

# **Self Stuck: Every Mask You Leave Behind Is a Mask You'd Like to Don.**

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November 21, 2005



# Preface.

The process of achieving unity from multiplicity entails the journey from the adoption of specific personalities and traits and view points to the synthesis of these diverse elements in a global level of understanding. Seeking knowledge from the specific to the general is akin to taking on the perspectives of specific persons, arguments, and institutions, and incorporating them into a general equilibrium model of interacting processes. Unfortunately, we sometimes become stuck in the role that we are given, and often burdened by habit. Although we have no idea of its disutility, these adverse habits, behaviors, and circumstances drive us toward propagation of these multiplicities instead of further syntheses. This work is about the process of being stuck, the situation of being stuck, and how one would go about trying to become unstuck. Well, at least that's what this work began as. What it turned out to be, you figure out, for the content of this work does not necessarily reflect its title.



## An ironical point of view.

Though her given name was Pusacola, neither of her parents came to see her when she first came upon the scene and saw the light of day, and her paternal relatives who received her began referring to her as Pus, more for convenience sake than for any recognizable connotation, though in the native language of the Ojibwa, her name was shortened from “woman of the sand dune that has a hand in it holding an eye ball” to “woman of the eye ball.” This latter connotation is appropriate, however, because among the Ojibwa (which, by the way, means “puckered up”), her puckered up eye balls were supposed to be among the most beautiful in all of Algonquia, and her lashes were long and sharp enough to serve as needles upon being plucked. When her parents were killed in Mackinaw, she was nestled into a birch bark canoe by her Potawatomanian aunt Chechugehamena (literally “giant pink tsunami from Lake Superior balanced on a porcelain plate by an ice pick forged in the caverns of Hamena”) and sent off into the Illinois river headed for lake Michigan.

The boat was intercepted, however, by an aide under Major Robert Rogers, a British-employed colonial ranger on his way to inspect the former French forts of Pitt and Detroit. The aide, whose name was Joseph Chokebimble, looked curiously into the basket for a sign of the divine gift of God when the child’s puckered up left eye ball blink quickly, releasing a sharp eye lash headed straight for Chokebimble’s retina. Needless to say, Joseph became blind, and began wearing an eye patch, which irritated Major Rogers to no end, and earned him a demotion to the ranks of the British infantry, and he soon began to take over the duties of the dish washer. However, Joseph *did* take the hit in the eye as the prophetic sign that he had envisioned, for he soon escaped an encounter Major Rogers had at the mouth of the Cuyahoga near the cross of St. George with members of the Ottawa tribe, who refused to let him pass. Only when Rogers agreed to make every

fourth member of the his British rangers stick a pink ice pick covered by birch bark into his trousers did the Ottawans agree to let them pass, and moreover, to call George III their uncle. Since no ice picks were readily available, Chokebimble was asked to supply popsicles as substitutes, with Pus's eye lashes serving as the popsicle sticks. A godsend indeed!

As Pus grew up to be about 5 years old, she began picking up the nasty habit of stealing food (and popsicles) from the British and sending them off to the native Ojibwans, one of whom, Georgiacola (named as a niece to George III) was taken by Pusacola to be what she believed to be her legitimate mother. Whether she was or was not Pus's mom is to be debated, but two fragments of circumstantial evidence point to her reliability. First, Georgiacola had a puckered up left eye ball, just like Pus. Second, Georgiacola and Pus shared the uncommon interest (or habit, if you will) of sunbathing naked on the rocks near the banks of the Illinois river, with their back sides facing the sun and their heads dipped into the water while their hands cradled the rock on which they lied. Although Pus has the uncommon ability to keep her head dipped in the water for over two hours, just as her supposed mother Georgiacola, Pus lacked the then even more uncommon ability to keep her buttocks prostrate against the rays of the sun for over 2 minutes, a feat easily accomplished by her more experienced mother. Lying in this position, in a fashion likely adopted from the mermaids in an evolutionary adaptation, Pus and Georgiacola were able to avoid detection by British soldiers and native American trappers alike. Pus spent many an hour in this prostrate position bonding with her mother, until one day, the rock upon which Georgiacola laid dipped into the water and she died along with it. Chokebimble, sensing the importance of her mother on young Pus's early development, erected a tombstone of Georgiacola at a cemetery near Detroit, where the army stayed for a while as Pus dipped her head into the Maumee river, drowning in tears of sorrow.

During one particularly painful session on the Maumee, during which her tears raised the river's water level by three inches, Pus conversed with her god Molalaquebabkikiselagehamena (roughly "Sound of Hamena") in a direct, open-hearted, frankly anger-driven, 5 year-old to 5 year-old interview in which Pus asked the questions that Molalaquebabkikiselagehamena answered to the best of her knowledge, though the answers are often cryptic enough to drive a preoperational 5 year-old crazy.

"Why do you have to take my beloved mother away?" asked Pusacola.

"Do didst thou what thou didst always hadst rather likest to do?" an-

swered Molalaguebabkikiselagehamena, apologetically.

“How will I grow up without a role model to look up to?” asked Pusacola.

“Likest thou one trout thou hadst caught last Thursday but not likest thou one salmon thou wilt take up this coming Tuesday?” answered Molalaguebabkikiselagehamena, cutting and pasting as she went along.

“What must I do to overcome this sorrow?” asked Pusacola.

“Doest not that which changest what ever it is not stayest the same when it not is it?” answered Molalaguebabkikiselagehamena, ad libbing on the theme of Heraclitus.

“How do I become concrete operational?” asked Pusacola.

“Art thou what thou artest not?” answered Molalaguebabkikiselagehamena, a bit confused herself.

“What is the meaning of life?” asked Pusacola.

“Why?” answered Molalaguebabkikiselagehamena, yawning.

“Why are you speaking like a funny person?” asked Pusacola.

“Why doest thou stuckest in thyself?” answered Molalaguebabkikiselagehamena, referencing the title of a book sitting on her heavenly bed of feathers above.

“Can you tell me where Michilimackinac is?” asked Pusacola.

“Zzz,” answered Molalaguebabkikiselagehamena, finally asleep.

After taking the forts of Miamie and Gatanois, the troops continued on to Michilimackinac, up near Saint Ignace at the top of the peninsula. A strange incident occurred when the crew camped at Saginaw, near its eponymous bay and river. The night grew dark quickly after a long day of heavy marching. Pus was barely straggling in line, while Chokebimble tried to keep himself between the advancing troops and the much slower Pus, who refused to ride on anyone’s back and ended up barely close enough to see Chokebimble’s figure. They camped near the Saginaw river, and while everyone slept early, Pus decided to go exploring. She made it through the dark bushes north of the camp, and struggled through the thick woods before emerging upon a ghostly reflection: the moon announcing its presence to the river. It was an eerie place reminiscent of a damp marsh with large stones spread out here or there on shore. Pus cradled one of these rocks and dipped her head into the water, as if to eulogize her mother. Thoughts of the unfortunate circumstance of her existence, the gracefulness of her mother even in death, the ice picks of the Ojibwa, the meaning of life, and the nonsensical and hence brilliant machinations of Molalaguebabkikiselagehamena raced through her simple and immature mind in rapid succession.

In this state of semi-delirium, Pus began to fall asleep while her head was in the water, for the first time imitating the “Pescitogemena,” the Ojibwa’s sacred fish. Minutes passed away in silence, though it seemed like hours to Pus, whose preconventional brain measured time as real time rather than objective time—the way older Ojibwa folks regress back to earlier existence—behaving as if a child. While images of Georgiacola and her web-like feet and Molalakebabkikiselagehamena with her halo made of birch bark flashed through Pus’s mind, she could sense and hear a small fragment of a rock skipping across the water.

A man, or if you will, a fish, was sitting on one of the stones tossing rocks over the surface of the river listlessly, as if he’s fed up with life. He was a young boy from the torso upwards, with thin but sturdy arms and a tan, brownish face. His lower body, however, was a fin, and we may very well call him a mermaid, if a male one existed. Looking in his direction, Pus realized that she has finally seen a “Molalana,” a divine creature of the Potawatomi whose ancestor was said to be outcast from the court of Molalakebabkikiselagehamena for eating the magical bait of “what if” while she fished for the “meaning of life” at the caverns of Hamena with an ice pick. In the earliest days after the creation, Molalakebabkikiselagehamena tagged her bait with “animal faith” and lowered her ice pick into the pond of “skepticism,” but nothing answered, until a male fish from the ocean of “naivete,” the primordial fish that was once a Pescitogemena, swallowed the “meaning of life,” and became a full grown human being, the primordial human being, and took it back with him to “naivete,” never to be found again. Molalakebabkikiselagehamena started sobbing like a child and asked her mother Mola what must she do to overcome this sorrow. Mola talked in parables and answered that “that which changes also stays the same.” Molalakebabkikiselagehamena understood this and transformed the primordial human being into a half-human half-fish, his head, arms, and stomach remaining the same, while his legs became the tails of the primordial fish, and he is banished to the rivers and lakes beyond the eastern horizon. Molalakebabkikiselagehamena then found the “animal faith” and molded the waters of “skepticism” into the shape of the human being, the secondary human being, and blew life into it, though the “meaning of life” was absent from its spirit. These secondary humans she populated the deserts, forests, shores, and plains, and they became the modern equivalents of the Ojibwa, the Ottawa, the Sioux, the Fox, and the Potawatomi.

“What are you?” asked Pus of the Molalana sitting on the rocks.



Surprised by the human presence, the Molalana made a perfect dive into the water without making a noise or giving a splash, then came back with only his eyes out of the water, looking to his left, then to his right, finally spotting a little girl with her wet hair just out of the water. In Pus the Molalana recognized the “will to believe,” his absent self, and, too depressed to follow his inclinations, he began to swim away.

Pus quickly glanced in his direction and yelled loudly, “is life worth living?”

This stopped the Molalana in his swim. He came out of the water and turned to listen to young Pus.

“Can you tell me the meaning of life, you divine creature of the Potawatomi, exiled from the presence of Molalakebabkikiselagehamena,” she asked.

Remarkably, the Molalana spoke the same language, which, remarkably, is not English, though this author’s remarkable translation is excelled by none but that of George Chapman. “The meaning of life was handed down to me by my father, who treasured it as the central piece between skepticism and animal faith, yet I, having witnessed his death, no longer possess it.” The Molalana saw in Pus the will of his former self, the life of intention before it was discolored by the realm of conception. When Pus asked him for the story of his life, he gladly gave it.

The ancestor of the Molalana carried the “meaning of life” back to the Saginaw river from the ocean of “naivete.” Apparently, no one knew about this. Generation after generation, the “meaning of life” was bestowed to the youngest son by the father, all while living in danger of being found out by the tribes of Michigan. In this way the Molalana lived out its ways, swimming in the Illinois and the Maumee, feeding on the “skepticism” of the spirits around them, and, after digesting it in their stomachs, puking out “animal faith” that nourished the life of the woods. It became an ecological cycle as important and fundamental as nitrogen fixation. People warred and whored with each other, taking in the “animal faith” and subconsciously turning it into “skepticism,” while the unseen Molalana worked in the role of the *Rhizobium*, sustaining the spirit of life. The Molalana lived in this way for centuries, bringing balance to the world unobserved even by Molalakebabkikiselagehamena, though Mola knew it all along as part of a grand plan. Eventually, the “meaning of life” came down to the father of the present Molalana. Possessed by the demon of “naivete,” this father decided to swim back to look for Molalakebabkikiselagehamena. Unfortunately, he journeyed only as far as the Susquehanna river in Pennsylvania, where, near the

Lancaster, Pennsylvania, he was taken in by the Conestoga Indians, who recognized, in him what they call the Moladecin, or translated as simply “Mola’s scourge.” In short, the Conestoga, contrary to the Ottawa and the Ojibwa, saw Molalaquebabkikiselagehamena as the pranky little kid that overthrew her rightfully reigning mother Mola, and helped herself to the flesh of the legs of the Indian people, which she used to create the Mola from the Pescitogemena, hence making all subsequent Conestogans short-legged. Moreover, Mola stole the “will to live,” thus making the Conestogans cranky. Instead of being revered, the Mola is condemned as the lurking evil, so when the father of the present Molalana was taken, he was grilled on the holy Molalaniscatorimex, and put into pork buns sold to the Pennsylvanian Quakers. Left without his rebellious father and mother (who died while giving birth), the Molalana lost all will to believe, and failed to receive the “meaning of life” that became lost forever when his father was packed into the pork buns. Wandering aimlessly, he is one day discovered by an Ottawan, from whom he anxiously escaped until he came upon little Pus on the present night.

“It is all lost,” exclaimed the Molalana. “The meaning of life that joins the world together no longer exists, and all that is in the world will cease to have relevance, just as if the colors of nature become black, white, and gray,” he continued, eloquently.

The precocious Pus interjected with some cold, hard, postmodernist facts. (Her cognitive development in the last few weeks has been nothing short of a miracle. From this we must conclude that much of her knowledge must come from innate sources, a type of fixed pattern that comes to fruition after a critical period.) First, she pointed out that nothing is deterministic, for in a deterministic universe, we can only ponder on what may have been, and since each one of us has a subjective notion of what is and what could have been, we will always be in conflict, and thus we will never agree on one determined universe. On the other hand, different view points, not only in terms of the personal variety, but the methodological variety, such as science, history, philosophy, and art, can generate a multiverse in which all truths are relevant. This plurality provides a reason for all possible view points, and for at least some view points, generates a world of which we (as persons in addition to as view points) inhabit and can relate to.

Here she paused for effect. The Molalana seemed very confused, but soon the spirit of the ancient Pescitogemena in him sparked a certain level of understanding in his own limited view point or idea of what Pus meant. With the basics down, Pus then moved on to the question of “is life worth

living?” It seems to her that such a question is directly related to whether an ultimate meaning can be extracted from life. Since a multiverse dictates that no single hypothesis can account for life, the answer to the question of life’s meaning may appear on the surface to be no. However, one needs to realize that hypotheses are continuously modified. A working hypothesis today may not be useful tomorrow, and vice versa, and hence philosophical discourse in general is never exactly right. The hope is that our theory for the meaning will be asymptotically right. Hence the “sentiment of rationality” suggests that we ought to follow the view points that point us in the right direction. The idea is that view points are sampling the potential for the optimal point in a distribution of possible theories, among which one (or more) will be the correct theory. If we have enough samples (view points) that are modified in time in the right direction (asymptotically), then we ought to expect a future convergence. As we generalize and differentiate, asking “how” in moving from the level of unity to multiplicity, and asking “why” in moving from multiplicity in unity, we give off a multiverse of possible explanations and efficiently sample the space of possible answers. Thus we ought to accept hypotheses a priori in view of future opportunities for verification, much as we accept the idea of God. Hence it is pragmatic to follow the “will to believe.” This is what “psychical research has accomplished.”

The Molalana, enlightened by the philosophical discourse, tapped his fin in agreement. He has learned from Pus that the “meaning of life” need not disappear with one person, for no single hypothesis for life is ever the solely correct one. He realizes that the pursuit of meaning is a process both continuous in time and dimension, that is, it each evolves over evidence and can bifurcate into separate theories or converge onto one theory. Hence the “meaning of life” is not one thing, but many things, that when held together in a “pluralistic universe” becomes a total impression. The Molalana felt that he now had the “impression of the meaning of life.”

The Molalana thanked Pus for her expert guidance, though she little knew what she meant. Before he could return a favor, however, the sudden appearance of the voice of a human (Chokebimble in this case) aroused the fear in him, and he dived quickly into the depths of the Saginaw river and disappeared. Chokebimble reprimanded Pus for her lack of consideration for others and dragged her back to the tent for bed. Pus, meanwhile, decided to forget all that has happened and rest her tired and feeble brain.

The next day, Chokebimble decided that he could no longer put up with the antics of Pus: her constant stealing of military supplies, her periodic

absence from the rangers to indulge in bathing, her loud yells and unforgiving attack of the eyelashes, and her random words of philosophical jumble were all subjects of great distaste. What was worst was that Pus would predictably engage in “submarine warfare” every Saturday. That is, Pus would play every weekend by bringing water from the Saginaw river in a huge bucket twice her size to drench Chokebimble, because, as she claims, he is “so motionless in his posture that he is beginning to freeze into a snow man” in this cold weather, and only water will melt the snow away. (The submarine warfare term is due to Chokebimble’s view point; the quotes are mine.) Chokebimble realized that he could shirk off responsibility by sending Pus to Major Rogers to look after every Saturday, so that it would his superior getting drenched instead of himself. Robert Rogers was always fond of the little one, except that he was always wearing some sort of facial protection akin to a mask of green every time he saw her, because he knew of the (physical) dangers of looking at her eyes. When Chokebimble’s appeal for help came, the Major gladly took on the responsibility on condition that he’d not be seen with the sweat suit while he’s babysitting Pus.

Ballad celeste, ensemble  
mechanique.