

The Continuum

As far back as I can remember, there have always been times when I felt like I was “living in the moment” but remaining in this mental state indefinitely is something that I haven’t been able to do. Instead of focusing on the now, I have always been anxious about my past or my future, wondering where life will take me or if I have gone down a path that will doom me later on (or has already doomed me in the present). There is a word that is used for this state of mind, mindfulness. I think that this word encapsulates the mental state of “living in the moment” but it fails to describe experiences that open up to you when entering this state of mind. I call this the continuum, some call it the “flow”. The moments when you are not thinking, but acting. Not worrying but living. This is living in the moment, living in the continuum.

Drifting off into another reality is much easier than dealing with the hardships and experiences of the current realm in which we exist. I often catch myself daydreaming away my day, thinking of better ways of living or judging my actions of another time. Any man who considers his position in the world and his trajectory in this life is bound to fall into the trap of anxious thoughts. Over analyzing your previous actions and thinking about how you will act in the future is so much easier than acting right now. This is just another form of escapism, like binge watching a television show or scrolling endlessly on social media. I typically find myself hating various aspects of the era I have been born into and longing for an idea of a romanticized past that I have invented in my head or a future that I think I am capable of creating (without any real sort of plan of action or even concrete vision of what that would look like). This is not a way to live a life. Men who fail to embrace their age fail to embrace their lives. There is no escaping the age of which you are born. There is no escaping reality.

The modern forms of coping with the world in which we exist do not end there. Stop and look around as you carry on about your day. How many men do you see that aren’t looking at a screen? How many do you see that do not have headphones in their ears? How many do you see that look content with their lives? This is not the way for any man to live. The pleasures of 21st century abundance (whether it comes in the form of food, infinite screen entertainment, pornography, drugs, etc.) are a way of accessing a false continuum. They are traps that pull you into a flow state that feels similar to when a man lives his life as he should. Watching tv for 5 hours in a single day draws you in, it focuses your attention, it makes you think about what is happening before you. It is very similar to the auditory, visual and stimulating experiences that men have felt since the dawn of mankind as they roamed the earth, experiencing the universe in all of its glory. Now that glory has been hyper optimized to draw your attention upon a screen and keep you attached without being aware you’ve been put into a cage.

I think that these new forms of escapism, longing for the past, ignoring the present with 21st century distractions, dreaming of a future free of strife and difficulty, must be some of the most nihilistic worldviews that have ever existed in the history of mankind. Never has there been a time when men lived so little of their life in the present. Never have so many men failed to access the continuum. Never have there been so many distractions to close our eyes from what is

happening right in front of us. There is only one way to overcome this nihilism, by embracing the continuum.

When in any time of crisis, we must look to the ancients. I believe that the continuum, as a concept, has been taught throughout various cultures, schools of thought and different ages. The Upanishads teach that mindfulness and meditation are the only ways to reach a state of enlightenment and peace. This is the only way to access what they call Atman or the Self which is the eternal/divine that is within all beings. I think that this eternal being is the spirit that you feel when the continuum is reached and you engage that state of “flow”. It is a similar feeling no matter the activity that you are involved in. I feel it when I do something creative, when I am engaged in a compelling conversation with someone, when I am focused on getting a task done, when I find myself sitting on a bench next to a river feeling the breeze on my skin. They are all very different experiences but all the exact same states of mind. This is what I imagine my eternal self to be.

I believe the stoics preached a similar idea. Seneca taught that each man should be entirely okay with just himself at any given moment in time. You should not need constant streams of entertainment or action surrounding you to be happy or to have a fulfilling life. Living life in of itself should be fulfilling enough for you to be able to enjoy it without the need for some sort of entertainment. Both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius taught similar ideas as Seneca along with the practice of what they call “attention” which when cultivated, allowed a user to act on instinct alone and not need to rely on thought or reason to get by. It would appear their lessons in life come with lessons on how to access the continuum as well.

One of the ways that I also interpret Nietzsche’s idea of the *Urbarmensch* and Camus’s notion of the Absurd Man lies in this same school of thought. There is no inherent meaning in the things around us. When a man is to stare into the abyss around him, the abyss will simply stare back. Looking into your mind to think about what could’ve been or what can be instead of living in the continuum and enjoying life is nihilistic at its core. My envisioned *urbarmensch* isn’t a Napoleonic/Cesarean figure, it is a man that enjoys every moment that he is granted. A man that would relive his life infinitely times over if that was the nature of his existence, including the highs and lows. I think that this is what Camus is also arguing for when he talks about the Absurd Man. The Absurd Man lives entirely in the present and doesn’t worry about the future in any way. He is guided only by his integrity and nothing else. I think that the only way one of these heroic figures could exist is by living entirely in the moment. Men of action, not men of contemplation.

The present is the only thing that is guaranteed. I think that Caesar and Napoleon probably became Caesar and Napoleon because they lived entirely on their own instinct and their courage as individuals. I doubt that they were worried about what was going to happen or where they had come from/what they had done in their past at every fork in the road. I’m sure there

were times when they found themselves anxious but they knew that glory only came to those who focused on what was happening in the moment. This is the mindset of an emperor/conqueror, of a super man. Anxious thoughts are the mindset of the idle. Caesar and Napoleon embodied the continuum.

When I wake up, I begin my morning with a ritual to remind myself to be present in all moments of the day. At night I pray I will be able to wake up the next day and do it again. This is all a man can do in this world. Since I have been doing this, I have had so much more enjoyment at my job, in random interactions with strangers in the city, as I notice the sights and sounds around me throughout my day, as I feel the breeze on my skin and the smells/tastes of my food. To live is to feel the sensations of life all around you, all the time. This is how all great men have lived in the past and that is how we must continue to live in the present.

Exert your will in the present. When offered a peaceful day of sitting on a bench in the park, it should be appreciated. When a challenge or tragedy is thrown your way, it should be embraced and dealt with. When the opportunity for triumph enters your life, you must seize it.

This is the only way to live.