



Narasi Rico

Buku 8 Atomic Essay Smipa

Serial Penulis | Ririungan Semi Palar | Karya Warga Smipa



Buku 8 AES | Narasi Rico

Diterbitkan untuk Kalangan Internal Rumah Belajar Semi Palar

Sumber tulisan : <https://riungan.semipalar.sch.id/rico/blog>

Gambar Sampul : Dokumentasi Pribadi - Kampung Batik Laweyan, Solo.

Edisi 1

Tanggal Terbit : April 2022

Penyusun : Rico, Kak Mutia, Kak Iyank, Kak Andy, Bu Mega

Pengantar

Pengantar dari Penerbit

Saya menuliskan pengantar untuk buku ke 8 AES ini dalam beberapa peran. Pertama sebagai koordinator Rumah Belajar Semi Palar, sebagai ayah Rico dan sebagai sesama rekan penulis di Ririungan Semi Palar. Sudah sangat panjang saya mengikuti perjalanan Rico - terutama dalam hal tulis menulis sejak dia berproses di Semi Palar mulai di jenjang TK belasan tahun yang lalu hingga Rico menuntaskan prosesnya di KPB dan saat ini sebagai alumni Semi Palar.

Sejak dulu saya bersama kakak-kakak sudah mengamati kekuatan Rico di bidang bahasa. Rico suka berpikir dan menuangkan pemikirannya lewat gambar dan kata-kata. Di KPB bersama kak Agni, Rico pernah menjawab tantangan kak Agni dan berhasil membuat entah beberapa puluh blogpost. Setelah itu kebiasaan itu berhenti. Setelah KPB, saya berusaha mendorong Rico untuk menulis - dia mulai blognya yang baru (ceritarico.wordpress.com) dan setelah beberapa waktu berhenti lagi.

Saya bersyukur bahwa saya tidak berhenti dan terus mencari cara untuk mendorong Rico menulis - sampai suatu waktu gagasan Atomic Essay ini muncul. Di sekitar awal bulan Mei 2021 - sekitar sebelas bulan yang lalu, entah apa yang mendorong Rico menyambut tantangan ini. Akhirnya, saya bersama Rico, Ahkam, Joe dan kak Leo mulai menulis esai-esai pendek. Yang tidak saya duga adalah Rico jadi salah satu yang tidak berhenti menulis - satu tulisan setiap hari. Saat saya menuliskan pengantar ini, Rico baru saja tuntas mempostingkan esainya yang ke 323. Dia punya komitmen untuk terus

menulis sampai satu tahun penuh. Komitmen yang sampai hari ini masih ia pegang kuat. Sebagai sesama penulis AES, Rico jadi salah satu pendorong bagi saya untuk juga terus menulis sampai hari ini.

Di esai pertamanya, Rico menulis begini :

For me, there's something special and seemingly magical about the written word, and I think it's the crowning achievement of humankind.

Melalui buku ini, Rico menjadi penulis kedua yang diberi kehormatan untuk kita terbitkan buku AESnya - Seri Penulis ke dua setelah Joe. Seperti Joe, Rico telah menyumbangkan sekian banyak kepingan kehidupannya bagi kita semua di Semi Palar.

Sebagai orangtuanya saya tentunya merasa bangga dan bahagia. Bahagia terutama karena saya juga bisa mengenal Rico lebih mendalam dari tulisan-tulisannya. Pemikirannya, gagasannya, impiannya, pemahaman dan pemaknaannya dari segala sesuatu yang sudah dia alami dan cita-citakan.

Terima kasih banyak Rico untuk partisipasinya di AES, dan selamat untuk buku AES - Narasi Rico, berbagai kisah Rico yang dituliskan bagi kita semua. Semoga tidak berhenti menuliskan kisah kehidupanmu di hari-hari mendatang.

Bandung, 15 April 2022

Andy Sutioso (ayah Rico) | **Kak Andy** (Koordinator Utama Semi Palar).

Pengantar dari Penulis

Dari titik ini sampai seterusnya, tulisan di buku ini akan berbahasa Inggris. Ini berdasar dari beberapa alasan. Pertama, saya sebenarnya jauh lebih nyaman

menggunakan bahasa Inggris, karena kebanyakan dari interaksi sehari-hari saya dengan teman-teman di seluruh dunia memang menggunakan bahasa Inggris. Dan mereka juga seringkali meminta untuk membaca tulisan harianku, jadi untuk membuka pintu aksesibilitas selebar-lebarnya, tak hanya untuk pembaca dari Indonesia, saya menggunakan bahasa Inggris.

Why do we write? Well, writing is one of the oldest, and most reliable ways humanity has to convey ideas. Every single page of a book ever written (at least the ones with latin characters) are composed with only 26 letters of the alphabet. 26 characters, arranged in different ways, provide us with endless possibilities. Millions upon billions of potential stories, poems, discoveries, that can be brought to life by simply arranging written symbols in a certain order. Creating words that are capable of making you feel the entire range of emotions, from sorrow to joy, and hope from despair. That in my opinion, is humanity's pinnacle achievement, our greatest invention yet.

Would the teachings of ancient philosophers be remembered, if it weren't for parchments documenting their musings and ponderings? Would we even know they existed in the first place? Giants of scientific discovery, creators of the greatest stories ever told, poets of the most heart-wrenching verses, would not exist without the magic of writing. It's crazy how a collection of pages can be the entire accumulation of someone's life's work. The reason they will be remembered for years to come.

In these modern, technologically advanced times, almost everything is created and stored digitally. Text, videos, images... But still none of them compares to the simple joy of a good old-fashioned book. And unlike its digital brethren, it

can't be destroyed by a power outage, corrupted drives, or computer viruses. Say an apocalypse happens (*seeing how the last couple of years have gone, I would not be surprised*), books will most likely still survive, while everything else will not.

One of the most important things we can ask ourselves is, if we were to die tomorrow, what would be our biggest regret? What do we wish we should have done in life? For me, the answer to that has always been, *"I wish I'd written more."* And this little book serves as a start for the answer to that question.

The Atomic Essay movement has been going on for almost a year in our little community. With over 3000 daily blog posts from multiple individuals, that is a massive collective achievement. But speaking for myself personally, after taking part in this movement to write something each and every day, clearly not every single piece I've done is going to be incredible. I've gone long stretches of time where it felt like I was only merely fulfilling a quota, waiting for the next wave of inspiration to start. But these are a collection of my posts which were written with intent and purpose. A collection of my writing that I would say I'm very proud of, and would like to share with others. There isn't one specific thing I write about, they are like puzzle pieces, each will give you a glimpse into my mind, and how I see the world. Enjoy and thank you for reading!

Bandung, 6 Mei 2022

Rico | Alumni KPB Semi Palar angkatan 1

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Panduan Buku AES

- Buku AES ini diterbitkan untuk kalangan internal Keluarga Besar Semi Palar.
- Serial **Narasi Penulis** adalah bentuk apresiasi bagi penulis yang sudah mencapai lebih dari 150 esai di Ririungan. Jumlah tersebut tentunya sudah menggambarkan berbagai gagasan pemikiran yang terus dituangkan melalui esai-esai pendek di Ririungan secara konsisten dan merupakan kontribusi yang diberikan kepada komunitas belajar di Semi Palar.
- Esai-esai yang dimuat di sini langsung dipindahkan apa adanya tanpa ada editing sedikitpun. Typo (salah ketik) atau kesalahan yang sama bisa ditemukan di sumber tulisannya. Ini adalah bagian dari keunikan Atomic Essay Smipa.
- Buku ini diterbitkan dalam bentuk digital (e-book) yang bisa diunduh secara bebas di Ririungan Semi Palar.
- Buku Cetak (printed book) dapat dipesan melalui **Semi Palar Co-Op**. Keuntungan yang diperoleh akan masuk ke Kas Koperasi.
- Di setiap akhir esai bisa ditemukan QR-Code yang bisa discan, di klik (di PC) atau di tap (HP atau Tablet) untuk mengakses sumber tulisan agar pembaca bisa meninggalkan like atau komentar untuk tulisan tersebut sebagai bentuk apresiasi bagi sang penulis. Jangan lupa **login** di Ririungan agar identitas pembaca tercatat.



AES01 Starting Over

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 22 Mei 2021

It has been a while since I've written anything that I didn't have to. Every so often my father would ask me to write again, since it used to be a good habit of mine back at school. But when you've stopped doing something for a long time, it's always very difficult to pick it up again because you're basically re-learning how to do it from the start, with the added pressure in your mind that it needs to be good, perfect even. That is a deadly combination for someone like me, and in the end I just don't bother attempting it. But this atomic essay concept is interesting to me because it removes a lot of the pressure that's been pulling me back, you don't have to write a whole book in one go, just several paragraphs each day. And today I'm going to try it!

Here's something to think about, if you were to die tomorrow, what would your regrets be? For me, I wish I would have written more, I feel like there's so much I need to say. Everything will fade away eventually, but a piece of

your soul that you've poured onto a page will still be there (whether if there will be people willing to read it is a different matter)

For me, there's something special and seemingly magical about the written word, and I think it's the crowning achievement of humankind. For someone who's been dead hundreds of years can still make an impact on us with just a few sentences. Your ideas, feelings, insights and experiences are fragile, and would all be lost if you didn't take action to preserve them. And that's what so magical about written words, it transcends time and space, it endures.

For someone whose preoccupation involves a lot of thinking and conceptualizing, the ideal medium to share my thoughts is through writing. So, I'm going to continue my journey, writing just a measly 250 words a day, which is a very doable goal if you think about it. Just a 15 minute commitment to sit down and write every day. But it definitely adds up, and in the end it will be an achievement to be proud of. In writing this I'm reminded of the quote, "The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago, the second best time is now". And I hope by reading this, you can join me too!



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AES12 A Pale Blue Dot

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 3 Juni 2021

"It suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. I didn't feel like a giant, I felt very, very small" -Neil Armstrong-

It's mind-blowing to realize that all of human history has taken place on this small planet called Earth. Everyone you have cared for, everyone you hate, everyone you have ever known, will all live and die here. The most profound spiritual experience anyone can have is to look at our planet from the vastness of space. This little ball of blue and green is everything you have ever known. From a distance, the things that revolve our lives around seem so small, so insignificant.

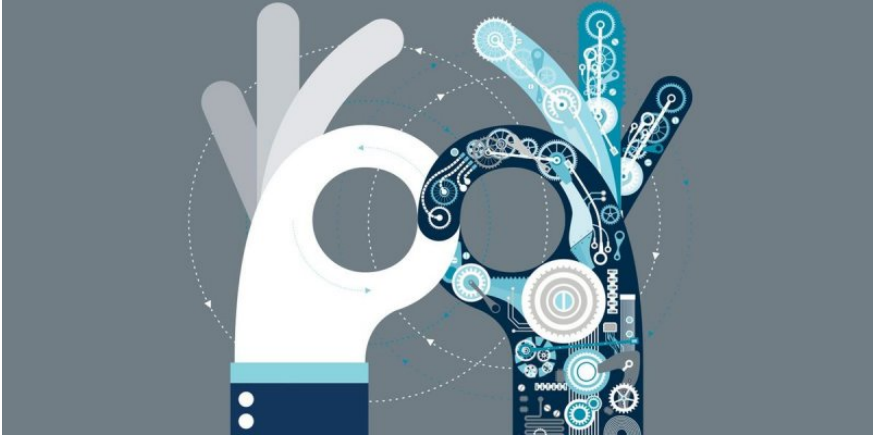
On a cosmic scale, we are smaller than a speck of dust, our short lives are nothing compared to the heartbeats of the universe. But it's exactly this insignificance that gives our lives so much meaning. We are not supposed to be here, but we're here anyway. Let's make sure we don't waste it. Our greed

and short-sightedness has brought problems that will soon become permanent. What we need right now, is to be honest with ourselves and take responsibility for our actions. All we have is each other, and this tiny ball of dirt we call Earth. If we are not careful, we may be one of the last ones to cherish it.

It's a scary yet sobering thought. All our lives we've been searching for something greater than ourselves, something to care about, something to dedicate your life to. We take comfort in myths and distract ourselves from what's really important. Look around you, see the faces you love, this place you call home, do whatever you can to save it.



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AES17 Automation Under Capitalism

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 7 Juni 2021

The concept of automation should not be unfamiliar to all of us nowadays. Lots of processes in factories and such are automated by the technologies of today. Tasks that used to be performed by humans can now be done by robots and computers. Most of the tasks done by machines nowadays are those that are repetitive, jobs that require precision, or simply things that are too dangerous for us humans. Now, logically automation is great for us, after all, with some of the work delegated to machines, it means that with all the work still being done, you can have more free time, expend less energy, but still reap the full rewards of your normal work. But unfortunately, under the current capitalistic system we're living in, it's not how it works at all.

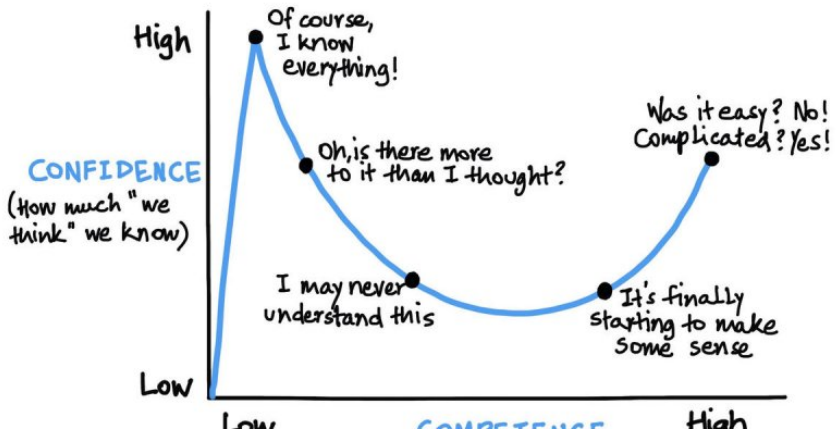
While working with a capitalistic company, more productivity doesn't mean you'll get paid more, or that you only have to work half the hours, or that you can retire sooner. Under capitalism, automation is actually a threat to the workers, rather than a solution. For example, say your job is to create

furniture for a company, let's say that normally you can craft 3 chairs per day, and the company you worked for installed a new machine to cut the wood automatically, speeding up the process, now you can make the 3 chairs in just a couple of hours. This doesn't mean that after you make the 3 chairs you can just relax and go home, the company you work for will now demand you make 9 chairs per day. But you still work the same long hours each day, and you might even get paid less because the skill requirement has gone down and there are more workers available to do your job. Worse yet, if a machine can do all of the work for you, the company will just fire you because they don't have to pay the machine a living wage.

Capitalist mindset has a primal need for endless growth and expansion. Everything needs to be bigger, faster, more efficient, no matter what. They have to keep producing more commodities, open more branches, and lower operating costs as much as possible. And in this ruthlessness the capitalists disregard the needs and wellbeing of their workers. Something as wonderful as automation is turned against the workers that they are supposed to help. We need a change in perspective, with the amazing technology available to us, humanity has the potential to be so much better than we are now, we just need to focus on the right things, and leave endless greed behind us.



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AES20 The Two Extremes

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 10 Juni 2021

For today I'd like to talk about some cognitive biases that we've probably all done at some point. Us human beings are actually not very good at assessing our own abilities accurately. Generally, we tend to overestimate our capabilities, judging ourselves to be above average in many things such as driving, language, ethics, leadership etc... This is called the Dunning Kruger effect. But there is also another side to this, where even though you're entirely capable of doing something, you feel like you've got no chance, that your accomplishments are just unearned coincidences. This is called the Impostor Syndrome.

The Dunning Kruger effect is a cognitive bias where incompetent people think they are competent. For example, it's like reading an article about a subject you previously knew nothing about, and now after reading that one

article, you feel like an expert on it, while in reality you've barely scratched the surface on the subject. It's the person with the least knowledge and skill that rates their own ability to be as high as actual experts do. This is because when you lack the expertise to notice the faults in your own work or line of thinking, you believe you're doing amazing while in fact you're making mistakes that you don't even know are mistakes.

Impostor Syndrome is where someone who is actually competent feels like that they're unqualified or undeserving of their position. You feel like an actor, only playing the role of who you're supposed to be, waiting for the inevitable time where you're exposed as the fraud you feel you are inside. These feelings can affect us all, when you are skilled and accomplished at something, you develop a feeling that everybody else is just as good as you, that you don't deserve the opportunities and recognition that you've rightfully earned. There is a phenomenon called Pluralistic Ignorance, it's when we all separately doubt ourselves privately, while believing that others do not think this way at all. A great way to fix this is to just talk to others about your feelings, you'd be surprised to know how common these feelings are, and how little foundation your fear stands on.

When you've been learning something for a long time, there always comes a point where you realize that there's so much you still don't know. But it is exactly at this point where you can develop the humility needed to start your journey of becoming a real expert. The problem with impostor syndrome is that it can stop you from achieving great things you're capable of because of your own self doubt. You'll keep good ideas silent, not apply for jobs or education programmes you'd excel at, keep to yourself when you can contribute meaningfully.

It is our duty to balance out these two extreme biases, make sure you're not confidently wrong about something, but don't keep silent when you do know better. A great way to deal with this is... Writing! Because with writing you can examine yourself closely with how familiar you are with the subject, it helps you understand how little and how much you actually know. Best of luck, I'll see you out there!



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AES70 The Ship Of Theseus

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 30 Juli 2021

There is a famous metaphysical thought experiment called the Ship of Theseus. Theseus himself is a figure in Greek mythology, a hero who adventured throughout the world before he became the king of Athens. He did many great deeds, but we are here to talk about his boat (note that I use the terms ship and boat interchangeably here).

So what's the deal with this ship and why are we talking about it? Well in his story after Theseus settled down, his ship was permanently docked and was ordered to be preserved. So throughout the years, the shipwrights tried to maintain the ship's condition, replacing old decaying planks of wood with brand new ones. This continued on for so long until finally, the last original piece of the ship was replaced.

This is where the thought experiment kicks in. If every single piece of the boat was eventually replaced, is it still the same boat as before? If it is, then

what is the essence of “boat-ness” that remains even when all the material has changed?

And if you say that it’s not the same boat anymore, when did it change to a different boat? When the first plank was replaced? When half of the ship was replaced? 75%? Don’t worry, there is no right answer here, that’s why it’s a thought experiment, a paradox.

The Ship of Theseus can be applied to numerous things in life, including yourself! The cells inside our body constantly replace themselves, and scientists discovered that every seven years, every single cell in your body will have been replaced with newer ones. Depending on your age, you might have fully replaced your body several times over already, now that’s something to think about.

There’s a character from a sci-fi movie or video game (I can’t remember exactly) who’s a battle hardened veteran of many wars, and in this future, body parts can be upgraded and replaced easily. But this veteran still has an injured leg, and when questioned why he still has an injured leg even though he can get it replaced instantly. He answered, “Because it is the only original part of me that’s left.” After getting damaged in battle so many times, parts of his body were slowly replaced until finally only his right leg was left. And even though it was eventually injured, he refused to get it replaced because he feels that it would mean he wouldn’t be the same person he was before. He’s holding on to his sense of humanity with that one final link that he has. If only he knew that even his right leg is not *really* the original anymore, referring back to cells being replaced part earlier.

The Ship of Theseus can also be applied in today’s world of interconnectedness, where purposeful misinformation is rampant. Where

statements and arguments can be warped using the principles of the Ship of Theseus, replacing the words and rhetoric piece by piece and erasing the context until it conforms with whatever agenda they're representing. We can find lots of examples for this online if we are aware that this tactic exists.

How many words can you change in an argument where it's not the same argument anymore?

"The Ship of Theseus is a kind of elaborate euphemism: what language they use reveals what they think we care about; what language they won't use reveals what they can and can't say. It's a temperature check for where we are as a society - what things do horrible people feel they can get away with and what things do they have to disguise; but no disguise is perfect, and if you do the fact-checking it will show you where they're weak. People will try to contort the truth... but the truth leaves an essence behind."

I'll end today's post with a lighthearted and silly approach to a ship of theseus statement.

Q: "Is it true that Grigori Grigorievich Grigoriev won a car in the All Union Championship in Moscow?"

A: "In principle, yes, but first off, it was not Grigori Grigorievich Grigoriev, but Vassili Vassilievich Vassiliev, second, it was not the All- Union Championship in Moscow, but the collective farm sports festival in Smolensk, third, it was not a car, it was a bicycle, and finally, he did not win it, it was stolen. But in principle you are right.



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AES84 Nighthawks

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 14 Agustus 2021

"People are feeling alone together, in their lighted ship against the darkness of all that was yet to come"

Nighthawks is a painting completed on January 21st 1942 by Edward Hopper, a prolific painter in the realist style. The date in which this painting was done is important because of the historical event that happened just several weeks before, the bombing of Pearl Harbour, and the subsequent consequence of America joining the World War. This general feeling of dread and fear permeated the country. Faced with impending war and trepidation for the future, what else is there to do? But try to enjoy the peaceful time we have left before it all can be taken away in an instant.

Even though I myself have never been to an American style diner, the imagery depicted in this painting evokes strong familiar feelings within me. It depicts a quiet night in New York City, and it shows the diner from the perspective of a bystander, possibly someone crossing the road or just

passing by on the street. From this perspective we get this beautiful portrait of a moment in time, where it feels warm, calm and comforting, and yet at the same time, feels far away, lonely and disconnected.

There's only one source of light in this painting, and it comes from the inside of the diner. Making it stand out like an oasis in the desert. The main character, it seems, is the diner itself. Bathed in warm light, it bleeds over to the outside through the windows, giving us a clear view of the people inside, as if it was an aquarium. There's something to be said about the meaning of windows in Hopper's works, it represents a blurred connection between the inside and the outside world. We can see past the glass windows, but we are still separated from each other, because the transparency hides a barrier still. And in Hopper's works, the windows are always perfectly transparent, as if they're not there at all.

There are four people present in the diner. From their body language and expressions, it seems like they are bored, lonely and a bit tired. Their relationship with each other is ambiguous, are they strangers? Or are they estranged? They are the only life to be found in the dark of night, being alone, together.

Edward Hopper's style of realism paints an ideal grounded in reality, but still carries a great amount of depth and emotion when you really look into it. Nighthawks is a wonderful work of art that really captures the feeling of finding solidarity and comfort in our shared sense of loneliness.

"Yes they're sharing a drink they call loneliness, but it's better than drinking alone" -Billy Joel, Piano Man-



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AES90 Long Term Procrastination

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 19 Agustus 2021

We all procrastinate sometimes, it's just human nature. But some of us are definitely worse about handling it than others, and that includes me. I think most procrastinators have this sort of "all or nothing" mindset, where we either give 100% effort in short bursts of productive energy, or we just over analyze things and don't end up doing anything for one excuse or another, preferring instead to partake in mindless distractions. But why do we procrastinate? And what effects can uncontrollable procrastinating have in our lives?

Well, everyone has that logical part of our brains that makes plans, sets goals and is capable of rational decision making. And a big part of that rational long-term planning is accepting the fact that we might need to do things that are not so fun and exciting in the moment, in order to make progress and be closer to achieving our future goals. But for procrastinators, this

logical decision making part of the brain is often taken over by the strong desire for short term instant gratification.

If we're being controlled by this need for instant gratification, everything seems to go by in a blur. We no longer have a concept of past and future, there is only the concept of now, and what we can do to make now as comfortable, easy and fun as possible. This often means that we're easily distracted by various things, like spending hours playing video games or watching a television series, things that are fun and engaging in the moment, but won't actually do much in the way of progressing towards your long term goals. And when you've already slipped inside this distraction zone, it's really hard to get out of it.

Funnily enough, when we're deep in our distraction zones, we don't actually feel happy and content, because we know it's not earned. There's underlying feelings of guilt, dread, anxiety and self-hatred; because deep down we know that we're not doing the things we're supposed to be doing.

Now the most effective way to get out of the distraction zone, is the panic you feel when a deadline is coming up. Then your system kicks into overdrive and you frantically work on what you're supposed to do weeks ago. And for the most part, it works. When people talk about the effects of procrastination, it's mostly "Oh I keep putting off my assignments until right before the deadline." But there's another, darker effect to procrastination that affects us on a much larger scale, even throughout our entire lives.

I keep procrastinating because it usually works out for me, I can cram in as much work as I possibly can just before the deadline hits, and my work will often be good enough to pass. It definitely is not the best I could have made it, but it's still good enough. But these sorts of scenarios don't happen all the

time. What if the project you needed to work on is far too big to be rushed in one day? What if it's long term goals that have no discernible deadline? If that's the case things get much more complicated.

When things we have to work on have a tangible and strict deadline, then the effects of our procrastination are contained in the short term, we get a productivity boost and finish whatever it is we need to do just before the deadline. What procrastinators have the most trouble with is when there is no deadline. When there's no sense of panic that drives you, then you can easily waste day after day doing nothing, stuck inside the distraction zone where nothing can snap you out of it. This is the very dangerous and scary side of procrastination that's not really talked about as much, because it's much less visible and not as dramatic as the usual "panicking about the deadline" kind of procrastination.

These are things that can be outside of the realm of our education and career, such as exercising, relationships, personal growth and development. It's hard feeling stuck as a long term procrastinator, because I want to be doing important and meaningful things with my time, but it seems almost impossible to climb my way out of this pit. It's difficult knowing exactly why you're failing, and yet feeling powerless to actually do something about it. It seems like everyone else is moving forward while I'm standing still. It feels like you're just a spectator in your own life, cursed to stand by the wayside, watching everything slowly crumble away. What I feel guilty about is not that I couldn't achieve my dreams, it is that I didn't even have the heart to try.

There are things that I wished I'd have done differently, but we can't change the past. All we can do is acknowledge what we did wrong, address the specific issues and make a commitment to do better from now on. There's no

magical instant way to suddenly solve our procrastination issues and turn us into motivated, disciplined hard workers in a day. Like everything, it's a long process that takes time and continued effort. But if you're willing to try to be better, then you're already going in the right direction. Believe in yourself and don't let procrastination get the better of you that easily. I wish you good luck in this journey, until next time.



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AES96 The Great Wave

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 25 Agustus 2021

This is a famous piece of art that you surely have seen at least once. It's certainly the most recognizable work of Japanese art in the world. It's a wooden print depicting the beauty of Japan. But if you look closely, you'll see three boats filled with terrified fishermen just about to be swallowed by the huge wave. The great wave seemingly eclipses Mount Fuji, the highest peak in the land, a spiritual icon for all the people of Japan.

Most people mistake the wave for a tsunami, and for good reason too, it looks huge. But it's actually called a rogue wave, or "plunging breaker" scientifically. These sorts of waves are scary and deadly, they can come out of nowhere even in open seas, sinking anything unfortunate enough to stand in the way.

I'll try to give this art piece some historical background. In 17th century Japan, the Tokugawa Shogunate decided that isolationism was the way

forward and declared Sakoku (Closed Country). They closed their borders and forbade any outside culture's influence on Japan, deeming them a threat to the stability of Japan. Nobody is permitted to enter or leave, to do so was punishable by death. This policy was in effect for over 200 years. During this time, there was an unprecedented growth in Japanese art and literature, an artistic period where every social class can enjoy art.

This particular work of art is named "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" made by Hokusai in 1830, as part of a larger series called "36 Views of Mount Fuji". It's not one singular painting but instead printed many times by hand on wooden blocks, this art form is called "ukiyo-e". You can find the original prints all around the world, since there's an estimated five to eight thousand woodblock prints of "The Great Wave" produced at the time. The earlier the print, the higher it's valued.

Back then, traditional forms of art such as paintings were reserved for the higher classes, but new art forms such as the mass-producible prints of Ukiyo-e meant that art was no longer restricted to those of higher status. People collected woodprints like trading cards, since buying a print is as cheap as buying a bowl of ramen. And "The Great Wave" was one of the most famous within the country, and it sparked international interest in Japanese art when it finally was circulated out of Japan.

Even the colours used in "The Great Wave" are unique. It is the first ever that used Prussian Blue, a formerly expensive and hard to get synthetic color. But opening trade with China meant that acquiring it for printing was possible. The colors usually used in traditional woodblock prints were often muted and pale, while "The Great Wave" uses a striking blue, further setting it apart from other prints.

The artist Hokusai believed that art has a life force of its own. And you can definitely feel it when you look at “The Great Wave”. This image depicts Japan facing an uncertain future, unsure of their place in a fastly modernizing world. But even though the seas are rough and dangerous, the soul of the Japanese people, represented by Mount Fuji in the background, stands solid and unwavering. Ready to face the oncoming wave of the future, and come out the other side stronger.



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AES97 Lament Of Orpheus

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 26 Agustus 2021

Don't look back.

Greek Mythology is something I find very interesting, with stories and characters both heroic and gruesome. These myths are told even today, and one of the most iconic tales is the tragedy of Orpheus and Eurydice.

Orpheus was born as the son of Apollo and Calliope, his father being an Olympian God, and his mother one of the Muses, which were immortal beings who oversaw all kinds of art, including music. With these kinds of parents, it's no wonder that Orpheus had a natural talent for music. Only his talents were much greater than natural, his skills with the lyre rivals the Gods themselves.

He was the greatest mortal musician that ever existed, every living thing that heard him play was captivated as if under a spell. Mobs of people would

follow him around just to hear him play, wild animals became docile and wide-eyed at Orpheus' music, even the trees and rocks moved in the ground just to be close to him. Nothing in the world can resist the beautiful melodies that Orpheus played on his lyre.

During his travels, Orpheus met Eurydice, the love of his life. They were perfect for each other, no one could doubt that they were well truly in love. Their wedding day was as perfect as it could be, Orpheus sang joyful love songs and Eurydice beamed at her husband.

But soon after the ceremony, tragedy struck. Eurydice stumbled and fell, she was bitten by a venomous snake hidden within the grass. By the time Orpheus reached her side, she was dead. Dazed and devastated, Orpheus buried Eurydice by a meadow, and wandered aimlessly through the world with only his lyre and broken heart.

He dealt with his grief the only way he knew how, through music. He poured his gut-wrenching heartbreak into his songs, and the entire world wept. Clouds unleashed endless downpours, colours seemed to fade on the earth, and even the Gods of Olympus cried when they heard Orpheus' lament.

After wandering the Earth for a while, Orpheus could not accept his love as forever lost, he simply could not live without Eurydice. He was determined to get her back, no matter what. Orpheus walked to the entrance to the Underworld and played a tune, the gate split open. He walked down the steps, deeper into the realm of Hades, but no demons dared to stop him, they were mesmerized by the sweet melodies coming from Orpheus' lyre. He even convinced the ferryman Charon to take him across the river Styx. The demonic three-headed dog Cerberus even laid down when he heard Orpheus' sorrowful chords, letting him pass.

Soon he arrived at the palace of Hades. He was brought before the throne where Hades and his wife Persephone sat, the King and Queen of the dead. Orpheus pleaded with them, saying that he could not bear that Eurydice was taken so soon, that his love for her guided him here, where no living mortal has been before. Orpheus took up his lyre, and started to sing.

When he played for the God of the Underworld, all hell stood still. The damned souls of Tartarus looked up towards the palace, and all the demons stopped torturing as they heard the beautiful and heartbreaking melodies that this human filled their ears with.

Such notes as warbled to the string,

Drew Iron tears down Pluto's cheek,

And made hell grant what Love did seek.

- *John Milton, "Il Penseroso"*

After hearing Orpheus' sorrowful ballad, Hades agreed to release Eurydice's soul, but on one condition; he was to make his way out of the Underworld with his love following close behind, but he must not look back at her, or else she will be lost to this realm forever. Orpheus looked the God of the Underworld in the eye, and agreed.

But as he made his climb back towards the land of the living, doubt started to grow in his mind. He doesn't hear footsteps behind him, he doesn't feel

Eurydice's breath on his back, he doesn't feel her presence at all. What if he was being tricked? What if he made the perilous trip to the Underworld all for nothing? That Hades and Persephone were laughing behind his back, successfully tricking him into just leaving their domain without question, with only a hollow promise that his true love will follow, what a fool.

The closer he got to the surface, the louder his thoughts got, and his doubts and mistrust got the better of him. Standing at the entrance, just one single step before the warm embrace of the sun, Orpheus looked back. The last he saw of Eurydice was her saddened face as she melted back into the shadows of Hades, losing the only chance to be reunited with her one true love.



Close enough that light we can see

My doubt betrays the better of me

*A glance to the stern is all it will be
Her anguished shade will haunt me
Ever on...
Calm seas, winds a-lee
But now the squall's upon us
We're foundering, drowning
Don't look back,
Don't look back,
Don't look back.*

- *Darren Korb "Lament of Orpheus"*



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AES100 Impermanence

Penulis : Rico | Tanggal : 29 Agustus 2021

*“The gods envy us. They envy us because we’re mortal, because any moment may be our last. Everything is more beautiful because we’re doomed. You will never be lovelier than you are now. **We will never be here again.**”*

-Homer, *The Iliad*-

I’ve been thinking a lot about change lately, and I’ve come to the conclusion that nothing lasts forever. Even the stars will die out someday, even the greatest loves can fade with time. Impermanence is an immutable fact of life. Most people think that in a negative way, but I myself find it comforting. The promise of change means that our troubles are not forever, it also means we can appreciate the good times more. The moments we experience in our lives are unique to ourselves alone.

It is the fact that we don’t live forever that gives meaning and importance to the time we do have. We find beauty in the impermanence because we know

we will never be here again. It is said that the Gods envy us, because we managed to make the flaw of our mortality into our greatest strength. We feel everything more intensely, we laugh louder, fight harder, and we love fearlessly.

When we see fruit flies, we think “oh those poor flies, living for just one day and then dying, what sort of an existence is that?” But on a grander cosmic scale, we’re exactly like those fruit flies. Our human lifespan is nothing compared to how long the universe has existed. So yes, from a cosmic perspective we do only live for one day, but it doesn’t mean we can’t make it a really good day. So let’s wake up, be grateful that we’re alive, spend time with friends and family, say “*I love you*” to your partner, contribute to society and help those in need, learn more about the universe so at the end of the day, we can go to bed happy and content. Knowing that we did not waste our one day.

After sleeping through a hundred million centuries we have finally opened our eyes on a sumptuous planet, sparkling with colour, bountiful with life.

Within decades we must close our eyes again.

Isn't it a noble, an enlightened way of spending our brief time in the sun, to work at understanding the universe and how we have come to wake up in it?

This is how I answer when I am asked why I bother to get up in the mornings.

-Richard Dawkins-



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AES102 The Parasocial Problem

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 31 Agustus 2021

The world has changed immensely in these last few years. The internet has become an integral part of our existence, and with it, people all over the world can connect in ways that no one thought possible before. New viable fully online careers have emerged, one of the most prevalent are Youtubers, or more recently, streamers. These people make a living out of creating entertaining or educative content to their online audience, which can mean millions of people all over the world.

Yet through all this incredible interconnectedness, the main issue felt by the youth of today is ironically, loneliness. Particularly considering the effects of the pandemic, most of our interactions with other people nowadays are constrained to online spaces only. And with most of our relationships developing online, it can be hard to sort it out sometimes. For today I'm going to talk about a new kind of online relationship between regular people

and content creators that might be unhealthy if left unchecked. It's called a parasocial relationship.

What differs live streaming from other forms of media entertainment, is interactivity (however limited it can be). If you're watching a movie or tv show, you can't really interact with it in any meaningful way. It's a prepackaged, scripted and edited piece of media being replayed on your screen. But with livestreams, the entertainer is actually there talking to you, the audience. And if you type out a message, they can respond in real time too! It's almost like an actual conversation between two people, almost.

A parasocial relationship is different to having online friends or other kinds of healthy relationships that can be had over the internet. What defines a parasocial relationship is that it's completely one-sided. It's where you're keeping investment in a person you care about, like you would with a real social relationship, but the other person doesn't even know you exist. At most you're just a username on a chat box that they see on a screen. And this kind of relationship is obviously unhealthy.

See, when a big name streamer says your name out of the sea of thousands clamoring for attention, there's a certain kind of rush to it. You feel special, noticed, valued. That's why there are some people who donates hundreds of dollars at a time just to get the streamer to read out their message. Enough of these "interactions" and you'll start to feel like you're becoming friends with the streamer, even though that's not what's happening at all.

You start to talk about that online personality as if you know them, and maybe to a certain extent that's true. When you've been following someone's stream or videos for a while, you start to recognize their likes and dislikes, their hobbies, their way of talking, you can even get a sense of what they're

thinking or feeling. You might even start to think of them as a friend. Maybe you'll start casually mentioning them in real life conversations as if they're just another friend you hung out with yesterday, even though again, they don't even know you exist.

This can create problems for both the online personality, and the audience. For the online personalities that stream and produce content for a living, sometimes you get weird people that contact you and start talking in an overly familiar way, maybe they already consider you to be a close friend, or even more than that. However much you mean to them, for you all they are is a stranger deluding themselves thinking that they're something more.

A dangerous problem for the audience is that sometimes, the content creator that you watch isn't really a good person deep down. There are so many cases of youtubers or streamers that abuse their power and position to take advantage of their unsuspecting (often young) fans. They can use their status as a celebrity to get unearned trust from their fans, who are just happy that their favourite content creator is even talking to them, not realizing that it's with bad intentions. We need to be aware of these potentially dangerous scenarios. We especially need to prepare our children to navigate this big scary online world more safely.

As we get older, we learn to reconsider and sort the relationships we have with other people into their proper context. Any kind of relationship has to be properly built up. You can't take shortcuts in getting to know someone, building trust and a strong bond takes time and effort from both parties. With the internet now being an essential part of our lives, it opens up so

many wonderful possibilities, but we have to be aware of the pitfalls it hides as well.



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AES147 Epicurus And Happiness

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 15 Oktober 2021

Epicurus was an Ancient Greek philosopher that spent his life studying the concept of happiness. He asks the age old question, *what really makes us happy?* The consumerism driven world we live in now would say, oh that's easy! Money, fame, recognition and relationships will make you happy. But does it really? Looking around the world, what we can mostly see is widespread dissatisfaction, and a quiet underlying desperation. Hundreds of years ago, Epicurus tried to tackle this issue, let's see if what he discovered still holds weight even today.

Epicurus thought that people usually make three common mistakes in trying to be happy. Firstly, he notices that friendships are vastly undervalued compared to romantic relationships. He saw that friendships tend to be free of the sometimes unhealthy expectations and possessiveness that comes with many relationships. Friendship, it seems, is where human nature shines in sweetness and pure innocence.

The second thing relates to our professional lives. Epicurus discovered that what makes work satisfying is not the amount of money or status we earn from it, but the feeling of helping others, and the sense that we're making a difference. That we are contributing in our own little ways to improving the world.

Lastly, people in modern times are often obsessed with the idea of luxury, expensive cars, tailor made clothes, fancy houses and gold trimmed furniture. But underneath all this, Epicurus believes that what we're really trying to achieve in striving for luxury, is to find a feeling of calm and safety. We want to live our lives in peaceful comfort, our minds pure and unbothered by worldly issues and responsibilities that so plague our everyday lives.

So after learning all of this, Epicurus decided to put everything he learned into practice. He moved into a big house in the countryside with all of his friends. They all had their own rooms and areas, but there's also common areas where they could gather and enjoy each other's presence, so there's always a friend you can talk to around the corner. Epicurus and his friends started focusing on doing their own stuff and contributing to the commune. They took up farming, knitting, writing, cooking, and a myriad of other small, helpful jobs. Sure, they weren't making large amounts of money like they did with their old jobs, but doing these real and fulfilling things had an immediate effect on the environment around them, and it helps the people they love in a clear way.

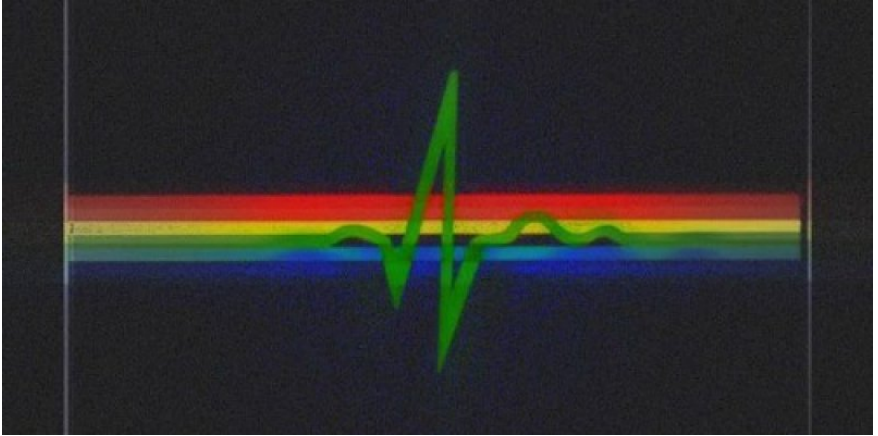
They learned to stop looking outwards hoping for happiness and peacefulness, instead searching for it in themselves instead. Epicurus and his friends did lots of contemplating, meditating, reading, and self-reflection, to

find peace and acceptance within their own minds. This experimental commune started by Epicurus was incredibly successful. Even though they lived relatively simple and humble lives, they were incredibly happy and satisfied with every day they went through. Being self-sufficient, having a tight-knit community, contributing your best and helping each other is the key.

Try and reflect on the moments that truly brought you happiness. For me, true happiness is always found in the quiet and understated moments. Sitting down on the grass to watch a beautiful sunset with a cold drink in hand, having my dog fall asleep in my lap, having a laugh with my friends, when I helped someone in need, and seeing someone I love smile. It's these moments that always come back to me, not the time where I went on a fancy holiday, or when I bought something expensive for myself. Being aware of what truly makes you happy can make a big difference in how you live your life.



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AES161 **Breathe**

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 30 Oktober 2021

A classic song from the legendary “*Dark Side of the Moon*” by Pink Floyd, “*Breathe*” gives us a strong introduction to the themes and soundscape of the album. Before we get to the lyrics, there’s an instrumental section about one minute long, a very psychedelic arrangement that lays down the calming, mellow foundation of the song. I really love the little guitar flourishes from David Gilmour that really breathes life into the melody. There’s a lot of advanced (for the time) technology that’s being used to create all these sound effects. Let’s get into the lyrics.

Breathe, breathe in the air

Don't be afraid to care

Leave but don't leave me

Look around, choose your own ground

*For long you live and high you fly
And smiles you'll give and tears you'll cry
And all your touch and all you see
Is all your life will ever be*

The first verse is commonly interpreted as a parent talking to their child. Bringing a new life into this world, we are responsible for raising them, and protecting them until it's time for them to “*leave the nest*”. We encourage them to go out and face the world, but deep inside we really don't want them to leave us. We tell them that there's so much to explore, they're going to experience so many things, both good and bad, and always remind them to make use of their lives.

We often see our own lives as stretched out decades filled with our many experiences. But what this song's lyric reminds us; is that what we do in a day, is basically what we do with our entire life. The coffee we drink in the morning, the coworker we chat with at work, the couch we sit in to watch movies; that is our daily routine, what we do every day, month, year, or even decade. This one day is a snapshot of our entire existence.

*Run, rabbit run
Dig that hole, forget the sun
And when at last the work is done
Don't sit down, it's time to dig another one*

One of the main topics Pink Floyd brings up on “*Dark Side of the Moon*” is the absurdity of modern life. Most of our adult life is focused on work, trying

to make it through each day, just to wake up the next day and do it all over again. On and on, there's always more to do, and never any time to rest.

For long you live and high you fly

But only if you ride the tide

And balanced on the biggest wave

You race towards an early grave

You can live a long, comfortable and quiet life if you ride the tide, so to speak. But not everyone is content with the safe path, some people want to ride on the biggest waves. Living on the edge, burning bright for all to see. But this comes with the chance of ending your life much sooner than you think. This seems to be the case for a lot of exceptional musicians and artists, they die far too young, like a melting candle consumed by its own flames. There is a risk to breaking the mold, making your own way in life. In the end, the choice is up to you, for there is no singular meaning of life; *we all get to choose.*



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AES178 Pandora's Box

Penulis : Rico | Tanggal : 17 November 2021

I've once written about the myth of Prometheus, the titan that gave humanity fire, and was severely punished for it by the gods. There is one more famous Greek story that's connected to this myth, a story about curiosity and its consequences, the story of Pandora's Box.

Prometheus had a brother called Epimetheus, who helped the gods create the Earth and populate it with living beings. But since Prometheus was a constant thorn in the side of the Gods, they disliked the titan brothers. The last straw was when Prometheus stole fire from Olympus and gave it to humankind, Zeus had him chained up to a mountain and punished for eternity for that act of rebellion. Zeus also wanted to punish Epimetheus, but he couldn't directly do so like he did his brother, since he had not rebelled openly. Zeus wanted humanity to pay for accepting the gift of fire, so he

came up with a plan that will trick Epimetheus into unleashing a curse upon the world.

The way Zeus tried to trick him in the beginning was to send him secretly cursed gifts. But before Prometheus was taken to the mountain, he warned his brother not to accept any gifts from the Gods, for they were trying to trick him. Epimetheus took his brother's advice to heart, and refused all the gifts that the gods tried to give him. That's all well and good, since the gifts were imbued with evil spirits and curses that will cause all sorts of trouble for humanity.

Zeus was getting impatient, his cursed gift idea is not working out so far because Epimetheus is wary about any gifts he receives. But the goddess Aphrodite came up with a clever solution, what if the gift didn't look like a gift? Particularly, what if they sent Epimetheus a perfect woman to fall in love with, that way she could be the Gods' way in. Zeus agreed, and so the Gods started working on creating the perfect irresistible woman to charm Epimetheus. She would be beautiful, smart, charming, and the last crucial trait; full of curiosity. She was given the name "*Pandora*" by the gods, which means "*all of the gifts*". When they sent her down to the world, she met Epimetheus and the pair fell deeply in love. It wasn't long before they got married, and at the reception, Pandora received a strange box as a wedding present. The box had a note that said that it should never be opened, for the content is not for mortal eyes. Epimetheus was suspicious of this box, but he could not refuse it since it's a wedding present addressed to Pandora. But he warned her to listen to what the note said and never open the box.

After the wedding, she kept on thinking about the box and its contents. What was so special about this box and who gave it to her? Why would they give

her a box that she's not allowed to open? Her curiosity burned inside her, and it's getting harder to resist opening the box each day. After all, unbeknownst to her, it is what she was created for.

One day, she could not bear it any longer. When Epimetheus was outside, she got the box out and slowly opened the lid just to peek at what's inside. But at the slightest crack of an opening, the lid burst open, and out came a rush of wind that knocked her back. She watched in horror as the wind took the shape of evil spirits, cackling as they were set free. Zeus had packed that box with curses and evil spirits that were meant to spread all over the Earth, bringing pain and suffering to the mortals that were given the stolen fire.

As they faded into the wind, Pandora despaired at what she had done, by opening the box she had doomed humanity to a life full of suffering and misfortune. But as she wept, she felt another presence still inside the box. This presence wasn't evil like the others, it was warm and familiar. As she opened the box one last time, a beam of peaceful light slowly floated out. This is the spirit of hope, no matter how difficult life may be for us mortals, hope will *always* be with us.

"To light a candle is to cast a shadow." -Ursula K. Le Guin



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AES193 Privilege

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 30 November 2021

Everyone is dealt different cards in life. Sometimes you get lucky, and other times you don't. Each individual person has their own mix of things that makes life easier or more difficult. This can range from looks, intelligence, wealth to social status. Now, privilege on its own isn't a guarantee of success, it's more of a head start that other people do not have.

Privilege isn't an inherently bad thing by itself, because life itself is unapologetically unfair, there's bound to be people all across the spectrum. What can be bad about privilege is that it allows some very lucky people to brag about their accomplishments and status as if they've earned it all on their own, with no regard to the connections, opportunities and economic freedoms that allowed them to reach it in the first place. This can create a false message to the rest of us that with hard work and a can-do attitude, we too can accomplish what they did. You see this often when they interview billionaires about the secret to their success, they always say "*hard work*" is

the answer. They never bring up the massive inheritance, capital seed investments, family connections and the insane amount of luck it took for them to even get started.

From my own experience, I come from a loving, respected family that always has enough. I never had to worry whether we could afford food for dinner, or worry about making the next rent payment, they always had my back and I could talk to them about anything. Most people don't have that. And realizing it made me feel almost guilty, why do I get to have all of these privileges, while others don't? It doesn't seem fair to me that I get to enjoy a mostly worry-free existence while others have to struggle so much. This evolved to a gnawing feeling deep inside that I don't deserve my comfortable place in the world, that it would be better to give up all of my privileges and live as a hermit with just the bare minimums. But after talking a lot with my parents, I realized what it's all about; Privilege isn't a burden you have to drag around and apologize for, it is instead an opportunity to better yourself, so you can help improve the lives of others.

There's little point in trying to erase or disavow the privileges we own. The most we can do is *acknowledge* the privileges that we hold, and use our position of privilege to help the less fortunate the best we can. If you have the privilege of belonging to a majority group, you can support and amplify the causes minority groups are trying to get across. Or if you come from a wealthy family, you can use the resources you have to provide food and clothes for the less fortunate. There's plenty of ways to use privilege for good, instead of feeling guilty about it, or even worse, using it solely for your own personal gain. Let's try to make this unfair world a little bit more fair, and do the best that we can with the opportunities we are given.



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AES217 The Great Filter

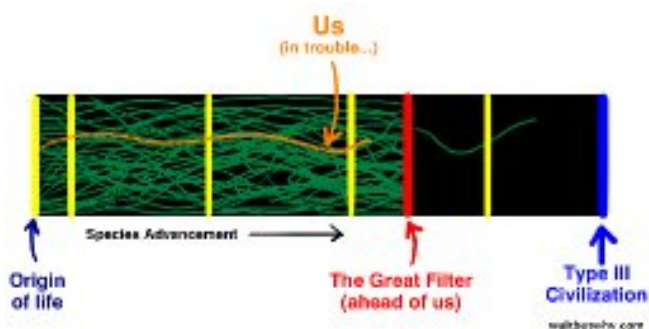
Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 25 Desember 2021

“Two possibilities exist: either we are alone in the Universe or we are not. Both are equally terrifying.” - Arthur C. Clarke

Are we alone in the universe? This question has perplexed humanity since we've discovered our place among the stars, on a lonely planet in a seemingly infinite, boundless expanse. Through the improbability, we are here now, alive and looking to the stars for answers. Surely there must be others like us out there? There are up to 500 billion planets in our galaxy alone, and almost 10 billion of them are similar to our own. And most of them are much older than the Earth, surely there must be living beings like us who have developed far more advanced technology... But so far, there's nothing. In a universe that should be bursting with life, we haven't found an iota of evidence that suggests that life exists beyond our planet. No remains

of previous civilizations, no signs of alien technology, not a single whisper from the cold, dark vastness of space. So, *where are they?*

The Great Filter is one possible answer to this question. We can visualize a species' journey as steps on a ladder. For us, our journey began when we were single cell lifeforms swimming around in primordial soup. Through millions and billions of years of evolution, we managed to become more complex, multicellular lifeforms, and eventually become the dominant, intelligent species of our own planet, which is where we are today. In the future we might learn to harness the potential of our own planet, and eventually the sun itself... Providing us with the necessary energy needed to finally reach other stars and become an interplanetary species. This is the template on how a species would grow and spread itself throughout the universe, all these steps that a species takes that takes them higher and further in an interplanetary scale. But because our planet seems to be the only one so far to harbor life, there must be some important things else we are yet to figure out. This fact suggests that there is a bottleneck, a great wall that's nigh impossible to pass through somewhere in life's journey, an evolutionary leap that no species have succeeded in making. That bottleneck is what we call the Great Filter.



And so finally the question is raised, are we just incredibly special and lucky? Is the emergence of life a statistical impossibility before we beat the odds? Are we the first ones out there, and therefore alone in this stage of our existence? For the continued survival of our species and civilization, this would be the preferred scenario. It would mean that we have overcome the impossible, the Great Filter is safely behind us... That the countless worlds scattered throughout the universe are simply empty, just waiting for humanity to finally discover them and fill them up with life.

This is why if at some point we discover that life exists somewhere else in the universe, say some microbial life forms or cute alien dogs, it's incredibly bad for us. If we find advanced civilizations or the remains of one, it's far far worse. For it would mean that life isn't as incredibly rare as we thought, that we were not the first and definitely not the last "advanced" civilization to exist in this universe. That the intimidating Great Filter is something we have yet to experience.

If the Great Filter does truly lie in front of us, then we may just as well be doomed. Somewhere in our future, there lies a challenge so great that no other species have triumphed over it. Something so dangerous, deadly and inescapable that it left us as only the next young, wide-eyed new species unwaveringly marching forward towards our own inevitable destruction. If the Great Filter is yet to be faced by humanity, I hope that we somehow rise to the occasion and overcome the impossible challenge in front of us.



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AES253 The Dragon In My Garage

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 31 Januari 2022

In this world, there is a lot of deliberate misinformation floating around everywhere, particularly on the internet. There are countless people who are willing to lie for the purpose of selling a product or convince you of something untrue.

Now, one of the most important scientific principles is falsifiability. It means that any claim or theory put forth can be open to be refuted by an empirical test. We can verify the strength of the hypothesis by trying to contradict it and even prove it wrong. This is one of the main differences between real science and pseudoscience. While real science always tries to verify and prove their own theories to make sure we have the best, most accurate view of the world possible, pseudoscience will actively avoid any empirical proofs or tests, and always make up excuses whenever challenged. They're always moving the goalposts, rendering any attempts at disproving them pointless.

One good example of this was put forth by Carl Sagan. Imagine that your friend tells you that they have a real, fire-breathing dragon living in their garage. Being naturally unconvinced of this, you visit your friend's house to see this dragon. When you go into their garage, there's no sign of the dragon anywhere. Confronting your friend about it, they say *"Oh well, it's an invisible dragon, I just forgot to tell you."* So then you suggest spreading some flour on the ground, so you can see the footprints of the dragon walking around. But your friend tells you that *"The dragon floats in the air..."* Alright then, you suggest setting up an infrared camera, so you can detect the dragon breathing fire, but again your friend tells you *"No, the fire it breathes is heatless"* No matter what experiments you propose in order to prove the existence or non-existence of this dragon, your friend keeps making excuses on why trying to test it will not work.

Carl Sagan concludes this story by asking "Now what's the difference between an invisible, incorporeal, floating dragon who spits heatless fire and no dragon at all? If there's no way to disprove my contention, no conceivable experiment that would count against it, what does it mean to say that my dragon exists? ***Your inability to invalidate my hypothesis is not at all the same thing as proving it true.***"



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AES278 War

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 25 Februari 2022

"I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones". -Albert Einstein

Earlier today, Russia moved troops into Ukraine in an aggressive military operation that can only be described as an invasion. Plenty of cities including the capital has been bombed, and skirmishes between the troops have also occurred. It's a terrible catastrophe that's bound to lead to a massive loss of human life. It's a sad day for humanity, nothing good can come of this, only death, destruction and senseless violence. It's crazy to think how many lives can be taken because of the whims of an unhinged dictator. I'm sure that the majority of Russian citizens absolutely do not support this act of war, but breaking free of propaganda and ingrained nationalism is hard to do; because the ones who will suffer the most are the regular people trying to live their lives in peace. I truly hope that this conflict can be ended as quickly

as possible, so no more innocent lives have to be lost. Ukraine's President made an important speech just before the attack.

"I have initiated a call today with the president of the Russian Federation. The result - silence. Although silence should be in Donbass.

That is why today, I want to come with an appeal to all citizens of Russia. Not as President. I am appealing to the people of Russia as a citizen of Ukraine. We share more than two thousand kilometres of border. Around it, today, is your army: almost 200,000 soldiers; thousands of military units. Your leadership has approved their movement towards us. Towards the territory of another country. This step can become the start of a big war on the European continent. The whole world is talking about what can happen any day now. A reason can appear at any moment. Any provocation. Any spark. A spark that has the potential of burning everything down.

You are told that this flame will bring freedom to the people of Ukraine. But the people of Ukraine are free. They remember their past, and are building their own future. They are building it, not destroying it, as you are told everyday on TV. Ukraine in your news and Ukraine in reality are two completely different countries. The most important difference is that ours is real.

You are being told that we are nazis. But how can a nation be called nazis after sacrificing more than 8 million lives to eradicate nazism. How can I be a nazi, when my grandfather has survived the whole war as part of the Soviet infantry, and has died a colonel in an independent Ukraine. You are told that we hate Russian culture. But how can a culture be hated? Any culture. Neighbours are always enriching each other culturally. Yet, that does not make them one entity, and does not separate people into "us" and "them". We

are different, but that is not a reason to be enemies. We want to build our own history. Peacefully, calmly, and truthfully.

You are told that I am ordering to attack the Donbass. To shoot. To bomb without questions. Although there are questions: To shoot at whom? To bomb what?

Donetsk? To which I have been dozens of times. I have seen their faces and eyes.

Artema street? On which I have been on many walks with my friends in the past.

Donbass arena? Where I have been rooting with the locals for our boys during the Euros.

Shcherbakova Park? In which we were drinking together after our team has lost

Lugansk? The home of my best friend's mom. The place where my best friend's father is buried.

Note that I am now speaking in Russian, yet no one in Russia understands what these names, streets, and events mean. This is all foreign to you. Unknown. This is our land. This is our history. What are you going to fight for? And against whom?

Many of you have visited Ukraine in the past. Many of you have relatives here. Some of you studied in our universities. Befriended Ukrainian people. You're familiar with our character, with our people, our principles. You know what we cherish the most. Look inside you, listen to the voice of reason, of common sense. Hear our voices. The people of Ukraine want peace. Ukrainian

authorities want peace. We want it, and we make it. We do everything in our powers. We are not alone. It's true, Ukraine is supported by many countries. Why? Because we are not talking about peace at any cost. We are talking about peace, and about principles, justice. About everyone's right to define their own future, of safety, and everyone's right to live without threat. All this is important to us. All this is important for peace. I know for sure that this is also important for you. We know for sure that we don't want war. Neither cold, hot, or hybrid.

But, if we are threatened; If someone is trying to take away our country, our freedom, our lives. The lives of our children. We are going to defend ourselves. Not attack. Defend. By attacking us, you are going to see our faces. Not backs. Our faces.

War is a big distress, and it has a big price - in all meanings of this word. People lose their money, reputation, quality of life, freedom, and most importantly, people lose their loved ones. Lose themselves. A lot of things are always lacking in war. But what is in abundance is pain, dirt, blood, and death. Thousands. Tens of thousands of deaths. You are told that Ukraine is a threat to Russia. This was not true before, not now, and won't be in the future. You are demanding security assurances from NATO. We are also demanding assurances of our security. The security of Ukraine from you. From Russia. And from other signatories of the Budapest memorandum. Today, we are not part of random security alliances. The security of Ukraine is tied to the security of our neighbours. That is why we are now talking about the security of all Europe. But our main goal is peace in Ukraine, and the safety of our citizens. Of Ukrainians. We are determined to let everyone know about this, including you. War is going to deprive everyone of any assurances. No one will have assurances of security.

Who is going to suffer from this the most? The people.

Who does not want this more than anyone? The people.

Who can prevent all this from happening? The people.

If these people are among you. I am sure they are. Public figures, journalists, musicians, actors, athletes, scientists, doctors, bloggers, stand-up comics, tiktokers, and others. Ordinary people. Ordinary, simple people. Men, women, old, young, fathers, and most importantly - mothers. Just as much as the people in Ukraine, no matter how much they try to convince you of the opposite.

I know that my announcement will not be aired on Russian television. But the citizens of Russia have to see it. They need to know the truth. And the truth is, that this needs to stop, before it's too late. And if the authorities of Russia don't want to talk to us, for the sake of peace, maybe they will talk to you.

Do the people of Russia want war? I would've very much liked to be able to answer this, but the answer depends only on you - citizens of the Russian Federation."



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AES300 Verbesserungen

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 18 Maret 2022

Seit den letzten Monaten wollte ich immer einen Blogbeitrag auf Deutsch zu schreiben, und endlich werde ich es jetzt tun. Eine neue Sprache zu lernen, ist ganz nicht einfach. In diesem Blogbeitrag werde ich natürlich viele grammatischer Fehler machen. Aber der Versucht, etwas perfekt zu machen, ist nicht der Punkt. Das eigentliche Ziel von alle Sprachen ist einfach Kommunikation. Kann man verstehen, was der andere meinte? Kann man äußern was er gefühlt hat? Normalerweise, wenn man eine neue Sprache lernt, wird er plötzlich nicht mehr so zuversichtlich, nicht mehr so lustig, nicht mehr so eloquent, wie in seiner eigenen Muttersprache. Und dieser Prozess kann lange dauern. Ich glaube, dass man eine Sprache beherrscht, wenn man sich ohne Hilfe vollständig ausdrücken kann. Ich selbst, bin noch nicht auf diesem Niveau.

Ich habe im August letztes Jahr angefangen, Deutsch zu lernen. Also lerne ich jetzt fast sieben Monaten. Ich habe in dieser Zeit viel gelernt, mehr als was ich erwartet hatte. Aber ist jetzt mir klar, dass je mehr man weiß, desto mehr man merken, dass wir eigentlich fast nichts wissen. Der Versucht, uns selbst zu verbessern, ist eine Reise ohne Ende. Es ist verrückt zu denken, dass in diesem Datum letztes Jahr, habe ich kein Wort Deutsch verstehen. Aber jetzt kann ich einen Deutscher Film anschauen, und kann ich er ziemlich gut folgen. Ich kann die Verbesserungen merken und erkennen, und ja, es ist super. Ich habe noch viel zu lernen, aber ich glaube, dass eine strahlende Zukunft steht vor uns alle, voller Möglichkeiten und neue Erfahrungen.



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AES311 When Is It Too Late?

Penulis : Rico | Tanggal : 3 April 2022

"We are living in this planet as if we have another one to go to."

Climate change is *the* big threat looming over us all. Every year things get a little worse, but the people in power don't seem to be doing anything about it. *Why is that?* People like us who recognize the threat of climate change for our future, are surely scratching our heads wondering why our leaders seem to refuse to do anything about it. But that's because the problem doesn't lie with any single individuals, corporations or even nations. The problem lies in the *system* we all live in. No person controls the system, and yet we are all bound to it, and no one can escape it, not you or me, neither can the country we live in. *It is an intricate global web of incentives and punishments that create and maintain the status quo*, inadvertently accelerating our misguided path to climate destruction.

There's an economic term called "*The Tragedy of the Commons*", it illustrates how when different individuals are presented with unrestricted access to a public resource (also known as a "common"), they will act in their own self interest and try to take as much of it as they can, because they think the others will surely do the same. This leads to the resource's quick depletion. This is happening on a much larger scale, with our planet as the resource, and all of the world's nations as the greedy individuals exploiting it until nothing is left.

Say a country makes a pledge to massively reduce emissions in an effort to combat climate change. But there's no guarantee that other countries will do the same. Hell, there's even a good chance that a rival country will *increase* their emissions and energy consumption to gain an economic or military advantage. That's why the most we see out of our leaders is an empty promise that we'll start being sustainable "somewhere" in the future.

They all take advantage of the situation because everyone else is.

This is because everyone still sees life as *competition*. That in order to win, everyone else must lose... In order to prosper, everyone else must suffer. A notion further compounded and perpetuated by our current economic system. This is why ***there can be no solution to climate change under capitalism***. In the world we live in now, to do the morally right thing, doing a selfless act to better the future lives of our children, is not only discouraged, but often punished. All that seems to matter is profits, efficiency, an increase in company growth to be celebrated in the quarterly reports.

The people who are in charge, every single world leader, corporate head, and billionaire absolutely *know* that climate change is real, and that we are the one causing it. But no one is willing to do anything. **No leader wants to**

disturb the status quo. Our leaders are paralyzed, because any actions they take to reduce waste and consumption will be met with swift resistance not only by companies that profit from it, but also by their own society who's addicted to a lifestyle that is inherently unsustainable. The corporations and billionaires who are blinded by short term profits, try to convince everyone that there is no problem, that we should keep buying and consuming mindlessly, forever.

Objectively speaking, our way of life, this standard of living in developed nations is the highest humanity's ever had. Every opulent comfort is available to us, every delicacy, every advanced piece of technology... Everything is just a push of a button away. Cheap beef from the terrible greenhouse-gas emitting cattle industry, cheap fish from our overfished, dying oceans, fast fashion clothing that will be disposed of within months, cheap phones that become toxic bricks in a couple of years, cruises on luxury ocean liners that produce more pollution than every car in the world combined. This convenience did not come without a price. To reach and stubbornly hold on to this unsustainable consumerist lifestyle, we are paying for it with the blood of our children. For they will be the ones negatively affected by our selfish actions.

The adults who are alive right now, will most likely still be able to live a relatively comfortable life with a high standard of living until they die. But what about our children? Things will start to truly get bad within their time. The disappearance of coastal areas under the sea, the inescapable deadly heatwaves, unavailability of fresh water, and terribly accelerated cases of "natural" disasters on an unheard of scale. This will lead to a mass exodus of a massive portion of humanity, escaping their soon-to-be uninhabitable homelands. The global economic supply lines will be severely affected,

supplies will become scarce, even wars might break out, broken nations scrambling to fight for whatever is left. And what about our children's children? Will there even be anyone left? Let's not sacrifice their future for temporary pleasures and conveniences.

That's the scary thing about all this. That the more *"real"* the threat of climate change becomes to everyone, the less likely it is for them to abandon their last chance at a "normal" life. *"Why should I stop consuming meat everyday? Why should I stop using disposable plastic bags? Why shouldn't I keep driving my own personal car? Or stop traveling on planes and luxury cruises? This isn't my fault to begin with, why should I sacrifice my personal comfort for something that won't make a difference anyway? At least let me enjoy the luxuries in the time we have left..."*

On a strictly individual scale, this might be somewhat true, what an individual does won't make much of a difference in the grand scheme of things. But what if everyone is thinking this? Thousands, millions, even billions of humans? Then the aggregate amount of bad things everyone is doing adds up into a whole lot of bad. And this is at the individual level, which has the least effect overall. Corporations and nations consume, exploit and pollute hundreds of times more than everyone on Earth combined. All this means that the worse climate change gets, the more the world will react in ways further *preventing* us from taking actions to mitigate it.

Something that makes caring about climate change difficult for humanity at large, is that it's a *gradual* threat. Slowly getting worse each year, sure, but at an incremental pace where we can still get used to the slight inconveniences it causes. *"Oh, this summer is 2 degrees warmer than last year's, oh well."* *"Man, aren't the seasons inconsistent nowadays? It should already be winter right now."* These little remarks will become more serious

over time, but day to day, you won't notice a thing. Like a frog sitting inside a pot of slowly boiling water, not jumping out because the water is heating up ever so gradually, that when it finally realizes it's in danger, it's already too late.

Sadly, it seems that the only times humanity truly unites together to achieve something is when we're faced with an immediate, dramatic, global threat that can't be ignored. Take a look at the last couple of years. It took the global Covid-19 pandemic to make us realize how fragile we really are. It took the threat of war for the European nations to finally band together and support each other like they should have done a long time ago.

If suddenly tomorrow, a massive meteor is found to be in direct collision course with Earth in two months, threatening the extinction of our species, then the world will no doubt immediately unite, every nation working together to find a solution without the geopolitical bureaucratic red tape that asphyxiates us all. But climate change doesn't work like that. There's no scary deadline for the extinction of humanity. And so it gets pushed further and further down the priority list.

The politician asks, *"When will it start to get bad?"*

The scientist answers, *"We don't know, maybe 50 years from now, maybe 100 years from now, but it will happen eventually, we must prevent it by acting now."*

The politician scoffs, he will be out of office by then, enjoying his retirement on a luxury vacation home. *"Let it be someone else's problem down the line."* he thinks, not knowing that that exact thought was had by his predecessor, and will be had by his successor too. The crucial window of time to act keeps

getting ignored, because there's always something more important to take care of, there is always a later, until there isn't.

There will be a point when an unlucky future politician will look around his crumbling, dying nation, and ask *“Okay, this is getting bad, our people are suffering, how do we get out of this? What can we do now?”*

And looking down, the scientist shakes his head sadly. *“There's nothing we can do, the time for action was fifty years ago, when we still had a chance to avoid this dreadful outcome.”*

No one is willing to sacrifice their own personal comfort and do what's necessary, because no one else is. If this is the mindset everyone keeps running on, it will take a global climate catastrophe on an unheard of scale, before humanity is kicked into action. But by then, it will already be too late. All we can do then is prepare to face the millennia of climate apocalypse that will test our species' survival.

Is our doom inevitable? No. **There is always hope.** It is the hope that our children place on us, you can see it in their eyes. The hope that we might leave this world a better place than we have found it, so that our children will have a chance at a better life. We each have a part to play, we didn't create this mess, but it falls on us to find a way to solve it. Somehow, we *must* find a solution, because the only alternative is our eventual extinction.



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AES324 Candlelight

Penulis : **Rico** | Tanggal : 17 April 2022

When I was attending mass today in light of Easter, I saw a beautiful symbolic gesture, where a fire taken from a single brazier with a candle is spread across the room, each person offering up their candle to light up another's. The whole cathedral was dark in the beginning, but as more candles were lit up, the brighter the hall became. And in the end, everything was bathed in a warm comforting light. Hundreds of points of light that originally came from one singular spark.

That's inspiring to me because it reminds me of our duty in this world. We each carry a flame within ourselves, a burning desire to make the world a better place, our own personal mission to carry out in life. It is our duty to never let this flame go out, make sure it shines bright with everything you do, so that others can carry the torch when you're gone. We've inherited a lot

of problems from our predecessors, seemingly insurmountable obstacles that we need to learn how to surpass, but along with all the bad, they've also passed down their own fire. Hope, that we'll find a way through the darkness in the end.

A single candle won't do much to brighten a room, but as a point of light it stands out, we all in the dark can see it, reach out towards it. Like a singular candle in a dark room, an inspirational act can be a beacon of hope for everyone stumbling around in the dark, eventually spreading its fire to everyone else. And with it comes real change, because only together can we stop the coming darkness. Only when every single one of us lights our own candle to fight against the dark, can we light up the world.



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