useful to develop one's self. Once you have done enough of this, you will be yearning to interact with others.

## 10. The only constant is change

Predictions of the future are almost always wrong.

But, if there's one thing that is always true of the future, it's this:

*Things will change.*

You only have to look at the rapid improvement in technology over the past 20 years to see this is the case.

We have gone from phones that had minimal computing power, to phones that are more powerful than most computers 10 years ago!

The rate of change has been phenomenal, and it's not only in regard to technology.

Everything is constantly changing and evolving. While we may think things stay constant over the long-term, this isn't true.

Change is with us whether we like it or not. The sooner we accept it, the sooner we can adapt when it strikes.

## 9. The only certainty is uncertainty

This is related to the above paradox. As we can be certain change is constant throughout our lives, we can also be sure that the future will be uncertain.

No one has been able to accurately the future and I doubt that will change as time progresses.

Whatever happens from now on is impossible to predict. We can make assumptions and informed guesses, but we will never know for certain.

Just look at recent events. Had you asked someone in 2010 whether Donald Trump would be President and the UK would vote to leave the European Union in 2016, they would have looked at you with bewilderment.

But here we are in 2019 and both of those statements are true. There is no telling what the future may hold. While this may seem like a bad thing, it can also be a good thing.

It means we have the ability to shape our future if we make the right decisions today. While the future may be uncertain, we can do our best to make it a good one if we take action.

If we don't, we will be hurtling into the future with no idea of where we are headed.

8. The more choices we have, the harder it is to choose

Whenever I go into a cafe or restaurant to order food, I am always paralysed with indecision over what to get.

There are so many options it can be difficult to decide what to get.

*“Do I order a sandwich?”*

*“I had a burrito the other day, I don’t feel like having one today!”*

*“I better hurry up and order because the person behind the counter is getting annoyed!”*



Photo by [Brian Waak](#) on [Reshot](#)

These are all thoughts that have raced through my mind during these situations and they all relate to one thing, the paradox of choice.

When we are presented with more options, we become less satisfied with those we choose and less able to make a decision.

Due to there being more options, there is a greater opportunity cost associated with selecting a particular item, which makes us less happy with our decision.

Sometimes, less really is more!

## 7. Failure leads to success

Nobody likes to fail, but if you want to be successful, it is necessary.

I remember trying to ride a bike without stabilisers for the first time when I was little. No matter how hard I tried I couldn't keep my balance.

The bike would keep toppling over, and my Dad would have to rush after me to make sure I stayed upright.

This carried on for a few days, before I finally got the handoff it, and was able to ride without any assistance.

*The old adage we learn from our mistakes is true.*

There is nothing wrong with failure as long as you learn from it and apply it to your endeavours in the future.

Success comes from improvement, which comes from failure. The two are intertwined more than you think.

6. Fear of death will impact your enjoyment of life

This is something I have experienced myself.

I remember reading a passage from a book of knowledge that made me shit my pants!

It read:

*When all the hydrogen runs out the universe will die.*

This seems like a silly thing for a 9-year-old child to be worrying about, but worry I did.

So much so, that I was unable to enjoy everyday things because I was worried about an event that was out of my control, and would happen long after I'm gone!

Ironically, when I got hit by a car, the first time, and then the second time, it didn't make me fear death.

I was accepting of it.

The incidents made me realise it would happen one day, and that I should make the most of the brief time I have on this planet.

5. The more you learn, the more you realise how little you know

I have been trying to wrap my head around the world of physics recently.

It is a subject that has fascinated me since I was little, yet my knowledge of the subject is limited at best.

To improve this, I have been reading various articles and books by respected physicists and listening to podcasts that feature prominent scientists in the field.

I thought I had a rudimentary idea of the world of physics, but I was wrong.

*Very wrong.*

It is a complicated, ever-changing world, that has so many foibles and contradictions that are hard to get to grips with as a layperson.



No matter how old we get and how much we think we know, [we will always have blind spots.](#)

This is one of the many beauties of life. There is always something new to learn.

4. The more available something is, the less we want it

Humans have a strong scarcity bias.

We assume because something is scarce it must be more valuable. This is often not the case.

A case in point is clubs. They create the illusion of being places of scarcity, where only select individuals can get in.

However, once we have worked our way through the queue, made our way past the bouncers, and find ourselves inside.

We are often left feeling disillusioned. All that queuing for nothing when it's similar to most other clubs we've been to.

This is because we subconsciously assume things that are abundant are not valuable, whereas those that are less available are.

This is why we dream of owning a Ferrari, why becoming an entrepreneur is all the fashion right now, and why we all wanted that cool toy at Christmas.

We are hardwired to desire those things that are less valuable. Yet, when we get them we are often underwhelmed.

It's important that just because something is scarce does not mean it's valuable.

3. If something scares you, you should probably do it



Photo by [lsr4el ~](#) on [Reshot](#)

Travelling has reaffirmed this paradox to me many times.

There were many things that I was scared to do for some reason or another. Travelling was actually one of them.

*More specifically, travelling abroad by myself.*

I had wanted to go to [backpacking in Australia](#) for as long as I could remember, yet I was too scared to go alone.

It got to a point where I could no longer take working at my job. I paid for the year-long visa, quit my job, and eventually booked my one-way ticket to Australia.

I was petrified the moment I booked the tickets, and I was even more scared once the flight was underway, as I knew there would be no turning back.

My fear of being alone in a foreign country was so strong, I didn't want the plane to land.

However, once I got off the plane and out into Australia, a funny thing happened. I was no longer scared, I was excited. I realised I had to take responsibility for myself and get on with things.

I had an amazing year, and ended living abroad in various for five years afterwards!

Fear only gets smaller the closer, sometimes that's all we need to do.

2. The more you try to keep someone close, the more you will push them away

This comes down to feelings of neediness. No one likes doing something they feel obligated to do.

It may feel normal to want to keep that special someone close to you all the time, but it can make the other person feel as though you are being needy, and that they are obligated to be with you.

When actions or feelings become obligations, they lose all meaning. People want to spend time with you because they enjoy being around you, not because they feel like it's an obligation.

Boundaries in any relationship are important, it's what makes them work. Respecting other people's time and desires, and not forcing them into spending time with you is the way to keep your relationships intact.

Otherwise, you may find them falling apart.

1. Talk less to say more

This is something I used to great effect when I was at university.

I was shy back then, and I wasn't fond of speaking up during seminars. Depending on the topic and the people in my class, I would speak up in certain classes but not others.

During this time I noticed a funny thing.

Those classes where I was more active in speaking my mind, were the ones where people paid less attention to what I saying. Yet, when I spoke in those classes where I rarely spoke, everyone gave me their undivided attention.

I was confused at first, but then I realised why this was the case.

The more we speak, the more comfortable people become around you. They start to form their own assumptions based on what you have said.

Whereas, this isn't the case when you don't say much. It's harder to form a view of someone because we aren't sure what their views are.

Once you do speak up people tend to listen more, because they're eager to hear what they say.

The more we speak, the more our words lose meaning. But, if you let others speak, once you do speak, those words will say more will carry more weight.

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# What Is A Paradox? 20 Famous Paradoxes To Blow Your Mind



Lenard

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<sup>7</sup>The world is full of mysteries, contradictions, and questions that are seemingly impossible to answer. Paradoxes, for instance, are great examples of thoughts that can leave you scratching your head. What is a paradox, anyway? A paradox, sometimes referred to as antimony, is a statement that has a logically sound premise but comes to a conclusion that appears to be senseless, absurd, self-contradictory, or the opposite of the expected outcome. It could be a situation that produces two

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<https://facts.net/paradoxes/#:~:text=The%20liar%20paradox%20or%20liar's,would%20be%20saying%20the%20truth.>

opposite but entirely possible outcomes. Or, it could be as simple as a sentence that contradicts itself, such as “This statement is a lie”. Paradoxes are some of the most unusual quirks of human logic. To better understand them, we’ve compiled a list of some famous paradoxes that will surely blow your mind.

## The Liar Paradox



The *liar paradox* or *liar's paradox* statement is one of the simplest yet most famous paradoxes out there. The statement “this statement is a lie” or “this statement is false” is a paradox because if that statement is indeed a lie, then it would be saying the truth. If the statement is the truth, however, then it would counter the premise that the statement is a lie. This statement contradicts itself and indicates that the statement is both true and false. Weird to think about, isn't it?

Different forms of this paradox have been around for centuries. The Epimenides paradox, for example, existed since around 600 BC. Epimenides, a semi-mythical Cretan seer and philosopher, famously said that “all Cretans are liars.” This would mean that as a Cretan himself, Epimenides is a liar as well if this sentence were true. If Epimenides is lying when he said that statement, however, then it would follow that Cretans would be truthful — but that would mean that Epimenides, a Cretan,



would be lying. This again confirms that Cretans are liars, making the statement true and Epimenides would not be lying. The cycle continues. Scratching your head yet?

Another popular version of the liar paradox is the Pinocchio paradox. In this version, the dilemma arises when Pinocchio says “My nose grows now.” Pinocchio’s nose only grows when he is lying, however, so if the sentence is true, then Pinocchio’s nose will not grow. However, this would mean that Pinocchio is lying, which causes his nose to grow. As Pinocchio’s nose grows now, then Pinocchio would not be lying... which means his nose will not grow, and so on without end. Some have sought solutions to this problem and claim that Pinocchio was not inherently being dishonest — he was simply making a prediction that would turn out to not be true. The prediction that his nose will grow wouldn’t count as a lie, so Pinocchio would not be lying even if he says his nose will grow and it doesn’t.

## The Fermi Paradox



With the vast knowledge we have of the observable universe, scientists say that the Sun is a pretty common star and there are billions of stars similar to it in the Milky Way alone. There’s also a good chance that those Sun-like stars have Earth-like planets orbiting around them. It’s also pretty likely that these stars and planets have been around for much longer than our solar system, so the

evolution of intelligent life and civilizations more advanced than us would likely be possible. These advanced civilizations may have developed interstellar travel already or at least launched probes to study other planets from far away. However, even with the likelihood of all of these circumstances, why hasn't anyone made contact with us yet? Shouldn't their presence be obvious to us by now?

The Fermi paradox presents this problem. If Earth is just one of the billions of planets that have similar conditions, why is it that sentient life seems to be unique to us? The paradox takes its name from the Italian-American physicist Enrico Fermi. While he wasn't the first one to raise the problem, the paradox has ties to his name because of his conversation with fellow physicists Edward Teller, Herbert York, and Emil Konopinski in 1950. In this conversation, while they were talking about UFO sightings and faster-than-light travel, Fermi reportedly asked, "But where is everybody?"

The conflict between the scientific estimates that sentient life is likely common in the Universe and the fact that we don't have any solid evidence of sentient life on other planets still baffles scientists to this day. Some have tried to explain this paradox by arguing that intelligent life outside of Earth is extremely rare and civilizations like these have short lifetimes. Others have suggested that alien life could be so alien that it's completely unrecognizable to us.

## The Unexpected Hanging Paradox



This paradox follows a condemned prisoner that a judge sentenced to death by hanging. The judge tells the prisoner that the executioner will hang him at noon on a weekday in the following week. He also told the prisoner that the day of the execution will be a surprise. Thus, the prisoner will not know the exact day of his execution. He will only know the day of his hanging when the executioner comes knocking on his cell door.

The prisoner, upon hearing his punishment, reflected on it and concluded that he'll be able to escape his execution. Because the execution will happen on a weekday, he argued that his execution can't be on a Friday because the judge told him that the day will be a surprise to him. Therefore, when Thursday passes and he's still alive, he will know that the execution will be on Friday. This means that the day of the hanging won't come as a surprise to him anymore.

After drawing the conclusion that the day of his execution can't occur on a Friday, he reasons further and states that his execution cannot be on a Thursday either. That's because when he's still alive when Wednesday noon passes, then the hanging must be on a Thursday, given that he already ruled out the possibility of a Friday execution. Therefore, a Thursday execution will not be a surprise as well. Using the same line of reasoning, he further argued that the execution also won't occur on a Wednesday, a Tuesday, or a Monday. After making his arguments, he happily went back to his cell. He was confident that the surprise hanging will not happen at all.

When the week of the execution came, the executioner knocked on the prisoner's cell door on a Wednesday. This came as a surprise to the prisoner, who was confident that the execution wouldn't happen at all. Thus, what the judge told him eventually came true.

The unexpected hanging paradox has a lot of other versions, such as those involving a surprise test or pop quiz. Many philosophers also attempted to resolve this paradox, but there is no unanimous

agreement on its nature and resolution. Some even say that it remains a significant problem in philosophy to this day, and that's why it's among the most famous paradoxes!

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## Schrödinger's Cat Paradox



If you're a fan of science, particularly physics and quantum mechanics, then you likely have already heard of Schrödinger's cat. This thought experiment is one of the famous paradoxes that have a profound impact on science.

In this popular paradox, imagine a cat trapped inside a box. Within that same box, there's also an apparatus that will shatter a poison-filled flask if it detects radioactivity (such as when a single atom decays). When the flask shatters, the poison will kill the cat inside the box.

After a while, the flask may or may not have shattered, and the cat may or may not be dead. Until an observer comes along and opens the box, the cat is in a superposition. This would mean that it's

both alive and dead at the same time. When someone opens the box and takes a look, however, the cat will only be one or the other. It would be either dead or alive and not both at the same time.

The Austrian-Irish physicist Erwin Schrödinger first devised this thought experiment in 1935, in a conversation with Albert Einstein. This scenario represents the current leading interpretation of quantum mechanics, wherein a quantum system remains in superposition until scientists measure or observe them. For example, some subatomic particles (such as electrons) behave as both a particle and a wave. This is much like how the cat is both alive and dead at the same time. Upon observation, however, the electrons act as either particles or waves, never both at the same time. This means that the presence of an external observer collapses a quantum system into just one state. Because of its implications on quantum mechanics, the paradox of Schrödinger's cat continues to be a significant part of scientific discussions to this day.

### The Interesting Number Paradox



This paradox is among the silliest and most whimsical of all these famous paradoxes. In this paradox, suppose that you have to classify all natural numbers as either “interesting” or “not interesting”. The paradox postulates that every natural number is interesting in some way, even if you don’t find it interesting. Once you find a number that doesn’t seem interesting, then it becomes

interesting by virtue of it becoming the first number that is not interesting. This then creates a contradiction — a paradox. It's a rather silly paradox at that because of the sheer subjectivity of the concept of "interestingness".

The Interesting Number Paradox famously came up in a conversation between mathematicians G. H. Hardy and Srinivasa Ramanujan about interesting numbers. In the conversation, Hardy reportedly stated that the number 1729 of the taxicab that he'd ridden was rather dull. However, Ramanujan promptly replied that the number was interesting because it is the smallest number that is the sum of two cubes in two different ways. The number 1729, later on, became famous as the "taxicab number" or the "Hardy-Ramanujan number".

Nathaniel Johnston, a quantum-computing researcher, sought to resolve this paradox by defining an "interesting" number objectively. He defined a number as interesting if it appears on the On-Line Encyclopedia of Integer Sequences (OEIS), which contains thousands of integer sequences. Using this definition, Johnston found in 2009 that the first "uninteresting number", or the first number that didn't appear on the OEIS, was 11,630.

## The Crocodile Paradox





This is among the famous paradoxes that are in line with the Liar Paradox. Suppose that a crocodile grabs a young child from a riverbank. The child's parent then asks the crocodile to return the child safely, but the crocodile replies that he will return the child only if the parent can correctly guess if he will safely return the child or not.

Now, if the parent correctly guesses that the crocodile will return the child safely, then there will be no problem. If the parent is wrong, then the crocodile will keep the child. The paradox then arises if the parent guesses that the crocodile will not return the child. If this happens and the crocodile returns the child, then this will contradict the parent's answer and the crocodile will be breaking his promise. Furthermore, if the crocodile does not return the child, then the parent will have correctly guessed the answer and the crocodile should then return the child safely. However, this scenario would then also result in the parent being wrong about the prediction. Therefore, there wouldn't be any justifiable solution for what the crocodile will do.

The Crocodile Paradox dates back to ancient Greece. People in the Middle Ages even used "crocodilite" to refer to a similar dilemma wherein your words are used against you.

### The Lottery Paradox



This paradox originated from Henry E. Kyburg Jr. in 1961. Let's say you buy a lottery ticket just for fun. Assume that there are at least ten million tickets and that the lottery is fair with exactly one winning ticket. Your chances of winning would then be one in 10 million, which you know isn't likely to happen. It's therefore perfectly reasonable to assume that your ticket will lose. It's also perfectly reasonable to assume that the next ticket will lose, too. That goes for the next ticket as well, and the next, and the next, and so on. Your belief that every ticket bought from the lottery will lose will be completely justified by the odds.

Even though you're perfectly reasonable in thinking that every ticket will lose, you *know* that one ticket will win. The problem is this: why is it still reasonable to assume that every ticket will lose, even if you know that one will win? This problem has been around since the early 1960s, and it has opened up a lot of discussions regarding knowledge, rationality, and other philosophical concepts.

### Achilles and the Tortoise Paradox



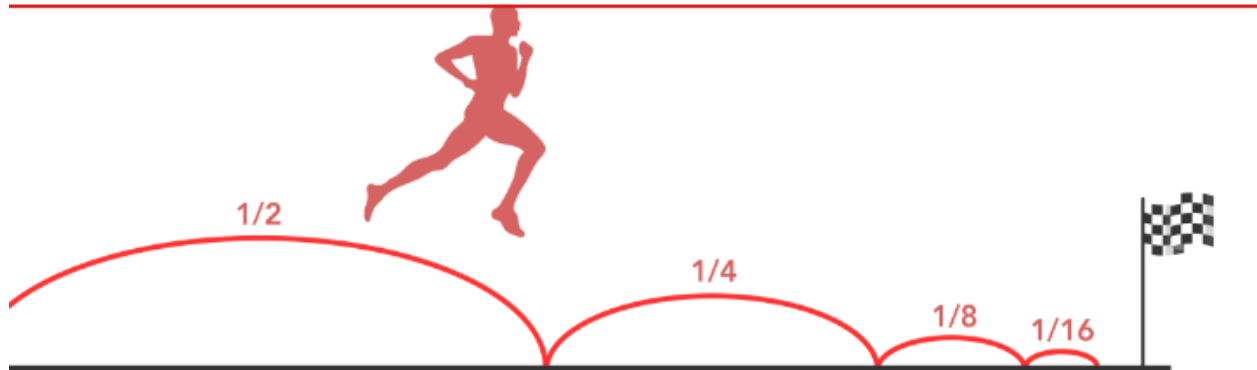
The Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea, who lived in the 5th century BC, is popular for introducing many famous paradoxes. One great example of these is the Paradox of Achilles and the Tortoise. In this paradox, the great mythological warrior Achilles is in a footrace with a tortoise. Because

tortoises are notoriously slow, he agrees to give the tortoise a head start. Let's say the tortoise gets a head start of a hundred feet before Achilles starts running.

Obviously, when Achilles runs, he'll run much faster than the tortoise and will eventually reach the tortoise's starting point of a hundred feet. However, by the time Achilles reaches the hundred-foot marker, the tortoise will have walked about 10 feet further. It will take Achilles a bit more time to reach that point. By that time, the tortoise will have walked a foot further again. Although the distance will become smaller and smaller, Achilles will have to infinitely play catch up with the slow tortoise that's always moving ahead. He can never overtake the tortoise because he will always have some distance left to run to reach somewhere the tortoise has been.

Now, practically speaking, it isn't that hard to outrun a tortoise in real life. However, practicality is not the point of this famous paradox. Instead, this paradox only exists to provide some insight into one of the most fundamental and hardest-to-grasp aspects of mathematics — infinity. Zeno's Achilles and the Tortoise Paradox tackles the concept that there is an infinite distance between two finite numbers. For example, between the numbers one and zero, there exists an infinite number of smaller and smaller numbers (or distances) such as 0.1, 0.01, 0.001, 0.0001, and the list goes on. It's such a mind-blowing concept to think about!

## The Dichotomy Paradox



Like Achilles and the Tortoise, this is another one of Zeno's famous paradoxes. In this paradox, imagine that you'll be walking to reach a certain point down a street — but for you to reach your destination, you would have to walk halfway there. Furthermore, before you walk halfway to the destination, you'd have to walk a quarter of the way there. To reach a quarter of the way there, you'd also have to walk an eighth of the way there, which would then require you to walk a sixteenth of the way there, and so on without end.

This would ultimately mean that to reach a certain point, you would have to do an infinite number of smaller and smaller tasks, which Zeno deems utterly impossible. In this paradox, no matter how small your starting point is, you can always divide the task into smaller and smaller divisions. Therefore, the only way for your starting point to not be halved is to travel no distance at all.

This ultimately concludes with Zeno saying that you cannot travel any finite distance and motion is just plain impossible. Of course, we can see that things do move, but Zeno maintains that things are not as they appear and that motion is merely an illusion. Definitely one of the famous paradoxes that will leave you scratching your head!

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## The Fletcher's Paradox



This paradox is yet another mind-boggling work from Zeno, which begins with an arrow-maker or fletcher. Say a fletcher fires one of his arrows into the air. To prove that the arrow is indeed moving, it needs to continuously reposition itself from the place where it has originated and to any place where it isn't. However, Fletcher's Paradox states that the arrow, all throughout its trajectory flight, is not moving.

During the arrow's flight, any instance of real duration is nonexistent. Simply put, the arrow cannot move to anywhere it currently isn't because there is no time given for it to happen. It also has no capacity to move where it currently is, because it's already in that place. So, for that snapshot in time, the arrow is only stationary. The paradox further states, however, that time is a series of instants, which includes a single panel where the arrow is stationary. With that, we can deduce that the arrow must indeed be stationary through the shot — even when it apparently isn't.

## The Raven Paradox

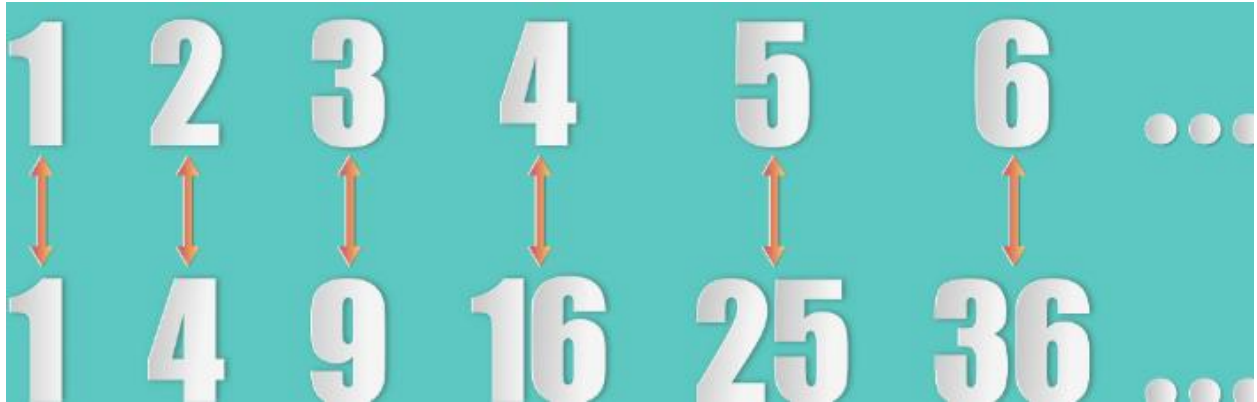


The Raven Paradox is also known as Hempel's Paradox, which is named after a German logician who created the concept in the 1940s. The concept of the paradox is rather straightforward compared to the other statements depicted so far. Hempel postulates a true statement: all ravens are black. This is then supported by a logical contrapositive concept, which means a negative and contradictory statement. Now, we can say that everything that is not black is not a raven.

The idea may seem ludicrous and unnecessary, especially considering the statement already provided that all ravens are indeed black. So, whenever we see a black raven, it supports that everything that isn't black isn't a raven. This then translates to other concepts, such as an orange — if an apple is not black, then it isn't a raven.

So, how is this a paradox? Hempel essentially proves that seeing an orange is already evidence in itself, particularly when it comes to the true statement depicting that ravens are black. Unfortunately, the implications are endless — what else can you pull from this paradox?

## Galileo's Paradox of the Infinite



The renowned Italian polymath Galileo Galilei introduced one of the most famous mathematical paradoxes in his final written work. In his work *Discourses and Mathematical Demonstrations Relating to Two New Sciences* (1638), he discussed his Paradox of the Infinite.

Suppose there are two sets of numbers. One set contains all square numbers such as 1, 4, 9, 16, 25, and so on until infinity. The other set contains numbers that are not squares such as 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and so on until infinity. When you combine these two sets, you will end up with a set with more numbers than just the two sets separately. The total number of squares will surely be less than all the numbers together. However, each positive number only has exactly one square and cannot possibly contain more numbers than the other set.

This paradox left Galileo with the conclusion that concepts such as more, less, and equal only apply to finite sets of numbers. They don't apply to infinite sets. Later works by German mathematician Georg Cantor then drew the conclusion that some infinite sets are larger than others.



## The Unstoppable Force Paradox



You probably already have heard of this paradox because it's certainly one of the most recognizable famous paradoxes out there. The unstoppable force or irresistible force paradox goes like this: "What happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object?" Will the immovable object be moved, or will the unstoppable force be stopped?

This classic paradox involves two indestructible and incompatible things, which makes it complex and mind-boggling. If there is such a thing as an unstoppable force, it should follow that there is no such thing as an immovable object. This is true for the reverse. However, both exist in this paradox, so there's no easy answer to the question.

Like many famous paradoxes, there are many versions of the unstoppable force paradox. One example from China is a story that dates back to the 3rd century BC. In this story, a merchant was trying to sell a spear and a shield. When people asked him how good his spear was, he answered that it could pierce any shield. Then, when people asked him how good his shield was, he replied that it was so strong that it could block attacks from any spear. However, one person came and asked what would happen if he took the merchant's spear and struck the shield with it. The merchant could not answer. This paradox gave rise to the idiom of "zìxiāng máodùn" (自相矛盾) which roughly translates to "from each-other spear shield" or "self-contradictory".

## The Boy or Girl Paradox



This paradox's original version dates back to 1959 when Martin Gardner introduced it in his "Mathematical Games" column in the October 1959 issue of *Scientific American*. Gardner originally called it "The Two Children Problem".

The paradox involves two families: Mr. Jones's family and Mr. Smith's family. Mr. Jones has two kids, the older of which we know to be a girl. What's the probability that the younger child is a girl as well? It should be obvious that the answer is  $\frac{1}{2}$  because the younger child could just either be a boy or a girl. Furthermore, the odds of giving birth to a boy and a girl are essentially equal.

Mr. Smith, on the other hand, also has two kids. At least one of them is a boy. What is the probability that both children are boys? Surprisingly, it's  $\frac{1}{3}$ ! That's because there are actually four possible combinations of children in a two-child family: both boy children (MM), both girls (FF), an older boy and a younger girl (MF), and an older girl and a younger boy (FM). We just know that one of Mr. Smith's kids is a boy, which only leaves us with the possibility of Mr. Smith's children being both boys (MM), just the older child being a boy (MF), and just the younger child being a boy (FM). The odds of those combinations are equal, making it  $\frac{1}{3}$ !

The ambiguity of the question changed the probability. Even today, the paradox continuously generates considerable controversy. Mind-blowing, isn't it? It gets even more complicated with other versions of the problem. The pr when the boy child has a name or if he were born on a specific day of the week.

## Sorites Paradox or the Paradox of the Heap



The sorites paradox, also known as the paradox of the heap, is essentially a concept that happens from what are called vague predicates. The concept usually involves heaps of sand, where the grains are removed individually.

Considering the postulation that removing a single grain cannot turn the sand heap into a non-heap, the paradox then lies in an idea: what happens if the removal happens multiple times, just enough to make sure that only a single grain remains? Does that make a single grain still a heap? If it isn't, at what point did it change into a non-heap? What do you suppose is the answer?

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## The Potato Paradox



This paradox is another one of the famous paradoxes that involve the beauty of mathematics. In this paradox, suppose that a farmer has a sack of potatoes, say 100 lbs of it. He discovers that these potatoes comprise 99% water and 1% solids. The farmer then leaves the potatoes outside to dry under the heat of the sun for a day. When the next day came, the potatoes dried to just about 98% water, but to the farmer's shock, the potatoes only had a weight of 50 lbs. How did this happen with just a 1% drop in water content?

Given that the 100 lbs of potatoes are 99% water, then the weight of the water must be 99 lbs. Also, the weight of the solids must be 1 lb because it makes up just 1% of the 100 lbs. This makes the water-solid ratio 1:99. Once the potatoes have dried to just 98% water, however, the solid compounds now make up 2% of the potatoes' weight. This now gives a new ratio of 2:98 or 1:49. The solids still retain their original weight of 1 lb, so given the new ratio, the water must now have a weight of just 49 lbs. This makes the new total weight of the potatoes just 50 lbs! This result would still hold true as long as you double the non-water concentration. For instance, reducing the water content of the potatoes from 99.999% still would result in halving the potatoes' original weight.

The Potato Paradox is a type of veridical paradox. This means that despite the seemingly absurd result, the theory is logical and perfectly reasonable.

## The Teletransportation Paradox



The Teletransportation Paradox is another one of the most interesting famous paradoxes. It first appeared in published form in the 1984 book *Reasons and Persons* by British philosopher Derek Parfit, but similar questions existed long before then. Imagine that there's a "teleporter" machine on Earth. It puts you to sleep, records your molecular composition, breaks you down into your constituent atoms, and relays that information to somewhere on Mars at the speed of light.

At the receiving end on Mars, a machine recreates your body atom by atom down to the last detail. When that body wakes up, it will have all your memories and all the parts that make you who you are. It even has the smallest of cuts from when you shaved that morning. Now, is the person on Mars still the same person as the one who entered the teleporter on Earth? Is it still the same *you* or did you cease to exist when the teleporter destroyed your physical body?

You could say that your replica on Mars is still the same *you* and that the teletransporter was just a way for you to travel. However, to make things more complicated, let's say the teletransporter became faulty over time. It failed to destroy your original body on Earth. Thus, the machine now just made an exact replica of you on Mars. The replica would have the same memories as you and can claim to be you. It even remembers entering the teletransporter on Earth to travel to Mars! Your Martian self will identify itself with you. Which one is the real *you* in this case?

One related paradox about identity is the Ship of Theseus, which dates back to ancient Greece. In this paradox, the problem is this: If you replace the parts of a ship one by one until it no longer has its original components, is it still the same ship? It's a mind-blowing and a little concerning problem to think about!

### The Grandfather Paradox



Time travel has always been a favorite subject of many. The entire concept of traveling back in time continues to spark debate in the scientific community. Much confusion and theories arise, and all for good reason. Time, after all, is a tricky concept to grasp. A more pressing question, however,

continues to fuel the imagination of countless people all over the world — is time travel even possible?

The French journalist Rene Barjavel spent most of his time pondering on the concept of time travel. In 1943, he proposed an idea: what if a man goes back in time, particularly before his parents were born, and then proceeds to kill his grandfather?

The death of the grandfather means one of the man's parents will never see the light of the day. The man himself also never would have existed. That would mean that there will be nobody who will go back in time to murder the grandfather.

This paradox not only sparks discussion among the scientific community. People who study philosophy also join in on the fun, along with fans of the film trilogy *Back to the Future*. Other people postulate that time travel can be possible through a parallel universe theory, where time travelers can end up creating a separate timeline that branches off the already existing one. There are also other versions of the Grandfather Paradox. One version has this problem: What would happen if you go back in time and kill Adolf Hitler? Definitely among the famous paradoxes that are interesting to think about!



## The Bootstrap Paradox



The Bootstrap paradox is yet another play in time. It essentially questions how something that is taken from the future, to be placed in the past, can never come to exist. It's a common idea used by the science fiction realm, heavily decorating book plots, film concepts, and other more prominent ideas. The most renowned and memorable example of the Bootstrap is *The New Time Travellers*, which was written by Professor David Toomy.

Let's put it this way. Say that William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was taken from a bookstore by the time traveler. The time traveler then goes back in time to give the book to Shakespeare. Shakespeare then pays to make copies of the book, claiming it as his own work. Centuries pass, and *Romeo and Juliet* continues to be printed, produced, and read by countless people. Eventually, it finds its way back to the bookstore, where the time traveler takes it and brings it back to Shakespeare. The question now stands — who actually wrote the drama?

## The Monty Hall Problem



To cap off this list of famous paradoxes, here's another fun paradox: the Monty Hall Problem. The paradox takes its name from the American television game show *Let's Make a Deal*, whose original host was Monty Hall. Statistician Steve Selvin first described the problem in his 1975 letter to the scientific journal *The American Statistician*. It also rose to popularity in 1990 because of Marilyn vos Savant's "Ask Marilyn" column in *Parade* magazine.

In the Monty Hall Problem, you're in a game show and you have to choose among three different doors. There is a brand-new car behind one door and goats behind the other two doors. Let's say that you pick Door #1. The host, who knows where the goats are and where the car is, opens Door #3 to reveal a goat. He then offers you a choice to switch to Door #2. If you want to win the car, should you make the switch to Door #2?

Marilyn vos Savant stated in her column that the player should make the switch. According to her, it increases the chances of winning the car. She wrote that when you make the initial choice, your chance of winning a car is  $\frac{1}{3}$ . When the host opens the door with a goat and offers you the choice to switch, making the switch would surprisingly bring your chances up to  $\frac{2}{3}$ . How does this happen?

When you make your initial decision of Door #1, the chances of you winning your dream car would be  $\frac{1}{3}$ . This means that there will be a  $\frac{2}{3}$  chance that the car is behind some other door. That would be either Door #2 or Door #3 in this case. Since you know that Door #3 contains a goat, the odds remain the same. There is a  $\frac{2}{3}$  chance that Door #2 contains the car. If you don't switch, you still retain your  $\frac{1}{3}$  chance of winning the car. Although you may think that switching does nothing to increase your odds of winning, it actually increases your chances! Mind-blowing, isn't it?

## Paradox

Isn't it a paradox that before we were born we were one with the universe?

When we die we return to the universe.

We once again return back home.

Yet when we are born we are aware of the oneness and then it slowly starts to disappear.

Over time we forget who we truly are.

We forget our true nature.

We think we are alone.

Isn't that a paradox?

Is this a game?

Well, quite frankly I think it is.

This is the greatest game in the universe.

The universe is rooting for us to find our true essence while we are alive.

It takes a tremendous amount of work and effort.

But each day is an incredible journey.

We are learning to transform ourselves.

We are learning to let love, patience, compassion, and tolerance be truly in our life.

Kindness to all.

The list is endless.

The masters have taught moment by moment to be connected to the core of your being.

You can solve this paradox.

# Is Buddhism paradoxical?

- 
- BY [MARK SIDERITS](#)

- APRIL 24<sup>TH</sup> 2016

<sup>8</sup>Buddhist literature is full of statements that sound paradoxical. In *Mahāyāna sūtras*, for instance, we repeatedly find claims of the form, “ $x$  is not  $x$ , therefore it is  $x$ .” This has led to the widespread idea that Buddhism, like some other religions, wants to point us in the direction of a reality transcending all intellectual understanding. But while this view of Buddhist thought may be common, it is rejected by most Buddhist thinkers. For it puts Buddhist teachings perilously close to *Advaita Vedānta*, the Indian school that claims that ultimately all is One. It also calls into question the idea that the Buddha taught the truth when he said that the cause of suffering is ignorance about impermanence and non-self. So for the *Madhyamaka* school, for instance, the point of the paradoxical-sounding statements is just to get us to stop engaging in metaphysical theorizing.

I have long favored this anti-metaphysical (or “semantic”) interpretation of *Madhyamaka*. This is what I had in mind when I said that for *Madhyamaka*, the ultimate truth is that there is no ultimate truth. Of course this itself sounds paradoxical. But this is paradox used ironically (Tom Tillemans calls this the “head-snapper” use): paradox as a rhetorical device that invites us to work out an ambiguity and resolve the seeming contradiction. In the case at hand this goes as follows: the first “ultimate truth” refers to whatever realization brings about final cessation of suffering, the second refers to the idea that there can be a theory that corresponds to the mind-independent nature of reality. And I’ve thought a similar strategy can be used to discharge all apparent contradictions in *Madhyamaka*.

Recently, though, there have been challenges to this way of resolving paradoxes in *Madhyamaka*, with Jay Garfield and Graham Priest proposing a dialetheist reading of *Madhyamaka*. Dialetheists hold that there can be contradictions that are true; they use a paraconsistent logic to prevent the “explosion” that results from the presence of a contradiction when our thinking is governed by the rules of classical logic. Now there is ample evidence that Indian *Mādhyamikas* accept the laws of classical logic. Indeed *Candrakīrti* says somewhere that anyone who accepts a contradiction is “crazy” (*unmattaka*). But Robert Sharf recently told me that Chinese *Madhyamaka* and its successor schools may be more friendly to dialetheism. I don’t read classical Chinese, so I’ll have to limit my discussion to Indian Buddhist philosophy. Could it be that Indian *Mādhyamikas* were wrong to reject the possibility of true contradictions, and that their arguments actually show reality to be, at heart, paradoxical in nature?

Here is a test case. Not just *Madhyamaka* but *Mahāyāna* in general holds that conceptualization is central to the ignorance that keeps us stuck in *saṃsāra*. This can be expressed as the claim that all conceptualization falsifies. Is this claim true? If it is, then since it uses concepts it is also



false. So if these Buddhists are right about the roots of ignorance, then we are faced with a paradox. Is there any way they might get around this?



Seated Buddha Gandhara, by PHGCOM. CC BY-SA 4.0 via [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Seated_Buddha_Gandhara.jpg).

Before I retired from Seoul National University, our department brought François Recanati from Paris to give an intensive seminar on contextualist semantics. There I learned of an approach to the theory of meaning that he calls radical contextualism. We all know that some statements don't have a determinate meaning apart from a context in which they are asserted. The statement, "It's raining here today" only succeeds in saying something – in picking out some state of affairs in the world – when it is spoken at a particular place and time. Radical contextualist semantics says this is true for all statements, not just those containing words like "here" and "now." While we may think we can understand the meaning of a statement without knowing the context in which it is uttered, this is only because we imaginatively fill in a background in which someone might say it. This is not the place to go into the evidence supporting radical contextualist semantics. But suppose it were true. It offers a way to resolve the paradox involved in trying to say that all conceptualization falsifies.

When we utter a statement, we presuppose that there is some mind-independent truth-maker for our assertion. Just what would count as such a truth-maker will vary, however, depending on the interests and cognitive limitations of speaker and audience in a particular context. *Madhyamaka* claims that no known theory about the nature of those truth-makers really works. This is what stands behind their view that conceptualization falsifies. The difficulty comes when we try to say this. To say that all conceptualization falsifies, one must presuppose a mind-independent fact that makes it true – in which case there would be at least one such truth-maker. One may be able to demonstrate that what counts as doing the grounding in one context stands in need of further grounding in some other. But we cannot look for a demonstration that this holds universally. Radical contextualism explains why this should be. To ask for such a demonstration is to ask for an assertion that holds across all possible contexts – something the radical contextualist claims there cannot be. That there are no ultimate truth-makers is something that perhaps can be shown, but it cannot be said.

I once decided to call work that brings two philosophical traditions into dialogue in order to help solve philosophical problems "fusion philosophy." Others don't like "fusion," and use "confluence" instead. In most cases of fusion or confluence philosophy, there's an attempt to show that ideas from an Asian philosophical tradition can be used to help solve a problem arising in current philosophical thought. The present case is different: radical contextualism is a modern theory being recruited to help solve a problem arising in Buddhist philosophy. This sort of confluence is something we should look to see more of in the future.

*Featured image credit: Confluence of the Tolminka and Zadlaščica, by Paul Asman. CC BY 2.0 via [Flickr](#).*

*Mark Siderits' research interests lie in the intersection between classical Indian philosophy on the one hand, and analytic metaphysics and philosophy of language on the other. He received his PhD from Yale University, and taught first at Illinois State University and then at Seoul National University, retiring from the latter in 2012. He is the author of [Studies in Buddhist Philosophy](#) (OUP, 2016). For more about "confluence" efforts to use modern tools to clarify issues in Madhyamaka Buddhist thought, see the podcasts from the [New Madhyamaka](#) project. For more about how to resolve the conceptualization paradox, see Chapter 8 of *Personal Identity and Buddhist Philosophy: Empty Persons* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015).*



## Paradoxes in Buddhism

— last modified Feb 16, 2011 04:29 PM

**<sup>9</sup>Buddhism is full of paradoxes, and many of them are germane to Japanese nature writing. Here is an outline of some of those paradoxes.**

### *Action*

If the goal of Buddhism is to have no desires, how does one act—would one starve?

- **“Preferences only.”** An enlightened Buddhist does prefer some things over others—such as eating rather than starving. But a Buddhist is not attached to that preference and so is not troubled if s/he doesn’t obtain the preference. “Desire” = preference plus attachment.
- **“Free spontaneity.”** An enlightened Buddhist acts on her true nature, which responds spontaneously to changing circumstances. “If you’re hungry you eat; if you’re tired you sleep.”

### *Emotion*

What happens to emotions in enlightenment? Aren’t emotions a result of desires and dis-ease? Is an enlightened Buddhist devoid of all emotions?

- **“Dispassion” tradition.** Emotions are a result of attachments. The goal is to have no desires.
- **“Free flow” tradition.** Emotions themselves are not the problem. The problem is that we have desires and aversions about our emotions. If we don’t resist or hold onto the emotions, if we become one with them, they flow naturally through us. This does not disturb enlightenment. This is true at least for some emotions (e.g., joy or sorrow) but maybe not others (e.g., rage) because by nature they signify

emotions *and* desires/aversions. The point is that you can have emotions and remain content and tranquil.

### *The bodhisattva paradox.*

The bodhisattva is an advanced Buddhist who turns away from trying to achieve her own enlightenment and works on behalf of all those who suffer: "sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them." This is based on *compassion*: "he who hears the cries of all that suffer." But wouldn't such openness to massive suffering lead to desires and aversions—or numbness? Only by remaining content can one remain open to the suffering of others. Therefore true compassion involves contentment.

### *Reality and illusion*

Is what we call reality an illusion? Doesn't Buddhism say that it is illusion, but don't they also talk of seeing things as they are? Tension: poets write about their experiences of reality, but in some sense reality is not quite real.

- "Illusion". Yes, reality is an illusion. A recognition of this fact helps you remain unattached to circumstances, enabling you to attain tranquility.
- "Delusion." No, the problem is delusion—a quality of our state of mind and consciousness. Reality is really there. We simply misinterpret it, in particular because

- o we falsely believe that we are a self separated from the rest of the world
- o we see life as made of individual things rather than a web of interrelationships
- o we think of things as unchanging rather than always in process.

These delusions distort reality in our minds and lead to desires and suffering. Enlightenment is a state in which those delusions are gone, along with desires and aversions. Then one sees reality as it really is. "Thusness."

### *Desiring enlightenment?*

We are stuck in our deluded and attached state of mind. How can one break out that state unless one has desires? And if one does have desires, wouldn't that keep one from obtaining enlightenment?

- "Unattached preferences."
- "Free spontaneity."
- "Pulling the rug out." You start out with intense desire, which establishes intense and full focus on achieving enlightenment. When this is firmly established, one jettisons the desire and enters a complete and total focus on the present, which is enlightenment.

### *What is the relationship between delusion and enlightenment?*

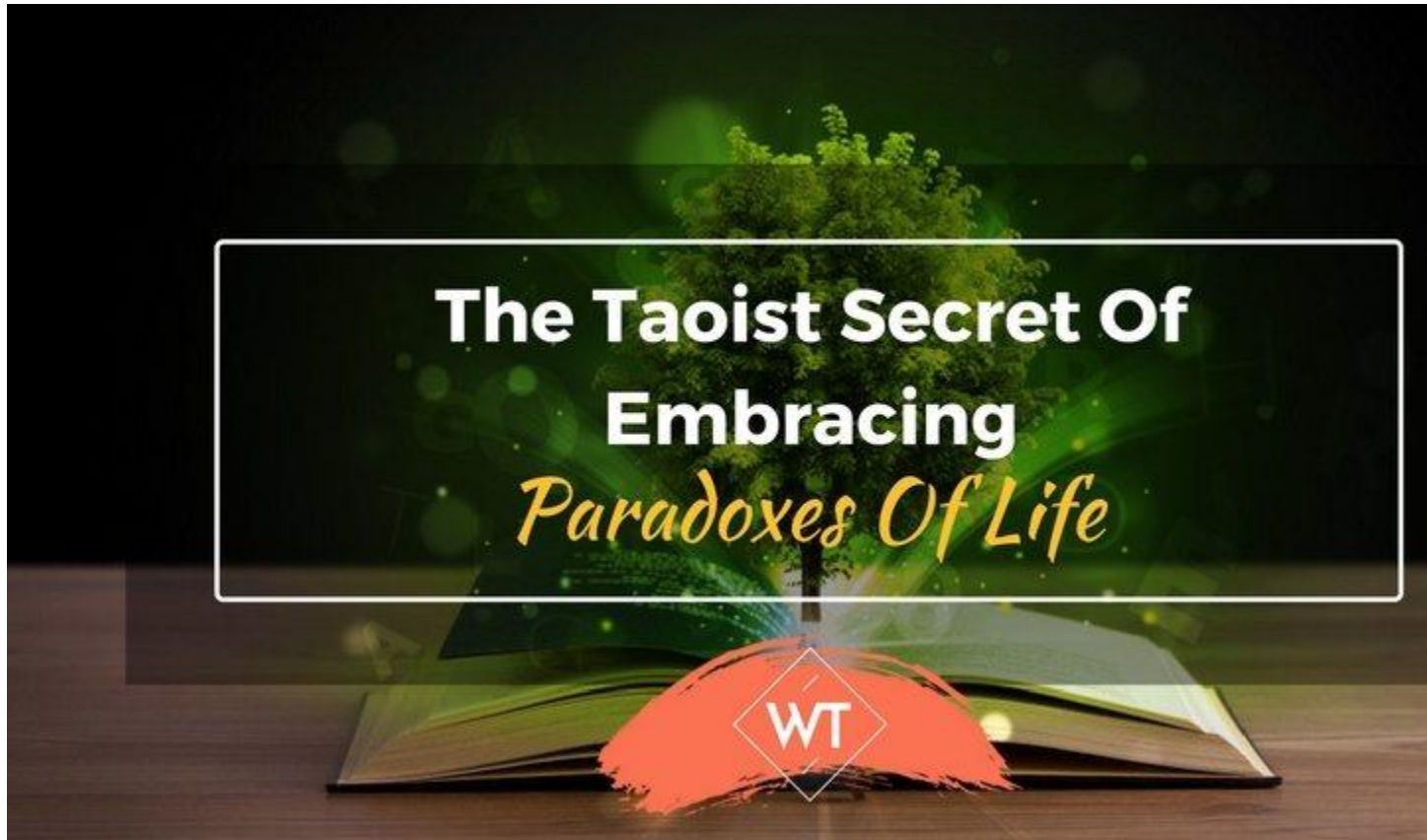
The cause of suffering is delusion. Delusion arises out of dualistic thought, including the dualism involved in desiring enlightenment. How can you affirm the distinction between delusion and enlightenment (necessary to get you on the path) and deny that duality which keeps you deluded?

- "Original enlightenment." You are all Buddhas right now. The problem is that you think you have a problem. The goal is to recognize that you have always been Buddha. The process is one of subtraction: getting rid of that distinction between being deluded and being enlightened.
- "Perfect and complete." (*This is not an alternative to original enlightenment, only a corollary to it.*) Our delusions make us think that life can be better. This leads to desires and attachments. The goal (and the process) is to realize that this moment or any moment is perfect and complete as it is.

*>> Note: "perfect and complete" is like a code word for ridding yourself of judgments or expectations, desires or aversions. One gives total attention to the present.*

# The Taoist Secret Of Embracing Paradoxes Of Life

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<sup>10</sup>When I was studying Philosophy as an undergraduate, I remember spending many hours and days trying to digest Ancient Greek Philosophy, particularly an academic topic called the pre-Socratic Philosophers. These ancient philosophers such as Miletus, Zeno, Pythagoras, Heraclitus and many others were mostly concerned about the nature of stuff and Cosmology but somehow these guys came up with a lot of mind-boggling paradoxes.

It was through these ancient thinkers that I first got acquainted with the paradoxes of life, the universe and reality.

## Enter the Tao Te Ching

However it was many years later until I truly appreciated and understood how true wisdom and understanding comes from embracing the paradoxes of life. This appreciation came to me through reading the 2000-year-old Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu. The Tao Te Ching is without any doubt the most important single-authored book in history. Short and cryptic at times, its eighty verses are the crystallization of pure wisdom

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.wisdomtimes.com/blog/paradoxes-of-life-the-taoist-secret/>

and insight. Reading the Tao Te Ching was a breakthrough in my life—a kind of opening to a new level of understanding.

Lao Tzu's wisdom goes deep to unravel the mysteries of the Tao or 'The Way' – the path that leads the sage within us to fulfillment, abundance, happiness and an effortless life. This wisdom is very often conveyed through paradoxes or seemingly paradoxical thinking. Yet these paradoxes are not meant to be intellectual push-ups or brain-teasers, but rather to transcend beyond the mind and allow insight about the true nature of things and ourselves.

According to Lao Tzu, the wise (or the sage) embraces the paradoxes of life – or rather, embraces the paradoxical nature of reality – because by doing so one goes beyond the trappings of the mind and the illusions of the ego.

But what are paradoxes exactly and why is it a good thing to embrace them in our practical day-to-day life? Well put crudely a paradox is a sentence which includes two or more seemingly irreconcilable concepts, for example opposites like dark and light, soft and hard, wet and dry. When we try to read and understand a paradox with our left-brain logical thinking and with our conventional understanding of how the world usually works, we end up at a loss. We would fail to grasp the hidden, deeper meaning inside the paradoxical sentence, which often is meant to actually help us leap outside this logical and conventional thinking. So this is one very important use of paradoxical thinking in philosophical thought. They are like a high jump poles that allow us to leap beyond our limited view of the world and acquaint us with some deeper meanings of life.

To give a simplistic example, imagine I tell a child that she needs to be like water, which is both soft and hard at the same time, penetrable yet contained, gentle yet can carve through rock, etc. Perhaps this would sound quite paradoxical for a child since she is still learning the idea of opposites in the world and that they are what they are – opposites. So how can they both be properties of the same thing? Yet for a grown-up, who has a wider experiential viewpoint, the idea is less paradoxical and he or she can appreciate the subtle truth in the sentence.

## The second verse and paradoxical unity

A good example of this is the second verse from the Tao Te Ching – a verse which I am quoting in full below because it is explicitly about why we should live with and embrace what Lao Tzu refers to as '**Paradoxical Unity**'.

**NOTE:** The Tao Te Ching has been interpreted by scholars and translators throughout the years and there exists a good number of these translations which have different undertones and overtones. I am quoting from Wayne Dyer's book "Change your Thoughts, Change your Life" which I believe is one of the most inspiring books in the personal development world. A must read.

"Under heaven all can see beauty as beauty,

only because there is ugliness.

All can know good as good because there is evil

Being and non-being produce each other.

The difficult is born in the easy.

Long is defined by short, the high by the low,

Before and after go along with each other.

So the sage lives openly with apparent duality  
and paradoxical unity.

The sage can act without effort  
and teach without words.

Nurturing things without processing them,  
he works but not for rewards;  
he competes but not for results.

When the work is done, it is forgotten.

This is why it lasts forever.”

The second verse of the Tao Te Ching is still relevant—perhaps more relevant now—to our present day society. We live in a world in which we are programmed with a belief system that works with duality and judgment. All our thinking is embedded in duality and judgment. Pain or pleasure, pleasant or unpleasant, sage or risky, soft or hard and so on. We judge or label a person or life situation with any of these preconceived ideas.

## The problem of duality and judgment

However this duality and judgment often brings with it problems and limitations. It makes us pigeon-hole things according to ideas we have already formed about similar things or situations. Now, when things do not fit in our pigeon-holes we feel disconcerted, in conflict with ourselves and the world and sometimes at a loss about what to make of it.

The lesson from this verse is that we have to first **transcend beyond the apparent duality** and embrace the paradoxical unity of everything. Duality is just a mind construct—a default in our program, so to speak. Seeing beyond this dualistic view of the world and more importantly, embracing it in our living, we bring with it peace, clarity and a deeper understanding and acceptance in our lives. When we do this we can ‘act without effort’ and nurture things without needing to process them. Seeing beyond the limits of apparent duality will allow us to flow with nature and rise beyond inner conflict. This is the key principle behind Taoism.

**PRACTICE:** I recommend that you try to incorporate this idea in your daily life through observation and witnessing. Try to be an observer and witness of how you perceive duality in life. For example, try to catch yourself passing a judgment or labeling something even when they are just thoughts and not expressed verbally. Stop for a few seconds and think why you are judging a person or situation as being so and so. You will find that one reason is that you have a preconceived idea of how someone or something should be. Another reason comes from the idea of duality – ugly and beautiful, cool and uncool, coward and adventurous, and so on. We don’t often see duality thinking because it is deeply rooted, so just by observing it we can be impartial witnesses of how this way of seeing things arises. The more you observe yourself and others, the more you start naturally transcending beyond this duality thinking. The result? Openness, wisdom, clarity and inner peace.

## Living without goals: A modern-day paradox?

Another thing to mention is that we are goal-oriented creatures. We believe that everything we do has to take us somewhere or make us achieve something. But what Lao Tzu is telling us is that because the sage can live beyond duality and judgment then he or she works for no rewards and competes but without seeking results.

This of course seems paradoxical to people living in modern-day society because everyone is used to working hard and competing to achieve some end or be better than others. It is inconceivable that people put effort without seeking a reward of some sort. But again this is the thinking that Lao Tzu is inviting us to go beyond—if we are to seek harmony with ourselves and the world. Paradoxical as it may sound, it is possible to work for no rewards or results because the type of work that Lao Tzu points at comes from living out our inner passion and being in harmony with ourselves rather than following an idea, goal or belief handed down to us by society.

Since we would have seen beyond the apparent duality and embraced the paradoxical unity, our way of thinking changes and widens. We are no longer enslaved by goals that are not authentically ours. We flow in harmony with our true nature and hence we are more prone to succeed because we are not driven by external goals (at least not *only*) but rather from our own inner nature.

**PRACTICE:** Take some time to list some of the goals you have or are working on. Could be long-term or short-term goals. Try to make an honest assessment of why you are following those goals. Is it because they are a want or a need? Is it because society (your family, peers, authorities) see this as successful or is it because you think it is your personal success or something that is aligned with your life passion? Try to just observe the difference between these type of goals and how they have affected you in the past. What gave you the greatest fulfillment, happiness and feeling of being ‘there’?



## Paradoxes of life: A final comment

It takes some time to process this idea Lao Tzu has tried to convey more than two-thousand years ago but it is an idea that it is important to be open to.

If we are to truly move beyond our limitation and conflicts then we first have to start seeing things differently. Rather than seeing life in terms of opposites and contradictions, we come to be at one with the paradoxes of life, the paradox of unity and non-duality (pun unintended!). Pin2



## About the Author

### [Gilbert Ross](#)

Gilbert Ross is a researcher, blogger, philosopher and online media expert. He teaches personal development topics through workshops and the online media, particularly about positive life transformations and unfolding the human potential.



### Taoism's Paradoxical Path of Power and Enlightenment

5.6K views • 1 month ago



In this podcast, we will explain Taoism's paradoxical path of power and enlightenment. This is the thirty-third episode of the 81 ...



Introduction | Tao Te Ching Chapter 33 | Reincarnation and immortality in Taoism | Taoism's... 15 chapters ▾

22:13



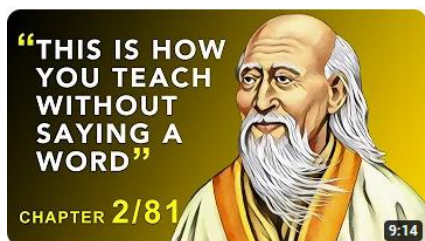
### The Taoist Concept of 'Paradoxical Unity' - Part 1

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15:01



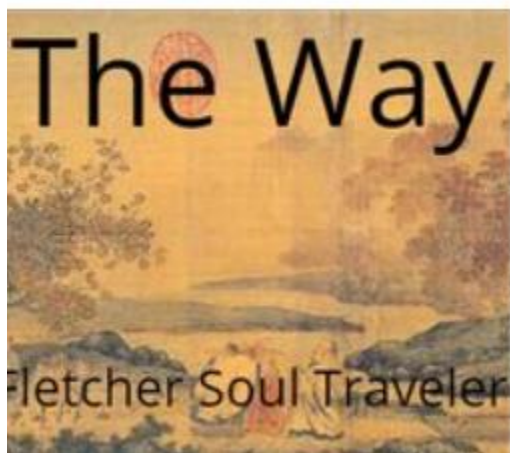
## Living the Paradoxical Unity - (Tao Te Ching) Chapter 2

230 views • 2 years ago



Awakening Entrepreneur

Tao Te Ching consists of 81 chapters. It can be read from the first to the last chapter as a typical book but it is not necessary to do ...



[PDF](#)

## Even Lao Tzu Walked Away

We think we have political problems today.  
Well in China many moons ago Lao Tzu walked away.  
China had the same problems we did.  
Man lost the way.  
Man wouldn't listen to the great masters.  
So eventually Lao Tzu walked away.  
He was stopped in the forest near the border.  
The monks knew that he was going away.  
They pleaded for him to give some final wisdom.  
The Tao Te Ching was born.  
This precious book is still alive today  
We think we know ourselves.  
I'm John or Susie.  
Yet we are so much more.  
Only you can find your true nature.

# A SPIRITUAL PARADOX JAINISM AND THE ARMY

Jai Jinendra!

<sup>11</sup>We as Jains mostly associate the Army and Armed Forces with violence, death, and destruction. But, you will be surprised to know that despite many of the negative and violent stereotypes, The Army has taught me how to become more in touch with my own spirituality and the Jain Religion. Hence, a true paradox.

The theme of this article will revolve around how Jainism has allowed to me to become a better leader in my organization and how The Army has allowed me to harness the fundamentals of the Jain Religion and apply them to everyday leadership challenges. From a cadet at West Point to the second-in-command of a Bridge Company, the fundamental principles of Jainism have allowed me to create a personal ideology to achieve success as a Soldier and as a leader.

The first phase of leadership starts with YOU! In order to become a successful leader, you must look within yourself and constantly analyze, “how can I improve myself?” When new cadets first enter the doors of West Point on “Reception Day”, they are stripped of their possessions, shaved bald, and stripped of their individuality with the goal of full indoctrination. There are very specific rules for eating, walking, and behaving that remind young new cadets that they are no longer individuals, but part of a much larger and greater team, The United States Army. This was the crucible moment where learned why the Jain Religion preaches Non-attachment (Aparigraha) to living and non-living entities. I came to realize very quickly that my own being as a human is of very little significance in the larger universe, leading me to find my own greater purpose on Earth, which was in the service of the nation. As time continued to pass, I became more and more unattached from material possessions and began to focus on more important aspects of life, like what I could do to become a better, more efficient, and knowledgeable leader for my troops.

I also began to introspect; at West Point, first year cadets are forbidden from speaking outside of the classroom or dorm rooms for the entirety of the school year, the result of this is a developed ability to contemplate and analyze one’s own self and allow the fusion of mind and body. We Jains practice what is known as “moan-vrat”; a few minutes of internal reflection in silence will allow you to

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<sup>11</sup> <https://youngjainprof.wixsite.com/young-jain-prof/single-post/2017/04/22/a-spiritual-paradox-jainism-and-the-army>

listen to the world. People have a lot to say and there are many problems that need solutions! With self-improvement comes self-discipline or “samyama”. This important Jain principle teaches us to control our urges and exercise the mind and body daily. Once you’ve taken control of all self-pleasing desires, you can discern needs from wants and begin the process of becoming a true leader.

The next phase of leadership affects those that we come in direct contact with on a daily basis. Once you’ve realized your own self-being, you can begin to change your surroundings and give back. One of my biggest reasons for attending West Point and joining The Army was my genuine intrinsic desire to serve the nation. I’ve been granted the privilege of being an American citizen and have enjoyed the privileges and luxuries therein. The people I serve and come in direct contact with on a daily basis are the men and women assigned to my platoon. As a platoon leader, I’m given charge of a sizeable force of 40-50 Soldiers of all races, religions and ethnicities.

As their leader, I’m responsible for their welfare before my own. I am accountable for their training, discipline, equipment, and general well-being. This opportunity was given to me at a very early stage in my life and by age 25 I’ve had to deal with such issues as DUIs, public intoxication, unpaid child support, domestic violence, drug use, marital problems, health problems, and suicide within my unit. At such a young age, I haven’t had the experience to deal with such issues, so I fell back upon what Jainism had taught me. The most important Jain principle that allows us to deal with and solve problems relating to others is that of “Anekantvad”. “

Anekantvad” is the theory of multiplicity of views that states, “no single point of view is the complete truth, yet when taken together, they comprise the complete truth”. How then, as leaders do we develop the ability to view problems from multiple angles? We care of others and empathize by understanding and sharing in their feelings. Over time this develops into the ability to see situations from several points of view to make the best decisions. In order to develop a strong sense of “Anekantvad” we must realize that every situation and problem will have many different views and angles, and we must be able to analyze and examine every single one. We must also develop a strong sense of compassion, known as “Daya”, which entails universal friendliness (“Maitri”), universal forgiveness (“Kshama”), and universal fearlessness (“Abhaya”). Applying these fundamental

principles to everyday occurrences allows us to make a positive impact in our surroundings and in the lives of the people we work with every day.

The final phase of my leadership model is the transformation from a leader in the community or the workplace to a global agent of change. My experience in this final phase is limited to my experience as a platoon leader deployed to the Republic of Korea, but the fundamental lessons I've learned are very applicable. To make any sort of difference or change outside of our community and circles we must gain a certain degree of credibility. Credibility is derived from character; develop your character by finding a unique set of values that defines YOU. My values have stemmed from those taught to me as a disciple of Jainism, and as a Soldier and leader in the Army.

My unique set of values have allowed me to become a leader, yet maintain a strict adherence to the fundamental principle of Ahimsa or non-violence. This has allowed me to develop credibility. The U.S. Army is as successful and sought after for assistance because it has gained a great amount of credibility in the world by adhering to a stringent set of values and ethics. We as Jains have gained credibility by strictly adhering to Ahimsa; we are known as a benevolent group of people that will never seek to harm anyone.

Ahimsa is the baseline characteristic of a Jain and it's the underlying value that gives us and our religion credibility. The bottom line is that people who don't know you personally will only trust you once you've developed the right amount of credibility, which stems from character, which further stems from the values, ethics, and morals that define you as a person.

In conclusion, these are the lessons that I've learned and adopted that have allowed me to become a successful person, successful leader in my organization, and to some degree, a global agent of change. This is not an end-all, be-all solution for becoming a successful leader, but rather fundamental truths that guide us. You must do your own personal self-reflection and examine what works best for YOU.

**Raj Kankaria**



1LT Raj Kankaria is a native of Houston, TX. He attended the United States Military Academy from 2009 to 2013 and graduated with a B.Sc. in Civil Engineering. He then commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Army Engineer Regiment. 1LT Kankaria was then posted to Fort Leonard Wood, MO to attend the Engineer Basic Officer Leadership Course.

In April 2014, 1LT Kankaria was posted to Fort Hood, TX and assigned to the 74th Multi-Role Bridge Company where he was given charge of a 53 man Engineer Support Platoon.

He has served a tour of duty in the Republic of Korea from 2015-2016 as a bridge platoon leader, participating in various combined exercises with the Korean Army. Upon return to Fort Hood, 1LT Kankaria was reassigned as the Company Executive Officer or second-in-command of the 183-man bridge company. 1LT Kankaria, along with his Army duties, teaches Patshalah to 11th and 12th grade students at the Jain Society of Houston, and has given a presentation at YJA 2016 about his experiences as a Jain serving in the U.S. Army. Jain values and fundamentals have played a huge role in his success as a leader in the Armed Forces, and he uses Jainism as a guide for leading a well-balanced and disciplined lifestyle.

## Conscientiousness

The definition of conscientiousness is as follows.

: the condition or quality of being conscientious

Apparently, the secret to a happy, healthy adulthood is learning early on to deal with disappointment and developing character traits—persistence, curiosity, conscientiousness, optimism, and self-control—to surmount it.

– Deanna Pan

Not surprisingly, they have found that people blessed with innate conscientiousness, meaning that they are organized and predictable, typically eat better and live longer than people who are disorderly.

– Gretchen Reynolds

This trait is an incredible trait to cultivate.

When a person is conscious of his actions his life blooms like a flower.

His actions come from his heart and wisdom within.

Most of humanity is driven by the subconscious mind.

In fact, over ninety-five percent of our actions come from it.

One can be innocent as a child and have great wisdom.

Great wisdom comes from discovering the jewel within.

A conscientious person blames no one for his problems.

His mind is calm and peaceful.

A person who hasn't developed this trait tends to live life out of control.

This person tends to grasp at straws.

It's like the engine of life is backfiring.

The spark plugs are not in sync.

Life is extremely challenging.



Remember the more you pay attention to something the more attention it will pay to you.

This trait can be cultivated over time.

Life is free-flowing yet we must pay attention to our thoughts and actions.

In each and every moment we must fine-tune the guitar of life.

To be an incredible guitar player one must make a great effort.

To master the guitar of life we must practice in each and every moment.

Mind you this takes an innocence of a child to do.

Yes, this is a paradox.

Life has many paradoxes.

Ponder this over.

It can and will take you far on this journey of life.

## Sudoku

My wife loves to play Sudoku.

It's one of her hobbies.

She started with the easy ones and worked her way to the most challenging ones.

At each step, she learned when an obstacle comes her way to walk away.

Answers come in stillness.

It seems like when the mind is relaxed the answer is like a bubble coming to the surface.

At each level, this happens.

If she tries to use brute mental force to solve the problem, the answer never comes.

It seems like we need to take action and at the same time no action.

Yes, that is a paradox.

We don't learn that in our schools.

Our school systems are all about rote memory.

It doesn't teach us to think.

We can learn how to make our actions more Zen-like.

Zen-like is being conscious of the now in each and every moment.

It's easy to say.

It's the latest buzzword.

Advertisers love to use it.

It brings up the unknown.

Just think this state of awareness is your true nature.

Yet we are texting on the freeway of life.

I'm astonished

I'm astonished.

The signpost of God is everywhere.

Yet we don't have the eyes to see.

What a paradox!

We are on the freeway of life.

Many people are texting on the phone and miss the sign saying road work ahead.

Consequently, they hit a huge bump on the road going seventy miles per hour.

This causes major suffering yet we keep on texting.

Many people get detoured from the highway of life.

They drown their miseries in drugs and alcohol.

Look I'm not saying to use them.

There is always a time for celebration.

Yet be in control, not the other way around.

People are dying every day.

They didn't mean to die yet they did.

How did the fish drown in the water?

How does chaos exist when signposts are all around us?

Mystics have been talking about this for thousands of years.

Mind you the mystics don't quarrel with each other.

They know that each one has a custom experience of the source of life.

The funny thing is so do you.

## Silence Is Your Friend Or Foe

Silence is either your friend or foe?

For many people, silence is deafening.

A moment in silence brings one into a state of agony.

Solitary confinement can bring a person to be insane.

Yet for a mystic it brings liberation.

Just think it could be the same room yet for one it brings liberation while the other goes insane.

Many people find it extremely uncomfortable to be in a room with absolute silence.

One must have the radio blaring or the TV on.

For them, silence has not been cultivated.

Silence is a state of mind.

If you love silence it is your friend.

If you don't know silence is your foe.

Silence is living in the center of the hurricane.

In this state all is calm.

This is your natural state of being.

When silence is your foe you are like leaves blowing in the wind.

We are scattered.

We are happy in one moment and discouraged in the next moment.

Silence has infinite levels of existence.

It is an infinite well within.

A wise man can be in silence and yet be talking to you.

That's quite the paradox for most  
Yet for the mystic life is a paradox.  
He places his concentration on the unknown.  
The unknown becomes the known.  
In that state one just smiles at life.  
He has nothing to say or prove.  
The world would be heavenly if we all had this state of mind.  
The kingdom of heaven lies within.  
If I could give you any advice it would be the following.  
Love to love the silence inside of you.  
Make it your friend.  
Your life will be much better and clearer.

## God Speaks Thru Silence

We pray to God.

God listens.

God speaks thru silence.

Then how can we listen?

Meditation brings one to a state where one can listen to the unspoken word.

That may seem like a paradox.

Unfortunately, we haven't been trained this way.

We can live with our feet on the ground and our heads in heaven.

This is our true nature.

Our minds are like a tuning forks.

Whatever it touches it vibrates at that frequency.

We all vibrating with chaos.

Just turn on the news.

A wise man trains to vibrate with the frequency of silence.

This is where God speaks to you.

Love is the doorway to this precious communication.

Everyone on earth can do this.

No one will be denied.

A person can change their habits in 30 days.

Maybe, just maybe you can try to do this.

You will stumble and fall.

Curveballs will be thrown your way.

That's called life.

When you fall just smile and pick up yourself from the ground.

Dust yourself off and take another tiny step.

That's all that is needed.

One baby step after another.

Remember Rome was not built in a day.

To truly change takes time but it is so worth it.

In the beginning, you meditate on God.

At some point, God will meditate on you.

What you pay attention to you will pay attention to you.

That is a universal fact.

## Earth's Quietest Place Will Drive You Crazy in 45 Minutes

Inside the room it's so silent that the background noise measured is actually negative decibels

**Rose Eveleth**

Contributor

December 17, 2013

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Credit: Jonathan Haerber

Everybody seems to be looking for a little peace and quiet these days. But even such a reasonable idea can go too far. The quietest place on earth, an anechoic chamber at Orfield Laboratories in Minnesota, is so quiet that the longest anybody has been able to bear it is 45 minutes.

Inside the room it's silent. So silent that the background noise measured is actually negative decibels, -9.4 dBA. Steven Orfield, the lab's founder, told Hearing Aid Know: "We challenge people to sit in the chamber in the dark – one person stayed in there for 45 minutes. When it's quiet, ears will adapt. The quieter the room, the more things you hear. You'll hear your heart beating, sometimes you can hear your lungs, hear your stomach gurgling loudly. In the anechoic chamber, you become the sound."

[Report an ad](#)

But the room isn't just for torturing people. Companies test their products in it to find out just how loud they are. And NASA has sent astronauts to help them adapt to the silence of space. For you and me, however, the room is a deeply disorienting place. Not only do people hear their heartbeat, they have trouble orienting themselves and even standing. "How you orient yourself is through sounds you hear when you walk. In the anechoic chamber, you don't have any cues," Orfield told the *Daily Mail*. "You take away the perceptual cues that allow you to balance and manoeuvre. If you're in there for half an hour, you have to be in a chair."

So the next time you wish for some quiet time, remember that it could also drive you crazy.



## Rose Eveleth | | READ MORE

Rose Eveleth was a writer for Smart News and a producer/designer/ science writer/ animator based in Brooklyn. Her work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Scientific American*, *Story Collider*, *TED-Ed* and *OnEarth*.

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### The Quietest Place on Earth: Orfield Laboratories

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Transcendental Media

Watch "In Pursuit of Silence" here: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/pursuitofsilence>.

## Not So Fast

Most prisoners in prison would probably give the following advice.

Before you commit this action, is it worth the consequences?

All it takes is one moment of hesitation before acting which could save you prison time.

Most prisoners realize it's their hot-blooded actions that they did that are the reason why they are in prison.

Prison is a state of mind.

One can live in this world and yet be in the prison of the mind.

One can live in a prison and be totally free.

Isn't that a paradox?

Your state of mind determines whether you live in heaven or a state of depression.

Your actions today predict your future.

If you can't control your mind today, do you think you can control it in the future?

One must be diligent in this process.

Imagine you have dirty clothes that must go inside the washer.

Yet, if you leave the clothes in the laundry basket, do you think the clothes can wash themselves?

In the same way, we must turn on the washing machine within.

We must add the soap and turn on the water.

We must set the washer under a proper rinse cycle.

As you know, these steps are needed to get your clothes cleaned.

This is similar to brainwashing.

We know brainwashing is extremely negative.

Yet there is the brainwashing of the soul that transforms one's personal life.

In this state, one does not act hastily.

One's actions are in harmony.

One must be humble.

A man full of ego will act quite hastily.

How dare you say that to me?

I'll teach you a lesson.

It's all about the ego that gets one into such serious trouble as being in a prison.

Even if one is living outside of the prison once awareness is still confined to the  
four walls within.

Ponder this over.

## Lies, Lies, Lies

### Lies, Lies, Lies

We have been lied to all our life.  
The funny thing is that the ones who are lying to us don't even realize they are  
lying.  
How's that for a paradox?  
It's been going on for thousands of years.  
Hans Christian Anderson wrote the ugly duckling.  
He understood that we are not just some lame ducks yet we are all swans.  
We are all precious and sacred.  
As you know storytelling has deep meanings.  
At times the only way to get your message across is through a story.  
The Court jester knew all about that.  
He can tell a joke and everyone would laugh.  
Yet out of costume. If you told the same joke he would lose his head.  
The older I get I see that the matrix is alive.  
Quantum physics has blown the lid on who we truly are.  
Unfortunately, we still live in the Newtonian age.  
We believe that the external world is so real.  
Yet quantum physics says quite the opposite.  
We are just beginning to understand the quantum field.  
Yet the mystics of old have been talking about this for thousands of years.  
It's not something new.  
It's eternal and lies inside of you.  
Many people would say the opposite of truth is a lie.  
Darkness is the absence of light.  
How can you see where you are going if you don't have a flashlight?  
Fortunately, everyone has a built-in flashlight inside of them.  
The wise man will simply turn it on.  
This may seem so simple which it is.  
We think that discovering the jewel within would take such a heroic effort.  
Yet maybe just maybe all you have to do is turn on the flashlight.  
A newborn baby. Just smiles and has nothing to prove.

The older we get, the more we think we have to prove ourselves to others.

Maybe that's why mystics were considered misfits of their time.

The universe doesn't judge.

Only man is excellent at that.

The first step to understanding that we have been told a lie is to ponder and think  
it over.

If you never question life, how do you think you can understand its deep secrets?

The signpost is all around you yet.

Do you have the eyes to see?

This riddle is meant to be solved by you.



What if I told you the following? You are the universe. You just don't know it. Modern-day scientists discovering the laws of quantum physics are saying the same thing. Many of them believe the universe is not a series of

random events. These events didn't create life. Life itself created life.

You are the sun, moon, and stars walking around in a human body. You were never created nor will you ever be destroyed. Your body will die but you never will.

You were there before the dawning of creation. You will still be there when our universe slept into the night and never come back again.

You see we are eternal. We are one with each other and all of life. We have been taught differently. You could say our ideas about life are quite archaic. We truly haven't come a long way since we first appeared on this planet. Maybe in technology and science, we came a long way yet we are still babies.

We are still fighting wars on this planet. One out of every six children is hungry in America. We make laws for the rich and ignore the poor. I could go on and on.

Emotionally we haven't progressed much. We still fight with each other. We don't know how to control anger. Look at Facebook today billions of people are flammng each other. We are adding gasoline to the fire of life. Has the whole world run amuck?

Yet there are millions of people waking up. Millions realize that they have a piece of the puzzle inside of them. If you want to change the world you must first change yourself. Only then can the world change before you. You will see the world with new eyes.

If you are eternal where were you before your Grandfather was born? Where were you before the earth was even created? You were the universe.

I know that's a lot to take in. Yet it's true. If you break down everything in the universe it comes down to the quantum of multi-dimensional energy. Your mind truly can't grasp this but your heart can. The finite mind can't grasp something infinite.

Only your heart can. You see true wisdom isn't thinking about the infinite. True wisdom comes from the silence within you. You can recite the knowledge of all the books on planet earth yet one who has discovered the silence within is truly the wise man.

Life is truly a paradox. We all have different lives to live yet ultimately we are all one. There is truly no difference between you and me. We have separate journeys yet at the same time, we all have the same journey.

If we look at the quantum level and multi-dimensional level our journey is the same. We are all one.

If we look at the material level it seems we are all on a different journeys in life. The world around us is a whole civilization of people seemingly living in a crazy world.

In the East, they call this Maya. Many moons ago I read this book the Autobiography of a Yogi. It was written by Paramahansa Yogananda. Yogananda describes this world as watching a movie in a movie theater.

You get sucked into the movie and it seems so real. You cry, laugh, and feel the emotions coming from the actors. Yet if you turned around you could see light streaming from the projector. The light would hit the screen and project moving images.

The East has had this concept for thousands of years. It's only since the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century did our scientists researched the law of physics. Back then they knew that energy is the backbone of the universe. Yet we still live our lives in the old ways.

You see the universe is kind. The universe is love. The universe is compassionate. The universe does not judge us.



What if I said that this is a journey from darkness to light? What if this journey is meant to discover your true nature? What if I told you that the ultimate goal is to discover you are the universe?

You have been living in the material and non-material world for eternity. This isn't your first go-around. This won't be your last go-around. You are on the merry-go-round of life. You will see that this ride is the most incredible in the universe. You will discover your true nature.

What if I told you that when I was born humanity was considered doomed? Millions of people believe in the last days of man. Yet we are still here. A great shift has occurred. You may not see it with your external eyes.

Imagen dusting your house. At first, it seems like you have created more dust by dusting. A huge cloud will appear. Over time the dust settles.

Well, this planet is going through the same transformation. It will take a while yet the darkness can't live in the light. If you want peace on earth you must have peace inside of you. You can't have peace on earth if you are full of anger and greed.

The universe doesn't have an ounce of anger and greed. We do. Our goal is to pull the weeds within and take care of our internal garden.

## You are eternal



If you are eternal that means you have existed for billions of years. How come we don't know that fact? Many of the wise men from the past posed that same question.

Their answer was always you must look within to discover your true nature. Imagine the whole universe's wisdom exists inside of your DNA yet we are oblivious to this wisdom.

Many people say they have no need or desire to discover their true nature. No judgment there. You see we are all on different journeys and at the same time we are all on the same journey. That's quite the paradox.

Did you know that the more attention you make to the universe, the universe starts paying attention to yourself? That's quite the statement. In the beginning, you have to put a tremendous amount of energy into focusing within. After some time, there is a shift and the universe meditates on you.

Inside of our DNA contains every life experience on this planet and beyond. You see you helped create the universe. Now that's mind-boggling if you stop and think about it.

Did you know that there is a part of you that exists in the entire universe? This is your true nature. Yet we come into this world with full knowledge and over time we forget our true nature.

Even after meditating for 47 years we only get glimpses of who we were in the past. Maybe there is a reason behind this. We don't want to get stuck in the past. We are on an infinite journey of learning and growing.

My twin brother and I have this feeling that we came from a different universe altogether. Where does this feeling come from? I have always felt that I'm a stranger in this world.

From the moment go I knew that I came from the stars. I knew that inside of me lies the universe, Yet I didn't know how to tap into it. I always knew that meditation was the key.

Yet I thought that only a teacher or Guru could show you the way. Yes, they provide tremendous help along the way. Yet they can't walk your journey. Only you can unlock the door within.

I have realized that behind your breath lies the universe.

## The journey in life can be quite bumpy



The journey in life can be quite bumpy. One thing the world needs to embrace is kindness. Kindness is a gift from God. God is kind.

There is no wrathful God. God does not judge. Humans do. Kindness can go a long way. It is so easy to blow up and get angry in difficult

situations. But to be kind in the face of adversity takes true strength.

I feel that an infinite ocean of kindness exists inside of just waiting to be tapped into. The world doesn't need bullies and powermongers. We have a President who loves to mock and bully his opponents. This scenario of fighting and bickering has been going on for thof years with no end in sight.

Yet mankind is slowly waking up from its slumber. Most humans want to be kind to each other. Most humans want peace on earth. If we want peace on earth, be kind in each moment. Take your religions to heart and practice what the great masters have said. Be tolerant of each other's beliefs. Realize there is a thread of love tying us all together.

This planet earth is an incredible place. We need to cherish and protect it. Remember it's the only planet we live on. By being kind we can solve any problems on earth. There are numerous solutions out there to help make this world a better place.

We need kindness in politics. If the person you vote for isn't kind don't vote for them. If they have a negative campaign don't vote for them. If they receive money from pacts or any business donors don't vote for them.

If each of us did this in three generations we could change the political system. Get money out of politics. Have term limits. Stop giving them a pension when they leave office. The average American has social security. Politicians must use the same system. They are not special and elite.

In your practical journey kindness will take you a long way. People love being around a kind person. There is an aura that people can pick up. It doesn't matter

if it is consciously or unconsciously. The effect is the same. A kind person has nothing to prove. A kind person will never bully anyone. Only an unsincere person will bully and taunt each other.

Wars have been started by bullies. Need I say more? There is no honor in war. God does not take sides. Only man in his confusion does. You see war is outdated. It is a sign of emotional immaturity. A true and mature adult would never go to war. War is obscene. Only through kindness can war ever be stopped.

Imagine there are probably hundreds of civilizations in the universe who encountered this same circumstance of fighting and going to war with each other. Many of them probably blew their planet up.

Yet many of them probably overcame their problems and lived in kindness for each other. Many of them probably over time lost the concept of ever fighting and killing each other. We have a long ways to go. Fortunately, we are waking up from our nightmares.

Even in midst of all this craziness this journey of life is precious. We came to this world to discover our true nature. Each one of us is on a different journey and yet at the same time, we all are on the same journey. That's quite a paradox.

Do we truly need anger, greed, and power? Has it truly made this world a better place? I don't think so. Kindness is a way to weed out our internal garden. Kindness is a tool to pull these weeds. A garden that is full of weeds won't be beautiful and bountiful. Kindness is a way to discover your true nature.

What do we think is normal is not? We have been conditioned to look externally for everything. We have not been taught that the universe exists inside of us. Only you have the key and can open the door. You think you are powerless and alone on this journey.

The entire universe supports you and loves you. You are not alone. What can I say? You are the piece of the puzzle in life. Without your piece, the puzzle wouldn't be complete. For the sake of this world and the sake of yourself discover your true nature. There you will find the true treasures of life.

Ponder this over.

## Paradox Conscious versus unconscious breathing.



I find quite fascinating the paradox between unconscious breathing and conscious breathing.

Just think the same breathing mechanisms take place between them. For example, millions of people around the world have sleep apnea.

This is a condition where when they are sleeping they aren't breathing for minutes at a time. This over time causes tremendous harm to the body.

All sorts of systems maladies occur such as high blood pressure, and damage to the heart which leads to strokes, diabetes, and all sorts of other problems.

In the east, they practice breath control and holding of the breath with absolutely no side effects. They are helping the body to be in harmony with itself.

They are learning how to harmonize the mind, body, and soul. This leads to being in harmony with nature and the universe.

So by being unconscious, all sorts of illnesses will slowly start to manifest. This is why the yogis and mystics of old have said one must pay attention to your breath at all times.

It's not easy but can be done. And every moment we have the opportunity to put our mind on the power behind our breath. This is

why I say this path is the most practical. Many people would laugh when I say this.

Yet how practical is the path that we take today? Most western scientists say there is no difference between breathing through your mouth or nose.

Today sleep apnea is a major and chronic problem in our society today. There are countless illnesses and diseases caused by not breathing properly. This covers both the mind and body.

Ultimately they are the same. You can't separate the two. There is no demarcation point.

Panic attacks are quite frequent in our society today. The body and mind get so stressed out that we have to breathe in quickly to bring more oxygen into the body.

The ratio of oxygen and carbon must be at a certain point. Too little carbon will also bring malfunctions to the body. Consequently, the body and the mind resolve to panic breathing.

In the East, they practice a form of breathing fast. That helps to reset the human body. There are many names for this.

Some call it chaotic meditation. Some forms of it are in Kundalini yoga. Some forms of it exist in tummo.

All these farms lead to a healthier mind, body, and soul.

They also have breathing techniques where they slow down the inhalation and exhalation. When doing this consciously has tremendous

health benefits for the body and mind. The body enters into the quantum field where unlimited peace, bliss, compassion, and love exist.

The human body gets rejuvenated with these subtle energies. By the way, these subtle energies are your true nature.

We see the quality of life between one who is conscious and the other who is unconscious. 95% of our actions stem from our unconscious. Only 5% are conscious.

We play the same tapes over and over again. We are on a constant treadmill and never realize we are not going anywhere.

Light the movie matrix. We are trapped and don't realize it. Does our everyday life stem from our unconscious? We can't see the forest from the trees.

What we think is normal is abnormal. We think that all these problems that we have in our society and our health today are normal.

For thousands of years, wise men have said the opposite. You would think with the advent of using computers in our society since the 1980s we might have learned that we are the programmers of our own life.

Somehow we don't put two and two together. If we had this understanding then every day, we would program our subconscious minds.

Your subconscious mind is a recording device that was brought online during your early years of development. You are today a byproduct of that programming. All the good, bad, and ugly are programmed directly into your subconscious mind.



Your subconscious mind even exists in your body today.

A person who is trying to be conscious will take all the tools in the toolbox and utilize them. These tools are always with you yet we are lethargic and most of the time don't want to change for the better.

Many people who are pre-diabetic or diabetic don't want to change their lifestyle. They don't want to change the foods that they eat.

By changing your lifestyle and the foods that you eat, you can put your blood sugar levels under control. Most Western doctors say that diabetes can never be healed.

I agree with that fact. If the person is not willing to modify their habits to heal themselves Western medicine will never heal or solve this.

Did you know that sugar is more addictive than heroin or cocaine? Unfortunately, almost any processed food that you buy today has sugar present.

To heal oneself one should educate himself. One should constantly fine-tune the guitar of life.

We can learn from our mistakes. Nature does this all the time. Nature is not stagnant. Nature is always growing, changing, and morphing into something more sublime.

We should imitate nature. The problem is most people don't want to change. Most people dislike change. We must change our attitude about change. Everything in the universe morphs and changes for the better. Nothing in the universe is constant.

Any breathing technique can be beneficial to you. I say this with a caveat. You have your chemistry set.

What is good for one person is poison for the other person. One must be consciously aware that many breathing techniques may not be beneficial to you.

For one thing, never go beyond your limits. You should never force anything. This includes breathing techniques and yoga. postures.

In fact, in life easement is the way. Make small incremental steps. Slowly one step after another. You don't have to leave and bound.

This is why it's called a practical path and the middle ground. If the guitar string is too tense it will snap. In the same way, if you breathe too forcefully the body will rebel and snap.

One must be consciously aware. This is why my personal preference is moderation and relaxing along the way. When my body and mind say to exhale I exhale.

The more you do this the body and mind start to have trust in you. When trust is established, one can go to a different and higher level than before.

You must trust the body and the mind. The body and mind must trust you. This is a reciprocal relationship. We all depend upon each other. The essence is the same.

Our relationships mostly occur externally. That is part of the problem. Having neglected our mind and body chaos exists today. We are divorced from our true nature. We could be light years ahead in

emotional, physical, and spiritual development. When I say spiritual it means all the external activities you do stem from that jewel that lies within.

The world would change dramatically if we all did this.

To sum this up I would say there's a huge difference between being conscious and being unconscious. All the problems in the world today stem from our unconscious state of being.

It's up to you to wake up from your slumber. Millions of people are waking up.

# Homework in Finland School

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© fightbegin | Depositphotos.com — Finnish schoolchildren visiting Hameen castle

How many parents are bracing themselves for nightly battles to get their kids to finish their homework every year with the beginning of a school year? Thousands and thousands of them. Though not in Finland. The truth is that there is nearly no homework in the country with one of the top education systems in the world. Finnish people believe that besides homework, there are many more things that can improve child's performance in school, such as having dinner with their families, exercising or getting a good night's sleep.

## Do We Need Homework?

There are different homework policies around the world. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) keeps track of such policies and compares the amount of homework of students from different countries. For example, an average high school student in the US has to spend about 6 hours a day doing homework, while in Finland, the amount of time spent on after school learning is about 3 hours a day. Nevertheless, these are exactly Finnish students who lead the world in global scores for math and science. It means that despite the belief that homework increases student performance, OECD graph shows the opposite. Though there are some exceptions such as education system in Japan, South Korea, and some other Asian countries. In fact, according to OECD, the more time students spend on homework, the worse they perform in school.

Finnish education approach shows the world that when it comes to homework, less is more. It is worth to mention that the world has caught onto this idea and, according to the latest OECD report, the average number of hours spent by students doing their homework decreased in nearly all countries around the world.

So what Finland knows about homework that the rest of the world does not? There is no simple answer, as the success of education system in Finland is provided by many factors, starting from poverty rates in the country to parental leave policies to the availability of preschools. Nevertheless, one of the greatest secrets of the success of education system in Finland is the way Finns teach their children.

## How to Teach Like The Finns?

There are three main points that have to be mentioned when it comes to the success of education system in Finland.

First of all, Finns teach their children in a “playful” manner and allow them to enjoy their childhood. For example, did you know that in average, students in Finland only have three to four classes a day? Furthermore, there are several breaks and recesses (15-20 minutes) during a school day when children can play outside whatever the weather. According to statistics, children need physical activity in order to learn better. Also, less time in the classroom allows Finnish teachers to think, plan and create more effective lessons.

Secondly, Finns pay high respect to teachers. That is why one of the most sought after positions in Finland is the position of a primary school teacher. Only 10% of applicants to the teaching programs are accepted. In addition to a high competition, each primary school teacher in Finland must earn a Master’s degree that provides Finnish teachers with the same status as doctors or lawyers.

High standards applied to applicants for the university teaching programs assure parents of a high quality of teaching and allow teachers to innovate without bureaucracy or excessive regulation.

Thirdly, there is a lot of individual attention for each student. Classes in Finland are smaller than in the most of other countries and for the first six years of study, teachers get to know their students, their individual needs, and learning styles. If there are some weaker students, they are provided by extra assistance. Overall, Finnish education system promotes warmth, collaboration, encouragement, and assessment which means that teachers in this country are ready to do their best to help students but not to gain more control over them.

The combination of these three fundamentals is the key to success of any education system in the world and Finns are exactly those people who proved by way of example that less is more, especially when it comes to the amount of homework.

## Why do Finnish pupils succeed with less homework?

- Published

27 October 2016

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IMAGE SOURCE, THINKSTOCK

Image caption,

Homework can be the cause of friction in families - but not in Finland

**By Sean Coughlan**



BBC News education and family correspondent

[@seanjcoughlan](#)

## **How do Finnish youngsters spend less time in school, get less homework and still come out with some of the best results in the world?**

The question gets to the heart of a lot of parental angst about hard work and too much pressure on children in school.

Parents facing all those **kitchen table arguments over homework** might wonder about its value if the Finns are getting on just fine without burning the midnight oil.

As the OECD think tank says: "One of the most striking facts about Finnish schools is that their students have fewer hours of instruction than students in any other OECD country."

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### **Long summer holidays**

It also touches on another tension between schools and families - the increased cost of summer holidays.

Finland's school system is high performing, but pupils spend relatively few hours in school

While children in England and Wales are still toiling away in school into the middle of July, the Finns have already been on holiday for six weeks, in a summer break that lasts 10 to 11 weeks.

And completing this picture of less is more, Finnish children do not in theory have to start school until they are seven - although most will have been in classes from an earlier age.

But when it comes to the international Pisa tests, Finland is in sixth place and the UK is 23rd in reading; and Finland is 12th and the UK is 26th in maths.

Another set of OECD global rankings last year put Finland in sixth place for maths and science.

So what's going on? How do the Finns seem to start later, have fewer lessons and then finish ahead?

Finland, as part of its centenary commemorations next year, has a project to share what works in its schools with other countries.

Saku Tuominen, director of this **HundrEd** project, says parents in Finland don't really want longer hours in school.

He says there is a "holistic" approach to education, with parents wanting a family-friendly approach.



Why Sean wrote this article:

We asked readers to send BBC Education correspondent Sean Coughlan their questions on schools.

Sean chose four questions, and we asked you to select your favourite, which came from Lukas Milancius, a 16-year-old student.

Lukas asked: "How come Finland has shorter days and no homework for students and yet is achieving more?"

Lukas explained to us the thinking behind his question:

"I want to know why other countries are not adopting this education system. I find myself to be in a difficult situation where I am obliged to do a lot of homework and attend long school days which leaves me with hardly any time for me to do other activities."

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### Respect for teachers

There is little homework, compared with UK schools, and there is no culture of extra private tuition.

A key concept in the Finnish school system, says Mr Tuominen, is "trust".

Parents trust schools to make the right decisions and to deliver a good education within the school day - and schools put trust in the quality of their teachers.



IMAGE SOURCE, THINKSTOCK

Image caption,

Finland has systematically put an emphasis on improving education since the 1970s

Teaching is a high-status job in Finland and teachers are accorded a great deal of professional independence.

It's a different philosophy from the system in England, says Mr Tuominen, which he sees as being built around a check-list of tests, league tables, targets and public accountability.

He describes the amount of testing as the "tail wagging the dog".

But before making any assumptions that the laid-back Finnish approach must be the way forward, you could just as easily look to the educational hot houses of Singapore or South Korea.

Their children also do better than those in UK schools, but with an entirely different cultural approach, based on long hours and relentless pressure.

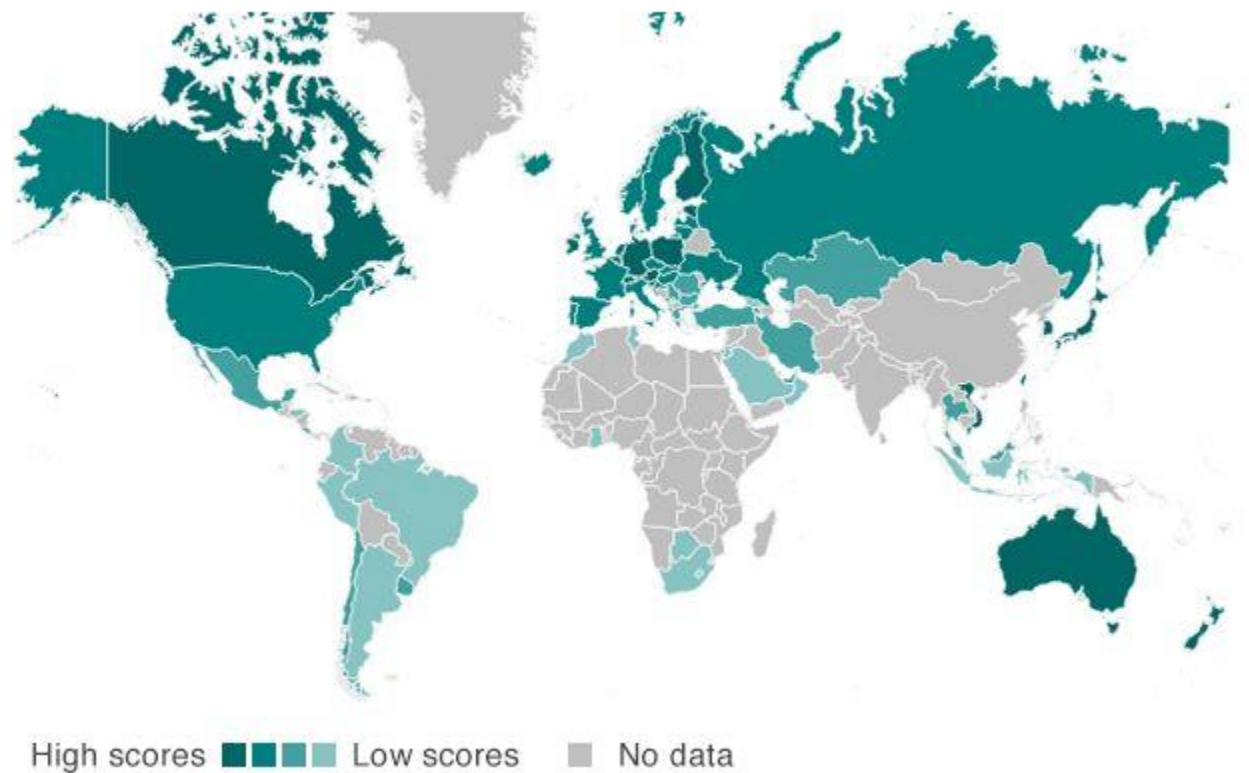
### 'Long-term planning'

This raises the question as to whether school systems, rather than shaping the next generation, simply mirror the society that's already there.

And in the case of Finland, Mr Tuominen says the Finnish school system is inseparable from the culture which it serves.

He says it's a "socially cohesive", equitable and efficient society, and it gets a consistently reliable school system to match.

### Rankings based on maths and science at age 15



This might sound as if countries are stuck forever with the school system that they've inherited.

But it's worth mentioning that there is nothing inevitable about Finland's success. It's built on the foundations of reforms introduced in the 1970s and 1980s, which turned an ordinary school system into a world leader.

Russell Hobby, leader of the National Association of Head Teachers, picks out this "stability" beyond the electoral cycle as the key difference.



"In Finland there's a long-term approach to education policy that means plans remain in place for a significant amount of time, giving them a chance to work," he says.

"In England the opposite is true. The government is constantly tinkering with policy and there's an obsession with structure - such as grammar schools and academies - rather than a focus on evidence."



**IMAGE SOURCE,ISTOCK**

Image caption,

By the beginning of June, schools in Finland are on summer holiday

But there are no signs of cutting back on days or hours in the UK.

England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are already above the OECD average for the number of days taught.

And in England, this year's Budget in fact promised extra funding for extended days in secondary schools.

Pupils in England already get an average of 150 hours extra teaching per year than their Finnish counterparts.

### Homework works

The OECD's education director, Andreas Schleicher, says extra hours are linked to better results.

"You teach one hour of science more per week and you will see that reflected in higher average scores," he says.

But that doesn't mean it's going to be enough to catch up - because countries such as Finland, he says, can "deliver greater value in learning in fewer hours".

There is another big question raised by this balancing act between quantity and quality.

If there were shorter hours and longer holidays for schools, what would it mean for working parents and the cost of childcare?

There's also bad news on the homework front.

Even if the Finns don't need it, research suggests it makes a positive difference.

Prof Susan Hallam from the Institute of Education says there is "hard evidence" that homework really does improve how well pupils achieve.

"There is no question about that," she says.

A study for the Department for Education found students who did two to three hours of homework per night were almost 10 times more likely to achieve five good GCSEs than those who did no homework

So back to the late night arguments over unfinished homework.

- 
- *Do you think your children get too much homework?* **Join the conversation - find us on Facebook**
-

# The 3 Paradoxes of Life (And How They Determine Who We Are)

<sup>12</sup>WRITTEN BY MARK MANSON – FILED UNDER DECISION MAKING | HAPPINESS | PERSONAL VALUES

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**I**n life, you often find yourself in no-win situations. You tell yourself that you need to be

more social. But then you go out to events and spend the whole time wishing you could be at home. You celebrate the glory of Thanksgiving by eating thirteen slices of pizza... and then proceed to spend the next two days hating yourself for eating thirteen slices of pizza. When you are single, you dream about meeting somebody special. But then, once you find yourself in a relationship, you daydream about being single.

Humans suck. We are impossible to please. We have so many conflicting needs and desires, it's a marvel that we can even wipe the correct ass.

I've long written about how humans evolved to be constantly dissatisfied in some way. I've written about how, in life, it's *impossible to escape suffering*. In fact, in one of the most popular sections of my book *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck*, Disappointment Panda says: "Life is essentially an endless series of problems—the

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<sup>12</sup><https://markmanson.net/the-3-paradoxes-of-life>

solution to one problem is merely the creation of the next. Don't hope for a life without problems. Hope for a life full of good problems.”<sup>1</sup>

We all experience this. The anxiety of needing to make money doesn't go away once we're successful—it instead morphs into an anxiety of *not losing* money. Feelings of inadequacy when we're single don't leave when we find a partner—instead, we begin to feel inadequate *for* our partner. We oscillate between wanting to be alone and wanting to be with others, from feeling as though we deserve good things to feeling guilty for those good things, from feeling anxious about the future and feeling bored about the future.

Can we ever win? Or are we doomed to always be dissatisfied? Is there never a *perfect* amount of pizza that we can eat without hating ourselves?

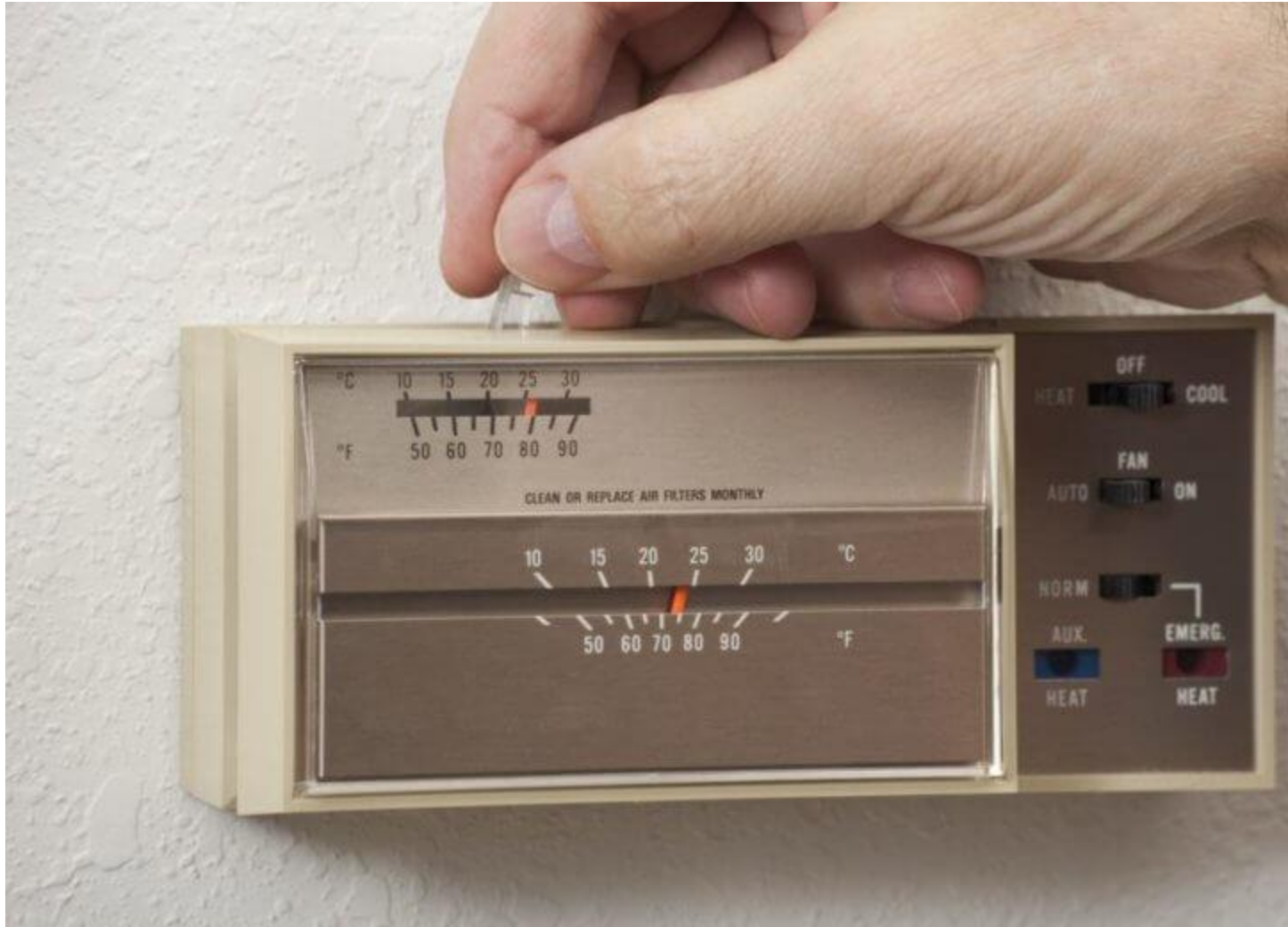
Is it possible to be content with our lives?

The answer is yes, we can be content. But it's not simple. To understand why we seem to be constantly dissatisfied with ourselves and the world, we must understand some basic psychological principles, as well as, of all things... thermostats.

## THE EXCITING LIFE AND FAST TIMES... OF YOUR TYPICAL AIR CONDITIONING UNIT

Chances are you don't spend much time thinking about thermostats. If you do, it's probably only because your partner sets yours way too hot/cold and you think they're crazy. Or perhaps you work in an office environment where some passive-aggressive sasquatch believes that meetings will be more productive if they're held in a goddamn icebox.<sup>2</sup>

But social strife aside, thermostats are a pretty amazing little invention. And they are analogous to a lot of the functions that happen inside our bodies and minds.



Oh yeah... get excited. The secrets of the universe are about to be yours.

Thermostats are just a set of feedback mechanisms designed to keep the temperature within a range of a set point. When it's too hot, the thermostat turns on the AC. If it's just right or too cold, it turns the AC off. Thus, the temperature of the room bounces back and forth between these two points—too high, triggering one mechanism, and too low, triggering another—always keeping the temperature within a certain comfortable range (set by that asshole at the end of the hall).

Feedback mechanisms like this that always push towards a stable equilibrium create something known in systems theory as homeostasis. And while that sounds like a big SAT word, it basically just means a system that self-corrects, returning itself to equilibrium.

Many of our biological functions are homeostatic.<sup>3</sup> Similar to the thermostat, if your body gets too hot, it releases sweat to cool itself off. If it gets too cold, it shivers to warm itself up. Other mechanisms regulate hunger and satiety, sleep and wakefulness, and so on.



And when, for whatever reason, we break *outside* those ranges—our blood sugar spikes out of control, or our body temperature drops to a dangerous level—the entire system threatens to break down.

Homeostatic processes emerge everywhere—in biological ecosystems, financial markets, within businesses and political systems, and, as it turns out, they often emerge in our cognitive functions.

## YOUR PERSONALITY AS A THERMOSTAT

Here's a mini blow to your ego... what you experience as “you”—i.e., the traits and preferences that seem to differentiate you from everyone else—are arguably homeostatic functions.

For instance: extraversion. We all have little psychological thermostats in our brain saying, “I need more social time... wait, wait, wait... okay, that's too much, now I want to be alone.” What determines differences between us is the range that feels “normal.” My wife can hang out with friends every night of the week and feel great. For me, by the third night, I hate the world and everyone in it, and desperately want to sit at home and read a book for four hours.<sup>4</sup>

My extraversion thermostat setting is much lower than hers, so my desire for socializing becomes “too hot” much quicker. And the feedback mechanisms—feeling tired, irritable, wishing nuclear annihilation upon this horrible, horrible species—set in for me much earlier.

But this is still kind of obvious, no? Some people prefer different ranges of cleanliness. Some have different ranges for thrill-seeking and excitement that they operate within.<sup>5</sup> Too much cleanliness and you start feeling like a nutjob. Too little and you feel like a slob. When it comes to basic personality traits, homeostasis is fairly intuitive. Our inner thermostats are all set a little differently, and that causes each of us to respond to our environments a little differently.<sup>6</sup>

So biological homeostatic processes allow us to function and eat and poop and perceive the world. From these perceptions and experiences we develop psychological feedback mechanisms that then result in psychological homeostasis.

The homeostatic properties of our personality explain why Disappointment Panda's lesson is so true. There's no “perfect” amount of socializing or cleanliness or friendliness. We are constantly pinging back and forth within a range of acceptability. We love seeing friends... until we're sick of them. Then we sit at home alone... until we're sick of being alone, so we call up some friends. And on it goes. Much like eating and pooping, many of our psychological experiences are cyclical in nature.

But most of us, by the time we're adults, understand our own cycles within ourselves. We intuit when we should back off and have some “self-care” time. We've also learned when to push ourselves out of our comfort zones or maybe make a few sacrifices for long-term gain.

Yet, we *still* struggle to remain content with our lives.

This is because we operate on more than just our simple psychological desires. We also *create meaning around those desires*, and this meaning is also subject to over-stepping in one direction or another. Thus, from our psychological equilibrium emerge philosophical homeostatic functions—feedback mechanisms notifying us when we are *hollowing out our self-worth* like a bowl of ice cream on one end and being a totally narcissistic fuckwit on the other.

Put your spandex on, because we're going to push this thermostat metaphor to its limit!

## OUR PHILOSOPHICAL HOMEOSTASIS

***To be human means to be constantly in the grip of opposing emotions, to daily reconcile apparently conflicting tensions. I want this, but I need that. I cherish this, but I adore its opposite, too.***

—STEPHEN FRY

Just as our biology has feedback mechanisms to keep us within a healthy range physically, and our psychology has feedback mechanisms to keep us from hating everybody and everything emotionally, I propose that we have intellectual feedback mechanisms.

These are ever-evolving belief systems in place that respond to maintain a sense of satisfaction and meaning in our lives.<sup>7</sup> If we can manage our belief systems and assumptions to promote a *philosophical balance*, then we can develop a resilient and persistent state of happiness and satisfaction throughout our lives—i.e., we can be content.<sup>8</sup>

Sounds difficult?

Well, duh... but that's the fun of it.

Below are three sets of conflicting needs that everyone experiences throughout their lives. We experience these conflicting needs as paradoxes—unresolvable contradictions in our own motivations that feel impossible to win. Instead of getting everything we want, we ping back and forth, sacrificing one need for the other and vice versa, never fully satisfied, always full of anxiety and angst.

These paradoxes are universal in principle, yet play out differently in each individual life because we approach them with different experiences, desires, and beliefs. I'll suggest principles to help us resolve each paradox, and then at the end of the article, if your brain hurts, we'll go out for ice cream.<sup>2</sup>

# 1. THE PARADOX OF CONTROL: STABILITY VS CHANGE

Think about all those cheesy horror movies for a second. The scariest parts aren't when the guy is slamming an axe into a kid's head or even the climactic shootout in the end where Officer Bumblefuck heroically saves the day. The scariest parts are when the main character is walking alone into a dark house, the power is off, and there are strange sounds coming from upstairs.

It's not the actual violence that scares us. It is the uncertainty and possibility for disaster that emotionally drives us absolutely bonkers.

The need for a stable and predictable environment is a core human need.<sup>10</sup> What frightens us or gives us anxiety is not when bad things happen—it's when *we're not sure whether a bad thing will happen or not*.

When something goes wrong, at least we have the power to fix it. We're still in control. But when life becomes unpredictable—when the house is dark and there's a mysterious sound upstairs—we feel as though we've lost control.

We seek to make our environments and our lives predictable. We lie to ourselves and misremember details in order to give us a greater feeling that we control our fate.<sup>11</sup> We create routines, build habits, and organize our lives around a few repetitive, knowable goals or ideas.

Obsessively controlling everything in our life has an unfortunate side effect: it makes life fucking boring. The same old thing, day after day, week after week, for months on end, the mindless repetition begins to challenge our sense that our actions are actually meaningful. After all, this can't be all that life is, right? Driving the same route to work, day after day. Saying the same things. Doing the same things. There *must* be something more.

Suddenly, the stable routines feel stifling. You feel yourself suffocating. You have this unbearable need to break out and do something drastic or irrational—to go climb a mountain even though you're 50 pounds overweight. Or to crush up your kids' Flintstone Vitamins and smoke them.

Why?

For something new. For some sense of change. Because in the same way we need a sense of control, we *also* need a sense of change. And that just messes up the whole game plan.

So you do it. You smoke the kids' vitamins and climb a mountain and nearly die. But then you fall in love with a Sherpa named Domino and decide to knit saris and restart your life in the wondrous wilderness of Nepal.

This newness is exciting. It's invigorating. It infuses your life with a sense of meaning and purpose again... You've *finally found* yourself, you think. Thank God you took the leap. This change was necessary...

... until it's not. Because suddenly, you find yourself in Nepal, broke and alone (Domino left you for a younger, cuter, inexperienced mountain climber). You realize that not only do you not know how to make a sari, but you don't even know what the fuck a sari is. Do they even wear them in Nepal? Who knows?



Domino, the ridiculously handsome Sherpa, wants to take you up his mountain...

Suddenly, you feel like that kid in the dark house again—danger and peril lurking around every corner. You're vulnerable. But not in *the badass self-assured way*... in the very real, animalistic way. Something could happen to you. And suddenly, you crave the safety and stability of familiarity and home. You realize *that's* what makes your life feel meaningful. *That's* who you are. And while you may or may not regret the detour to Nepal, you know one thing: you need to get back to stability, because *that is what* will bring satisfaction back to your life...

... until it doesn't.

## HOW TO RESOLVE THE PARADOX OF CONTROL

When we feel a lack of control in our lives, we experience anxiety and despair. We struggle to find meaning or purpose for ourselves. And, after enough time, we begin to break down mentally and physically.<sup>12</sup>

To reassert control for ourselves, we seek new experiences and change. Whether it's getting a new haircut, a new job, or moving to a far off land, we use the process of changing ourselves to give ourselves a sense of meaning and purpose again.

But change has consequences, and often those consequences are unexpected or outside of our control. Therefore, if we destabilize our environment and our lives too much, we fall back into anxiety and despair.

Change, of course, has its limits, because the more we seek change, the more meaningless that change becomes. One new haircut is exciting. Twelve new haircuts then just become another routine.

So, we seem stuck: pursue too much stability and life becomes dull and uneventful, pursue too much change and we lose ourselves in superficial excess. Too much stability and our control feels meaningless. Too much change and we feel out of control.

To resolve the paradox of control, we must pursue both stability and change simultaneously. That means consciously changing our lives gradually and reasonably. That means setting goals. That means incremental changes done with purpose. That means creating smart habits. That means imagining the person you desire to be and taking small, baby steps towards that person.

That means practicing self-discipline.

Obviously, some people will desire more stability than change and others will desire more change than stability—after all, everyone's thermostats are set to different temperatures. So, the correct amount of self-discipline for you might be different from me and vice versa. But the principle remains: we achieve both stability and change through steady, controlled discipline.

## 2. THE PARADOX OF CHOICE: COMMITMENT VS FREEDOM

Jean-Paul Sartre was a dark dude. A brilliant writer, he was captured by the Nazis and held in a prison camp for nine months. Upon release, he joined the French resistance, regularly risking his life in efforts to undermine some Nazi scum.

These experiences had a profound influence on Sartre and his writing which, in the decades following the war, would arguably become the most important philosophical works of the 20th century.

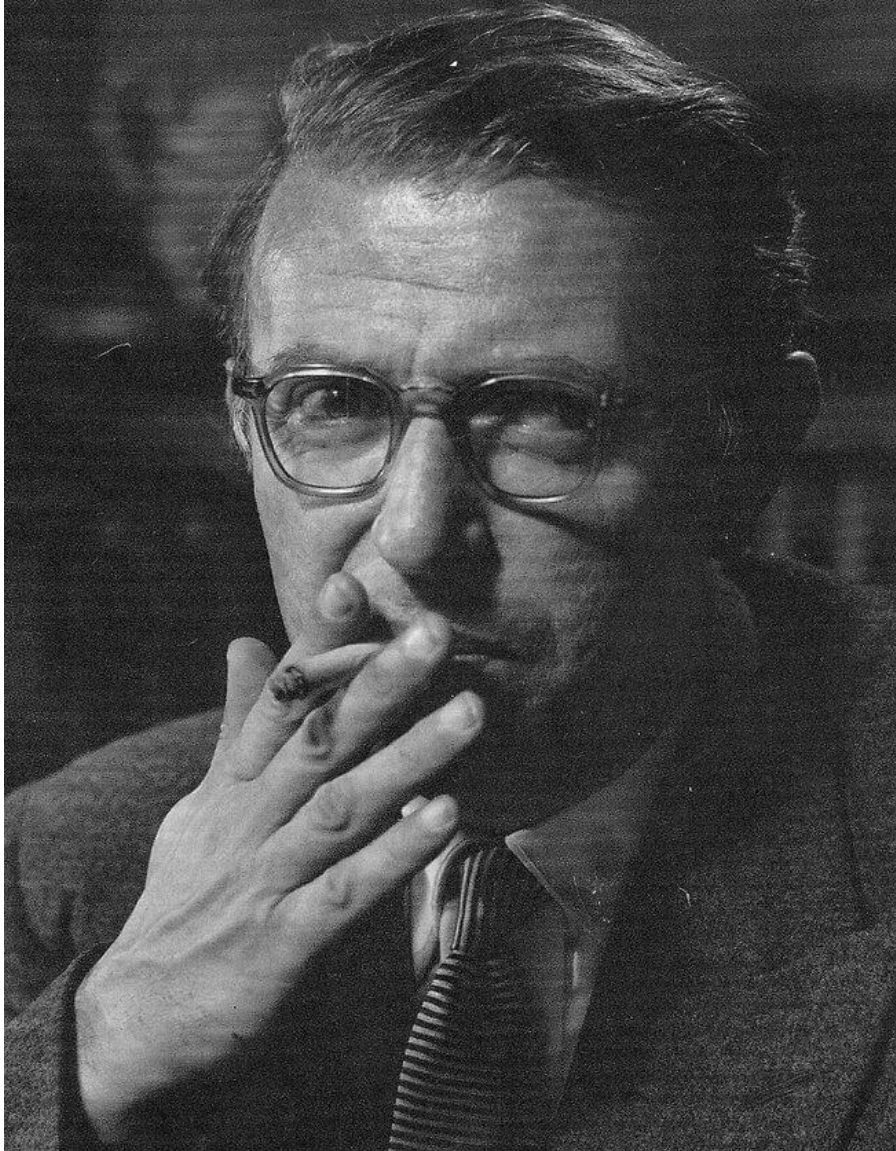
Sartre's whole thing was this: we're all going to die, and if we're all being honest about it, there's really no evidence that any of this shit matters. In fact, the whole notion of "mattering" in the first place is something made up in our minds—a choice, if you will. We are each, from moment to moment and experience to experience, choosing what we wish to matter in our lives, thus giving our own lives meaning.

Sartre believed that to truly generate a life of meaning for oneself, you had to be willing to risk death (as in, fight some motherfucking Nazis). But he also noted that this willingness to choose something to die for is absolutely horrifying and impossibly difficult for most of us most of the time. We avoid this responsibility to choose what matters for ourselves. We distract ourselves and numb ourselves to it.

It's for this reason that Sartre wrote that freedom was a kind of curse or burden that we must all carry with us. He said that ultimately, this need to commit to something in the face of freedom *crippled many of us emotionally*, that it was the greatest challenge any of us would ever face.<sup>13</sup>

Sartre won a Nobel Prize for his work... but being the edgelord emo kid he was, he decided to pass on it in favor of smoking even fancier French cigarettes.





The face that says “Fuck you and your Nobel Prize.”

The core of Sartre’s work is an inherent tension—or paradox—in how we create meaning for ourselves in the world. On the one hand, we are free—we are free to choose what to do, what to believe, and what to think.<sup>14</sup> This freedom grants us the opportunity to create meaning for ourselves and from a wide selection of potential thoughts and experiences, *we choose what to make of ourselves*.

But this freedom can also become overwhelming. We can become addicted to infinite options, to the constant possibility of bigger, better, *more, more, more*. Beyond a certain point, freedom seems to *discourage* commitment because we are too aware of everything that we are potentially giving up.

But without that commitment to something, our life begins to feel empty and pointless... It’s all just superficial *stuff* that accumulates and then quickly serves no purpose.

It's only by rejecting alternatives, by *giving up* certain freedoms through making commitments, that our freedom becomes meaningful. For instance, when you *commit to one partner*, part of the significance of that commitment is the fact that you have given up the freedom to commit to other people. Once you commit to a *career or a craft*, part of the meaning of that commitment is the fact that you've given up on *your dreams* of being an astronaut or a professional basketball player or cleaning the Pope's toilet.

Freedom is only meaningful when it is given up. And we give up freedom by making commitments.

But just as we can be overwhelmed by our freedom, we can also become overwhelmed by our commitments. When we over-commit, we can feel trapped, as though we've lost our identity. When we're over-committed, we lose the sense of freedom of choice—and without the freedom of choice, then commitments lose their significance.

At some point, we need to feel as though we have an option again, as though we have a choice in our commitments. So we seek independence. We throw off commitments and labels. We try to stand alone. We break free. We say, "Fuck you, Nobel Prize! I choose my dainty French cigarettes!" And then we feel empowered by it.

But after a while, that too can lead us to malaise, a sense that it was all for nothing. After all, if we cast off *all* of our commitments in favor of freedom, then our commitments meant nothing. But if we give up all of our freedoms in favor of our commitments, then our freedoms meant nothing. Mooom! Help!

## HOW TO RESOLVE THE PARADOX OF CHOICE

Much like the paradox of change vs stability was resolved by merging the two extremes, here the only way to resolve the paradox of choice is by *committing to actions that multiply our freedoms*—that is, making a commitment to our own growth.

The ability to commit to exercise makes your body more capable and adaptable, expanding your physical freedom. The *commitment of education* grants you the greater freedoms provided by the knowledge you learn. The commitment to certain relationships helps you emotionally mature into an individual who is better able to flourish.

The line between growth and stagnation can be hard to decipher at times, but it's crucial to be able to recognize the difference and resolve the paradox of choice. Our commitments, when made out of *insecurity and fear*, shrink our selves. When I commit to binge-watching 72 episodes of *The Office*, I'm not benefiting from greater freedom. I am arbitrarily limiting myself. Whereas if I commit to *writing* 72 episodes of a comedy show, I am expanding myself from my commitment, opening myself up to greater freedoms provided by my efforts.



### 3. THE PARADOX OF RELATIONSHIPS: INDIVIDUALITY VS CONFORMITY

When I was a kid, I went to a new school and there was this other new kid—let’s call him “Jeff.” That whole first week, Jeff followed me around like a sick puppy. He did everything I did, agreed with everything I said, laughed when I laughed, got upset when I got upset, and so on.

It was unbearable. I quickly started hating this kid. Within a few days, I was making fun of him in front of other kids and telling him to fuck off (I know, I know... but I was fourteen, fourteen-year-olds are evil).

Looking back, like me, he wanted to make a friend. The problem is, he went about it exactly the wrong way. He thought if he just acted exactly like me, I’d be forced to like him. After all, who doesn’t think their own ideas are the greatest?

But it backfired. By acting exactly like me, he prevented *me* from feeling like a unique individual. And because I was prevented from feeling like a unique individual, everything I thought or did became pointless. This inability to feel unique or different pissed me off to the point that I said mean junior high things like, “Get a life, dweeb!”

Jeff did get a life. And about a year later, we became friends. It was only when he allowed himself to be an individual and different from me that I respected him for those differences and accepted him. This, in a nutshell, is the paradox of relationships.

We all want to be connected with others. It’s a fundamental human need.<sup>15</sup> To be accepted, we mimic and follow others. We conform. We look for a group or crowd to be a part of. This helps us feel secure and as though we are loved and needed.

But if we conform too much—i.e., if we completely surrender our individual identity to another person or to a group—then we lose a sense of who we are. And because we have no sense of who we are or what we want, that surrender renders the relationship meaningless.

I had a friend a few years ago who made his wife the center of his universe. He was like her Jeff: he followed her everywhere. He did everything with her. He went on business trips with her and stayed in the hotel. He even packed her suitcase for her!

And what happened? She left him, duh... because in trying to be everything she wanted, he was no longer a separate person for her to love... He was merely a shadow of herself.

But there’s an opposite approach to human relationships, as well. We can try to be *completely* different from everybody else. We can become contrarian. We can wear our hair

in a weird way and stop showering and adopt a small pack of feral wolves and speak about ourselves in the third person.

This desperate desire for individuality is motivated by the same thing that motivates the Jeffs of the world: the desire to feel important. In the case of Jeff, he tried to feel important by mimicking and being accepted by someone he admired. In the case of the weirdo individualist, they seek to feel important by being incomparable to anyone else.

By rejecting and being rejected by others, they write a narrative in their minds that they are rejected because they matter. And the more they are rejected, the more people will have to pay attention to them and engage with them.

But the weirdo individualist runs into the paradox from the other end: by trying to be unlike everyone else, he or she just conforms... to other non-conformists.

Like the other philosophical paradoxes, both individuality and conformity fall into one another. Because whether you act *exactly* like the people around you or *exactly opposite* of the people around you, the truth remains: you are basing your life on the people around you.

## HOW TO RESOLVE THE PARADOX OF RELATIONSHIPS

**Healthy relationships** require a fragile balance—the ability to identify *with* someone or something, while also being able to identify *without* someone or something. It's the ability to be yourself, for yourself, while also being accepted by others.

Or, as I put it in my book **Models**: you will always care what people think about you, the trick isn't to stop caring—the trick is to correctly prioritize how you feel about yourself first over what people think.

We resolve the paradox of relationships through acceptance—both the acceptance of oneself (I will be different and yet, I will also be the same) as well as the acceptance of others (they will be different and yet, they will also be the same). It's the ability to recognize yourself both as an individual and as someone who conforms to their relationships without identifying too much with either.

## CONCLUSION

We manage our conflicting desires for stability and change through **self-discipline**. We manage our conflicting desires for commitment and freedom through committing to our own growth. We manage our conflicting desires for individuality and conformity through acceptance, both of ourselves and of others.

Growth. Discipline. Acceptance. Sounds nice, right?

Easier said than done. And remember, these don't get rid of the struggles of life... they simply point your struggles in the right direction. These are skills that we must develop within ourselves. They must be practiced and perfected, like bowling or making funny ice sculptures. They are skills that help you use your dissatisfaction to your advantage rather than your disadvantage. Because these inherent tensions will always be within us and resolving them is a never-ending process—a tightrope that extends infinitely into the horizon.

The best we can hope for is to simply get better at balancing.

The surf industry paradox -SURFING, BY ITS VERY NATURE,  
CONTRADICTS BASIC CAPITALISM

<sup>13</sup>"Capitalism, on the other hand, absolutely wants to sell you more stuff, is searching for more consumers to sell to and just loves attention." Oh it's a real tug-o-war!

**Despite the ruckus in the surf industry, surfing is very much alive and chugging along nicely, thank you,** oblivious to most of the drama that surrounds the long-running mismanagement of surfing as an industry.

So why all the bad news?

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<sup>13</sup> <https://beachgrit.com/2020/02/the-surf-industry-paradox-surfing-by-its-very-nature-inherently-contradicts-basic-capitalism/>



# Adapt to modern risk challenges.

The Hurley debacle is getting most of the press these days but really it's been a long slow burn going all the way back to the late-eighties when Quiksilver first took their company public.

Let us try to explain.

Surfing, by its very nature, inherently contradicts basic capitalism.

Surfers, for the most part, don't need more stuff, don't want more surfers, don't care about grabbing attention, etc.

Capitalism, on the other hand, absolutely wants to sell you more stuff, is searching for more consumers to sell to and just loves attention.

Juxtaposed, you might say.

So, when Quik put the company up for public trading they inadvertently entered into a different way of doing business of which the company, and in turn, much of the surf industry, has never really overcome.

Ya see, publicly traded companies, or even those propped up with significant amounts of venture capital funding, are expected to produce a profit.

Full stop.

The CEO will quickly be shown the door if they are unable to create those profits. Those gains usually come through increases in top-line revenue, but can also be helped through improved operational efficiencies.

Since revenue is often seen as the easier of the two it gets a lot of attention. Open up more wholesale accounts, expand global distribution, and create new product categories, are some of the ways a company might do that.

Quik was on it back then and through most of the late-eighties and early nineties, they did all of those things, and more, to quickly blow past 100 million dollars in annual sales. That was a huge number back then and at the time that growth was readily available simply because there was so little competition and the emerging wholesale channels were also beginning to flourish.

“Surf” was hot and Quik was right there with everything one might have needed to complete the look.

You could pretty much go head to toe in Quik gear.

And many did.

As was predictable, the surf trend waned and that double-digit growth that the surf brands were achieving suddenly became more challenging.

Over these early years, many of the major surf brands had begun gearing up to produce the massive amounts of product the trend required.

But with the core surf market being fickle, creating new categories was quickly recognised as needed to maintain that investor mandated growth.

Wetsuits, snow gear, women's lines, kid's products, middle-aged guy stuff, accessories like watches, sunnies, and sandals, were all quickly included in almost every surf brand's offerings. "Stay in your lane" be damned.

Believe it or not, there was once a day when Quik just made great boardshorts, O'Neill made great wetsuits, Oakley made the sunnies, etc.

Soon, however, it seemed like all brands were in literally every category, unfortunately, not always doing that with much quality.

This corresponded with an almost across the board removal of much of that vital, creative, entrepreneurial spirit as brands rotated the founders out and rotated in a revolving door of CEOs trying to catch lightning in a bottle one more time.

Without any semblance of connection to their customer base, this led to an almost industry-wide lack of a fundamental understanding of who their most important customer really is.

Which fed into the very destructive miscalculation that a core fifteen-to-twenty-five-year-old surf consumer doesn't mind wearing the same brand as his kid brother, sister or even his dad.

They didn't understand that filling off-price, big-box retailers with crappy products might actually damage the commodity.

They simply didn't realise that actual surfers don't really need a bunch of stuff.

Surfing is just a thing we do. Period.

Surf clothing, and much of the other gear being peddled today, isn't really required to actually surf so to achieve the growth big brands require much of the consumer base needs to be non-surfers.

It's a pretty simple concept really: A brand employs various marketing tactics to use surfing as a way to appear cool to a non-surfing consumer.

But what happened, instead, was that the truly influential young crew on virtually every beach were no longer connecting to that message and they began to walk away from most surf brands.

Gotcha is long gone.

Volcom has changed hands numerous times.

Quik and Bong were both bought for pennies on the dollar and are now owned by the same VC firm.

O'Neill is owned by a European investor that has licenses for the clothing and wetsuits.

Rip Curl, the last of the privately held "big brands" was recently sold to a large conglomerate.

Reef, Vans, Oakley, BodyGlove, etc, have had significant ownership changes over the years.

And, of course, we all know about Hurley by now.

Which brings us to today.

We don't know what will come of many of these brands when it all settles out but the early indications appear that there may be some more pain to come.

Then again, maybe this is exactly where we need to be?



Refocusing on brands that communicate to us authentically.

Backing surfers who represent our sensibilities, and living a lifestyle as a surfer of which we define, not some ad agency from Chicago.

Sadly, there are a lot of good people without a job and/or sponsorship today in part because of situations they didn't create.

They worked hard, drank the company "Kool-Aid," so to speak, and then when those at the executive level mismanaged the brand, these same good folks got unceremoniously shown the door.

Hopefully, all of them will quickly find gainful employment in less volatile situations.

The unfortunate reality being that this needed to happen.

So no, surfing isn't dead. It just doesn't want anything to do with the box the industry keeps trying to put it in.

## Closing

Life is mysterious. We live life like Joe Friday on the show Dragnet. His famous line was just the facts, ma'am.

Even with this statement, some say he said this and some say he never said this.

Life is a paradox. At times we think we have incredible information and facts to decipher. What is true and what is false?

But life is not so simple as that.

Life is a mixture of polar opposites.

We can never control it.

We can never ultimately understand it with our minds and rationality.

Daily we try to control life and look at the world today.

Not a pretty situation.

I hope this book gave you examples of how paradoxes are all around you.

Our take on life is so limited. Remember we only see with our eyes 1% of the light spectrum.

Yet we go on and we are texting on the freeway of life  
We think all is well.

When life throws us a curveball we cry out. Why me?

Curveballs will always be thrown your way.

It doesn't matter who you are. That is a given fact.

Nothing external is constant.

Everything morphs and changes

The wise man understands this. He has learned that the external world is constantly changing.

Therefore, the happiness that you seek externally will never be permanent.

You may try to fix the leaks in the dam. Yet someday the entire dam will come crumbling down.

Use the power of paradoxes to your advantage.

Zen Buddhists use the power of paradoxes for their enlightenment.

There is something that you will never be able to understand with your rational mind.