

# Andrew van der Vaart Transcripts

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Andrew is an MD/Ph.D. (Psychiatrist and Neuroscientist). These credentials are put to great use in his videos, in which Andrew analyzes the actions and words of murderers; though he will also comment on other notable people who display some serious pathology, such as the lady who was mad about chimpanzees and had a Netflix series that documented her maniacal need to own chimpanzees, regardless of the danger to her or others.

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# This is Your Brain on True Crime

Feb 14, 2023

Why do people get obsessed with true crime? What's happening in our brains when we watch true crime content, and why do some of us get hooked? 5 Reasons based in Neuroscience, as reasoned by a neuroscientist.

00:00 Introduction

00:17 (1) Survival Instinct

04:07 (2) Morbid Curiosity

06:32 (3) A Break from Mental Noise

– 08:21 & the Default Mode Network

09:47 (4) Dopamine

13:02 (5) Desensitization

14:56 What can you do?

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7HGLY4CE3c>

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## Introduction

Why do people get obsessed with true crime? Why are people, myself included, fascinated by serial killers? I'm a neuroscientist and psychiatrist, and in this video I'm going to try to provide some answers.

## 1. Survival Instinct

The first reason of these actually relates to all of the other reasons in some form or another, and that reason is survival instinct, animal brains in general. Give more weight and. The attention to potential threats than potential rewards, because in evolutionary terms, missing a potential threat is game over for your genes. You know, ignoring that rustling in the bushes that turns out to be a Saber toothed tiger you

can't afford to do that even once, whereas missing out on a potential new source of food in your environment. Not a huge deal. You can probably find berries tomorrow, right? You're not going to die immediately. So this same principle, I think accounts for why today we might pay more attention to bad guys than good guys. Serial killers, for example, are like that Saber toothed tiger. But instead of rustling in the bushes, they're. Doing what exactly? Well, that question I think is why we're so drawn to true crime. So let's talk about how our brain normally detects threats. The key region involved in threat detection is the amygdala. As your brain is parsing through the barrage of information that's coming in from your environment, the amygdala is scanning that information. Looking for potential threats to flag and when it flagged something as a threat. There are two pathways from the amygdala, one which we'll call the slow pathway, is sending that information to your higher order cortical regions, which process complex information, and in this case can figure out whether that thing is really a threat. In humans, this is when you become consciously aware of something. This is what it is to think about something. It's your higher order cortical regions processing information. But again this takes. So the other pathway is the fast pathway and this is what gets immediately engaged. If the amygdala flags something as a potential threat, that's dangerous enough, something that could kill you in a moment like a snake, which could have lethal venom. That's dangerous enough that the amygdala is going to send a signal to go into fight or flight. Mode immediately. It may even trigger reflex motor behaviors, so an example of this fast pathway is what happens if you put a cucumber behind a cat. The cat freaks out. This is pre thinking this is a reflex behavior because the cat's amygdala has sent a signal that hey, that could be a poisonous snake. So get out of here. You got to get out of here. In time that slower or higher cortical pathway is still getting engaged, and so the cat realizes after that initial reflex that OK, wait. That's not actually a snake. OK, so then the cat may decide to investigate the cucumber. You know, give it a sniff. Figure out what the deal is. That's that slow pathway that happens after that immediate reflex motor behavior. That fight or flight mode. So let's get back to true crime. I think if you're scanning your environment for something to do, let's say. There are aspects of true crime that might in fact engage that fast pathway immediately get flagged by your amygdala and put you in kind of a state of excitement. You know, your heart rate might speed up just from looking at some of these. Sensational thumbnails or seeing a cover of a book, and that reflex might be just clicking on the thumbnail or pulling the book off of the shelf just instinctively, but the part that's really going to keep you engaged is that slow pathway. Once the amygdala is sending it to your higher order cortex, you start paying conscious attention to it. And at that point you realize ohh this this definitely is worth continuing paying attention to. You know, you find that you're quite curious to learn more and that leads me to morbid curiosity.

## 2. Morbid Curiosity

So wanting to understand the killer isn't as perverse as it seems. It's actually quite natural, in my opinion. Because again, the difference between the kind of predators our brains are good at detecting the ones they can detect easily, like a snake or beast of some sort versus psychopathic killers, is that the latter can hide in plain sight when we become aware that there are people that seem normal, that look normal or even. Seem charming. That might actually be cold blooded killers. We're going to feel like we need to figure out who they are. We need some system to detect these people. Otherwise, what if they kill us right now? I do think the survival instinct is essentially universal, but we all vary in the extent to which we enjoy the curious aspect. Mere curiosity by itself is a trait that we vary in probably most closely related to. Openness to experience in terms of the Big 5 personality traits and then within curiosity there are more specific interests that we also might vary in, like interest in human psychology. Certainly a cool thing to be interested in, and I think that most people that are into true crime are probably interested in human psychology. Right? And then there's also variation in the morbid part. Some people are just more drawn to dark or morbid topics. Some people are fascinated by natural disasters. Right storm chasers. Certainly come to mind as people that are highly drawn to natural disasters in terms of the effort they are willing to put into that interest and that I think again, fundamentally, is related to a survival instinct. But there's variation in whether people actually enjoy what that survival instinct leads to, which is curiosity and learning more. And I think serial killers and spree killers can be thought of as a type of natural disaster, but where the nature in this case is human nature. So true crime represents these case studies. And disasters of human nature or in human predators. And in turn, there's going to be this kind of innate survival based curiosity. And again, I think true crime fans are probably a curious people and that curious. Quality has kind of a morbid quality, So what might be going on in the minds slash brains of people who are enjoying this type of curiosity? Well, one thing I think is a break from mental noise.

## 3. A Break from Mental Noise

I remember watching an interview with the comedian Norm MacDonald, and he was talking about game. Filling with which he was known to have a problem, but he explained what made gambling so appealing to him in this way that made more sense to me than anything I had heard before when he was betting on sports, which was his favorite. The reason he loved it so much was that when he put down, you know, thousands of dollars on a game. It was as if nothing else in his life mattered from that point on until the end of the game. Every play, he was just enraptured with what was happening with the full force of his attention, and this was an unbelievably powerful escape from the day-to-day stressors of life. Now true crime, I think, because it is

so salient, again because of our brains survival instinct, it offers a similarly powerful escape from the kind of usual background noise and stress that's kind of bouncing around in our minds all day long, but without having to gamble. Right, as you get invested in the details of a case, your mind just aligns its focus completely towards this thing. And I think this can be a pretty nice break from the mental chatter that might otherwise be going on in your minds. Now. What do I mean by mental chatter? I'm. I mean, the kind of self talk that's often just happening in our minds as we go about our waking life. You know, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, you need to do this. You need to do that. Why did you do this? Why did you do that?

## **& the Default Mode Network**

And in neuroscientific terms, mental chatter, I think, is the activity of the default mode network, the default mode network is so named because it is the part of the brain, the circuits of the brain that are active by default. So when you aren't doing any one thing in particular and your mind is just sort of wandering. Your default mode network is active, and that's comprised of multiple brain regions and the activity of the network has contributions from all of these regions. If you're dealing with stressors in your life and your mood is maybe getting low, you're getting anxious. The network is thought to be getting higher contributions from regions like the dorsal medial prefrontal cortex and the anterior cingulate cortex, which are regions that can shift the focus towards negative thinking, particularly like ruminations about the past or worries about the future. And also negative self evaluation. Or self criticism. Why did I do this? Why did I do that? I'm no good. That kind of thing. So I think in those times it might be especially attractive to have something external to your mind that brings your attention out of that default mode to a greater or lesser extent, there's probably always something kind of enjoyable. About a release, just from mental noise in general and that leads to enjoying a true crime case that's capturing your attention.

## **4. Dopamine**

So how does that shift in attention happen in the brain? I submit it's thanks to our good friend dopamine. People tend to think of dopamine as the feel good chemical, you know, because when you get a hit of dopamine, it must feel good, right? And that's why it underlies anything that's addictive. But it can't actually be the feel good chemical because it also gets released just when you're expecting something good to happen. But when it hasn't happened yet, and in fact it gets released when your brain detects a threat. Which is not a good thing, right? Signs of immediate danger cause a surge of dopamine release into your cortex. So why would this be? Well, it's because what dopamine actually is is the that's important chemical. It's your brains way of tagging something that is important and worth paying attention to when there's a surge of



dopamine, it's your brain saying this is important. Pay attention to it. Keep paying attention to it. As long as the dopamine's going. So yes, that does include rewards or reinforcing good things like food or mating. Opportun. These, but it definitely includes threats as well. So remember, we talked about the amygdala as the threat detector in the brain. Well, the amygdala is part of the limbic system, a major dopamine pathway that also connects to your frontal cortex, where the conscious control of your attention is also located. And so this is a pathway that's about learning or knowing what to pay attention to. None of this is as simple as just dopamine making you feel good. The pure feeling, good feeling is more likely accounted for by other neurotransmitters and really endorphins like endogenous opioids. These things, I think fundamentally feel good to the brain, but I think they're sort of secondary to dopamine. They can happen based on whatever dopamine is doing in the brain, but it may be that those secondary effects vary in people, in terms of how likely pure dopamine is to lead to a good feeling. You know something that you want to do rather than something that you're just motivated to do. I would guess that true crime fans are people that are much more likely to enjoy the dopamine effects on attention. As opposed to enjoying maybe just staying in the default mode of being non stimulated and letting your mind wander to seek out true crime is to seek out dopamine stimulation. I think they may also be people who enjoy horror movies, other situations where you're enjoying the threat response. In some form right now, if I were going to extend this hypothesis, I would also add that if you really enjoy true crime, then maybe don't ever try cocaine. OK, because cocaine is essentially pure dopamine. And so if you're someone that likes that dopamine based stimulation, you probably would like cocaine too much, you know. And OK, Speaking of dopamine and addiction, well, what's something else we know about that desensitization?

## 5. Desensitization

So what can happen with dopamine releasing stimuli is our brain adapts to it. So This is why people that do use cocaine, they might start as only occasionally using it only using a small amount. But over time, the amount they have to use. You get the same effect. Goes up. That's tolerance, right. And there becomes a point where they have to actually use cocaine just to feel normal, because if they don't use it, they're in withdrawal. So tolerance and withdrawal are examples of the price we have to pay for having a brain that is very adaptable. Our brains are always seeking homeostasis or a return to baseline. So things that increase dopamine regularly, our brain starts anticipating that and requires a higher or stronger stimulus to get the same amount of dopamine release. So I think this can happen in true crime and not just based on the true crime stories themselves, but based on the bombardment. Of threatening stimuli that we all get nowadays thanks to the mass media news outlets, all of these organizations are vying for your attention and one way to do that. That is to present

you with threatening stimuli, so news stories are generally weighted towards scary types of stories. Stories of threatening violence or scary health stories. Anything that's a threat is more likely to get you to click right, but then what your brain starts doing is adapting to an environment where there's constant threatening. Stimuli and so maybe it ends up taking particularly grizzly sorts of. Theory is to get you that same degree of dopamine stimulation to, you know, click and invest your attention and energy into something. So I think desensitization ends up being both A cause and an exacerbating factor of a sort of true crime addiction.

## What can you do?

So what can you do in this world of being over stimulated? And desensitized to threats, the generic advice from Internet psychology websites would be to just unplug and I don't think that's a bad idea, at least from time to time, but I'm not sure it's always viable and I think it may be overly broad. If you're desensitized to dopamine release along one particular circuit, which is this threat detection circuit, do you need to then live like a monk? And not do anything that's stimulating to you to reset that tolerance. I think our brains are a bit more elaborate than. That where these circuits each reach their own homeostasis. So you could just let one circuit reset itself to its baseline, but still get stimulation from other things in your life. So a selective break from threatening stimuli might reset that tolerance to a point I remember saying in the first true crime video I made. About the Jon Benet Ramsey case, that if you're in a rabbit hole, it may be time to cease the rabbit hole, at least if you were looking for satisfaction. Because I think in a case like that, to look for satisfaction might be to chase a horizon that you're never going to get to. But on the other hand, maybe satisfaction is always just over the horizon, but only very temporarily. With us, there was just an article about this on the Atlantic about how The Rolling Stones. I can't get no satisfaction was actually a prescient indictment of the state of being a. Human, that satisfaction is fleeting, but I think what you can know about yourself is whether or not you've saturated a certain dopaminergic circuit to the point where you're not getting those secondary good feelings that used to come with the stimulation. If you're at that point, I do think it's time to look for other things that are stimulating. To you, at least for long enough to allow that circuit to reset, sort of like if one circuit has gotten so soaked with dopamine, you have to let it spin dry. You know you have to go through a spin dry cycle in the dryer with that part of your brain. But if you're at a point where you're getting stimulated by it and still enjoying it. Shine on you crazy diamond. And for now, I thank you for your attention because I know that is a precious resource.

# The Tim Treadwell Delusion

May 8, 2024

Tim Treadwell & Psychoanalysis

00:00 Introduction & Impressions

06:50 Chapter 1: Like a Child

27:01 Chapter 2: Addicted to the Bears

43:52 Chapter 3: Denouement

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yj40VcwspGE>

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## Introduction & Impressions

**Tim:** How are you? Talks you to that talk you to that. Back off.

This is Timothy Treadwell. He's someone who seemed to believe he was a very special person on a very special mission. Today, we're going to watch some footage of him and talk about the narcissistic need to believe in one's specialness, even if it is a vulnerable, narcissistic need. And we're also going to talk about regressions into childlike States and addiction.

**Tim:** Don't do it. It's OK. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I'm sorry.

Timothy Treadwell is a tragic figure. Of course, being a tragic figure does not mean that he is not to blame for his own demise. In ancient Greek tragedies, the hero would always have a fatal flaw. Most often hubris. Excessive pride, pride comes before the fall, after all. In the case of time, Treadwell his hubris. May strike you as particularly stupid or delusional, depending on your disposition. And it was the belief that he could live amongst the grizzly bears in Wild Alaska as their friend and as their savior. And he did live among them every summer for 13 years before he was devoured by one, Verner Herzog was the perfect filmmaker to tell this story, what with its tragic and

bizarre protagonist, driven by an obsessiveness. That Herzog is clearly fascinated by. And I too am fascinated by Tim Treadwell and with the documentary Grizzly Man. So I want to lend some interpretations to this story as to what might have driven them Treadwell into that grizzly maze and into the delusion of being the savior of the Bears and into the death of himself and his girlfriend. I'm Andrew Vander Bart, a psychiatrist and neuroscientist, and any opinions expressed in this video are purely my own.

**Tim:** If they're, I have no idea if there's a God, but if there's a God, God would be. Very. Very pleased with me. If you just watch me here, how much I love them. How how much? I adore them. How? Respectful. I am to them how I am one of them. And how the studies they give me the photographs. The video and take that around for no charge to people around the world. It's good work. I feel good about it. I feel good about.

Myself doing it in this case as often is the case when when people are insisting to this degree that they're good and that they're special and that. They're happy. There is a kind of methinks thou dost protest too much.

**Tim:** And I want to continue and I hope I can. I really hope I can, but if? Not. Be warned, I will die for these animals. I will die for these animals. I will die for these animals. Thank you so much for letting me do this. Thank you so much for, for for these animals, for, for giving me a life. I had no life. Now I have a life.

There's a desperation here. There's a sense in which his life depends on this sort of calling. He believes he's found, and I often. Find that people that need to insist that they're so special in fact feel the opposite but can never confront that feeling.

**Tim:** Most times I'm a kind warrior out here. Most kind times. I'm I am gentle. I am like a flower. I am like I'm like a fly on the wall observing non. Middle. Non invasive in any way. Occasionally I am challenged and in that case the kind warrior must, must, must become a samurai must become so. So formidable. So fearless of death. So strong that you will win, you will win. Even the Bears will believe that you are more powerful and in a sense you must be. More powerful if you are to survive.

So notice he cannot help but smile as he voices this conclusion that you must be more powerful than the bears.

**Tim:** In this land with the bear. No one knew that no one ever friggin knew. That there are times when my life is on the precipice of death and that these bears can bite. They can kill if I am weak, I go down. I love

them with all my heart. I will protect them. I will die for them. But I will not die at their claws and paws. I will fight. I will be strong. I'll be one of them. I will be. Master. I'll be rowdy. Give it to me, baby. That's what I'm talking about. That's what I'm talking about. That's what I'm talking about.

So one thing we can see with Tim Treadwell is that he seems to be getting a significant amount of ego validation from the fact that he feels he must be more powerful than the Bears to be able to survive amongst them when he is occasionally threatened by them, it must mean that he is in some way their master. And what does that mean? Well, that means he's more powerful than one of the most powerful animals in the world.

**Tim:** Go back. This is a subadult and this is what happens to them. They work together and they get really powerful. As you can see, I am just feet away. You just relax. You just relax. I've now proven myself as being able to hold my ground and therefore earning their respect. This is rowdy the bear, and he's rowdy. He's getting bigger, but that was a challenge. And you have to remain cool. In. The challenge in the moment if you don't you're dead. They can kill, they can bite, they can decapitate.

What I'm suggesting is that Tim Treadwell has this need to be special. And where does that need come from? It might come from the fact that he doesn't actually feel special. His core feeling is that he is worthless in some way, or that there is some hole in him that needs to be filled, so he needs to believe that he is special and that he has worth what that need leads to is a belief that he is special. Because if he holds that belief, if the more he believes that he is special, the more he can deny that feeling he has that he is not actually. Special, right? So he's chasing filling this hole. With the feeling of being special and he convinces himself cognitively that he is in fact special because the need leads to that belief that I think reaches the point of delusion in his life.

## Chapter 1: Like a Child

**Tim:** I kind of think he was over 10 feet high, don't you? Oh, he's a Big Bear. He's a Big Bear. A very Big Bear. Wow.

The first thing I noticed about Timothy Treadwell is that his demeanor is quite childlike.

**Tim:** Anyway, he's over here Rob a dub dubbing. It's a big bear.

And so that childlike affect, it's a definite contrast to the way Timothy Treadwell wants to present himself. You know, he he wants to have this. He wants to see himself and present himself as a kind of rugged Jack London kind of character that's out there, you know, Bear Grylls kind of guy.

**Tim:** There's going to be a number of takes. I'm going to. Do these are called wild Timmy jungle scenes. Several takes of each where I'll do it with a bandana on, maybe a bandana off, maybe two different colored bandanas, some without a bandana, some with the camera being held. To do. Kind of stumbled on that one. Let's do it.

But in fact, what he looks more like is a kind of Peter Pan out in the wilderness with these kinds of silly facial expressions in terms of phrase. And it it makes me think about Arrested Development with him. So, you know, stages of psychosocial develop. Element or something that are essentially analogous to stages we see in all of biology, right? You know, developmental stages happen for all organisms throughout their lives. And so in psychiatry and psychoanalysis, there's this analogous idea of psychological stages. Now, Freud had very interesting ones. I think, you know, with the oral and. Handling all that kind of stuff, but that's sort of lacking in the kind of pragmatic realism that Eric Erickson's stages. So I really like the ericksonian stages. Each of them is defined by the typical chronological age associated with the stage and with the fundamental question that needs to be resolved and the idea is that it requires the resolution of each one of these conflicts to be able to move on to the next stage. So you can see in. Infancy through 1 1/2 years. The question is, can I trust the world or, you know, is the world OK? Is it a safe place? If that resolves, you can move on to the early childhood question of is it OK to be me? You know? Am I OK? And each of these is associated with a kind of conflict that needs. To be resolved. If it's OK to be me, I can be autonomous as a being. If it's not OK, I have shame and doubt. So the next one is. Is it OK for me to sort of move? Is it OK for me to take actions and that's initiative versus guilt and then with school age children, you know, starting kindergarten in really first grade and onwards the question is can I make it out in the world? Of people and things. And that's the industry versus inferiority. Like I'm either able to be industrious or I'm inferior. And then there's adolescence where you have identity versus role confusion. And that's the question of who am I and what can? I ultimately be. And so it's in this. Sort of pre. Adulthood series of stages that I want to focus with Tim Treadwell because we see him struggling with multiple of these conflicts. Inferiority, I would say is is is a big one. It's what's driving that need to believe that he is actually super. Prior, if he has this unresolved sense of inferiority, he needs to overcome that again, by insisting on the belief that he is superior and by pursuing things which give him a sense of non inferiority, of being special.

**Tim:** Governments giving me all they have so far. I've stood up to it. I've had danger in the boat. Almost died. I've almost fallen off. The Cliff, yeah.

Good morning. The danger factor is about to amp up in the maze. Maze is always the most dangerous.

Now, with Erickson, the idea was if you didn't resolve one of these conflicts, it's going to continue to present issues for you for the rest of your life until you resolve it. But this sort of goes hand in hand with the idea of Arrested Development and the idea of regression. So the idea of developmental arrest is, if you don't resolve the the goal of that developmental stage, you you actually cannot psychologically move on. And so you will act as though you are a school aged child in some cases, or you will be a perpetual. At a lesson. If you can't figure out who you are and what. Your role in the world is. And it's not as simple as a mere stagnation and just being arrested. There is a lot more dynamism allowed for here with the idea that regression can happen in the face of stress, so that you sort of go backwards in time and, you know, regression is something we see certainly in behaviors like school age, children themselves will sometimes. Regress to pre potty training. If they have a major stress, they'll have a period of incontinence where they're wetting the bed despite having not wet the bed for years and years. Because there's some new stress that essentially makes them retract. Back into a simpler state because it's as if it's not safe to be that age anymore. There's something bad about this age, so let me go back to the last time it was safe. So I think it's not a stretch to say if it if it happens with things like bed wetting, it probably happens with things like speech, mannerisms and internally with the way you see the world. So you'll regress to seeing the world the way a child might see the world. Perhaps, let's say, believing that animals are teddy bears, right? We're acting the way that Tim Treadwell acts.

**Tim:** Ohh he's a Big Bear. He's a Big Bear. A very Big Bear. Wow. Anyway, he's over here rubbing dub dubbing big. That's a bear.

At times like this when he's saying. He was up there rubber dub dubbing. It's very childlike. So his behaviors are very childlike, but I think the way he sees the world is very childlike as well. So immediately thinking there's there's some reason that he felt inferior from a young age. And that's leading to the insistence that he is not inferior to a pathological degree as well as often presenting as though he is still a child.

**Tim:** I would be within the physical presence of bears 24 hours a day for months at a time.

**Speaker 4:** This is crazy. This is nuts these. The most dangerous animals on the face of the earth, and you want to go and.

**Unknown Speaker:** Wow.

**Speaker 4:** Put yourself in harm's way 24 hours a.

**Tim:** Day I think they've been misunderstood. How can I believe?

First of all, datelines datelines Keith Morrison. I'll never not smile when I hear his voice. There's there's something about Keith Morrison's just folksy gruffness. But so we see another thing that living amongst the bears does for Timothy Treadwell. Not only does he have the immediate experience. Whenever he's able to sort of turn away a bear, you know, and avoid harm, that is an immediate feeling of power he. So he has that too. He's going to develop this belief that he's actually the only one trying to save the bear. So he has a kind of purpose and cause. And three, he's getting social validation and celebrity from this lifestyle. So what he's finding is that this pursuit. Is doing so much for that ego need? But again, this idea that he is now a national celebrity from his summers with the Bears kind of contradicts the. Image of the rough and tumble outdoorsman and so I I just get the sense that there's still kind of a role confusion even when he's in the periods where he's moving past the the sense of inferiority because it's getting solved by all of these claims, he still doesn't quite know who he is. Is he an activist? Is he an outdoorsman? Is he tough? Is he a sweetheart? He's he seems to be all of these things. Without knowing exactly who he.

**Speaker 4:** Is you are about to be killed by a bear that you wouldn't say. Oh, I made a mistake I'd like.

**Tim:** To have a gun, I would never ever kill a bear in the defense of my own life would not go into a Bears home and kill a bear.

In his final year, the 13th of his Alaskan expeditions. Tim Treadwell continued in what had become his established practice of first camping in the more open areas of the wildlife reserve and then moving into the thicker brush, which is what he called the grizzly maze to watch the salmon run of the fall. This year in particular, he had decided to delay his exit by a few weeks, and it's been suggested that this. Added risk to his already risky behavior as that is the time of year that bears might become most desperate to put on fat before the. Enter. In Tim Treadwell's footage from his final expedition, there are two bears in particular, either of which some people have speculated might be the bear that killed and ate him. Whether or not that's actually the case, I think it is reasonable to suggest these are the types of bears most prone to attack a human, and in fact Tim Treadwell himself suggest this.

**Tim:** I'm here on camera with Ollie, the big old Bear and the big old grumpy bear. He just took cracker out of the the Creek area. There's not a lot of fish here, so you could understand him wanting to have control. Three, I met him on the path where the other day after feeling sorry for him, thinking that he was a bit then a bit gaunt, and he promptly charged me with the attempt to probably strike. I I know the language of the bear. I was able to deter him from doing that and I'm fine, but I will tell you something. It is the old fair. One who is struggling for survival. And. An aggressive one at that. Who's the one that you must be very careful of for?



These are the bears that on occasion do for survival, kill and eat humans. Could only the big old bear possibly kill and eat Timothy Treadwell? What do you think, Ollie? I think if you were weak around him. If you're going down as down as gullet, going down the. Pipe.

We hear Tim Treadwell's notion that he's just sort of friends with the Bears. The story he tells of meeting this bear is the kind of story you'd tell about how you met someone at school or something. You know, that you just met him while you were walking along the hallway, and you kind of felt sorry for him because he seemed out of place.

**Tim:** I met him on the pamphlet the other day. After feeling sorry for. Him and he promptly charged me with the attempt to probably strike. I I know the language of the bear.

And then you also have the part where he wants to feel like he's more powerful than the Bears. So, you know, I was able to deter him. And if I were any weaker, he would probably eat me.

**Tim:** I was able to deter him from doing that and I'm fine. But I will tell you.

So this is definitely an illustration of Timothy Treadwell's kind of increasingly unrealistic view of what the Bears are. I think when he first started going out there, it was more so a fascination from a distance. These are majestic beasts, but what he started to do was escalate from that emotional distance. Into an increasing degree of emotional involvement. Which for the most part I think was a drama in his own head that he was friends with the Bears and that he knew the language of the Bears. Now likely he did pick up certain types of survival behaviors in terms of like how to know when 1 was about to charge. But he combines that with this kind. Of. Personality based view of the Bears that this one's grumpy, for example. So in the same way that you might escalate. With an addiction, Timothy Treadwell seemed to escalate in terms of his involvement with the Bears to get the thrill he would need increasingly close encounters with them.

**Tim:** I want to introduce you to one of the key role players in this year's expedition. The Bears name is the Grinch. Grinch has come on to be one of the more frequent bears here in the grizzly maze. The Grinch is a female of about five years of age. Ohh hi Grinch. Hi. And she has kind of an aggressive attitude.

Hi.

If I turn around too much. She'll bite me. It's OK. Hi. How are you? How are you? Don't you do that? Don't you do that. Back off. Don't do it.

It's OK. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I'm sorry.

So there's almost this fantasy of a push pull relationship he has in some of these cases. He definitely likes the feeling of sort of winning in a confrontation over a bear, but then he also has this kind of fantasy that they love him, right? It's not enough that they fear him. He wants them to both fear and love him. So the push pull is. Get away. Don't do that. And then I love you. I love you. I love you. I think this drama is entirely in his head because. We can't really presume to know what the Bears decision making process is at all in those cases, but you know from what I've heard, listening to Wes on tooth and Claw, it's probably something along the lines of this isn't worth it. Or just, you know, I don't have a reason to attack. The over interpretation in Tim Treadwell's mind is the bear is realizing that Tim is stronger and is A and is a beloved leader, and so he's not the bear's not going to attack.

**Unknown Speaker:** Like.

I think the I think that's an over interpretation. It may also be an over interpretation that we hear from this particularly cynical guy in in the movie Grizzly Man. Who says? The reason the Bears didn't attack him is because they probably thought there was something wrong with him.

**Speaker 5:** I think the only reason that Treadwell lasted as long and the game as he did was that the Bears. Probably thought there was something wrong with him. My opinion, I think Treadwell thought these bears were big, scary looking harmless creatures, that he could go up and Pat and sing too, and they would bond as children of the universe or some odd. I think he.

**Unknown Speaker:** Look at that.

**Speaker 5:** Had lost sight of what was really going on.

I think it is accurate that that when Tim Treadwell is acting childish, singing lullabies to the Bears, etcetera, he is also viewing them. The way a child might who a child that is not learned the ways of the world and has the kind of childlike innocence that borders on gullibility even in normal cases. In this case, I think it went beyond the gullibility and into again delusion. But So what I'm saying is the the childishness we see in Tim Treadwell is not an act. Psychologically, it's how he's functioning internally. He isn't just pretending to be this child of the universe trying to bond with the Bears. It's what he's experiencing.

**Tim:** What are you doing up there? That's where you're sitting.

**Unknown Speaker:** Go.

**Tim:** Hi. Hey, you little champion. Hi, how are you? You're such. I love you. I love you. Good champion. Get up there and guard that tent.

To me, one of the most tragic things about the Tim Treadwell story is that. He couldn't just be happy filming foxes, even though he has these moments of just pure joy and playful humor amongst the foxes. That wasn't enough for him because he had this hole that he needed to fill. This need to be special. Would not have been satisfied

by mere nature photography, or by animals that aren't so ferocious and intimidating as bears.

**Tim:** Only Timmy is the boss of all foxes and all bears. You're the ruler. We patrol the grizzly sanctuary together. How did we meet? Over a decade ago and we watch over things and he's the boss. Takes care of everything. Yeah.

Because I love my haircut. I think one of the things that's really important, as you can see the bond between this very wild animal and this very fairly wild person.

When he's with the foxes, there is still the childlike nature, and there's still the potential for criticism that he's habituating wild foxes to humans. But there's also a sort of peace. That I feel from him during those times that he's not subjecting himself to the intense drama that the Bears provide and there's a sort of relief in that. But of course it seems to never be enough. He he couldn't be satisfied without this false sense that he was special, that demanded justification. Why am I special? Oh, because it's the grizzly bears, the most dangerous and deadly animals. Not only that, I must be the only one that can save the grizzly bears. I must be the one. 1. And everyone else, therefore, who's involved with the Bears, must be the enemy.

**Tim:** Well, I'm here with one of my favorite bears. It's Mr. chocolate. Hey, Mr. chocolate. He is the star of many people across the country. Children, people, adults. And we're here in the grizzly sanctuary. But I'm wrapping up my work here in the Grizzly sanctuary. Why is that? Because I'm on my way to the grizzly maze where bears do not have human protection. But around. Human threat bears like Aunt Melissa, Bears like Demon Hatchet, Downey and Tabitha, and it's time for me to go to protect them.

Now, in actual fact, the entirety of Tim Treadwell's expeditions took place in Katmai National Park and Reserve. These were federally protected lands, and so the idea that these bears needed Tim Treadwell's protection was baseless, or more precisely based in fantasy. The escalation of this fantasy seemed to play into Tim Treadwell's overall escalation of psychological dependency on the Bears in its final form. It took on the grandiose notion that temp Treadwell was the saviour of the Bears with the paranoid counterpart that other people wished harm on the Bears, and on Timothy that there were people intent on stopping him on his sacred mission. But before we talk more about that, let's trace back the thread of his psychological dependency on the Bears.

## Chapter 2: Addicted to the Bears

**Tim:** But how did I? How did I come into this work? I was, I was troubled. I was troubled. I drank a lot. Did you do that? I I I used to drink to the

point of that. I guess I was either going to die from it or or break free of it. But nothing, nothing. Iris could get me to stop drinking. Nothing. I did everything. That I could to try not to drink and then I. Did everything I. Could to drink and it was killing me. Until I discovered this land of bears and realized that they were in such such great danger, they needed a caretaker. They needed someone to look after them, but not a drunk person. Not a person messed up. So I promised the bears that if I would look over them, would they please help me and they become so inspirational that I did. I gave up the drinking I it was a miracle. It's an absolute miracle. And the miracle was animals.

Now, Timothy Treadwell here cites drinking as the primary addiction. And. In his de facto autobiography, he actually also writes about drug addiction. He wrote that in the late 1980s, he had overdosed on heroin and cocaine and was rescued by a Vietnam vet named Terry, and that it was at Terry urging that he went to Alaska in the 1st place to watch the Bears. But I do believe. Tim Treadwell's account that it was in fact, this newfound love of the Alaskan wilderness and the Grizzlies that enabled him to overcome his addiction and and that is because I believe he was using alcohol and drugs to fill that same hole that. That he was using alcohol and drugs to make himself feel OK, temporarily, right? But then he found something that was even better at filling that hole, which was the Grizzlies. But the problem was he did not address the root cause of his addiction. And so his addiction is displaced onto the grizzly bears and that becomes its own even more severe addiction. I think that escalated to the point of destruction. As pathological addictions tend to do, addiction at its heart is a kind of seeking an intense seeking for something like the feeling that I'm OK, or that I'm not worthless. That has these these moments of relief. There are these periods where you feel OK. But that's only ever temporarily in your grasp, right? In the longer term, it's a seeking for something that is forever just out of your reach. But so to replace that constant, seeking that constant seeking of something beyond your reach, it takes something else that must be even more worth seeking, right, even more worth pursuing. And we can think of this in neurobiological terms, too, right? I mean, dopamine is the common link between all drugs of abuse and all addictive behaviors. And dopamine drives reinforcement, so it's often thought of as the reward chemical, but really it's more about salience and seeking behaviors. So consider a pre conscious brain with only the most ancient structures reptilian as they're called, and the the role of dopamine in the deep brain is just that of movement. So dopamine in the basal ganglia initiates movement and that is literal seeking for the Organism. It's seeking food or. Reproduction or seeking safety in the case of fear. Now when you overlay the cortex onto these reptilian structures, dopamine still has the same end goal movement, but now it's sort of involved in the planning stages of movement as well, right? So like the pre motor cortex, but even more abstract thoughts and complicated perceptions. Can still be thought of as ultimately precursors to action, right? So dopamine underlies

motivation, motivation. So. Pre movement, right? If you're motivated to do something, ultimately you're moving. So what does dopamine feel like? Well, it feels like this thing is worth pursuing, so it feels like this thing is significant. If it's a perception that's triggering cortical dopamine, you perceive it as significant and worth something. If it's a thought, it's it's a thought that feels significant and worth. Pursuing. So what dopamine feels like is significance or value and what it does is motivate action or pursuing the thing with value. So why are addictions so hard to quit? Well, because they're bypassing any kind of pre addiction logic you might have had, because the substance or behavior is talking to you in direct dopamine terms. And dopamine is the thing that assigns value to things. So if you're trying to sort of have an argument about whether something is valuable. With yourself and you have an addiction. The addiction has all of the currency it has. It is driving the stuff that is your sense of value. So it's like if someone grows up being told drugs are dangerous and they believe this growing up, they've been told it. Why wouldn't they believe it? So they say, OK, drugs are dangerous. And yet, in a moment of experimentation. They they try it. And then from there, they say, oh, wait. I didn't realize how worth the risk this was right because the drug is driving this dope means they're like, OK. Yeah. Like I always thought it was dangerous. But what this really seems worth it. And so they're kind of devalue the risk and overvalue the reward. Because it's an unnatural amount of dopamine, and you can't necessarily argue with your own dopamine about what's worth doing because the dopamine is what's defining what's worth doing. And then the process of addiction is doing something more and more such that for a while you're wanting to do it more and more, and eventually you're having to do it. More and more. And the end state is perpetual seeking. It's a state of perpetually wanting more, never being satisfied. Now someone like Tim Treadwell was at risk because they were already in a state of never feeling satisfied, right? So at least the addiction is giving them these transient moments where they feel satisfied, but they're all the more prone to the seeking they've they've been seeking their whole life. Lives. For a moment they get the thing, then it's out of their grasp. They're going to escalate.

**Tim:** And and it was killing me until I discovered this land of bears. I gave up the drinking. It was a miracle.

And now the way Tim Treadwell talks about the Bears, he's talking about them as a sort of higher power. He's almost making a deal with the Bears, the way people make a deal with God, right?

**Tim:** So I promised the bears that if I would look over. Them. Would they please help me?

I'll help you if you help me. I'll do whatever you want. If you just help me with this and and you know higher power. The the idea of the higher power part in 12 step

programs is crucial to 12 step programs, right? Because the higher power. By definition, is the thing beyond which there is no seeking and and This is why it works is that. It's the thing which you cannot seek more than. Right. You know you can't seek for more than God, because if there were anything more than God, that would then be God. This is sort of like the ontological argument of Saint Anselm. But I think that's a that's a crucial principle that you can't just say anything is a higher power, it needs to be sort of this ultimate thing, because what the person needs to do is not be able to keep the seeking cycle going. Now, it might be said that 12 step programs are trying to replace an addiction to a substance with an addiction to God, but the fact is the substance had already become the person's God in the sense that it was their be all end all it was the thing that they defined as having the highest possible. Value in their personal value system. And to say this is merely about substituting another addiction for another. I think it's to underappreciate the elegance of the solution. So the first step is actually a surrender, right? Recognition of the powerlessness the individual has over the dopamine circuit that has been fed and massively empowered by the substance. And then the second. Step is recognizing a higher power, which is to say, fundamentally re encoding your sense of what ultimate value is. So that is in fact an attempted frame shift from your higher order cortex. It's your higher order cortex intervening to say we can't keep putting. We can't keep thinking of this one thing as the ultimate value. We have this other thing now, and you're you're reassigning how to assign or interpret dopamine because that is what it is to assign an interpret value. So all of this is to say, I understand that that not everyone has the the disposition for 12 step programs sometimes because explicitly of the religious component to it, but. You know, my read on the literature is that. It it works as well as most anything else and for the people that do have that disposition, when it works, it really works. And I think it is the the crucial difference here in in terms of the Bears enabling the seeking circuit to only escalate, as opposed to intervening on the addiction. So I think the bears are replacing one addiction for another and what needs to happen is that you. Fundamentally disrupt the addiction circuit so the other ways to do that would be, you know, I think, intensive psychotherapy in the case of of someone who's never felt OK. I think exploring the reasons for not feeling OK and really challenging those those beliefs that were probably encoded from a young age that might be something that interrupts the addiction circuits, medication wise. I think what we can do sometimes is is essentially interrupt the. The survival instinct, you know when it gets to the point of thinking you're going to die if you don't have the the substance interrupt the survival instinct part to enable changes in, in thoughts and behaviors, or perhaps in one case Now Trek zone. I think we are actually intervening at the level of the of the addiction circuit and. Pharmacologically disrupting it, but again, what we're seeing in Tim Treadwell is a person that seemed to have a fundamental developmental arrest was struggling with with issues of identity. Who am I very often struggling with inferiority, you know? Am I good enough? As his addiction escalates in some sense, I think he regresses even further back around issues of trust versus mistrust. But in his case, what

made the grizzly bears and even better, addiction, something that he was willing to substitute in, was the fact that it was. Better addressing that question of inferiority and and I think the the escalation of that addiction was no, I I can't be inferior. Look, I'm able to survive amongst the Grizzlies out here. And then it went to. No, I can't be inferior. I'm able to even turn the Bears away. When they started approaching me. But it escalated still. To a point where I think he started regressing even further back. And we see periods where he's as far back as you know, the trust versus mistrust question where he starts getting it kind of paranoia. He becomes so possessive of the Bears as this thing that he needs for himself, that he doesn't trust anyone else that's involved with the Bears anymore. He becomes a kind of golem. Paranoid about anyone else encroaching on his territory.

**Tim:** I'm submitting this as a Sunday August 1st. It is 435 and 18 seconds. On this day. It's hard to say, but it's a warning of a sort, and it's obviously here to upset me.

And then at the same time, he can use that new narrative to still be trying to fulfill that ever increasing need of non inferiority. Because once he's made everyone else the bad guys, you know, once once the government is after the Bears. Well, now I can say I'm not inferior because I'm the savior of the Bears, right? So it leads to this kind of splitting where? I need to know I'm the good one. I've always needed this. Now I'm at a point where I'm the only good one and everyone else is bad. Everyone else is trying to kill the Bears. Only I can save them. And so that's that. At that point, I think is a grandiose delusion. That it's it's. Completely contrary to the evidence that this is all a wildlife preserve, you know in some cases maybe the government is after him because he's violating, he's violating rules of the National Park.

**Tim:** I have decided to violate a federal rule which states I must camp one mile. Every week I must move one mile after staying for seven consecutive days. If I was to do that here, I would not be able to study these bears. I would not be able to really protect them. I'd have to actually move out. Of the Bay. To get a mile out. Therefore, I have decided to protest the United States government and guard these bears anyway and stay.

But if anything, he's he's displacing, what is really just his own persecution on to the Bears, right? So he's saying because I am so good and I am one of the bears. If you're persecuting me, persecuting, really, they're trying to keep them from, like, camping. Too long in one area. They're trying to keep them from getting eaten. That's what the Park Rangers are doing. But he he then displaces that onto if they're. If they're against me, they're against the bears. It's me and the Bears versus the world. And. And that is the kind of end stage of this addiction. And you know, I I actually do think Gollum is a is a appropriate literary reference here. I think that the story of

Smeagol getting the ring and the effect it has on him where he, he forgets even his own name and regresses to this Gollum amphibian kind of character. There, I think that's a very powerful representation of of addiction. And I think that as Tim Treadwell gets increasingly paranoid about the Park Rangers and such, he is becoming Gollum mask, where the Bears are his ring.

**Tim:** Hi, Timothy. See you in summer of 2001. Now it doesn't say 'hi, Timothy we're going to fucking kill you'. It doesn't say 'hi, Timothy, you're dead, we're going to chop your legs off'. Hey, Timothy, get the. Check out. It says. See you in summer 2001, but it is some sort of a warning. It is some sort of a ha ha. I don't think it's friendly. Well, it's gotten a little worse here with the there's just the warning. High Timothy. See you summer of 2001. Now I find this big stack of rocks that were, you know. It. Put some labor here. We're not calling this the building of the pyramids. But we are saying there's there's a bit of trouble now. I'm going to walk back. I'm. Going to bring you back here. Here's where the sign was here, which is where my tent is. And then we go over where. My bear proof. Barrels would be. And we find boulders piled up. Boulders piled up and a happy face indelibly. Painted into the rock. Like looking at me. Very, very freaking frightening, huh? Whoever put it there? Knew what they were doing, that it was. It's a warning. And it's. And The thing is, it's a better than a. Warning. Than it's better than like your. Dad type of thing. It's creepy, baby. It's creepy. It's Freddy Krueger. Creepy.

**Unknown Speaker:** Crazy.

## Chapter 3: Denouement

So Tim Treadwell's most unhinged rant comes toward the end of the movie Grizzly Man, and for our purposes, too, it serves as a sort of day Neuman of a troubled man, tying together the various threads I've introduced in this commentary.

**Tim:** Well, we're into autumn now. Expedition 2001 coming to an end. The Bears moving safely towards their winter dens, the fox is hiding in the woods. Say from the humans, that would.

Come to harm them. So again, the idea that there are these villains people out to harm the Bears and he has utterly convinced himself of.

**Tim:** This it's been an amazing season. It's been difficult, but I came. I served, I protected and I studied. And I promise I'll be.

Back he, on the other hand, is this hero, and he's convinced himself of this, a belief serving as a rock solid wall, guarding against any feelings of worthlessness at the core.



**Tim:** My hair.

Right. So remember having an inflated ego is not the same as being confident. It's in fact the opposite of confidence. It's inflating an ego artificially rather than building it, so he's insisting that he's this great person he's trying to project this confidence. And yet, at the same time, he's worried about his hair.

**Tim:** People for me, Timothy Treadwell. I came here and protected the animals as best I could. In fact, I'm the only protection for these animals out here. The government flying over a grand total of two times in. Two months.

But protecting the bears from. What? Are you protecting the bears from the government, or is the government not doing enough by only flying over twice? These things aren't founded on logical associations. They're founded on needing to get to a certain conclusion and then coming up with a bizarre, illogical justification.

**Tim:** How dare they? How dare they challenge me? How dare they smear me when their campaigns? How dare they?

So this illustrates where he's going with his cognitive state and the way in which delusions of grandeur can lead to paranoid delusions. He needs to get to the conclusion that he's the one true hero, and the only person that can save. Theirs. And then that must necessarily mean there's villains everywhere trying to harm them. Or smear him or whatever. They're.

**Tim:** Doing and I come here in peace and in love. Neutral in respect. I will continue to do this. I will fight them. I will be an American dissident if I need be. There's a patriotic time going on right now, but as far as this government's. Turn. You \*\*\*\*\*.

So the corresponding emotional state is in this severe regression back to the trust versus mistrust, conflict of infancy. He now feels that the entire world is untrustworthy in this utterly black and white view, where he's the all good versus the all bad, and he's overwhelmed. By this terrifying world, and he's throwing a tantrum about it. He's fundamentally unsatisfied. Regress to what Erikson would call. The infancy stage of development, psychologically.

**Tim:** After a couple of nights takes now ohh man did I get angry. Them right? They do not watch these animals. They don't care about these animals. All they do is screw people like me. Around. It's amazing governments concerned you, Mother Park Service.

**Speaker 6:** Now treadmill cross is aligned with the. Park Service, which we will not cross. He attacks the individuals with whom he worked for 13 years.

So then we have Verner Herzog coming in with his voice over letting us know that Tim Treadwell then went into very personal targeting of individuals. He's going after people that he knows and that he has known for years from going to this National Park every year. So this really is a lashing out. It's it is the tantrum sort of primordial seeking of destruction. Because I cannot be satisfied by the world, just burn it all down. Now I will actually bring in Freud here at the end. I've been using the ericksonian stages, but the Freudian stage that would correspond to eriksons trust versus mistrust. Infancy stage. The Freudian stage would be the oral stage. So for Freud, regressing into the oral stage would mean seeking a return to infancy. When all of your needs were met through the mouth, you know, suckling milk was always going to be the thing that satisfied you. That was really your entire waking world. As an infant. Your whole world was just coming to you through your mouth, and there was a source of satisfaction, right? Getting the milk. So if an adult regresses to the oral stage, might they end up trying to get all their needs met through some oral provider of satisfaction like alcohol? Right. I mean, alcohol is sometimes referred to as just the bottle, right? Like going back to the bottle. Going back to the bottle sounds like a phrase that could either mean becoming an infant again to go back to the bottle of formula or, you know, relapsing to drinking alcohol. And if alcohol becomes your addiction, you're essentially creating that world where the only way to really satisfy your needs is through this oral interaction with the world that you know this. This thing that provides the satiety through a kind of suckling, I know this might sound crackpot or sycho baby. People, but I can't help myself. I'm going to go one step further because there is one step further back on the regression chain in psychoanalysis theory, and that would be to return to the womb. So a state of pre infancy wanting to regress all the way back to the womb. And now what would that regression look like? What would it look like? To seek the womb. Well, wanting to merge with someone else or literally even go inside someone that you love and just fully depend on them. Now your your gratification, your satisfaction. You don't even have to suckle because you're just in this womb. All your needs are taken care of, so I just have to suggest, as Tim Treadwell's addiction to the Bears escalated, he emotionally regressed further and further until on some level, maybe he wanted to go inside of a bear. This is not to say that he explicitly thought about being eaten and how that would accomplish an ultimate merger with the Bears. That he wanted, but emotionally he did seem to want that because, I mean, how else are we going to? Explain this part.

**Tim:** It's warm. It just came it just came from her \*\*\*\*. This was just inside of her. My girl. Touching it. It's your Pope. It's Wendy's Pope. Poop. I know me saying weird that I touched her poop. But that was inside of her it. It's what? It's her life. It's her. Everything about them is perfect. That's your poop. It's Wendy's poop.

He kept trying to get closer and closer to the Bears, seeking ultimate closeness. And so in this life, I'm not saying that he chose to get eaten by a bear, but he did make all

of these implicit decisions along the way to increase his risk of this. You know, the last year he stayed for longer, he was putting his tent. More and more directly on the trails that the Bears were walking, it just seems like he wasn't going to be satisfied until he was eaten. And that would be the ultimate regression. Now if you want to know exactly how things did come to an end for Timothy Treadwell in the fall of 2003, when Time's pilot friend came to pick him up in the small prop plane that was always his transportation to and from the cat, my reserve. There were no signs and no answers to the pilot's calls. He went up the thick. Rush of the hill, but since then, ominous, quiet and hurried back to his plane. At the bottom of the hill, he turned around, saw a quote. Nasty looking bear stealthily making its way down the trail with its head down. So the pilot Willy Fulton started doing some flyovers, circling the the camp with the intention of trying to scare the bear away. However, during these fly overs, Willie Fulton saw what appeared to be that same bear, now leaning over a human rib cage and eating from it. Willie Fulton called in the Rangers. A group of them came and had to shoot the bear, then confirmed that the remains in that Bear's stomach were those of Tim and Amy Huguenard. Both of them mostly devoured except for a few grizzly body parts that have been left strewn on the ground. We also know that when the attack actually happened, Tim Treadwell's camera had been recording. It seemed that when there was a commotion outside of his tent, Tim had gone outside to investigate and Amy had turned the camera on, albeit not taking the lens cap off, so only the audio was recorded. It's unclear to me whether the audio of the lethal attack has been released. In Grizzly man, Werner Herzog listens to the audio tape after it had been released from case evidence into the possession of one of Tim's lifelong friends. After listening to it, Herzog told that friend, you must never listen to this, and she said she wouldn't and would destroy it. I certainly think Verner Herzog was correct in that advice. The only thing I could see that tape doing is just searing itself into your brain, becoming something that you can't unhear and potentially causing a vicarious trauma. Now I have seen that there are audio clips on the Internet, including YouTube, which claim to be the actual recording. I don't know if these are authentic, but I know I haven't wanted to listen to them. I have not listened to them regardless. There are also written descriptions available online of the tapes content, which do seem to be an authentic transcription, the primary source being the journalist Nick Jans, who interviewed a scene investigator from Alaska Fish and Game named Larry Van Dale, specifically about the tape. So I have read the written transcription and I somewhat regret even exposing myself to that, so I'm not going to go through all of the details here. You can decide for yourself if you want to go further down the rabbit hole, I will give a sort of narrative overview with the pertinent quotes identified as Tim and Amy. On this. Final recording the audio is described as being roughly 6. Minutes. It starts with Amy asking is it still out there and the next thing is Tim starting to scream from outside the tent. He's yelling. Get out here. I'm getting killed out here. You can then hear Amy unzipping the tent. Then she starts screaming and yells to Tim play dead. The screams seemed to deter the bear as it breaks off the attack and then you can

hear a quiet conversation between Tim and Amy where they're trying to figure out if it's really gone. Unfortunately, the bear can then be heard to return to its attack on Tim. From here, both of them start yelling at each other. Variations of fight back, so the last resort. You know when playing dead isn't working and Amy tries to fight off the bear. The sound could be heard of a quote frying pan used to beat the top of the Bears head End Quote. Finally, we can hear Tim saying. Amy, get away and repeating this several times and that's the last thing that. Red, there are said to be additional minutes where there are no vocalizations before the tape cuts off. I definitely think the most unfortunate thing of all is that Amy Huguenard put her faith in Tim Treadwell in taking her on this expedition. You know, Tim was taking known risks for himself, but she trusted in his lead and tacitly believed that he would not let harm befall her. But it did in the most horrifying way possible. Rather than protecting her, he clearly brought her into harm's way. Amy, on the other hand, certainly tried to protect Tim. At the end. It is a definite testament to her courage and strength that she did not just immediately run away when Tim started being attacked, but rather she stayed by him and actually tried to fight off the bear hitting it with that pan and staying for a time, even beyond when Tim initially told her to run away. So I certainly do think we should feel sympathy and respect for Amy Huguenard with Tim Treadwell. The story of Tim Treadwell is a cautionary tale. I don't think having. Some amount of sympathy for him and how he ended up in this kind of state of addictive seeking for contact with the Bears and. And a grandiose delusion about them. I I don't think it's misplaced to have some sympathy and I don't think that that, that will detract from the cautionary nature of this, of this tale. I imagine he's a polarizing figure. You know that that there are people that that will very much relate to his his idealism. Misplaced as it was. And there are people that will be utterly disgusted by him. But I can't see him as anything other than a tragic figure. And one who who didn't know what he was doing by the end. I suppose I share this so that we may better know what we are doing. Thank you for watching.

# The Truman Show Delusion Killer

Sep 8, 2024

Let's examine the case of family annihilator Peter Keller  
& the Truman Show Delusion  
& Nietzsche's "Birth of Tragedy"  
& the Siren Song

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfm5EcpeKz8>

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**Peter:** It's just something I wanted to do. Hi. I'm both teenagers. Some makeup home underground somewhere, deciding to live around people.

So if you think about the reason someone might become a hermit, the pathological reasons would be schizoid personality disorder or paranoid personality disorder. But either of these cases would sort of preclude filming yourself. That's what's so strange about Peter Keller. If he were a schizoid personality, why would he be wanting to film all of this? Who is it for? I'm Andrew Vanderbilt, a psychiatrist and neuroscientist, and any opinions expressed in this video are purely my own. Now let's talk about Camp Keller. Peter Keller was a 41 year old computer technician who lived with his wife Lynette, and their 18 year old daughter Kayleen. Over the course of eight years, he secretly constructed an elaborate underground bunker in a remote wooded area of the Cascade Mountains. The bunker was designed as some sort of hideout or survivalist. Paradise equipped with food, water, weapons and various supplies, he meticulously documented his progress in building the bunker through a series of video blogs.

**Peter:** About two weeks before I finally drop out of society and. Start this project.

On April 22nd, 2012, Keller put his plan into action. He murdered his wife and daughter in cold blood, shooting them both in their home execution style. After killing them, he set fire to the house to destroy the evidence, and then fled to his bunker in the woods. His plan seemed to be living out the rest of his life in isolation, avoiding

capture by the authorities with a goal of 10 years. Now what actually happened in the investigation? The police arrived at the Keller home and discovered the bodies of Lynette and Kayleen among the ruins of the fire. Given these suspicious nature of the deaths and the fact that Peter Keller was missing, authorities launched a manhunt. For Keller was challenging due to the remote and rugged terrain of the Cascades, but with some good old fashioned detective work cross referencing some power lines and a Creek. It only took a few days for authorities to find that bunker the bunker was camouflaged and built into the hillside, making it nearly invisible to anyone passing by. Although the smoke from the makeshift chimney that Peter Keller had constructed was certainly a giveaway once they were within sight. So on April 27th, 2012, after tracking. Into his bunker, a SWAT team surrounded the area for hours. They tried to coax Keller out, not knowing if he had hostages or even was a hostage at. Point they used tear gas and loud speakers to urge the surrender of anyone inside. However, Keller had no intention of being captured. Instead, he took his own life with a gunshot to the head. When the SWAT team did enter, they found the body, along with an arsenal of weapons, ammunition and survival gear.

**Peter:** Looks like everything's working. Just checking the camera out since it's the first time. Watch it myself. I hate watching myself. Man, that's the way other people see me. So it's going to take some getting used to not used to talking into a camera.

So there's a real paradox here. Peter Keller says that he hates watching himself and he hates the idea of how other people see him. And if that's true, why go through all this effort of recording him? Is. Entire bunker building process over years and years, and why film the plan as though giving posterity some kind of documentation is necessary if he hates doing it, why is he doing it?

**Peter:** Let's see. So. Here we can look at the trail. There's not much of A trail. I try to keep it as hidden as. I. Can so other people? We'll stay off of it, which has worked so far. It's pretty far out so. Nobody's been up here yet.

So what we have is this conflict between wanting to be around no other people wanting to have no record of where he is, wanting to keep the path completely hidden so that no one would come upon him and he can live his life in isolated peace. And the part of him that seems to imagine himself with a global audience. Interested in his every supply that he's bringing to this bunker?

**Peter:** I usually come. Up with a. Between a 30. And 40 LB pack. Every time I bring a load of something up actually starting to get a. Lot. Up here, try to make it as easy as I can during the transition time. So far I've got to a bed. Blow up bed mattress. And blankets and pillows and clothes.

And stuff to keep. Me comfortable. So we'll see how long I last doing this. I don't. Know.

To be filming this, he must believe that the audience is interested in whether he has just one bed blow up bed. Why else is it on the video? Why is it recorded for posterity?

**Peter:** Basically, come up here on the weekends or on Friday, weekday whenever. The weather permits or depending on what I'm doing. At least once a week, and I tend to stay up here for about well, with travel time probably around 9 hours a day. Or each time which is a long time.

So Peter Keller lived with his wife Lynette, and their 18 year old daughter Kayleen, and they appeared to be a normal happy family. Peter attended Kayleen's High School graduation.

**Lynette:** You got a new life ahead of you.

**Peter:** Yeah, you got till tomorrow to get your stuff. Out of the house. So...

**Lynette:** She's staying with us forever. Sorry, Keller.

He made sort of classic lame dad jokes. Like, are you going to sell that picture of me on eBay?

**Peter:** Do you want to take a picture of me and sell me on eBay?

**Lynette:** Are you videotaping her?

**Peter:** Yeah I do a lot of videotaping, then just cut out the junk.

And he gave his wife's financial support while she struggled with the chronic illness.

**Lynette:** And he really helped me. My husband few months ago went out and bought me this big recliner for my back and. I just now starting to use. He's so happy.

Although he then privately confided to his imaginary audience that his wife was draining him of all of his money, so at the same time he's building this mysterious project in the woods, people kind of joke about it. They call it Camp Keller, but in terms of what it actually is. It seems to be a sort of don't ask, don't tell a kind of situation with his family.

**Peter:** It's just something I wanted to do probably. Since I was a. Teenager. Home underground somewhere, so I don't to live around people. One of our projects today.

So if you think about the reason someone might become a hermit. The pathological reasons would be. Schizoid personality disorder, or paranoid personality disorder. So schizoid personality would be the person that just has no interest in being part of society, and that's the pure reason they just are not interested in other people. They don't want to talk to other people. Schizoid here is like split off from society. Not like schizophrenia, which would be a split frenier. Mind schizoids just means this person is splitting off. They're done with the social group they want to live as a hermit, and that is the primary motive for going and living like a hermit. So people with schizoid personality disorder, we hardly ever see, because why would we? They have no interest in talking to us. They would just as soon. Live this life off the grid, not interacting with people. The other possibility is paranoid personality disorder, so this person might look sort of similar to someone with a schizoid personality. But in the case of the paranoid personality, the reason isn't just disinterest in society, it's distrust of society. So they're abandoning society because society has ill intentions. Right. So the person with paranoid personality disorder is sort of more apocalyptic in their thinking. They're becoming a hermit for more survivalist type reasons. Typically, rather than just wanting to be a hero. But either of these cases would sort of preclude filming yourself. That's what's so strange about Peter Keller. If he were a schizoid personality. Again, why would he be? Why would he be wanting to film all of this? Who is it for? Who is the audience for a person that has no interest in interacting with people? And if he were a paranoid personality, well. The concern would be things like surveillance and so disclosing information to a video camera would be mutually exclusive with the paranoid personality. Typically, at least you could say, well, he was going to secure these videotapes, and he was convinced they weren't going to fall into the wrong hands. But. Again with these, these types of personalities, there are no right hands or wrong hands. If you want to be a hermit, you don't film yourself, right? And So what I see with Peter Keller is something different. It's that he's role-playing as a hermit. He's someone who. Took on this character of a survivalist, but what he's actually doing is imagining himself on a reality TV show where he is the survivalist. He is not the actual hermit because the actual hermit wouldn't be on film. He is a character, he is playing a hermit, and what he wants is this audience interest. In the fact that he doesn't care about society, right? What he wants is a society that feels some kind of sympathy or some kind of loss for him, going and becoming a hermit. And So what we have is. A type of Truman Show delusion. So the The Truman Show Delusion in its most classical form. Albeit A relatively recent phenomenon, but classically described by psychiatrists Joel and Ian Gold, actually one was a psychiatrist, one was a philosopher. But they named the syndrome for several cases that were observed subsequent to the Truman Show movie, actually. But kind of a technology dependent delusion where people were convinced that they were being broadcast, that their life was being broadcast to a global audience without their consent, right? But believing that the world was watching them through television or other media, right, so kind of just a new manifestation of. Classical forms of paranoia like being followed or being watched, people looking through your windows.



These are common sort of explanations for feelings of paranoia that people have. But the Truman Show delusion. Is 1 in which the conviction becomes there are there is an audience watching me on TV throughout the world. There are people in their homes and they're watching me. I'm being recorded at all times. I'm being broadcast. That is the Truman Show delusion. In several of these early case reports, people were actually going to New York City and looking for the production crew that was filming their lives, right? Sort of like in the movie The Truman Show. When he gets to the edge of his simulated reality and he starts sort of breaking the 4th wall. There have been patients trying to do this, you know, going to New York. Looking to to break the 4th wall, but in their case it was a. It was a delusion. It was a manifestation of psychosis. What we have with Peter Keller, though, is is not so much a paranoid Truman Show, delusion, in my opinion. What we have is an almost grandiose or subtle narcissistic Truman Show delusion, where he has this conviction that there is an audience out there that is going to be interested in this. And now caveat, I suppose there is an audience watching these blogs, but I don't think they're watching in the way he intended. I think he was performing for people. Who he imagined as interested in a sort of non morbid way. You know, I think he imagined the audience was more sympathetic to him than the reality will turn out to be for him. Which is that we're watching with the kind of horror, right? Not any kind of and we're not gleaning any kind of explanatory power from him, right?

**Peter:** To take all this word that I've cut up recently and stack it up, put it down. So if somebody stumbles out here it. Not as noticeable.

But so the way he's talking on camera, to me it does not feel like someone who's even trying to just explain honestly what he's doing. He's talking like a character on alone or how he imagines someone on a loan or survivor back in the old days would be talking sort of like. Well, let me show. Let me show off a bit. Let me show you kind of how how I'm coming up with these strategies. But but it's it's not, it's not sort of present moment, Peter Keller. It's facade, Peter Keller.

**Peter:** Just now. And have the means able to action people. I've spent a lot of money. On this so far, thousands of dollars. Thousands more on guns. Other stuff for the hardware I'm gonna need. Everything I can think of. This is kind of an outside look. My word file on this side. I just feel like. I'm. Getting knocked back every time financially. My wife is just just going to suck all the money out that I have.

**Lynette:** And I'm so excited because I can actually afford these, these, these, these deals. My husband, he gave you some money to to go in here, some extra studies.

**Peter:** All right, I'm getting ready to move one of these big beams in. Saying it's pretty heavy soap with water, which makes them very heavy

makes it very rich. At this point, I don't know what's going to happen. I may get caught right away. I mean, I could basically be dead in two weeks or three weeks. I don't know. It's all up to chance at this point, so. I don't think anyone knows where I'm at. But if they put it together. You know, at this point I have to take that chance. So it's just going to. Be a. Point of, you know, go as far as I can. My I do have my escape and that's death and I'm OK with that so. I'm getting to the point where. Just trying to live. And pay bills and live as a civilian and go to work, or just that just freaks me out. It's actually more comfortable for me to think about living out here, robbing banks, pharmacies, just taking what I want for as long as I can.

So Friedrich Nietzsche, in the birth of tragedy, talks about how the world we live in is a world of mere appearances. Because our our minds are never going to be able to grasp the thing in itself, you know the the world as it is is not accessible to us. We can never really see the things in themselves. What we can see is mere representations that our minds give us. And so this is a world of mere appearances. And this is a state of suffering, living in this world. Of of representations never really knowing the things. And so he said in birth of tragedy that there are two ways that art allows us to escape this world of appearances. And one type of art is the Dionysian art, and that is escaping the world of appearances by going below it, by going deeper to the source. So die an ISIS, the God of the vine. Represents the forms of art which are primal as per niche dance and song. You know the primal rhythms of the world that are maybe enabled by the vine and by alcohol. These are the Dionysian art forms, and these allow us to escape the world of appearances towards something real or something deeper, something more primal, and the other form of art was the Apollonian, the Apple Linnean was the visual arts. According to Nietzsche, it was Apollo being the God of beauty in some form. In some ways the God of dreams. And visual art escaped the world of appearances by going above it by representing the visual world the way our dreams represent our own mental representations. They expose them by going one level. Above Apelian art through painting or sculpture or aesthetics in general, lets us escape the world of appearances by going above it towards something higher. So these are the two ways, something lower or something higher than the world of mere appearances. Now, if you were going to try to escape it through something other than art through something pathology. Article. Perhaps you would escape this civilian world that Peter Keller describes by going on the one hand below it towards the Dionysian chaotic, cruel nature. The Dionysian hermit life. In the woods. While simultaneously trying to create an apple linium. Version of your life that is your own representation of your motives, your own representation of yourself on video. And so with Peter Keller, we have this Nietzschean attempt to escape the world through this kind of dualistic and paradoxical means. On the one hand, he wants to live his life as a hermit. But on the other hand, he wants to live his life as a celebrity, as someone who a global audience

is watching and learning from. And in every sense, this is a complete detachment from reality. This is not. An artistic escape? No. This is a birth of a completely real kind of tragedy. One in which his wife and daughter. Died needlessly. For what? For a strange survivalist style series of video blogs. And a bunker that allowed for an approximately week long hideout.

**Peter:** At least it will be exciting. Won't be boring. And I don't have to worry about Leonard or Kayleen. And everything will be taken care of. Just be me.

**Lynette:** Yeah.

There.

**Peter:** I may get caught right away. I mean, I could basically be dead in two weeks or three weeks, I don't know. It's all up to chance at this point.

The fact that he doesn't really care at all, it doesn't really affect him. Whether he's dead immediately or in two weeks or in three weeks. You could say it's because he's depressed and he certainly might be. This might all be major depression with psychotic features. But I'm more interested in the individual psychology. What might be happening mechanistically. So putting people in boxes can be helpful, but it's never the whole story, right? So what I think about when I think about this nonchalance? About dying is that he's not really living as himself anymore. He's living as this character, or he's living perhaps as the surrogate audience, watching the character he's created, he has outsourced the feelings of being himself. Wolf. Through this kind of Truman Show, delusion, what has replaced the experiential self is this performative self. The survivalist talking to the camera, and what the actual Peter Keller experiences may actually be more so like what the audience is experiencing, like he's putting himself. Into that imagined audience and just watching himself so that he is now a passive participant in his own life, because the active parts of himself have been outside. First, the active parts of himself have decided this is all a show, right? I'm I'm on the Truman Show, and so I'm just performing. So the parts of Peter Keller that are actually experiencing life. I think are no longer the first person point of view. I think it is. He is. He has put all of his emotional weight into what the audience would think. OK.

**Peter:** So. I don't think anyone knows where I'm at. But if they put it together. You know, at this point I have to take that chance. So it's just going to be a point of. You know, go as far as I.

Can. So what are you saying is I don't. I don't know what will happen. In a way it doesn't matter because it's just how the story plays out, right? That's the only way. It doesn't matter is because it's a passive story that he is just watching. He is not participating in his life. He's watching his life. He has outsourced the participation to this sort. Of. Facade.

**Peter:** My I do have my escape and. Lots of death. I'm OK with that so. I'm getting to the point where just trying to live and pay bills and live as a civilian and it just it just freaks me out. It's actually more comfortable for me to think about living out here, robbing banks, pharmacies, just taking what I. For as long as I can.

Right. So pathologically escaping normal life. In favor of this simultaneous Dionysian, this chaos, drunk energy, where he's just going to be robbing things and living like a bandit. And at the same time, this outsourcing of any conscious or morality to an audience because he is not a real person, he's a character. And so as long as it makes a good story in this sort of apelian art form, this sort of play of visual story. That's replaced his sort of internal moral compass. Hey, if as long as it's interesting, as long as it's not boring. That's my new morality. Because my new morality is it's all a performance. It's all a stage. It's all a play.

**Peter:** At least it will be exciting. Won't be boring. And I don't have to worry about Leonard or Kayleen. And everything will be taken care of. Just be me. Well, I wanted to get a video log in. We haven't done part that I'm not. Looking forward to. I'm getting pretty close to that time. I'm guessing probably a couple of months away. 83 So yeah, I know I can. Once I do this, I could either die. Then maybe something will happen or. Few days or weeks. Or maybe even years. My goal is to make it 10 years.

So that superficial laughter. I might either die then.

**Peter:** Once I do this, I could either die then maybe something will happen.

Sort of superficial, not a joyful laugh, of course, but superficial because it's it's not really real to him. It's just it's that that would just be how the story ended, huh? The story ends with the the character I created just got killed immediately. That's I think that's sort of the quality of his emotions right now is just sort of this. So it's superficial, not just because he is antisocial or a narcissist, which he may be, but it's superficial because mechanistically again, he is outsourced his conscience. He is a character and what he's thinking about is the story he's thinking about the video. The sort of third person perspective on a fictional life.

**Peter:** That's the other hard part. It's either to give A to not care about dying. And to still care about. The project part of me. Has a hard time even imagining doing what I'm going to. Do. But as I think about it, I always come up to the same conclusion. Every time I'm starting to get more. OK, with it.

So this. Sort of. The siren song of something like a delusion. Let's let's say what's going on is this kind of Truman Show Delusion where he he's basically convinced himself that his life is not his own real life, but it's all sort of for a global audience. Once he has an inkling of that and he feels some kind of comfort about it because it lets him escape the banality of what his actual life was. In his opinion it it was banality. And there's something in him that that cannot. Appreciate what was good or meaningful about it. There's something in him that needs it to be grander than that. So the first inkling that he might sort of be on this global stage, that he might actually have this unseen audience. And that he could escape that banal life. If he only takes these series of steps sort of plays out what he needs to do to become this hermit character. That inkling feels good to him. But at first, it also feels crazy to him. You know, he can't really conceive of it. Other than it coming into his head and feeling good at doing something for his ego, let's say. But he keeps. Revisiting it and that's the siren song that delusions sort of get their hooks into people because they're they're playing upon some kind of vulnerability. And if you let them play upon you, if you keep turning them over in your head. It's like listening to the sirens from from the sea and giving in to letting your ship veer towards the siren song. And So what it looks like is it seemed wacky at first, but I started getting comfortable with it. That's what listening to the siren song and letting it get in your head. That's what it does.

**Peter:** Other times I feel like I'm more than ready. I've tried to to make it in this world and it just isn't happening. I'm 40 now and I am running out of time.

So running out of time, the idea that he is 40 and he was supposed to do some kind of grand thing by now, he was supposed to be living a life that was more exciting than being a computer repairman. And living in the suburbs or whatever it. It is. So that's, I think, his vulnerability. It does seem like a kind of grandiose vulnerability that he is disappointed by. He's disappointed by. The reality compared to his expectations, and so what's the escape from this? Let down of reality. The escape is the Nietzschean Truman Show delusion.

**Peter:** I don't even question it anymore. It just seems like everything makes so much sense now. You know, just the more I've thought about it

So then, once everything makes so much more sense, that sort of that means the siren song is now one that, you know all the words to you sort of have the revelation. This can happen at various speeds with some people, the sort of revelation feeling of psychosis is like that. For some people, it's very gradual and it's really taking a while to to listen to the siren song and then you know what it does make sense. So his sounds like more of the gradual one. This wasn't like he woke up one day and decided this, at least not from what I'm hearing right now. This is like he had an inkling of it and he kept. He kept circling around it and getting closer and closer to the drain.

**Peter:** The more I understand it. I don't really feel bad about it.

Yeah, it's not his conscience. He's a character now, right? So he doesn't feel bad.

**Peter:** Just the way it is.

It's just the way it is. That's the way the story is playing.

**Peter:** You know, Sir, things happen.

Out I'm the passive participant.

**Peter:** That cause this to happen so.

I kind of accepted it and I'm just rolling with it. That's a perfect encapsulation of. I'm passive, right? And So what he actually accepted was taking on a passive role because that excused him of whatever responsibility he might have had to not pursue this escape, this fantastical delusional escape of his life. He could only do that once he somehow Jerry rigged away to make it his not his conscience anymore. Right? And so he did that again by becoming a character by the sort of Truman Show delusion that meant the world isn't real. So consequences aren't real. Once, once it's just me and my invisible audience. Which is all implicit here. It's just me and my invisible audience. It's implicit for him to be making these videos at all that he's imagining that right. And once it is that. He's identifying more so with the audience that's watching himself than he is with Peter Keller, the man.

**Peter:** The man and have accepted it and just rolling with it. Oh, this is it. Home sweet home.

So he's simultaneously identifying with Peter Keller the Hermit character, and the audience watching this interesting hermit character, right? But what he's outsourced is the real experience of being himself.

**Peter:** Cook the Lantern. Get on so you can see a little bit. Not a lot. You know, I have to wonder with what I'm doing is the right thing. And. I think it is. They know, as they do this per hour on hour. Like I just sit there. Big enough stuff. How did I get? Sick. So anything?

So is this him actually thinking these things or is this him playing the character being introspective? I I think it's the latter, you know, especially when we consider things like he was doing multiple takes on these video diary. Is. I don't think this was using the camera as just a sort of conversational or introspective tool to self discover. I think this was to self portray. This was not an exploration. This was a justification.

**Peter:** I don't think it's all my. Fault. I think it's more. Upbringing.

And I think it's kind of a sympathy play. He's he as the sort of simultaneous director and audience and actor is saying my hermit character. Needs some sympathy. He needs a bid for sympathy in this scene, right? He's not thinking this consciously, but implicitly. I think it's a sympathy play.

**Peter:** I was just too ugly. Have repaired.

**Unknown Speaker:** Peters.

It it may well reflect an actual low self worth but but I think it's a low self worth combined with. Expectations or entitlement for being esteemed because again, I think when you think about the mismatch between your life. As it's actually playing out and the life that you wanted, you know the idea that having a beautiful wife and daughter being able to support them, having a a stable job. If we consider that those things were. Intolerable to him. Because he's he's 41 and he can't believe where his life is. You have to imagine it's the only explanation I can see is because he thought he deserves something much more than that. Right. Something really grandiose then. And so I think the low self worth that. I'm always so ugly. Is sort of simultaneous with the idea that people should perceive him as beautiful, but they don't. Right. That's the disappointment here. I don't think it's really just. I've always thought I'm no good or my family was mean to me. I think it was like I didn't get what I deserved. So I think he harbored this fantasy that he was going to build a self-sustaining habitat away from society. But he also harbored a fantasy that he would get some kind of credit or admiration about that. You know. Again, he just he doesn't strike me in the way he talks. He doesn't strike me as someone that just wanted to do this without getting any kind of recognition. But also in the very fact that he made the videos, I don't think he did this just to escape from society. He did it to escape from. The banal society where he's not getting the accolades he wants.

**Peter:** Yeah, basically last year has been. Really tough on me. Been coming to terms realizing just how pathetic. And there's just no hope.

Except the hope that people watch these videos and decide that he was the only true, brilliant one or something like that, right? Again, why else would he be doing this? I'm I'm just trying to come up with explanations here and I don't see what else. This would all be about.

**Peter:** That cell. It's tough. Isn't interested in anything anymore. Motivate myself.

So again, symptoms of depression it it many things can be true at once. I'm not saying he wasn't depressed. I'm just talking more about the mechanisms than just the labels or the, you know, symptom clusters. I'm saying why the symptom clusters.

**Peter:** All I did was work on this. It's the only thing that you make me feel better.

Because it was escaped and just.

**Peter:** I think I've come to terms with it.

That he's now making a.

**Peter:** Reality certainly feel better now. I'm not quite sure why exactly, but insist that I'm getting this further along.

Because he's making the escapist fantasy a reality.

**Peter:** Maybe I've just had the terms with what I am.

I don't think it's that.

**Peter:** That situation. And kind of work them through it. You know, I've tried. I always keep going back to the same same person I am. I guess.

If if he had wanted my advice, I think it would be. I think I would try to work with him on just thinking less about himself at all. You know, all of this. Like, I'm not who I want to be. I just keep coming back to who I am. It's self loathing, you know, it is self loathing. I also think it's self loathing in the context of wanting self aggrandizement. So I think that's really the. The problem is the chasm between how much he loads himself and how much he wants aggrandizement. But all that being said. What? Why focus so much on the self at all? You know, like, why? Why now have to go through this rigamarole of of not even wanting to experience life as yourself, but wanting to experience life as this sort of character and this audience? There can be things other than yourself and your self concept and your emotions. There can be things other than that that motivate you. You know, I I don't think society does a great job at giving us those things. I think society actually does sort of encourage pure self focus or, you know, society almost mandates thinking about yourself and how you feel as the primary thing. There's not a lot of sort of virtues that are sort of socially. Sanctioned that are like a true north, that you could be, that you could be trying to direct yourself towards. But but I think he is a good example of someone who, whether it's self loathing or narcissistic self focus. Or both as I think it is in his case, there are times when just turning the the spotlight of your attention outward and onto other things or other ideals is is really the right step. So whether that was thinking more about what he, what he could do for his family or thinking about what he could do for, for society. I I think those could have been a a more adaptive escape from the kind of banality that he was feeling rather than this sort of focusing on how banal he was and what a failure he was compared to what he wanted. I don't know. I guess I'm grasping at straws trying to imagine that. I could convince this guy that.



**Peter:** That's also because I don't have anything. I never did. No money.

Aye, aye. Aye, aye, me.

**Peter:** My lips are. Horrible.

**Lynette:** My husband actually gave me some money and I was going to go on and buy some of these. But I'm gonna go buy.

It is really sad too to see all of the times that he's talking about how he has nothing and either he could. He goes between saying I can't give my wife anything or my wife is taking everything from me. And yet you wonder he's seeing how thankful she was. I mean. I think it would it. Would play upon anyone's emotions in the positive way to see these videos of his wife saying like, I'm so thankful for my husband, you know? It's it's. It's really sad. It is really sad.

**Lynette:** Instead. Oh my gosh, sorry, I'm trying not to get too excited cause me like.

**Peter:** No personality. I mean, I'm OK with it. It's just I understand now. Very clearly, this is the only thing I. Have.

The only thing he has is this kind of Truman Show delusion that he's a survivalist character. And that's not a thing.

**Lynette:** Sorry, my dog's being crazy. I know my husband spoils me. He hates seeing me in pain. So. Tonight he came home and he gave me another \$20.00 because he knows I'm going to the doctor's tomorrow and he wants me to stop at. Michaels and get some more stuff.

**Peter:** Well, it's about two weeks before. The end this is going to be. My last video. Probably before. Till after that. That's terrible.

**Lynette:** I wanted to give some items for my mom and and some other items, but I just want to show you this. Do you know? Sorry, my husband's home. Do you know?

Did you guys see how much that dog barked when Peter was home? Dogs. No dogs, no right. Wow. That dog was acting like Peter was a severe threat, despite living there, right? Wow. All right, that's... I don't know. That's outside the scope of this video, but that is interesting.

**Peter:** About two weeks before I finally drop out of society and start this project.

[Rewind]

**Lynette:** Sorry the cute little puppy, right? So these are the items that are in there now. They're hard plastic. Stop.

**Peter:** Well, it's about two weeks before we finally drop out of society. Fully commit to this.

We, the royal we. Right. So in sort of Lacanian or Freudian terms, every decision of a word choice means something. The fact that he's saying we drop out of society when ostensibly this is all about pure self isolation. It's just me and no other people. And yet it's we drop out of society. Does that. Present that. Who he is now is this sort of actor, director and audience of his of his new reality of of Truman show type delusional thinking, right?

**Peter:** It's probably gonna be my last video till after that.

So on the day of the fire, police found Peters car abandoned in a parking lot. They went to his workplace, where Peter. He was absent and his coworkers said, well, he told us he would be here tomorrow, next week, or possibly never. Which again, why would he say that if he didn't want to get caught? Why would he be making these sort of mystery kinds of statements other than because he was trying to create intrigue or he was imagining himself as this intriguing character? No.

**Peter:** Well, before you know, a while ago I used to sit here and think, you know, this whole thing is just crazy at times. And then I think about it and. And it makes sense and it's like, OK. This is what I've. Got to do.

So this is the siren song, right? This the siren song becoming the the song you know by. Heart. And this this idea of an of an idea sort of accommodating itself into your brain with increasing exposure is of course the basis of. Much of neuroplasticity, it's the basis of drug tolerance, right? The brain is quite adept at turning a novel. Stimulus into. An automatic type of stimulus response if it is exposed to that thing repeatedly, the brain is almost made to be a. Automator you know, other than the parts of our brain that are under active conscious control and awareness, all of the rest of the processes of our brains are supposed. To become automatic. And so in these sorts of maladaptive cases, you can certainly fall into making a thought automatic or unquestioned by mere repetitive exposure. So the more sterile biological view of what I'm calling a siren song is merely adaptation and tolerance of a. Neuroplastic system.

**Peter:** Well, this is the end of the day. They're out there getting ready to read. I don't know if you can see me.

He hates watching himself. He hates seeing what other people see supposedly, and yet it's still. Important enough for him to mention not knowing if he can be seen in this scene and beyond that, what? Why even point the camera at him at all? Why? Why

point the camera at yourself if and and so again, I don't. I don't totally believe that the self loathing is all there is to it. Like always, what I'm doing is mere speculation here and something that I can't imagine is even satisfying. But it's also just something I sort of can't help but do when seeing a case like this, because I think we all sort of grasp at some semblance of an explanation. So what I'm saying is I would speculate that these are the types of possible mechanisms that were going on in a case like this. But of course it doesn't change the tragedy of the case. It doesn't excuse the behavior. Others, and nothing about Peter Keller warrants attention other than potentially as a cautionary tale in hopes that we can prevent ourselves or others from falling into a similar set of circumstances or a similar set of mental leaps underlied surely by a neurophysiology. That was careening into a depressive psychosis. Thank you to explore with us for posting this video and including the curated research that I could use to to discuss the case and thank you all for your attention and for watching. I will see you in the next video.

# Antisocial Honesty & Charles Manson

Aug 27, 2023

True Crime & Psychiatry

A dive into the personality, philosophy, and pathology of Charles Manson, and a question of why he draws people into his sphere of influence.

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MUSIC: Sup Spirits - "Virtual Reality"

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KU3RcVShqHM>

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## Promo Hilight

He's fascinating for the same reason that he's terrifying. We're all fascinated by the idea of a return to Eden and of freedom from the burdens of society. And yet we're terrified by the reminder of how quickly social institutions could break down, and we'd be left with pandemonium.

## Intro

So Charles Manson. One of the most famous and notorious convicted murderers in American history, despite the fact that the murders for which he was convicted, 7

counts, were ones that he did not carry out with his own hands. And seems he wasn't even in the room when these murders happened, nor did he hire, or pay the murderers. This wasn't a hire a hitman situation. This was a case of a cult of personality, expressing an ideology that was apparently so influential over his followers that they committed the most brutal of murders in the summer of 1969.

And see if you don't believe me about this ideology, would you believe Wikipedia? Because we've got the prosecution.

The prosecution contended that while Manson never directly ordered the murders, his ideology constituted an overt act of conspiracy.

So I'm gonna propose that this ideology was in fact, a fundamentally antisocial philosophy. If there's anything that united it, it was the antisocial themes of his ideology. And that that fits with his antisocial personality structure in a way that for some reason reverberated very heavily with the spiritual seekers he attracted in California in the late 60s.

## Cultural Popularity

The other interesting thing is even after his conviction and initially death sentence, which was turned into a life sentence, he's held a kind of sway over the culture that's different than other people of his ilk.

I mean, for one, there were apparently, you know, he had written all these songs, and there were. Like 70 bands or so we're we're characterized by the by the DA who who later wrote Helter Skelter as a sort of pro-Manson bands like they would cover his songs or they would make songs sort of praising him or, or at least romanticizing him.

Even in the online age there are these Charles Manson clip that get millions, sometimes 10s of millions of views.

**Manson:** Do you feel blamed? Are you mad? Do you feel like... [starts talking gibberish]

Usually the top comments... This is funny, I hadn't seen this top comment before. I can see why people followed him. He's got a real way with words. I mean, obviously these are jokes, but on a lot of these Charles Manson interviews. You'll actually see a kind of more sympathetic treatment of him than you might expect based on the the brutality of the murders that I think everyone is aware he was responsible that without him, as the cult leader, these murders wouldn't have happened. And yet there is this tendency to romanticize Charles Manson.

So what I want to do in this video is. Use some of the the Charles Manson interviews that were conducted from prison and try to paint a picture of, you know, what was his life and how did that inform who he who he became? Then also, why does he have this kind of power of influence over people, whether it was the original cult followers or this kind of subculture of of semi fandom he has even now?

## Background

So that there's so much to the story of the Manson family and the Helter Skelter summer of 1969 murders. That you know, you could do an entire podcast or docu series on Charles Manson. And many people have, I'll just briefly say that in 1969 there were a string of murders, the most famous of which were the Tate Labianca murders. These were on back-to-back nights. They were seemingly random home break ins. In near Beverly Hills, CA, Sharon Tate, one of the brutalized victims, was a famous actress. The blood of the victims was used to paint words onto the walls. And so in terms of there being a media firestorm, I mean it it couldn't have been more high profile of a series of murders, it essentially put California and the US as a whole into a state of panic. And so Charles Manson became one of the most feared individuals in the culture at large. And yet gradually, there was this simultaneous current of fascination that seemed to develop with him.

## Who is Pan?

The idea of putting the country into a panic though, that makes me think of something that I want to tie in to Charles Manson. And that is the mythological Greek God Pan.

So Pan was the God of shepherds and goatherds of animals and pastures. And he himself had the appearance of a part man, but also part goat. While representing the art of domestication of animals. He himself was retaining part of his feral nature, perhaps in the same way that you know, goats seem to eternally retain part of their feral nature, despite humanity's best efforts to domesticate them. And in Greek stories, Pan is most often seen, as you know, playing the pipes. Loving music. Gallivanting through the woods, sometimes indulging in some debauchery, but was generally A beloved figure for the ancients. And yet, at the same time, it was believed that Pan had this propensity towards rage when provoked, that could induce a mass panic in people. So the word panic comes from pan right? That's its etymology. And he was also believed capable of possessing people and inducing them to commit savage acts of violence, and this was called pantalets Y not a word that has made it into modern usage the way panic has, but another indication that pan with his. Feral undertones might represent that part of human nature that can easily become feral. And it's interesting to consider that Charles Manson seemed to have induced a panel Etsy in his followers in the summer of 69. So let's just let's keep that in mind and let's let's think about pan as we watch these interviews.

## Interviews: Upbringing & Personality Development

**Manson:** How long have I been in jail? 34 years, 34 years. So out of 47, you've been here 34. I've been in jail. Prison a long time. All my life, I was raised up in here.

So the fact that he spent the majority of his life in jail even prior to the to the Manson family murders is something that he brings up often in these interviews, and he has a kind of awareness. Of the effect that of the effects that institutionalization had on him and, and I do think he's right about that. I think he was essentially raised by institutions.

**Manson:** I went to reform school when I was about 10 and I learned to box and cry, and I learned to do all the things that you do in form school. Then I went to. I escaped there a bunch of times and I went to prison and I learned everything that. You. Do in prison and I talked to all the guys and asked him everything they knew and they told me all. The things they knew.

Manson never knew his biological father, and his mother spent much of his early life on drinking sprees and was arrested for assault and robbery when Charles was 4.

**Manson:** She was living in the Blue Moon Cafe and she hit a dude in the head with a wine in bottles of Jim Beam whiskey. She tried to hustle a few dollars on the corner, but there wasn't no money. So she jammed his whiskey bottle upside the times. Here he went down. She took the bread. Come up. Got me we left and we went to Indiana.

**Interviewer:** When you were a boy, did you love your mother?

**Manson:** I didn't know what that was.

And so the culture of the institutions is simultaneously a replacement for caregivers and is the source of those that he looks up to, you know, the lessons he's learned from inmates. They have have served as the proxy for the lessons you might learn from your parents, but also he's forever affected by the fact that this is not a satisfactory replacement for actual caregivers.

**Manson:** So I understand jail, so I understand myself and I can deal with that. It's a different world. I love the world I live in too. Just like Regan loves the world. He lives in you, love.

**Interviewer:** The world you live in.

**Manson:** Most assuredly it's me.

**Interviewer:** You love all the pain that you've caused people all anguish.

**Manson:** Ohh. You. Well, I don't know pain. I don't know. Pain. I have no depth of pain. I have no depth of suffering. I don't. Know where the. Cue. I don't know all the bad things. I haven't been punished by you all my life since I was 10 years old. I've been in every reform school. You got across the country. And used to lay down and have to get my ass whipped and I couldn't walk. Tell me about some pain.

So this is a case where he's he's getting this kind of righteous indignation about the suggestion that that he's caused other people much pain and his response is essentially. Society has caused me all of this pain. What are you talking about? You don't have any right to tell me about pain because in his mind, Tom Snyder represents society. So he starts actually talking to Tom Snyder like he is talking to society. You did all this to me, right?

**Manson:** I've been in every reform school. You got across the country and used to lay down and have to get my. Asss whipped till I couldn't walk. Tell me about some pain. Yeah. No, no, Paul. Make strong, good pain.

**Interviewer:** And that's our fault. That's all those people.

And Tom Snyder sort of saying, did, I mean, is that really our fault? He says, sure, I'll pretend to be society. Is that our fault? As as representatives of society and then and then Manson turns and says no, actually it's good. The pain is good. So he has this kind of conflicted love hate relationship with the institutions that raised him. The institutions that are sort of outside of. Typical social structures because again. He doesn't have a a parents to have a love hate relationship with. In a sense.

**Interviewer:** And that's no no.

**Interviewer:** Our fault, that's all those people.

**Manson:** Know fault. Make strong, good pain. Understand pain. Not bad. Pain's not bad. It's good. It teaches you things. It teaches you things like when you put your hand in fire. Oh, you know not to do that again. See. So I understand that.

**Interviewer:** Written accounts indicate that you.

So he simultaneously mad about he simultaneously angry about having been punished this way and yet doesn't want to totally dismiss it because for better or worse, that's that was his caregiver. So he has that part of himself that that wants to be attached to something, defending it now. Once someone else attacks. It.

**Manson:** Pain is not bad. It's good. It teaches you things.



## Interviews: Antisocial Philosophy

The anger he feels towards a society which he believes rejected him or offered him nothing crystallizes into an antisocial philosophy expressed as society is the problem and to whatever extent individuals are problems. The blame lays at society, and so the only. The only moral impetus that makes any sense is the destruction of society.

**Interviewer:** You don't feel guilty at all.

**Manson:** There's no need to feel guilty. I haven't done anything I'm ashamed of. Maybe I haven't done enough. I might be ashamed of that for not doing enough for not giving enough. For not being more perceptive for not being aware enough for not understanding. Maybe I should have killed. For 500 people then I would have felt better than when I felt like I really offered society something.

He's saying my moral system is so different. If I feel bad about anything, it's that I didn't do more to destroy society and its citizens.

**Interviewer:** On the night following the killings at the House on Seattle Drive in Los Angeles. You accompanied four people to a home occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Leo la Bianca. Yeah, but you went inside that house and you tied them. Up. And assured them that they were not. Going to be. Hurt that you went back outside and sent Kasabian and Krenwinkel and walked him and Atkins inside the house to kill him. True or false?

**Manson:** Mhmm.

**Interviewer:** Did you do that? Did you do that?

**Manson:** Did I kill anyone?

**Interviewer:** No. Did you go in and tie up the lobby on cause that night? Very simple question.

**Manson:** That night.

**Interviewer:** August 10th, 1969.

**Manson:** That night, August the 10th, 1969.

**Interviewer:** Did you? Why duck it? Why dodge it? Why not answer it? Yes or no? Once and for all. Put it behind you.

Why don't you want to talk about it, Charles? Why don't...

**Manson:** Because I'm an outlaw and I go so far and then that's all you know.

**Interviewer:** And if you did, and if and and and if and and and if...

**Manson:** That's like asking Jesse Jane did you shoot someone?

**Interviewer:** As others have written...

So I think this is a significant insight into how Charles Manson thinks of himself, he says "I'm an outlaw and I go as far as I can and that's all, you know." And then as Tom Snyder's trying to reintroduce the question, we can hear Charles Manson saying, that's like asking Jesse James, did you shoot someone? So the idea of being an outlaw or being like Jesse James. I think is part of the philosophy of Charles Manson, that because society has wronged him to such an extent, he is not subject to the laws of society because he does not see himself as part of society and he picks another figure that has been glorified as an outlaw, which is Jesse James.

**Interviewer:** And if you did...

**Manson:** That's like asking Jesse James did you shoot somebody?

**Interviewer:** And if and and and and and...

Somebody who, despite his crimes, has a kind of romance attached to him. Charles Manson here is pretty explicitly saying I'm not subject to the kinds of moral structures you're trying to impose on me. I'm not sure I even need to answer this question because would you ask Jesse James if he shot someone? I'm an outlaw, usually antisocial behavior is not so openly articulated. Usually it's hidden. You know, the personality shows up with these behaviors, but tries to hide behind a philosophy of benevolence of some sort. But with Manson, if he articulates anything, it is this. An outright rejection of society and its rules. There's also an interview from 1980 where he. When he explains why he carved a swastika into his forehead that you can also kind of get a sense of his philosophy.

**Interviewer:** What's it stand for?

**Manson:** It stands for whatever I mean it to stand for and whatever I make it stand for and whatever I. Want it to stand for what does it stand for? For you? It stands for many things and it would take two or three weeks to explain all the things that I've. Built.

**Interviewer:** Can you give me an example.

**Manson:** Certainly I can give you an example. Of the United States Flag of America, the swastika, the rising sun in the German and Japanese flag. The Star of David to the Israelis. The. Whatever country or nation or people or cause has always had a symbol, I put that there from two or three other symbols. I didn't want to put a Christian symbol, and I didn't want to put an Antichrist symbol, and I didn't want to put a. Yeah, pro communism. And I didn't want to put an anti thermal dropped ups and all that kind. Of stuff that you.

**Interviewer:** Say, but it is a swastika, but that would be Germany, wouldn't it?

**Manson:** It. Means. No, that's...

It's all the same to him. Any social institution might as well might as well be Nazi Germany, and that's what. He's. That's the message he's trying to tell members of society to get them to revolt against society, I think. He even starts speaking in gibberish to show that to him it's all the same. It's all meaningless. It's all institutions, all of which are wrong, all of which must be destroyed.

**Manson:** Put a Christian symbol and I didn't want to put an Antichrist symbol and I didn't want to put a pro-communism and I didn't want to put an anti... [starts talking gibberish]. It's like a drop drops and all that kind of stuff that.

**Interviewer:** But it is a swastika, that would be Germany wouldn't it?

**Manson:** No, that's not a Nazi. Hitler got that sign from mysticism and reversed it.

Now he'll go on to say that, oh, it doesn't actually represent the swastika that I have here, doesn't even represent that Nazi Germany. It's a it was a spiritual symbol before Hitler adopted it. I just. I don't buy that part. I think he's doing it. He he knows what people are going to think when they see it and. I think the the the subtext of the message is I'm shocking you with the appearance of it and then I'm going to tell you that your institutions are no better. They're all condemnable. And of course. I am simultaneously evil to you, but actually the only moral person. Because in my morality being anti society is the only good you could have or do.

## Interviews: Affect and Emotions

So let's talk about his affect, meaning his external emotional States and how that might relate to his internal emotional states. To me it seems like the one emotion that Manson is able to really get in touch with externally is anger. The other interview I'm predominantly referencing is the 1987 Today Show interview, so another one that was conducted from San Quentin Prison, but six years after the Tom Snyder interview. And we can also see the anger as righteous indignation at society.

**Manson:** I can do anything I want to you people at anytime I want to, because that's what you've done to me. If you spit in my face and smack me in the mouth and throw me in solitary confinement for nothing, what do you think's going to happen when I get out of here? They would have called me a murderer for I've never killed anyone. I don't need to kill anyone. I think it. I have it here.

And often what you see with people that have experienced a great deal of emotional pain as children, like if they experienced abandonment and neglect to a severe degree. Anger ends up being the one emotion that they can kind of channel everything else through because the adaptation they otherwise made was. Numbness because to the child. The emotions that they experienced during periods of abandonment or neglect were so intense that they cannot experience it as sadness. At a certain point, because it would be maladaptive to have that level of fear and sadness. As something that was constantly derailing the otherwise developing brain right, it would be overwhelmed with this kind of despair, and that would not be compatible with survival. So what you see then is a kind of baseline numbness. And the one thing that sadness can get turned into. Is anger, so if someone does something that actually hurts them, they're not going to experience it as hurt or pain. They're going to experience it as anger that motivates action or even rage that motivates destruction. And with Manson, we can certainly see statements that are. Consistent with denying any emotional depth of feeling, he'll say things like I don't feel anything about it or I wouldn't feel anything about. It.

**Interviewer:** You like jail? Don't.

**Manson:** You I don't dislike or like. You know, if I wanted to kill somebody, I'd take this book and beat you to death with it. And I wouldn't feel a thing. It'd be just like walking to the drugstore.

And outwardly, in his affect, other than the anger when he is expressive, there seems to be a kind of superficial nature to it. It has the qualities of a kind of playful mask.

**Interviewer:** Tell me in a sentence who you are. Nobody.

And sometimes he's even acknowledging that it's a playful mask or saying, hey, we're. I thought you said we were going into imagination mode and then you'll see he has this tendency to cycle through facial expressions because these are the masks that he knows.

**Interviewer:** Let's just play make believe here for a second. Let's make believe. Let's let's make believe you're getting out tomorrow. Would you go after anybody, Charles?

**Manson:** And we're making believe right on our team, buddy. Well. I don't rightly know.

And so there's a a strange kind of honesty to his expressions. A strange kind of honesty that this is all just a game. This is all just play. But both the anger, which I would say is an honest outward expression of what the internal state feels like and the superficial pretend facial expressions that are a mask against the insides. I think

sometimes you can see the traces of what would be sadness on the face. In a way that's unconscious, he's only experiencing it as anger, but we can actually see it at times, such as when his father comes up.

**Manson:** Not as not as much as my father. Me. I said got it from my father in prison. He gave it to me. I had a little charm bracelet I used to carry it. On when I.

**Interviewer:** Was about that big and so skip that for saying why was it so important for him to do what you say?

And when his son comes up?

**Interviewer:** All right, somewhere out there somewhere, there's at least one son that we know of. That's your child, who's probably about 25 or 26 years old. You talk to that kid.

**Interviewer:** What do you say to him?

**Manson:** Gotta catch it on your own, boy. Trains hard rose roof.

**Interviewer:** And that's it.

**Manson:** That's all I knew. All anyone ever told.

**Interviewer:** Me. All right.

**Manson:** And you want to. Hear something? Yeah. He will do it better. Than me do what? Whatever he does, he'll do it a little better. Kids do, don't they?

And so here he actually. Converts the unconscious Dr. towards sadness into superficial laughter.

**Manson:** That's all I knew all when anyone ever told me.

I would say you you see a sadness. There doesn't seem like Tom Snyder is recognizing it necessarily. But I I feel like you can see it. And then you can see him kind of turn that rather than facing it consciously himself, he'll turn it into a superficial laughter here.

**Manson:** And you want to hear something.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Manson:** He'll do it better than me.

And honestly, even with this laughter...

**Manson:** Kids do, don't they?

[Rewinds]

**Manson:** And you want to hear something.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Manson:** He'll do it better than me.

I feel like you can still see the sadness in his eyes. You know this... His eyes look like eyes that are laughing through sadness. He honestly, he kind of looks like Robin Williams, just just in his his eyes here. Same sort of laughing through sadness in my... To me, that's what it looks like.

**Manson:** Whatever he does.

**Unknown Speaker:** He'll do it a little better.

## Interviews: Identity & Self

Now, what about the question? Of. Mansons's identity most often we see him characterizing himself as an outlaw.

**Manson:** Well I was born illegitimately that put me on the other side of the law. I've been an outlaw ever since I was born.

And we also can get some sense that this identity is not fixed. It seems to waver between a few different things. So there's the outlaw.

**Manson:** Because I'm an outlaw.

Then at other times he will express that he's essentially a child.

I'm still 10 years old in your world. Well, I'm still a kid. I'm not going to grow up. I'm not going to go to. I went up to the board and they never would, they said. I was incorrigible and that not only was I incorrigible, but that I'd never grow up. And I kind of agreed with him.

And he'll also waver between sort of saying, if anything, I'm just a petty criminal. You know, I may be an outlaw. But I'm I'm like a petty thief.

**Manson:** In my whole life, I've fertilized the grocery stores, sold some nickels and Dimes, busted open and stamp machines, stole a few automobiles, and cashed a couple of checks. I'm a petty car thief.

And there's some there's some inherent contradictions. He'll insist that he is not the monster the media has portrayed him as, right?

**Manson:** Boy how insecure are we, as human beings, put all our fear in one little guy, and afraid to let him out, he might break all the toys.

**Interviewer:** Why do you say little guy?

**Manson:** Because I'm not the guy you trying to make out of me. That's not me.

**Interviewer:** If you got out of here, there are a lot of people who think you go start killing people again.

**Manson:** Again, you guys are misinformed, I haven't killed anyone.

But then other times he'll take this kind of perverse pleasure in boasting about how monstrous he actually is capable of being.

**Manson:** Believe me, if I started murdering people. There'd be none of you left. Maybe I should have killed 4 or 500 people then I would have felt better than when I felt like I really offered society something.

And so sometimes he's the romantic train, hopping James Dean kind of outlaw.

**Manson:** I was a beatnik in the 50s, before the hippies came along. You know, I cut it right down through Acapulco and I smoked Acapulco. Before you knew what it was. And I lived in the tombs. And I was in the Cook County Jail. In Chicago, when? You were playing cricket in high school. See, like you live in another world I live in. Street peoples world. About hobo. I'm a boxcar and a jug of wine.

And other times he's the kind of worst nightmare, the beast in human form.

**Manson:** Now you do what I say. And he said no. I said you do exactly what I say, and he said no. I'm telling you, I'm not asking you, I'm telling you, you do exactly what I say!

So he'll also let slip a little bit of narcissism because he'll say here I'm just a I'm a street person, right? I'm an urchin. I'm a street outlaw. I hang around with street people. Those are my people. I don't go Uptown and do anything fancy. Well, I I could. You know, it's not that I couldn't do it. I could be. I could do anything, right. He has these moments of of just grandiosity slipping in.

**Manson:** I've been with prostitutes and bums and winos and all my life. This street is my world. I don't pretend to go Uptown and be anything fancy, I can, but I find more real in the world that I'm in.

But as far as the identity goes, you know, I think the the wavering instability of the identity is in line with cluster B disorders, wherein the the true self as I often talk about was not allowed to form as just like a a true experience of of the world during childhood. And so the identities that are latched on to are sort of. Transiently latched onto it. They'll they'll switch between different things like a chameleon as the environment demands it. But it is interesting that the ones that he latches on most often are outlaw child and beast, right? And what do all of these things have in common? The outlaw, the child, the beast. Non domesticated, right? The the Outlaw has decided to live by his own rules, so he's not playing the the domestic society game. The child is pre domestication, right? You know, I think Peter Pan. Peter Pan, right? So while in Greek mythology Pan was our species, primal memory of a pre society type of human, or perhaps even a a borderline homo sapiens kind of memory, you know, I don't know how far back. I don't know how far back our collective unconscious memory goes. But Pan is a sort of on the species level. It's this romantic memory of Eden. Right before we were subject to the. Before we were subject to the laws of of society and domesticity and agrarian culture and all of that, and we all have a little bit of of romance towards getting back to Eden Peter Pan, I would say on the individual level, represents the nostalgia we all have for childhood, so the species nostalgia is for pan the. Part feral human. The individual nostalgia is for childhood, when things were uncomplicated and we were ourselves, not yet subject to the complexities of social etiquette and being civilized. And then the third identity is, is the beast right? And that's so that's the pan part. So Charles Manson is an outlaw raised by institutions that are themselves a sort of outside of society. Lord of the flies kinds of institutions. He's the child, the Peter Pan who. Is only only went Lord of the flies because he was in that kind of society and he's the beast who was never domesticate able in the 1st place. He is the the goat, not the greatest of all time. The just the animal, the goat right he's like. Then I think then to people that see Charles Manson, he is pan with an urban landscape, you know. The Greek mythological pan had this pastoral landscape. If you supplant that into modern society with its concrete jungles, what would pan look like? Like. Perhaps he would be a hippie songwriter, but also a dangerous fiend who was never domesticated by society and is capable of inducing a panelepsy.

## Discussion & Conclusions

What makes Manson dangerous is that society is not perfect and all of us feel to more or less degree the pangs of an imperfect society and frustration at it.

When we see someone who so impishly disdains society. I think we all have some degree of a draw towards that.

So, in a way, it's much easier to be put off by the dishonest antisocial types who are pretending to be good than it is to be put off by the honest antisocial type we see



in Charles Manson. But of course, how much of the draw you feel may correlate with how connected to society you feel at a given moment.

I think the idea of panalepsy, the idea of a regression into pre-civilization levels of brutal predatory acts and aggression really reflects the primal ability we all have to regress into a pre-civilization state.

People like Charles Manson are frightening for the same reason that they're charming. We don't want to be reminded of how easy it is to regress back into a pre-civilized state of animal instincts.

Although for those that do decide that society has nothing for them, it's remarkably easy to follow him because he's speaking to something that is deep seated.

However, I have no interest in defending him. I think that for the most part, while his answers seem pseudo-intellectual, his philosophy is guilty of the problem with most antisocial types of philosophy, which is he proposes nothing of an alternative. What he has is criticism of society and anger at society. But he does not offer any hope. And so he is a false prophet wearing the outfit of pan. But Charles Manson's garb was adorned through the prison system, the modern and urban version of a outlaw society.

**Outro song:** And a virtual reality it's almost like I'm really there. It's almost like I really care.

# Who are the Zizians & What are Delusions?

Feb 28, 2025

Attempt #1 to understand what the Zizians believe and why.

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[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OV8bdMx\\_P88](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OV8bdMx_P88)

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All right, who are these Zizians from the Baltimore Sun? The group arrested in Western Maryland had ties to violence across the country. But experts largely stopped short of calling Group A cult. So this is by Christine Condon. Let's see what we can learn about the zions. There was an arrest in Western Maryland last weekend of three people known as physicians, which brought renewed attention to this small group, which preaches obscure ideas about the human. Mind and is tied to a string of killings across the country. But whether they're viewed as a cult, as some have branded the group depends on whom you ask. Great. Let's get into the subtleties of whether this group is a cult. Most scholars eschew the term cult altogether, given that it carries a host of negative stereotypes. Well, you'd hate to negatively stereotype a group tied to murders across the country, right? Experts say the group is best described as a fringe religious sect, an affinity group or maybe even a small gang. OK. This is this is semantics, isn't it? Their story, known to law enforcement and victims families in several states, hit Maryland on Monday when police arrested three Zillions in Frostburg on trespassing, obstruction and gun possession charges, an area resident noting what he deemed as suspicious behaviour, contacted the police. Those arrested included. Jack Lasota, a 34 year old computer programmer who goes by the name ZZ and appears to lead the small group. The others were Michelle Sashko of Media, PA and Daniel Arthur Blank of Sacramento. So 2632 and 34 years old, three Zions that investigators have connected as a group to the January killing of a US Border Patrol agents during a traffic stop in Vermont. As well as other homicides in California and Pennsylvania. So the group caught the attention of Mark Pitcavage, a senior research fellow with the Anti Defamation League Center on extremism, after he learned of the Border Patrol agents death. All right, so you have this ADL fellow Mark Petkovic. And he has been trying to

figure out this Zizians, at least since the death of the Border Patrol agent in Vermont, as far as he can tell, these Zizians are a loose group of 10 to 15 people connected to Lasota that is ziz, who seemingly took to the Internet to share ideas about the human mind. Veganism and transgender people, among a host of other subjects, Pekovic said he considers the Syrians A fringe religious sect, essentially an antagonistic offshoot of the rationalist movement, even though their beliefs may not sound religious and don't necessarily involve a higher power. There's a whole history of sex or movements like this that are seemingly secular in nature, but are actually based on unprovable notions that you kind of have to take on faith. You mean like cults? No, I I I think. I I think it's true that I mean the human brain actually demands sacredness, right, without sacredness. You don't have a orientation to your compass. You know your mental compass needs something. That is your true north. And so certainly many things can take on religious fervor. I mean, you could say any belief could become religious insofar as it can become sacred. It can become the defining notion. Can become the pure good by which you judge how good other things are, right? How much like this pure good are the things I'm encountering. The only way to know that is you. You have a pure good right. So this group. Has some kind of sacred beliefs. That's what I'm getting so far. The Zazzy and beginnings, and he turned to violence. The saga seems to begin in the mid twenty 10s with Lasota, A transgender woman who uses feminine pronouns. That's Ziz OK. Attending workshops in California held by a rationalist group, the Center for Applied Rationality, which focuses on human cognition and espouses. Concerns on its website that artificial intelligence could pose an existential risk. All right, the Center for applied rationality. Developing clear thinking for the sake of humanity's future. Seems like a a reasonable goal. I would like clear thinking for the sake of our species future. They have workshops 4 1/2 day immersive retreats. I wonder if they're getting a ton of traffic right now, right? Navigating intellectual disagreement, making better use of our internal advisors, developing non self deceptive motivation, and building the habit of getting things done all right? Sure. I don't. I'm curious about internal advisors. But I like building the habit of getting things done. I like non self deceptive motivation certainly. Forming accurate beliefs. How do you do it? I guess you have to go to the workshop. Let's see. About. Their last update was in December 2020. Hello, we continue to exist. Well. Is that is that the latest or just the most popular one? No, I think that's the latest. Well, kind of need another update I think on that. See the problem is if I. I'd like I'd like to get things from the source. If I go to Wikipedia, you don't know if you're getting some kind of third hand interpretation whenever you can get a primary source. That's what you should use. So I'd like to get some kind of direct insights into what rationalism is. Here's their reading list. From AI to zombies. From 2015, all right. In rationality, from AI to zombies, though, these are Kowski explains the science underlying human irrationality with a mix of fables, argumentative essays, and personal vignettes. These eye opening accounts of how the mind works and how too all often it doesn't are then put to the test through some genuinely difficult puzzles. Computer scientists debates about the future of artificial intelligence physicists debates

about the relationship between the quantum and classical worlds. Philosophers debates about the metaphysics of zombies and the nature of morality, and many more. All right. So I mean, what's the point? What's the point? Lasorda remained involved with the Center for years, but over time the relationship grew more antagonistic as Lasota Ziz embraced more extreme ideas. Petkovich said. Lasota believed that the two hemispheres of the brain were very separate. I might be trans, one might not be trans, one could be awake while the other is asleep. One could be good and one. Could be evil. It's true for dolphins that one can be awake while the other is asleep. But I would say for humans we we have pretty good evidence that there is constant communication between the corpus callosum and that the coordinated mental activity that's happening during the waking life is in fact correlated across both hemispheres, as is the different state of brain waves that you can see, say, on an EEG. During sleep, still it has cross hemispheric. Correlations, at least so it it seems to be coordinated, and it makes sense that it would be coordinated across the corpus callosum, which is a bunch of wires right in the middle of the right in the middle of the brain. So. You know, that's not to say it's not possible that there's two identities that that there are sort of asymmetric. Areas of identity. I just that's not that would not be evident from any of the. Imaging or other ways of measuring brain activity that we have, you know, electrophysiologic readings of brain activity are not really consistent with that. Now some people have had the corpus callosum severed and in those cases there is the phenomenon alien hand syndrome where, you know, you can see videos that people that get this operation. It was used more often several decades ago. It was for refractory epilepsy. So patients that would have grand mild seizures despite any degree of drug treatment, they would still. Have these refractory grand Mal seizures and so the sort of last resort was to actually sever the corpus callosum, and in that case, if there is a seizure focus, it cannot generalize. It can no longer become Grand Mall. So that was the point of the corpus colisee Tomy. Now in those patients there was this phenomenon where the the non dominant hand. Could start sort of seeming to operate with its own will. That was not conscious to the person. For example, the person would be writing something with a pen and the left hand would come and take the pen out of out of the hand and throw it away. Something like this. I remember seeing seeing a video of a patient with this post corpus colectomy Alien Hand syndrome putting on a shirt and the and had to just button with the right. Hands. Right. And then the left hand came and started unbuttoning the buttons so so that is a quite a strange, albeit rare phenomenon. Alien hand syndrome. But I would say that's more the exception that proves the rule. The reason that there is that alien hand syndrome is because the communication between hemispheres was severed. The dominant verbal hemisphere is now the the one that the person is identifying with, right? We identify with the words that we tell ourselves in our heads. The words are in fact localized to the left brain, which controls the right hand. The right hemisphere which controls the left hand and left side of the body is nonverbal. And so in the case of severing all of the connections between the two hemispheres, yes, there is this sort of alien

identity, but it's because the hemispheres were just connected. So I don't think it makes sense that by default we should think of the hemispheres of the brain as being 2 separate identities. All right. In 2019, Lasota and two others were arrested at what they called a protest against sexual misconduct within rationalist organizations. You got that Lasota as is was first connected to a violent incident in 2020 in Vallejo, CA, land, owner Curtis Linde sought a court's approval to evict Lasota and several others from his property for non payment of rent. The group had been living on the land in box trucks and vans. So this Curtis Lynn, this was a guy that the group knew they had met when they had been trying to live on a tugboat. I believe prior to moving onto his land. He tried to evict them and they. Some portion of the group attacked him, impaled him with a sword, partially blinded him and two of the group's members were charged. Although Ziz was not charged at that time. Now, this landlord, Lynd survived the attack. But when he was due to testify against those attackers right, his court date was coming up. He's the crucial witness. He's killed in an attack right now. Prosecutors have charged Maximilian Snyder and argued that Snyder was motivated by preventing Lynn from testifying to to commit this murder. Back to Maryland now. There were these two people arrested, Ziz Lasota and Michelle Zacko. Michelle Zacko was previously interviewed as a person of interest in the deaths of her parents. The Jazz Co parents Rita and Richard in Pennsylvania. Right. So you've got the death of the landlord in California. You've got the death of the Jackos in Pennsylvania. You've got the death of the Border Patrol agent in Vermont. Police have said that a person of interest in the zazzo homicides in Pennsylvania also purchased one of the guns that was used in the Vermont Border Patrol agent shooting. Now, what had happened then? This was January 20th. Border Patrol agents had pulled Teresa Youngblood, who had applied for a marriage license with Maximilian Snyder. This is quite a web. Right. So, but so this Teresa Youngblood had been reported missing by her parents, was getting married to Maximilian Snyder. But here she is in Vermont getting pulled over with a companion. Felix close to Canada. And a Border Patrol agent David Mayland ends up dead. Youngblood was charged. Felix Balkot also died in that shoot off and so young blood is charged in the shooting, with the implication being she shot at the Border Patrol agent who returned fire and it resulted in the deaths of both David Mayland, the Border Patrol agent, and Felix Balkot. So a gang, a religion or a quote affinity group, the revelations about the Ziz group sparked a debate on an electronic mailing list for religious scholars, said Jeremy Rapport, an associate professor of religious studies at the College of Wooster in Ohio. Well, so we get we get some insider information about a lively debate. On an e-mail list for religious scholars. Aren't we lucky? There are people on this listserv who would definitely say sure, this is the same sort of fringe religious movement that we've seen in fits and starts throughout American history, Rapport said. And rapport, rapport. Rapport. Rappers said there's all kinds of small movements that do extremely unconventional, sometimes silent things, sometimes with sort of a figure of religion. But other scholars on the e-mail chain argued that the group seemed closer to a gang. Rapport said it's not really steeped in any sort of coherent

religious or meaning making system per se, and it's just kind of a flash in the PAN report, Rapport said. They did something violent and now everyone's paying attention. Academics who study new religions generally don't use the term cults because it has a very negative connotation attached as well as stereotypes that may not hold true for the group in question, said J Gordon Melton, a retired distinguished Professor of American religious history at Baylor University. Whenever you use that term. You don't like whatever you're labeling this group with, Milton said. So essentially it says more about the speaker than about the people who are being labeled. So fair point that if you're calling a group of cults, it's you're basically saying you don't like them or don't trust them, except if that were true, how would I talk about the band Blue Öyster Cult? I love them. No, I get what he's saying. I get what he's saying, but that's basically to sort of say we can never use the word cult again, right. If you can't call any new religious Group A cult, then the word cult has basically gone into obsolescence, right? Otherwise, what are we talking about when we talk about a cult? Though many exist, most Americans would never find out about these obscure groups with strange belief systems unless something brings them into the spotlight. Sure. As far as the Z group, Melton said he considers them something closer to an affinity group, which shares a common interest but doesn't appear to be linked by a clear structure or coherent set of belief. This. But the group is calling themselves zizia ANS, are they not? They're the Ziz group, and there's one individual who has gone by the name ZZ right. In this case, it's just a bad informal set of friends who influence each other and made bad decisions, Melton said. But Melton cautioned that little is known about the Syrians. And I thought this article I thought we were going to learn about the Zizians and revelations during the legal process could change the way the group is characterized. One of the real problems with the group is we don't know much about them. Why did I sign up for a Baltimore Sun subscription today? Once these people are looked at over a period of time, we don't know how much this first week of reporting. Will stand up. So really I was hoping for a link to the blog or something like this. Where is the Zizan blog? Since seriously dot FYI. Ah. Since seriously dot FY I has been deemed not to be safe. I've got to get back to safety. OK. Here is a rationalist that I guess this is a mirror. Alright, of the Sincerely blog. So I want to look at some of this. I want to look at some of these beliefs, but first I want to talk about delusions. OK, if we take someone like ZZ. And. We take the visions. I I imagine that they have ardent beliefs. I imagine that whatever you want to call them, the affinity that they have is for a certain. A certain collection of beliefs or a cluster of beliefs, some of which are more important to some members than others. But regardless, beliefs that have a certain zeal to them right. Now, as a psychiatrist, I do want to say it's important that we distinguish between. The content of a belief and the structure of a belief, particularly when we're talking about delusions and the reason for that, is I do not think that psychiatrists or any individual should be the arbiter of objective truth. And that's not to say that I don't believe in objective. The truth I happen to believe in it, but that's just like my opinion, man. But I don't. I wouldn't trust any human individual to be the arbiter of what is true, in

other words. If someone believes something, whatever it is, if they believe that aliens have left messages for them. In archaeological structures, aliens have left messages and this person believes that they know what the messages mean. I'm not going to say. You are delusional because of the mere belief content itself, right? I don't. Technically, I don't know whether aliens left messages and whether this individual is interpreting them correctly. For my purposes, it becomes a delusion when it is clearly interfering with functioning or when the structure of it is indicating a breakdown in the minds functioning. So, so long as this individual can explain the belief to me in a logical and linear sense, I'm going to say the structure is OK. OK now if in the explanation the individual starts putting words together that that don't function grammatically or logically together, if they did. Generate into word salad when they're trying to describe. Debit. I'm going to say this now sounds like a breakdown of logic. This is nonlinear. This is tangential thinking, et cetera, and the delusion is going to be treated more like a clinical problem, right? Something something to treat now. The other possibility is that it's not the structure of the belief itself, but it's the manifestations of the belief in the person's life. So if the person insists on. Charging through cordoned off areas of a tourist attraction if they are actually beating up security guards to be able to get a closer look at whatever sort of archaeological site because they believe it's important enough for them to see up close. This message that the aliens. Left for them. Then I would say that that then is a sign of a delusion as well. Right. So, so Peters ET al. Talked about delusions as having a certain level of preoccupation, distress and conviction. One or multiple of those factors. It's what is what is going to ultimately define the delusion. It's it's the level of distress it's causing the person. Right. It may be that the belief itself is not bizarre, but the level of distress is out of proportion to the belief, right? I mean, things like things like being spied on. Then. We're all being spied on, but probably right at this point. You got to think a lot of your activity is, in some sense being watched. Now that has been a paranoid belief for a long time, or it's been a belief that has shown up in paranoid people. But what makes them paranoid is not merely thinking I'm being spied on. It's that they cannot function because of the distress from this belief. They're tearing their walls apart. They're they're in just a horrible emotional state, right? So that's why it's a paranoid delusion, not because of what the belief is. OK. The others preoccupation. So again, preoccupation is is. Sort of like distress, but it gets at the continuity of thought. The the fact that you can't let it go. If you're spending your entire day thinking about something, likely you're you're not enjoying life, you're not able to sort of do the things that that Freud defined as as defining mental health right leben at arbeiten or Lieben und Arbeiten. To work and to love if you can't sort of function. If you can't do something meaningful or have meaningful relationships because you're so preoccupied with a belief, whatever it is that might be a sign of a delusion, right? And then the last being conviction. So if the belief is so resistant to evidence. To updated information from the environment if it if, if anything, that happens to the person is reinterpreted illogically reinterpreted as actually supporting the belief when a general consensus would be that this is evidence

to the contrary. Right. So for example, the Flat Earth belief, maybe you've seen the videos of. The strong sort of Flat Earth advocates carrying out these tests for the curvature of the earth and in a kind of beautiful way, right. So sometimes we see that they do the experiment, they do it authentically and correctly. And the results are consistent with the curvature of the. The person then has two options. One is to say I'm going to update my. Belief. I think the earth is curved. Whatever else I believe there's some curvature, otherwise the light would have been, you know, 8 feet higher or whatever. The other option is to say this is some kind of trick of light. You know, someone actually set up the. The bulb to be at the wrong angle from what we calculate, you know. Who knows? At that point it would be illogical, right? Because. That would be too strong of a conviction. That would be a sort of inability to participate in, like Bayesian belief updating. Right. So again. The content of the belief should not define a delusion. The structure or the manifestations of the belief can be used in that sort of clinical sense. And the importance of saying this is because I don't think any of us want to live in a world where someone can say merely based on what you. Believe. I'm going to lock you up, right? Not that we should be excessively holding people involuntarily in psychiatric units. Obviously, there's lots of safeguards that should be in place. But, but I definitely don't think we should. We should be any less stringent about, you know, using a delusion, quote UN quote. If it's just a. Belief. To to say that someone needs to have a mandatory mandatory 72 hour hold or be involuntarily committed, that kind of thing. I I'm sure you can imagine how various. Political movements could use that in a very dangerous way, right? No matter what side of the aisle you're on, right? OK. Neutral and evil. This was written by ZZ, so all right, I just picked one at random here from the Sincerely blog. This is neutral and evil, written by Ziz December 29th, 2017. What is the good neutral, evil axis of dungeons and Dragons alignment made? We've got an idea of what it would mean for an AI to be good. It wants to make all the good things happen so much, and it does. But what's the difference between a neutral AI and an evil AI? It's tempting to say that the evil AI is malevolent rather than just indifferent. And the neutral 1 is indifferent. But that doesn't fit the intuitive idea that the alignment system was supposed to map on to, or what alignment is. So it sounds like basically talking about there's sort of a spectrum like in dungeons and Dragons that things can be good, neutral or evil. They can be chaotic. I don't know that much about Dungeons and Dragons, but. Good or not good, that's different than there being this neutral versus malevolent. Imagine a crime boss who makes a living off of the kidnapping and ransoms of random innocents while posting videos online of the torture and dismemberment. Of those whose loved ones don't pay up as encouragement, not because of sadism, but because they wanted money to spend on lots of shiny gold things they like and are indifferent to human suffering. Evil, right? If sufficient indifference can make someone evil, then if a good AI creates utopia and an AI that kills everyone and creates paper clips because it values only paper clips is evil, then what is a neutral aligned AI? What determines the exact middle ground between Utopia and everyone being dead? I got to find a TLDR. I think you've got an intuitive



idea of what a typical neutral human does. They live in their house with their white picket fence and have kids and grow old and they don't go out of their way to right far away wrongs in the world. But if they own a restaurant and the competition down the road starts attracting away their customers and they are given a tour through the kitchens in the back. And they see a great opportunity to start a fire and disable the smoke detectors that won't be detected until it's too late, burning down the building and probably killing the owner. They don't do it. OK, so this, according to Ziz, is a neutral person. Here's one issue people are complicated, right? So I mean, trying to say that every human being should be either good, neutral, or evil. I mean, people do many actions that are good and an occasional action that is evil oftentimes. And so what? What would you call that person? So I I don't know why. OK. This, this entire essay seems to use the the notion that the Dungeons and Dragons rule of morality, which is that everyone should fit into one of three categories, would hold true for things as complicated as humans and human technology. That's one of my issues so far. It's not that a neutral person values the life of their rival more than the additional money they'd make. With the competition eliminated. It's not. So the reason someone wouldn't burn down their restaurant's competitor is not because they value that other restaurant owner's life more than the money they'd make. From eliminating the competition, it's not because of that. Nor cares about better serving the populace with a better selection of food in the area, right? So they're not doing it because they want to make sure the population has the choice between the two restaurants. I would agree with that. That's not what they're. You won't see them looking for opportunities to spend that much money or less to save anyone's life. OK, so they're not going to go at the same time. They're not going to go above and beyond to spend the amount of money they would have made here to save people's lives. OK. And unless most humans are evil, which is as against the intuitive concept, the alignment system points at as neutral equals indifference. It's not about action or inaction. Either people eat meat and I'm pretty sure most of them believe that animals have feelings that's active harm, probably. Wait a minute. Did I seriously just base a sweeping conclusion about what alignment means on an obscure piece of possible moral progress beyond the present day? What happened to all my talk about sticking to the intuitive concept? Well, I'm not sticking to the intuitive concept. I'm sticking to the real thing and the intuitive concept point. I'm sticking to the real thing, the intuitive. Ones that pointed at which gave it. Its worthiness of attention. I'm trying to improve on the intuitive thing. What's your point is if you try poking at the structure most people build in their minds around morality, you'll see it's thoroughly fake and bent towards coordination, which appears to be ultimately for their own benefit. I I I don't want to spiral into all of these tendrils that I'm sure rationalism has, I just want to try to get. A sort of single gestalt from this one essay for now. OK, So what is the answer Ziz would give to the question of whether becoming a sociopath makes you evil? No, from the perspective of you're evil. If you're complicit in an evil social structure, because then you probably already were. So I think Ziz is saying. That you can be a sociopath in an evil society,

right? Which is a useful perspective for coordinating to enact justice. So I think as this is saying. It's useful for people to realize that they're not being evil, even if they're being sociopathic in an if they're in an evil social structure. And so this is the sort of revolutionary spirit this is. You know, it's it. It would. It's not madness to be mad in a mad world or or whatever. Right? But but what? I'm always more concerned with what people's own definition of good is. It's easy to come up with definitions of evil in my opinion, or to excuse evil. It's hard to come up with what is an absolute good. Right. If you're reading this and this is you, IE. Being in an evil social structure and realizing it. Ziz recommends aiming for lawful evil, keep a strong focus on still being able to coordinate, even though you know that's what you're doing. All right, look, I'm going to admit, this is. This is going to necessarily be a very superficial read for me. I get the sense that there's a lot. There's a lot of pre reading that would be necessary to to sort of build this. This House of beliefs. I think it takes a certain amount of understanding the true nature of what coordination means and things like this. Let's see if the comments shed any light. Commenter says this seems to be conflating, at least at the start, evil in the sense of producing things we don't like with evil in the sense of a personal attribute specific to humans. Right. So we generally don't call lions or sharks evil. When Psalm 92 says that the wicked flourish like grass, but the righteous like trees, it's not just hating on the wicked and praising the righteous. It's describing two different coherent strategies that are designed to work well on different time scales with different periodicity. Wickedness is a particular sort of coordinating norm that can choke off isolated. Instant instances playing strategies with lower time preference righteousness is a different sort of norm that also protects its own and fends off high time preference players. So there's a coordination between wickedness and a coordination between righteousness and the coordination in the world of wickedness is a preference for a sort of immediate gratification is what I'm getting right? So grass can grow quickly and easily, and then choke out any sort of longer time frame. Layers, in this case trees, whereas trees, if they can establish their forests, can fend off too much grass because they're blocking the sunlight. So that's interesting, but I really I'm really lost as far as how this relates to the original essay, ZZ says. I'm talking about a psychological characteristic which is neither following harmful strategies or out group membership such that people will employ harmful to others strategies if it will benefit them. And are able to find such opportunities in a way that brings in their conscious mind because they are no longer held back from that by self-image or fear or reprisal or other things that are ultimately motivated by caches of long thinking and decision theory. Serving selfishness that don't any longer apply. I would say my superficial understanding is that this reminds me of Nietzsche's beyond good or evil. Right? So the the idea that good and evil were essentially. Organizing labels used by actually the weak to oppress the strong, you know, niche idea was that the class of priests, priestly type people had realized that they were biologically A weaker class. And that the strong, the vigorous the warrior types were otherwise going to oppress them. If they didn't come up with this idea of good versus evil in the kind of religious

understanding of in the sense of like a religious understanding of good. Being meek, turn the other cheek, do unto others. This sort of thing. And evil being conflated. You know, oversimplified to me in sort of violence and so niche idea was that the, the ubermensch would be beyond good and evil would recognize that actually strength is truth and is beauty and that there would no longer be this inversion of values where the idea of good has been used to actually glorify. Weakness. Now, I'm not going to say that Ziz has this same theory on where good and evil as labels came from, but I think the same argument that that these are mere labels that are sort of relics, right? Something like. So ziz, at least here Ziz is saying I'm talking about a psychological characteristic. Of individuals. This. No longer held back by self-image or fear of reprisal or other things that are ultimately motivated by caches of long thinking and decision theory. Serving selfishness that don't any longer apply. So in this case I think Z is saying go beyond good and evil because good and evil were determined by decision theory and group selection that takes place over over long periods of time. And you know what, I think a lot of a lot of this belief system, I think, comes from being surrounded by computer science and hyperplastic tech. So Ziz is sort of of the tech world, right? I I believe this. His father was himself a computer scientist. Ziz went to grad school for computer science. Was in this kind of Northern California, new tech philosophy. And I think if if if you have lived in the digital world and and been extremely online and extremely on computers for your entire life. There is a different time scale that you have been experiencing your entire life. You have been living in a world of hyper transients, right? Not only is tech itself rapidly developing such that over the course of years you might expect. You you could reasonably expect things to get faster and faster in terms of processing, but the nature of that digital world is itself. Utterly transient, right? Nothing really exists other than as the manifestations of bits, but we don't interact directly with the storage and the storage itself is transient, you know. Tech is about as far as you can get. You know the world of screens is as far as you can get from the world of things being set in stone. OK, in ancient history. Books in the ancient world culture had an extremely large time footprint because the only writing for a while would be like stone tablets, let's say, right? Then papyrus. But it's still quite long. Suddenly there are things that can be wiped away with it. There there are entire worlds of information that can disappear, at least from your view. And we have the sense that the information that is stored in hard drives and things is likely just deteriorating over time, becoming inaccessible for one reason or another. And so in this world of hyper transient. I think Ziz maybe looking for a new morality that that matches this new timescale. That's. That's going to be my best bet as far as. At least the milieu where this rationalism may have developed. All right. Perhaps I will continue following this case. This video was either a rambling mess or a fresh take on the sessions. I hope this video was not a rambling mess. But if it was. That's the nature of content now hyper transients. Thank you for watching.

# The Unraveling of Jared Lee Loughner

Mar 18, 2023

Were Jared Loughner's attempts to achieve "mind control" out of "conscience dreaming" born of a desperate, unconscious realization that he had lost control of his mental structures? And can we say anything about the motive for targeting and shooting Gabrielle Giffords, in a case of severe mental illness?

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All humans are in need of sleep. Jared Loughner is a human hence Jared Loughner is in need of sleep.

Quote by Jared Loughner

On January 8th 2011, Jared Lee Loughner opened fire on a crowd outside a supermarket near Tucson Arizona killing 6 people and injuring 14 more including critically wounding the speaker congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in the 2 months prior to this attack Jared Loughner made a series of YouTube. Post that gave a glimpse into his mental state. These videos feature written text almost entirely in the form of these syllogisms over and over he'll make a conditional statement if one thing is true if BCE years are unable to start then Ade years are unable to begin. And then another conditional statement. BCC years are unable to start. And reach some. Thus Ade years are unable to begin based on this logical syllogism type of structure but often the actual content of what he's saying is nonsense. Well. If you're editing of every belief in religion reaches the final century then the writer for every belief in religion is you your editing of every belief in religion reaches the final century? Thus the writer for every belief in religion is you. The repetition itself seems like a verbal stereotypy a kind of pathological repetitive. But the fact that the repeated structure is in these formal syllogisms it's as if some part of his mind is desperately trying to dig its way out of the nonsense into sense by imposing this logical structure a mind that is fragmenting into chaos but trying to regain a sense of order amongst that chaos. But ultimately failing to do so if Jared Loughner was trying to claw his way back out of madness he failed so was this madness that is psychosis. Enough to explain the murderous rampage or can we say anything more about the cause of the killing. Where the cause of the psychosis

I'm a neuroscientist and psychiatrist speculating about the Jared Lee Loughner case any opinions I express here are purely my own and do not represent the views of any institutions so before we talk more about these videos and the mental state of Jared Loughner at that time let's go back and review some of his biography? Jared Lee Loughner was born on September 10th 1988 in Tucson Arizona to parents Amy and Randy Loughner his father was a retired gasoline truck driver and his mother worked at the city Parks Department. The family was described as very private by a neighbor and in particular the father Randy Loughner has been described as reclusive Jared himself also tended to be quiet described as a scrawny kid who would fly under the radar and social situations much of his teenage life revolved around music he played saxophone. In a jazz band and at football games and jammed with a friend's garage band. He was reportedly a talented musician in fact a high school bandmate Christina Lundberg described him as really good and talented and arrogant so maybe the kind of guy who was good at his instrument but knew he was good you know had some significant ego attached to his musical abilities OK. In early high school he had a girlfriend Kelsey who has been quoted as calling Jared sweet and caring when they were in a relationship however sometime in the 10th grade Jared endured a break up with that girlfriend and his behaviors started to change his closest high school friend at the time Zach Osler said there was after this breakup that Jared's life. Quote started to come apart as Jared became progressively more weird he also started drinking heavily smoking a lot of cannabis and delving into other drugs and hallucinogens. He would talk. Excitedly about his theories of conscious dreaming. But also intermittently fall into these stupors where he would just stare unnervingly at his friends for a period of time by his junior year he had stopped playing saxophone his friends had changed to more drug oriented people and his grades had plummeted. He then didn't return to high school for his senior year dropping out at the age of 18 he was also working at a quizno's sandwich shop at the time and his employer said that while he was initially an enthusiastic worker he underwent a dramatic personality transformation after which he became more withdrawn and negligent. In his duty. Ultimately he was fired for that reason so this idea of a transformation both in personality and in level of functioning definitely makes me think of the prodrome of schizophrenia his age of onset is also classic for this you know schizophrenia in males typically has its onset. With Florida psychotic symptoms in the late teens or early 20s about 18 to 25 years. Picked and the prodromal period will be this variable period for a few months up to maybe 2 years prior to that first psychotic break the prodrome is thought to happen in about 75% of people who go on to develop schizophrenia and the prodrome generally consists of a kind of social withdrawal a worsening and. Functioning and maybe some odd behaviors or odd beliefs but not yet the outright psychosis symptoms so not evident hallucinations or clearly defined delusions. It's been described to me that in the prodrome a patient will have a sense that something weird is going on right that something weird is going on in their external world and maybe that they're on the verge of some great revelation in their inner world and then when that revelation. Comes it's actually the psychotic

break it's like oh I get it now I've been sent here to prevent an earthquake but the CIA doesn't want me to prevent it because the earthquake is part of their plan and that's why they had that dentist put the speaker in my tooth implant to tell me not to do it. You know these are real based on real examples of things I've heard some multiple times like the idea of a speaker being implanted in a tooth which for the patient is an explanation of why they're hearing voices right the auditory hallucinations and often it's also connected to some bigger group like the CIA. The FBI that's broadcasting messages to them to explain the hallucinations so that moment of revelation is when the prodrome converts into full psychosis and then assuming that psychosis persists for more than 6 months that's when you have the DSM criteria met for a diagnosis of. Yeah but so again Jared Loughner undergoing that type of change also corresponding to a period of heavier substance use definitely sounds like a prodrome though there's some question of when exactly it converts to full blown psychosis I'm guessing that transition is around age 18 what would have been his senior year. But clearly during high school he goes from a relatively normal teen you know band kid and then within a year or 2 drops out of high school is unable to hold down a basic job and is acting increasingly strangely people that know him are clearly wondering what's going on with him. That's even before he actually dropped out of high school and you know often the notion that a period of time actually represented a schizophrenia prodrome is only clear in retrospect you know that it was something more than depression or just social withdrawal for some other reason and so after dropping out of high school Jared Loughner has a couple years of. Seeming aimlessness. With some more oddities he has an arrest for drug paraphernalia but then the charges are dropped he then goes through a tagging phase where he is spraying graffiti with phrases from literature reportedly he would also just sit in unlocked cars until 1:00 night when he was chased off by a cars owner that put an end to that. And he actually tried to enroll in the army but at the entrance exam he was disarmingly forthright about the extent to which he used cannabis in the past you know frequently and heavily for years prior and that gets him rejected from the army. At about a year before the murders he briefly tries working as a volunteer dog Walker at an animal shelter he had apparently always liked dogs from a young age but at this shelter he doesn't seem to be able to register that the dogs aren't allowed in certain areas including an area that was being disinfected due to an animal having been sick with parvovirus. Which is potentially lethal and he keeps trying to insist on letting the dogs go into that area? So he's asked not to return until he can respect those boundaries and he just doesn't return so that definitely sounds pretty odd right but can't quite tell how much of that is just oddness and lack of awareness versus something darker or more delusional don't have enough information about that we're the bizarre public. Behaviors became really evident was in Pima Community College where he enrolled in some classes around that time a few years after high school. And for the year leading up to the murders in early 2011. So according to a Wall Street Journal article published later. Math instructor Ben McGahey said Mister Loughner 's frequent off topic outburst during an algebra course frightened

other students and on his first Test Mister Loughner wrote mayhem fest in large letters Mister McGahey the math teacher said he tried to remove Mister Loughner from class on several occasions. But college officials didn't agree. A spokesperson from the school said the school didn't notify law enforcement about Mister Loughner because he didn't appear to be a threat spokesperson was quoted as saying he said things that were strange and he was a handful in class but he didn't threaten any students. Then there was an incident in spring of 2010 where a public safety officer responded to a call from a staffer in the campus library. OK regarding Jared Loughner making some loud noises at a computer when questioned by this officer Loughner explained that he was really into music and sometimes he would be enjoying the music and excitedly utter phrases or words from the songs according to the report while he was listening on headphones.

Yes.

So this to me sounds like it could have been a cover story for having hallucinations you know hearing voices and actually responding to them which is something you see when the hallucinations are severe enough it's like the person can't help but interact with them to talk back to them but then the fact that he's covering it up with oh I was just listening to music and. And saying words from the songs for some reason he knows he's not supposed to be doing this it may be because he actually believes the officer is part of some conspiracy that he thinks is going on you know who who knows at that point what his interpretation. It was but I imagine it wasn't actually the case that he was just intermittently singing along to a song because I don't think that would have resulted in someone in the library calling the you know campus officer on him right then the most disturbing story I came across from his time at Pima Community College. Was in a creative writing class? A girl in the class tearfully read a emotional poem about a terminated pregnancy and Jared started laughing maniacally and said things completely out of context it's something about strapping a bomb or dynamite. To the feet. This. And obviously his class was very disturbed and and at that point it's clear to me that he is fully in a psychosis and a severe one at that to the point of not registering that anyone is real besides himself. Boiler Eugene boiler was the Swiss psychiatrist who in 1908 introduced the term schizophrenia for what had previously been called precocious dementia or dementia precocious in the 1800s and before that. That maybe just madness like in Shakespeare or demon possession depending on the cultural context. But so boiler coined schizophrenia for a chronic psychotic disorder and in boilers characterization he noted a core feature as being autism. Now autism as a term has since been repurposed for the neurodevelopmental disorder of social deficits we we now know as autism spectrum disorder. But what boiler meant in schizophrenia and if you think about what autism means so auto like self autism would literally mean selfism and this was meaning a retreat into the self as the only reality. So I would propose that we we've lost that idea a little bit in schizophrenia. But we could maybe use instead of autism a term like solipsism which in philosophy refers to the belief that one's own mind is the only thing we can really know is real but in schizophrenia

a solipsism I mean not as a philosophical belief but as the actual nature of the experience. That one's own mind is the only thing that actually exists. So maybe experiential solipsism would be a better term but that's kind of clunky the point is for Jared Loughner the idea that he was being incredibly insensitive in that class I don't think would have even registered with him at that point because he just truly felt like nothing was real. Except his personal experience. So maybe he laughed because he felt well some kind of stimulation from this poem stimulation that we would all experience as sympathy and sadness but for him it wasn't anchored to anything like sympathy because other people didn't actually exist. So this is different from antisocial personality disorder or psychopathy where the person does know cognitively that other people exist but doesn't feel empathy for them. This is a complete loss of touch with the experience of other people as real beings So what happened from there is that the school Pima Community College said that Jared Loughner was required to take a mental health evaluation to continue but he evidently refused that and instead dropped out in October of 2010. About 3 months prior to the murders in January of 2011 and it's soon after that that he starts posting his YouTube videos. So in the month after dropping out he posts one called how to your new currency and again it always has these syllogisms like if I'm thinking of creating a new currency then I'm thinking of a design for my new coins size shape color material and image to start a new money system I'm thinking of creating a new currency. Therefore I'm thinking of a design for my new coin size shape color material and image to start a new money system. Another one here where he's talking about starting with zero coins. And if he adds zero he still ends with zero but if he starts with zero coins and adds adds one now he has one coin in his treasury he seems to be believing that he is going to be able to create a new currency with his mind then he has these concerns about time like the idea that. BCC E has numbers going backwards from zero. Whereas what he calls a DE that's actually a combination I guess of AD which is what we used to call the time going forward from Christ we would now call it CE I guess common era but he's he's disturbed by the idea that that time goes in in 2 directions but that there's no end point I guess. To. To time in the future. Something like that then it goes back to coins. So here I I can't quite make sense of what he's trying to say that you can make new coins with your mind too something like that. Right you you have the power with your mind right. I guess at this point. If anything? So also in November the month after he drops out he has this pretty angry seeming post about Pima Community College and again it's in this syllogistic phrase every police officer in the United states as of now is unconstitutionally working. Pima Community College police our police in the United. It's therefore Pima Community College police are unconstitutionally working so he doesn't seem to realize that he needs to define his premises right he assumes that he's got these accurate premises that every police officer is unconstitutionally working if his premises were true then yes these would be valid conclusions right so that the structure is technically correct. But the the result is essentially meaningless.

Yes.



So this video to me does suggest a kind of persecutory ideation about what happened to him at Pima Community College. If the police remove you from the educational facility for talking then removing you from the educational facility for talking is unconstitutional in the United states the police remove you from the educational facility for talking? Thus removing you from the educational facility for talking is unconstitutional in the United states.

Yes.

So he cannot recognize his own role he you know he doesn't register to him why the campus police were talking to him he seems to believe that he's being persecuted right it was a scam you know that the fact that he was kicked out of algebra is proof of this scam that's being perpetrated against him. And he probably imagines other people would be outraged about this because he's he's not living in a consensus real. Quality then he's got a little bit of grandiosity too so he's got the persecutory delusions about unconstitutional police targeting him and then he has this grandiosity that most people are illiterate that theme kind of comes up several times in these videos but if you agree but if you believe in his mindset. You can create currency you can create symbols it's almost this kind of nihilistic existentialism. They seem to be like the foundational assumptions that are now being skewed through a psychotic thought disorder so back back to the first video how to your new currency here here's an example of what I mean by thought this order who possesses your new coin you're distributing your new currency lethally to people or you're distributing. Your new currency non lethally to people you're not distributing your new currency lethally to people thus you're distributing your new currency non lethally to people. So what's clear to me and there's also a limitation in interpreting delusional content is that there's what we call a formal thought disorder in this in these videos and that is where the associations between concepts are difficult if not impossible to comprehend. So like here the idea of distributing your currency lethally or non lethally to people. We could wonder well does he mean well sometimes war is a way that new currencies might be introduced lethally to a new population but then you have to realize wait if I'm having to do that much of a of a jump that much mental work to make any sense of something. That in itself is a sign that there's a thought disorder here these these are disorganized thoughts because it shouldn't be that difficult or require such a leap to discern meaning from someone's speech and so the fact is there's there's probably not a meaning in the sense that we understand meaning. So here we have a video called how to mind controller. This was December. This is about a month before the attack on Gabby Giffords and and the others at the event First off I have to wonder similar to what I was saying at the beginning of this video about how using syllogisms might represent his mind trying to regain some order in the midst of chaos. The fact that he actually calls this video how to mind controller. Would it be a reach to say he's choosing these words because at least unconsciously he realizes that he needs to relearn how to control his mind because it's actually no longer in his control? You know you could say that's a reach that you know really this is a a grandiose delusion that he

controls everything. But in kind of Freudian psychoanalytic terms you know where dreams are the unconscious presenting us with wishes that we want to fulfill but don't have conscious access to them in his dream like state of psychosis is he actually conveying a wish to regain control of his mind. Just a thought. But if if you look at the content here if I'm the mind controller then I control the belief and religion action thought location food. This is this is almost getting to the point of word salad you know down here this is almost just a a mixture of random phrases so word salad is the name we give the most severe degree of thought disorder and that's when there's not even a discernible connection between. Words in a in a cluster of words thought disorder is loose associations or lack of connection between concepts once it's actually words don't make sense one after the other that's word salad. Then strangely though the ones that are posted as the the last videos. So in later December or mid mid-december he calls introduction Jared Loughner. And then the last one is hello. And he calls it my introduction to the channel. Also the introduction Jared Loughner video starts with my final thoughts so again this kind of temporal nonlinearity. So in his final thoughts video he's again becoming concerned with the idea of time that in BCE the years go backwards but in Ade they go go forwards he has this conclusion that the Ade which he means CE or AD are endless in year they they don't see case now. Why is he concerned about that he's not wrong that for now the the years just keep going up? Up. But the fact that that's of great concern to him is a sign to me that he has what we call aberrant salience so this is a defining feature of the way we think of schizophrenia now is you're getting these almost spurts of dopamine that because dopamine is about assigning salience or significance to things if you imagine just getting random spurts of dopamine. The brain tries to interpret what something is significant what's significant and some. Sometimes it's because it's random you end up just assigning significance to seemingly random things because your dopaminergic system has sort of gone haywire it's making you think this is significant you know that 2 red cars in a row that there's something there must be something about that and so you reach for interpretations to explain while you're why you're feeling this sense of significance. But it's it's really just a dopamine gone haywire so that seems to be what's going on here he's not wrong that the years just keep going up without a an endpoint insight but most of us aren't concerned about that you know. It's like OK for him it seems very significant you know on the whole I talked about the verbal stereotypy in terms of the repeated form the repeated structures of syllogisms they're also these repeated concepts that sort of like a conceptual stereotypy. Where we have these the things about currency there's other concepts related to dreaming time the alphabet and symbols? And there's also the sense that he's had a revelation about how arbitrary everything is. Or how arbitrary it can be like you can just create currency it's arbitrary and that that basically seems to boil down to not realizing that there is a social consensus of what reality is and that's why things like currency work currency or the alphabet. But sure in one sense it's arbitrary but it's not arbitrary that we all agree on what works and so that's that's why it works missing now that part of the mind that understands that there is such a thing as a

consensus of reality I think is why he has this. Grandiose sense that he has realized this secret that everything is arbitrary where to the rest of us. It's essentially just ramblings you know but everything is only arbitrary if you think a social. Consensus is arbitrary. So again the last video he posted was December 15th 2010 it's less than a month later that there is the shooting at the Gabrielle Giffords event the attack itself is on January 8th. 20. Then at about 7:00 in the morning he went to one Walmart store trying to purchase ammunition unclear what happened but he left that store and completed his purchase at another Walmart around 7:30 AM later in the morning he took a taxi to the Safeway supermarket outside Tucson where representative. Giffords was holding a constituents meeting and the shooting occurred at 10:10 AM seems essentially he just walked up and opened fire aiming at Giffords at close range but there was a large crowd there and so numerous bystanders were hit. 6 people were killed either 13 or 14 injured I've seen different numbers or 13 were hit by gunfire and one was injured while fleeing the scene Giffords being the apparent target of the attack was shot in the head and critically injured taken to a hospital in critical condition Loughner was then stopped by bystanders. And was arrested by police saying only I plead the 5th as he was taken into custody and then there was this photograph taken by the Pima County sheriff's forensics. In it which was released to the media published on front pages nationwide the Washington Post described Loughner's expression in the photo as smirking and creepy with hollow eyes ablaze while the art director for the New York Times said the photo was featured on the front page because it was the picture of the day it was intense and arresting. It invited you to look and study and wonder and I I would agree with that it's an intense and arresting photograph I feel almost as if there's a kind of deranged triumph in his express. Also something that tells me he's got a lot of adrenaline coursing through his veins maybe that's coming from the intensely open eyes and the tense musculature of his face and then the the sense that he's not living in our reality I I couldn't tell you where that comes from exactly but I feel like you can just tell that. By looking at this picture. So the fact that Gabrielle Giffords was a political figure led to this news story getting politicized almost immediately. There was a lot of talk about incendiary political speech coming from the right since Giffords was a Democrat and concerns about civility and discourse generally that came out of this now surely there is a broader debate to be had about political discourse and its effects on people that's one. Knowing. But in the case of Jared Loughner I think assigning political rather than personal motives was essentially a rush to judgment by a media looking to capitalize on political partisanship and people's interest in that and I'm really only interested in even mentioning it here to make the point that. I think the politicization. Around this event at the time actually obfuscated the real story which is a story of severe mental illness but as one example of the politics the politicization politicization politicization. Here I'll give just one example of a specific accusation that came out after this shooting which was that Sarah Palin's campaign had incited this shooter and that was based on this picture. Now I mean looking at this today I have to say that this seems. Quite tame compared to the political materials

we're used to now right. But yes a a dozen years ago there was a media firestorm about this picture after the story broke about congresswoman Giffords being shot so essentially the Sarah Palin political action committee had circulated some midterm election rallying materials including this map with. The electoral districts including Gabby Giffords district that the campaign was targeting to swing republican in the midterms with these graphics of crosshairs over the disc. And the so the New York Times initially ran a story that said the political incitement of this electoral map with crosshairs on it was clear in its role in in Jared Loughner shooting they did then correct this Story 3 days later to say no connection was ever established. And but honestly I feel like they're verbiage and and that of others in the media was to make it sound like if you didn't see the picture I I feel like they made it sound like the crosshairs were over a picture of Gabby Giffords head rather than just on a map like this with multiple. Tell them but you know what whatever the Washington Post fact checker debunked this claim at the time and reiterated it years later look feel free to Google this if you want but what what I actually care about from this whole tangent is that one of the reasons the Washington Post. Sites for disregarding the Palin campaign map in the motive for Jared Loughner is that he had actually had an evident fixation on Giffords from well before these Palin campaign materials were ever published. Well before 2010 in general and his fixation seemed to stem from a Congress on your corner event in Tucson Arizona in 2007 when he would have been 18 years old and according to a friend who Jared spoke to after the fact Jared said she opened the floor for questions and Jared. Asked a question which was what is government if words have no meaning and then Jared would tell the friend Can you believe it they wouldn't answer my question. Then. And ever since then Jared thought she was fake and had something against her whether she actually answered it I I could never find a consistent report on whether she said anything it seems like she dismissed it to some extent or just didn't say anything and moved on to the next one whatever the answer was it clearly didn't satisfy. Jared Loughner and so his his friend who he talked to about this said it wasn't something that he would bring up day in day out but just periodically if Gabby Giffords came up he would talk about how she was fake as part of a whole belief system it seems that a lot of things were fake you know. The government was fake in general etc and in fact so 3 days after the shooting authorities searched Jared Loughner 's home and filed criminal charges based on items that showed he had plotted or premeditated her assassination so he had a safe which included a 2007 letter from Giffords thanking him for attending. The constituent event and on the envelope of that letter were the words I planned ahead and the words assassination and Giffords along with Jared Loughner 's signature almost like he wanted to show that he had been planning this you know the fact that he's. Find it so again I believe that this is a story not about politics it is rather a cautionary tale about severe mental illness that is schizophrenia but it should be said that severe mental illness is certainly not by itself a motive for murder mental illness. Doesn't happen in a vacuum it happens in a person and so perhaps there is some kind of personal motive but if any decipherable motive can be

ascertained here it must be found through the foggy lens of a psycho. This so I'm going to suggest that there are 2 very important concepts here one narcissistic injury and 2 anosognosia. So first I should say narcissistic injury doesn't necessarily imply narcissistic personality disorder but what it does imply is a narcissistic defense and I would argue that it is always possible in severe mental illnesses like schizophrenia that a narcissistic defense. Is necessary for the person to shield themselves from the reality of what's actually going on with their brain and this is in fact why delusions often have a grandiose quality for example the belief that the person is the only one who can save the world or is a reincarnation of Jesus Christ? These are actually fairly common claims in schizophrenia. In the case of Jared you know he says outright that he can control all religion and belief. He believes he can create currency it seems the point is that this kind of belief system if it works internally to explain these strange experiences he's having you know these the salience attached to certain things that he is perceiving perhaps hallucinations that he's experiencing. The narcissistic grandiose type of defense as an explanation is much more attractive than you know having a broken brain that's playing tricks on you which is the explanation they're going to be hearing from doctors and concerned family members so if it's between. I have a broken brain and that would explain what's going on or I'm a special unique person I'm the only one who can see these certain things. I certainly know which one of those explanations I'd want to pick and it's not just their internal perceptions that they're having to explain.

And.

They're also going to have to start explaining why people are treating them differently you know why aren't people understanding the significance of what I'm saying or in some cases you know with thought disorder people aren't even understanding what I'm saying. At all. And so socially they're aware of this response but they're not aware of why people. Don't understand what they're saying they just get a quizzical look or a dismissive comment in response but don't understand why. And so This is why anosognosia is the other important concept so anosognosia means non awareness of a deficit you definitely see this in people with stroke depending on the involved locations so a stroke patient may have a deficit where they can't move or feel their left arm for example. But if the damage impairing their their left arm also involves a part of the brain typically the right parietal that is involved in bodily awareness and not just motor control the patient. Actually can't recognize that they can't move their arm and maybe don't even realize that their left arm belongs to them anymore so a neurologist will show the patient their left arm and ask who's who's is this and the patient will actually say well that that's yours isn't it or I don't know who's is that because they they just can't? Register the deficit that that awareness is gone this could also have an envision with the hemi neglect so a stroke causing. Part of your you know half of your visual field to go away if you're amnesia agnostic to the deficit you'll fully believe that straight ahead is actually over here because you're now only aware of this half of your visual field and you're not aware that there is such a thing as the other

half of your visual field so you know you'll think. The middle of the line is right here you know if the line goes all the way across you'll pick the middle is right here won't know why you're walking in a strange direction things like that. So in schizophrenia about half of the patients will be aware that they have symptoms or deficits from a disease process you know realize that their speech can be disorganized or that their thoughts aren't clear unless they take medications which which will improve this but others about half of the people with schizophrenia do not. And maybe cannot possibly realize it for similar reasons to the stroke patients probably and such I suspect was the case with Jared when he was asking back in 2007 what is the purpose of government if words have no meaning. To him this was an obviously important and profound question. And he thought it would register as similarly important and profound to others maybe especially to someone in the government. So when he gets essentially a non response he doesn't know why due to antisocial behavior and he's enraged due to narcissistic injury. Because the subconscious premise is that he's got to be on to something he's on to something big with this new pattern of thinking these revelations this whole new revelatory reality he's living in if he's not on to something big if this new reality isn't affirmed. But rather rejected by everyone else his whole world crumbles and so the narcissistic defenses and schizophrenia can be rather tyrant. Clinically insisting that you believe the reality because again if you don't well it's it's too terrible to even think for the person living in that reality and to me I would say yes that that is terrible. Seeing someone slide into the quicksand of chronic psychosis leaving forever the consensus reality that the rest of us occupy is an awful thing to witness. It's hard to imagine a state of feeling more alone than being the only person to live in some new alternate reality so I I obviously wish a vine could have been thrown to Jared Loughner as he was sinking into that quicksand to pull him out before he was all the way under. And and I wish we knew better how. To do this. And to say I sympathize with people to whom this departure from reality happens. Is not to say I excuse their actions there was a saying in Christian circles I remember hate the sin not the Sinner? And I think a secularized society could sort of adapt this principle to a case like Jared Loughner's and say hate the mental illness not the mentally ill. I won't pontificate too much about my personal views on philosophical and religious concepts like free will and evil and their connection to mental illness I don't actually think I'm smart enough to do that. But I will say in the US justice system the question of not guilty by reason of insanity. Actually comes down to a definition of legal insanity not a clinical definition of whether someone has a mental illness. And what legal insanity means in its essence is at the time of the crime could the perpetrator tell the difference between right and wrong as applied to their actions or were they so impaired by their mental illness that they genuinely could not discern you know could their sense of morality have been so distorted. That they may have legitimately believed that they were doing the right thing somehow and again that's not to say. Say that that would mean they should be allowed to just be free in society in that case but perhaps it would engender something different than the gut reaction of justice by way of retribution because intentions do

matter right in matters of morality. So I think in that case it becomes more about justice by correction or restoration to whatever extent that's. Possible now what actually happened in the case of Jared Loughner was that he was diagnosed with schizophrenia and was initially found incompetent to stand trial meaning his psychotic symptoms were so severe that he could not sufficiently understand what the court proceedings even meant or. To participate meaningfully in council with his. Earnings and then after that finding there was a question of whether he could be given antipsychotic medication against his will and it was eventually determined that he could be forcibly medicated due to dangerousness to self and others which is different than being forcibly medicated just to restore him to competence to stand trial. Which is not allowed but for dangerousness it was found that he could be given medications against his will? That went on for about a year actually and aside generally what forcible medication means is that if the patient does not agree to take a daily dose of medication by mouth they are allowed to be restrained and given a shot of the same version of the antipsychotic medication intramuscularly. So after that year he was found to be sufficiently restored to mental competency to be able to stand trial and according to the forensic psychologist that he could and did express remorse about the killings at that point. He was also determined sufficiently competent to enter a plea bargain which he did do and the plea agreement was essentially that if Jared Loughner pled guilty the state would not pursue the death penalty and Jared in turn could not pursue an insanity defense he was then sentenced to. 7 consecutive life sentences with no possibility of parole. So if there's anything to be gained from this story I do think it's the cautionary nature of it and by that I mean the orange flags of a simmering psychosis that started when he was in high school that boiled over into red flags sometime afterwards and in his Community College. I do think it's unfortunate that he didn't get treatment earlier and that we aren't better on the systems level at referring and treating people with psychotic illnesses like schizophrenia as the big one. I also think that a discussion of some risk factors for schizophrenia may be worth talking about as another kind of cautionary tale but I think I about out of time on this video and may do that in the second one I do thank you for your attention.

# Schizophrenia Origins

Apr 9, 2023

4 potential pathways to schizophrenia, starting with the most well established, becoming increasingly "controversial."

00:00 Introduction

00:35 What is Schizophrenia?

05:04 Biological/Genetic

08:06 Pharmacological/Substances (Can cannabis cause Schizophrenia?)

15:00 Salvia Divinorum

19:44 Substances Interacting with other Susceptibility

25:12 Psychological (Can borderline personality disorder become schizophrenia?)

31:05 Social ("Social Charles Bonnet Syndrome")

I also use Jared Loughner as a case study, so in some ways this is a companion video to the prior one focusing on him: • The Unraveling of Jared Lee Loughner

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCkawZbba4Y>

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## Introduction

**Speaker 1:** So I just covered the case of Jared Loughner, gave an overview and some analysis of symptoms he might have been experiencing that were consistent with schizophrenia, A diagnosis he was ultimately given on formal evaluation, but I didn't go into risk factors and the etiology of schizophrenia that the Jared Loughner case may be instructive. About so in this video I do want to talk about the ideology, the origins of schizophrenia while continuing to use Jared Loughner as a sort of case study. But this video will probably end up being mostly about schizophrenia.



# What is Schizophrenia?

This is a drawing by August Natterer entitled *My Eyes at the moment of the apparitions*. August Natterer was a German electrician turned artist with schizophrenia who lived from the mid 1800s to the early 1900s for the latter half of his life. He was hospitalized in asylums. Maintaining that he was the illegitimate son of Emperor Napoleon. End Quote *The Redeemer of the World* End Quote, and this illustrates two of the most prominent symptoms of psychosis. Hallucinations. What August Natterer refers to as apparitions and delusions. In this case grandiose, that he is the son of Napoleon and the Redeemer of the world. Schizophrenia is a disease where psychosis is the primary feature. What psychosis means fundamentally is a loss of touch with reality. At least the reality that any culture or subculture would define as such psychosis can be temporary and caused by many things. But when it becomes chronic and the primary defining feature of an illness. That is what we call schizophrenia. Drug intoxication can cause a psychosis, a severe depressive episode can cause psychosis, at least for a period, as can trauma and later in life. Neurodegenerative disorders dementias can cause psychosis, but with each of these things, the psychosis is. Secondary or downstream or a side effect of something else. So think of schizophrenia. On the other hand, as the entity where the primary process is the psychosis and being a primary process. It's usually going to be the case that it is also a progressive process. In schizophrenia, psychosis is going to persist or even worsen over time, at least so long as it's untreated. So in DSM 5 terms, once a primary psychosis not caused by other things. Has lasted for more than six months. That's when the diagnosis of schizophrenia is made. And the other thing about the progressive process. Is that there is often a kind of deficit in cognition that sets in while hallucinations and delusions are positive symptoms. IE things that are now present that didn't used to be so positive or additions. There are also negative symptoms, meaning things that are now absent but used to be present. So the loss of motivation, the absence of drive, the absence of a full emotional affect. Are negative symptoms and in between the positive and negative symptoms is probably where I would put things like thought disorder or a disorganization of behaviors or speech, because with those symptoms there is sort of a presence of something like the disorganized speech or word so. Valid, but that actually results from an absence of something else, like meaningful connections between concepts. So All in all, schizophrenia has some combination of positive symptoms, negative symptoms and disorganization, and it's widely acknowledged that rather than being a single disease. Schizophrenia is more like a syndrome, meaning a particular constellation of symptoms that show up to. Whether but that it's actually comprised probably of multiple disease pathways that all end up in this syndrome of symptoms. So I'm going to break what I see as some potential pathways into categories wherein there may be risk factors in each category. And bits of each of these can all combine or coalesce in multiple ways towards the endpoint and into the syndrome of schizophrenia. And we'll see if there's evidence. In our case study

of Jared Loughner of one or more risk factors that could explain the etiology here. So the categories. Or one biological slash genetic 2 pharmacological 3 psychological.

## Biological/Genetic

And for social #1 so biological or genetic risk factors are things that we generally see as non modifiable and fairly reliable risk factors even before any potential genes were implied. Stated it was known that psychiatric disorders including schizophrenia showed a substantial heritability with schizophrenia. If you have a first degree relative who has schizophrenia, your odds of having it increased by tenfold, so up to about 10% from 1% if you have an identical twin. With schizophrenia, your chance of having schizophrenia is 30 to 50%. Again, compared to 1% or less in the general population, the fact that this number is significantly higher than if you have a non identical twin with schizophrenia, it would be about 15% is how scientists have long known that genetics rather than simply a shared environment play a significant role. So genes. Are clearly important here, but on the other hand, they're not everything. If schizophrenia were. A purely genetic disorder then having an identical twin with schizophrenia would mean you have a 100% chance of also having schizophrenia, because identical twins share 100% of their DNA since the advent of molecular genetic techniques, it's been found that there is a very broad swath of genetic polymorphisms. That each contribute a very, very small amount of risk for schizophrenia, but no smoking gun of a single gene or polymorphism that massively increases your likelihood. So it's more about how many of these. Hundreds or thousands of potential risk polymorphisms. How many of them you end up with is sort of your genetic loading of risk. The one possible exception of a significant single genetic pathway, albeit not a single on off gene for schizophrenia, is the complement pathway. Without going into depth or complexity, there's some interesting work here about the role of the immunologic complement system in synaptic. Pruning in childhood and adolescent development, and some evidence that an over-active pruning of neuronal synapses is a significant biological pathway that underlies schizophrenia with genetic variance in that immune complement system accounting for that mechanism. So for Jared Loughner, we don't have any. Genetic studies, of course. The way to infer a genetic risk would be to consider whether there is a family history of schizophrenia. To my knowledge, there is no evidence of any relatives in the Loughner family who have been said to have schizophrenia. But there's of course the caveat that the family has always been rather private, so I don't think they would have necessarily volunteered that information if it were the case. So essentially, this is an unknown for him. So category 2 is the pharmacological pathway.

## Pharmacological/Substances (Can cannabis cause Schizophrenia?)

So there is rather convincing evidence that cannabis use, at least in people who have a genetic predisposition for schizophrenia. That cannabis use can precipitate the onset of schizophrenia. Now the problem is there's no controlled way to know whether the abundance numbers of people that seem to get schizophrenia after a heavy period of cannabis use would have gotten schizophrenia anyways. You can't really do that controlled study right? But there definitely seems to be an association between cannabis use and psychosis, and later, schizophrenia, both in clinical experience and in large observational studies. So, for example, here's a paper from 2018. Cannabis use and risk of schizophrenia by voucher at all. So in this study they actually start with a meta analysis of observational studies looking at the association between the cannabis use and schizophrenia. So here they have one prospective study that was the most stringent showed. Odds ratio of 1.5, meaning that if you've ever used cannabis, your odds were 1.5 times as high as someone who had never used cannabis. This. They then added that study to a meta analysis of other prospective observational studies found that every use of cannabis was associated with a 43% increase in the risk of schizophrenia. Here's a graphical representation of the meta analysis, so always coming up to pretty close to 1.5. Times the odds of getting schizophrenia if you had ever smoked cannabis. What they then did was just read it from the abstract. So then they had. 30 some 1040, some thousand people with schizophrenia versus controls, and they found that in this sample use of cannabis was associated with increased risk of schizophrenia at an odds ratio of about 1.4. Corresponded with that meta analysis of the observational studies? You know the the prior studies matched their sample pretty closely, but what they could then do was look for whether the genetics of these people would account for both using cannabis and getting schizophrenia. But they did not find pleiotropic. Effects. So they did not find genes that merely increased the risk of both of these things. There was an independent pathway between genes increasing the risk of schizophrenia and cannabis increasing your risk of schizophrenia. Tobacco also did not alter. So in other words, they looked for things that would otherwise explain the association between cannabis and schizophrenia, including genetics or use of tobacco. And the association remained that cannabis increased the risk of schizophrenia. Here's one from the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, Cannabis and Psychosis. So this is a review. Paper talks about some of the. Large registry studies, so countries that have like a national healthcare registry can look at emergency department visits and later diagnosis. So in Denmark, for example, if you look at the patients who came to the emergency department and got a substance induced psychotic disorder diagnosis, meaning they came in because they were psychotic. And it was found to be due to a substance. If that substance was cannabis, there was a 41% chance that that person would later have a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Other studies have also shown

high conversion of cannabis induced psychotic disorder to \*\*\*\*\*. Epiphania in Sweden, cannabis induced psychosis had the highest conversion rate of all substances, at 18%. In Finland, out of 20,000 cases, people with cannabis induced psychotic disorder at 46% chance of later converting to schizophrenia. That was the highest percentage of any substance and in Scotland. 20. Percent. So what these multiple countries with large registries are telling us is that if you get a cannabis induced psychosis, you have somewhere from a one in five to one in two chance of getting a diagnosis of schizophrenia later in life. Now here's this is actually a table of other studies that have looked into the relationship between. Between THC, CBD and schizophrenia or psychosis, they're going to have different ways of defining whether it's causative because they're not going to be able to do a double-blind. And placebo-controlled trial where they give some people cannabis and they don't give others cannabis and they follow them to see who gets schizophrenia. That's just not viable. But like that first paper we looked at, there are other ways to establish likely causality. If you, you know, control for multiple other factors, you can just see the the number of studies where there is thought to be a causative. Or otherwise exacerbating effect of cannabis on schizophrenia or psychosis, one thing I will say is that cannabidiol has been shown in several studies to counteract the effect of THC and cannabis. So I I've heard that anecdotally as well that cannabidiol can actually improve psychotic symptoms. But THC seems highly suspect as a causal factor in schizophrenia. And there is the argument that maybe the reason people who go on to develop schizophrenia so often have a history of heavy cannabis use is because they were maybe self medicating. The symptoms of psychosis with cannabis. However, this always struck me as odd because a very common symptom of psychosis is paranoia, and paranoia is also a pretty common side effect of cannabis intoxication. So why would someone be self medicating paranoia with a substance that could also cause paranoia? Now I know many people will say, well, cannabis actually just relaxes me and doesn't cause any paranoia. Let me just say, if you have any family history of schizophrenia, or if you've ever gone into a temporary state of psychosis. In the past. Talk to your doctor about whether cannabis is right for you. Be careful, OK? Now for Jared. Loughner. He definitely acknowledged his own heavy use of cannabis, including during an entrance interview for Army recruitment. He was also referred to as a pot-head or Stoner type back in high school by people that knew him. But there are also other substances he was using, including. LSD, cocaine, mushrooms and something called Salvia divinorum or salvia for short.

## Salvia Divinorum

And in fact, the overlap between the effects of this substance Salvia and the apparent symptoms of Jared Loughner's psychosis is an observation the New York Times made in an article they published called shooting suspect, had been known to use potent and legal hallucinogen. So at the time in 2011, Salvia was was not really regulated. It had just come to the US and it was available in head shops pretty commonly, I

think, and so one. Of. Jared's friends said about Jared Loughner. He always had it on him, meaning salvia. Yes, he always had some on him and. Here's what they talk about how closely the typical effects of smoking Salvia match with Mr. Loughner's comments about how he saw saw the world. Like his assertion that he spent most of his waking life in a dream world that he could control, Salvia is known for producing these dreamlike alternate realities out of body experiences. The revelation of secret knowledge, honestly, a lot of this just sounds like psychosis to me. But maybe with this particular. Kind of surreal out of body like perceptual change here, the New York Times article says people who have smoked the herb say the experience is often unpleasant and many never use it again. And the powerful effects were documented in thousands of online videos. Documenting experiences on the drug, including made it all the way to Miley Cyrus, who was in a semi viral video at the time where she was laughing hysterically and babbling nonsense after smoking something came out that it was Salvia apparently, and I actually, you know, I remember this there. There was this sort of fad. On YouTube of all these people at the time, like filming their friend. Smoking some salvia and you'd see this moment where the friend clearly just was gone, that no longer responding to the people around them, just me laughing, or maybe panicking, looking terrified. But one way or the other, clearly just in another world. Not knowing what was going on and then it would last only like a few minutes. It was a quick onset quick offset. So then, yeah, here's here's a quote. It pretty much puts you. In a different. World, says Casey Hazelton, 19, describing his own experience with the drug while visiting a local smoke shop. I wonder, you know about, I wonder how Casey Hazelton feels about. People Googling his name and he's forever going to be associated with. Saying that smoking Salvia puts you in a different world, I don't know the Internet. Strange, right? But yeah, he says. It's like you're dreaming if you're awake. So again, maybe a particularly surreal kind of hallucinogen. Again, they all seem like they're surreal to me, though, but I think it's pretty intense. I think it it may be one of the most intense in terms of the complete loss of awareness of the self and the complete immersion. Into this dream world like you don't even know you're a person anymore. That kind of hallucinogen. Sort of like DMT probably, I think it's like on that level of hallucinogen, but I think for for any one of these hallucinogens and I would actually consider high potency THC to be a hallucinogenic to a degree. It seems like these substances can take people through a door in their perceptions, right? The the doors of perception. And it seems that some people don't actually come back through that door. And if what's on the other side is a psychotic state, a waking dream, where thoughts are not connected in the ways that we can understand back on this side of the door. This this is psychosis. And if they stay in that state for longer than six months, it's going to be called schizophrenia. And so I do think that one of these significant risk pathways to schizophrenia seems to be a substance induced psychosis that for some reason becomes durable or fixed. There's a substance induced psychosis that wears off, but sometimes it doesn't, right? Does it happen to everyone? No, certainly doesn't seem to.

## Substances Interacting with other Susceptibility

My sense is that there are. Predispositions. You know, pre-existing risk factors, genetic or earlier, environmental risk factors that define your starting point. They define where you are on this susceptibility towards going into schizophrenia. And so for people that have a very high biological loading, high preexisting risk factors. Maybe it doesn't take any use of substances to just end up going into schizophrenia. Maybe it was almost predestined or just a little. This one little environmental stressor is what precipitates it for some people with a very low predisposition, very low biological loading. Maybe they can do as many substances as they want. For as long as they want, and they're just not going to get schizophrenia. But it's those people in the middle, right people with a certain loading. Maybe if you're. If you're here enough repeated and heavy substance use is maybe going to tip you over the edge. And if you're higher up in your predisposition, maybe only a little substance use. Then of course, if you're. If you're up here, it doesn't matter whether you substances you were just going to get it. Unfortunately, right. So you can kind of think of this in either psychological or biological terms. In psychological terms, if you think about if you think about what you believe is reality. And then you think about a drug bringing you into an altered state. Usually that state wears off. But then if you do it again and then again and then you start doing it so frequently that you're in the altered state more often than you're in the normal state, is there a point at which you just start believing that the altered state is reality? You start fundamentally believing that. And it does seem like you could see Jared Loughner's increasing obsession with conscious dreaming this way. That salvia and or other hallucinogens were putting him in this dream state. And if he was in that state often enough, he actually recapitulated his view of the world, such that this dream was now his reality. And so, and he was outright telling his friends I'm conscious dreaming. He would say that. But so maybe there was this recapitulation, this transition in his mind, slash brain of the drug induced psychosis, previously temporary. Suddenly becoming permanent. There was this frame shift. Oh, this is this is the real reality. Right, the dream world. And then he couldn't go back. So that's worth thinking of it psychologically, of the the substance induced psychosis becoming permanent based on a frame shift psychologically. I think the same process could also be viewed as happening on the level of the brain simultaneous with what's happening on the level of the psyche. So let let's think about what it would what it would mean in the brain. There's long been a notion in pop culture. You know that people can fry their brains on drugs, right? There was that 90s advertisement, you know, this is your brain. This is your brain on drugs with the the frying egg. But I actually think that commercial came from. What was already a kind of folk wisdom that drugs fried people's brains. You know, I think that idea was already out there and the commercial just made a visual of. But I think people used to would say for a long time, like, oh, whatever happened to old Uncle Jimmy? Ohh, he he fried his brain on drugs. He just fried his brain on drugs. You. Know. But how accurate might

that folk wisdom have been? Well, the idea of frying. This would basically imply that something structural is happening to the brain, right? Like if you fry your computer by spilling water on it, or if a lightning strike fries your TV, what we mean is there was physical damage to the electrical hardware right now. In the case of drugs frying your brain, if there is physical damage to the electrical circuitry, we can't see it, at least not right now. We can't see it on a CT scan the way you could with a stroke where there's a damage from the insult. You know you can see that now there are changes in schizophrenia. Over the long term that we can see on imaging. They're general things like global atrophy, maybe a little more in the front. There's decreased connectivity, but again, these things are sort of global and they're not specific to the cause of schizophrenia being drugs. It happens regardless of the cause of schizophrenia. It seems, right. So it's not going to tell you anything about whether the substances did it. It seems to be part of the schizophrenia, but there may come a time. As neuroimaging becomes more powerful and there comes an increasing ability to map out finely detailed connections between neurons that maybe we do recognize a phenomenon like drug induced encephalopathy, where the consequence is chronic psychosis. What we now call schizophrenia. OK, so all of that was in the pharmacological category of risk, right? Though I did go into some of the the psychology of what what would be going on from the substances. Let's now move to probably an even more controversial hypothesis, which is that there may be a category or an Ave. of schizophrenia risk that is psychological in nature.

## Psychological (Can borderline personality disorder become schizophrenia?)

OK, so with Jared Loughner. We have at least one person saying that even pre bizarreness he was arrogant about his abilities as a saxophonist, right? And maybe that means nothing. Normal stuff. But maybe it suggests a trait of some narcissism, right? And so narcissism, which is one of the cluster B personality traits, is essentially a defense against some core wound, some lack of a core stable identity, borderline personality disorder. Also in Cluster B also has. At the core, a wound and a lack of stable identity. In fact, Otto Kernberg said that a narcissist is a borderline with a narcissistic shield.

**Unknown Speaker:** Built.

**Speaker 1:** Meaning that the core is the same in both cases and that is a core of unstable identity or core emptiness. But in narcissism there's this shield that that's the only difference, and the shield is the grandiose self-image, whereas in borderline personality disorder the core is essentially more exposed. It's unshielded. But having that kind of emptiness to the core self I would suggest is a psychological risk factor for psychosis. And it's fairly well agreed upon that in borderline personality disorder,

at least the one where there's not a shield. There can be a psychosis or psychotic like state that happens transiently under stress, maybe specifically when the core wound is reactivated like by abandonment or rejection, let's say, but a kind of psychosis. In fact, the reason it was originally named Borderline. In the old psychoanalytic days was that it was conceived as being on the borderline between neurosis and psychosis. So that tenuous position on the border at risk of going into a psychotic state now, I would suggest that similar to a repetitive temporary psychosis of the kind that can happen from repetitive drug use, there can be a repetitive temporary psychosis. From abandonment events or other interpersonal stressors for people with a core psychological wound, as in borderline or narcissistic disorders, and that perhaps this too can at some point switch from something transient to something permanent. If the stress is chronic, right? And their stress induced psychosis, then maybe there's a point at which the psychosis becomes chronic, right? And that looks like schizophrenia. With Jared Loughner, he had maybe an abandonment wound from the break up with his girlfriend in 10th. Which interacted with whatever biological predisposition he may have had. And then led to maladaptive coping mechanisms he used after that abandonment event, namely the heavy use of alcohol and drugs, and then, incidentally, once he's in that psychotic state, he definitely seemed to have extreme reactions to interpersonal rejections, kind of psychotic level. Narcissistic. Injuries, as I talked about in that first video. But so here's a question, given that I'm proposing that there's a domain of risk for psychosis that is in our psychological makeup, are there things we can do to mollify this risk? I think maybe there are and I'm going to suggest something which may sound like spiritual mumbo jumbo. But I at least believe it, which is. Do not lose sight of the part of yourself that is. Eternal, OK, because if it feels like there's nothing but emptiness at your core. I would say that is actually an illusion of modern society and maybe your upbringing or early childhood, but what is actually there is something enduring. Something that somehow is more than machinery and we are not meant to ignore this. Look, we're all conscious here, right? And what is consciousness? I don't know. But I think it's more like light than it is like matter. And light is the same light everywhere and through all time. And so staying anchored to that part of yourself that is more like light than like machinery. Is very important in my opinion. OK. But on a more practical level? Another thing is to maintain social supports. You know, have friends of some sort so that you can also endure being abandoned by one person. Should that happen without ending up feeling completely alone. And risk having your identity collapse. Those are sort of the conclusions I would come from based on the psychological risk factors. If those are in fact risk factors. We just talked about.

## **Social ("Social Charles Bonnet Syndrome")**

And this social supports part actually transitions me into risk category #4, which is the social category or the Social Ave. and I'm going to start by talking about



Charles Bonnet syndrome. Charles Bonnet syndrome. So this is actually a medical condition typically encountered in ophthalmology or neurology, not psychiatry. But it is defined by visual hallucinations, often complex visual hallucinations of people, scenery sometimes the same little play being enacted over and over again. But what it's also defined by is the fact that it starts only after a person who had sight has lost. Some or all of their eyesight. So it happens in advanced cataracts, for example. And the explanation for this is that your brain at that point has all of this dedicated visual cortex space that suddenly has had its inputs removed. And so that part of the brain ends up spontaneously generating activity because it can't just sit there and do nothing, I guess. So you end up seeing. All of these things that your visual cortex is inventing for or something to do, so I would propose that all of us also have a social cortex at least as distributed throughout our brain. And that typically receives social inputs analogous to the visual cortex receiving inputs of visual stimuli. But so when someone becomes completely isolated from social connections, those inputs get removed and So what might happen? Well, isn't it interesting that in schizophrenia the hallucinations are almost always voices talking very rarely? It's singing and even rarer. Are the hallucinations, mechanical noises or anything non communicative? So that to me sounds like maybe a social hallucination even more than an auditory hallucination. It's a social hallucination, specifically voices talking. And now maybe this is more of a stretch, but with some of the classical delusions like being targeted by a shadowy organization, maybe there is still. Something even there that's filling a social role. Because the notion is that people care about you, right? This the CIA or the FBI, even if people have some nefarious purpose towards you, I wonder if that's still something to the social brain. Better than the idea that just no one cares about, you know, people are are thinking about you or even know you. Exist. That would be essentially a blank space and total lack of activity in the social cortex, right? So this is a potential pathway that I haven't really heard anyone else theorize about this idea of a social Charles Bonnet syndrome. And again, I'm not saying that social isolation is all it takes to develop schizophrenia, but I think it's something that could interact in a significant way with the other risk factor pathways and probably it. It often ends up playing at least an exacerbating role, like in the case of Jared Loughner. It seems that when he was already having some significant symptoms of psychosis, his old friends ended up kind of ignoring him and, you know, being freaked out by him, right? But that then eventually led to his just being a total loner for several years. So unfortunately, I think if you're having some psychosis symptoms that are off putting to others, your subsequent isolation is almost inevitable, and that that's then going to make it much worse. You know, you're essentially going from early psychosis symptoms to getting exposures to these psychological and social risk factors of. Rejection and isolation that are going to substantially. Debate your your risk, in my opinion, and so things could end up getting a lot worse, right? Again, I think social connections are very important. Let's support each other as best we can right? And try not to let people fall so far afield.

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