

Philosophy is infamously turgid, dense, and often nitpicky. When sharing my major with people I meet, they often wonder how I am able to engage with this coursework without losing my sanity. I explain that I find philosophy rewarding: in its content, it improves my thinking, and ultimately makes me a more self-conscious actor as a person and as a member of society. One cannot live a life of integrity — of adhering to one's values — unless one is reflective about what they value and why. Philosophy allows me to live a life of genuine integrity.

With that said, philosophy often is a chore to read. I understand why many readers are put off by it; often philosophy is *not* written with casual audiences in mind. When it is, it is still generally arduous analytical non-fiction. I wondered, are there other modalities, specifically *creative* or *fictional* ones, which could help in making philosophical argumentation more appealing without sacrificing structure or logical procedure? My project is an attempt to find such a modality to serve as a vehicle for a pre-existing philosophical position and argument into a fictional narrative.

### ***Philosophy in fiction: clarifying my aim***

To be clear, my goal goes beyond importing philosophy into fiction. A plethora of works exist that have accomplished this goal with great success and recognition. Often such literary works are set apart as the greatest works of fiction *because* of this philosophical element to them, not merely in light of it. It is not unusual when asked “Who is the greatest fiction author ever?” to hear names like Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, Joyce, and Dickenson mentioned to name a few. Some of these works even go as far as to denote and defend a philosophical position, compounding on the more common thematic and inspirational uses of philosophy. Among such works are those which accomplish this goal so well that they have become staples in certain philosophical movements (e.g. Camus's *The Stranger* and Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground* in Existentialism). Fiction writing's ability to introduce readers to situations that are foreign to them aids in inspiring new perspectives and understandings. This mirrors the function of the thought experiment, a hallmark device in philosophical writing.

While these works can be effective in development of philosophical inspiration and understanding, My aim is more precise and technical than this, however. It is to use the literary devices of creative fiction to self-consciously deliver a pre-existing philosophical position and its formal argumentation through rational persuasion. Traditional analytic philosophy uses logical argumentative concepts like “validity”. Validity is a formal relationship between the premises and conclusion of an argument. An argument has validity, or is a valid argument, when the premises, if true, would require that the conclusion *must be true*. For example, the following argument form, modus ponens, is always valid:

1. A
  2. If A, then B
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Conclusion: Therefore, B

This admittedly simple example illustrates an important feature of valid arguments. If the reader accepts that the premises are true, they *must* accept the conclusion. If they do not, they must revise their acceptance of one of the premises. Therefore, a valid argument forces a reader who engages seriously with it to act: they must either accept the conclusion or reject one or more premise(s). My aim is to try and evoke this sort of active engagement in a non-traditional modality.

This is a large part of why philosophy is so valuable to me: writing works which contain a philosophical position and an accompanying argument by seeking to justify its conclusion with well-supported reasons has the consequence of either securing the reader’s beliefs with evidence or compelling them to reevaluate their view in light of proposed objections, if correct, to their beliefs. I can work through the argument myself after reading something that simply makes me feel, but I do not consider that to be the effect of a proper work of philosophical argument. My project is experimental in this device. I aim to translate pre-existing philosophical argumentation *in its logical form* into literature.

***Philosophical argumentation in fiction: two predecessors***

My project has two notable forerunners which come to mind. The first of these is the *dialogue*, which is a cornerstone of ancient philosophy. Presented as an actual conversation, these are works of fiction which act as a vehicle for one of more philosophical arguments of varying stature. Opposing viewpoints are typically personified, giving them a voice to raise objection to and rebut rival views and arguments in support of their own. Sometimes, these resolve by a champion view emerging amidst the others. Other times, however, they resolve in *aporia*, or the discovery of a paradox or unresolved philosophical puzzle which underlies the original issue being discussed.

Dialogues, however, are not the sort of modality I seek. First, I aim to rationally persuade readers to accept premises leading to a pre-existing conclusion. While I accept the appeal and utility of dialogues ending in *aporia*, this is inconsistent with my aim. Furthermore, my aim exceeds simply giving a voice to an argument. While this is potentially more engaging than traditional philosophy, it often falls short. Anyone who has read dialogues by Plato or David Hume will be inclined to attest that they are still prone to being as dense and fatiguing as when the argument is presented directly.

Another primordial form of philosophical argumentation containing elements of fiction is *meditation*. The meditation is a presentation of an *internal* dialogue, creating a narrative out of the deliberation seen in the author's thought process. The titan of this modality of philosophical writings is Descartes' work of the same name. Often streamlined and otherwise presented inaccurately to the author's actual sequence of ideas, it contains undeniable yet subtle elements of fiction. The conflict and dissonance between the author's thoughts portray an open perspective rather than a dogmatic one, filling the collective roles of characters in a dialogue. Thus, meditations are privy to similar incompatibilities with the aim of this project.

The story itself is heavily influenced by Surrealism, which seeks to elicit emotion and make readers conscious of things that usually remain in our subconscious or unconscious mind. Surrealists generally accomplish this through juxtaposition, reexamining ordinary objects and ideas as abstract ones, and deconstruction of our routine understanding of the world rooted in unchanging

perspectives and assumptions of normality. It is Surrealist in its abstract form and because its primary inspiration and intent are philosophical in nature rather than artistic. It is likely to create an air of mystery *reliant* on the reader's steadfast conceptions of storytelling, plot development, and the contents of the story themselves as all being uniform, linear, and unchanging. Its events parallel our reality and the dilemma functions as a Postmodern critique of consumerism and capitalist inaction in preventing climate change. I made these critiques through radical plot development and juxtaposing the negligent elite from the impotent masses, the extinct from the continuous, and the present from the future. Surrealism evokes emotion and challenges existing beliefs, aligning with my aim.

The form of the prose is intentionally experimental, as was the modality itself. I sought to dispose of conventional literary practice where I believed it would make the story more wordy, awkward, or uninteresting than unconventional ones. While this may be harder to follow by ordinary standards, I find that consciousness of their separation and unique purpose reverses this effect. As a result, I utilize three different manners of storytelling, each deliberately employed for specific purposes. Spatio-temporal storytelling is used to explain new events as they happen in the story. These sections detail the actions of the characters present and their thoughts in the moment, and serve as the primary mode of storytelling. Reflection on the history, cognition, or tendencies of the current subjects in the primary mode of storytelling. This serves to provide personal, contextual information which develops the reader's understanding of the story while differentiating it from the thoughts the character has in the moment. These two modes of storytelling are told first in third-person by an ambiguous narrator and secondly by the character Tarre, and are told in past-tense from each point of view. The third form of storytelling I used is a second-person form of reflection on the state of affairs of the universe relevant to the story which speaks directly to the reader *qua* reader. This provides *non*-personal contextual information which develops the reader's understanding of the story when the personal experiences of the subjects of the primary mode of storytelling would be inappropriate sources of the relevant information, so the narrator divulges it

directly to the reader. I differentiate these modes of storytelling with font weight and/or font discrepancy, staying consistent throughout.

In addition to these modes of storytelling, the reader will encounter a few other things in the text. First, aphorisms bound in horizontal lines supplement the story's themes without actually tying to the story itself. They can be read separately, or can be treated as a break from the story in order to make a point to the reader directly. Next, there are a few terms in text boxes which require an explicit definition or independent explanation. These are aimed at two things: providing a flow to the story otherwise compromised by their inclusion and to highlight important elements unique to the story which do not receive appropriate attention in the story alone. Next, there are two documents within the story which are from the story itself, as I find it more effective to include them than to describe them in equal detail through any of the three storytelling modes. Finally, indicators in the left margin flag passages in the story which seek to rationally persuade the reader to believe the (potentially) contentious premise enumerated on the indicator itself. The logical form of the philosophical argument is represented in these indicators by making explicit the point in the story which connects it to the argument. This aids in persuasion by presenting contentious premises first through passages that seek to justify them, which I hoped to be effective by streamlining the argumentative process.

An explanation of the issue and my argument, including the premises and conclusions I attempted to defend, accompany a breakdown of the story in the afterword.

A pragmatic argument for the capacity for meaning in  
life, as delivered through creative fiction.

*by*

Ricardo Jose Martinez

*presented as his*

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# Cati, a Martyr in Meaning

with aphorisms and afterword

Ricardo Jose Martinez

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When a vinyl record is created a path of tiny grooves is etched into its surface, which when interacted with by a needle creates electromagnetic waves, which in turn create acoustic energy that we enjoy as music. As both the needle and the grooves which it traverses are unbelievably small and delicate, and the music heavily reliant on the symbiosis between them in being played and heard as intended, it is very important that there are no bumps, scratches, or imperfections in the carving of this record. When such an anomaly interacts with a needle, we hear an unpleasant noise: unfortunate, to be sure. But, what's more: every imperfection encountered by the needle has a negative effect on it, itself the only constant in the playing of every record. Individually, or even sporadically few and far between, these imperfections may give no concern. However, once the needle has been damaged to a certain point, it can begin to damage other records and make them harder to enjoy as they otherwise would be. At a certain point, this careless etching of the grooves in too many records threatens to destroy the needle which permits them to be enjoyed entirely, from then on rendering useless anything it touches. Hence, it may seem concerning that a record being etched with imperfections affects the record itself, but what many seem to forget is that the needle which plays other records is not without vulnerability and can only take so much damage before it falls into disrepair as well

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**The Lindo transport system exploded quickly past the window. It livened the settled dust and crowded the air with its passing. The tram was like much of the city: brute utility first, with tranquility and any togetherness with the world being left behind.**

**LINDO: THE PLANET OF CATI'S LARGEST CITY BY POPULATION AND AREA, HOME TO SOME OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL CATIANS.**

Cati reminded you of this sort of thing everywhere you look; you step outside and look around you with a compulsive sense of awe. This is how they want it: for everything to be so amazing, so convenient, and so perfect that questioning it seems peculiar, at first. Why question something that gets you to your loved ones and your loved ones to you, from the other side of the planet, before you've finished your lunch? Giving up these luxuries would be crazy, they say. Even the



older generation cannot remember what it was like to spend days or weeks traveling, and nobody else ever had to experience it. The entire planet of Cati has been settled and industrialized. A tsunami of luxuries, expenditures, and other displays of progress had come washing over it before many knew it. It was fast: impressively, harrowingly.

What may be strange to you is that none of these technological leaps were influenced by extraterrestrials. Cati was an outlier a thousand times over, and is one of the loneliest planets in the universe. Its plain sky offered nothing but the star which it orbits. Their interests in life outside of the planet were little more than fever dreams - as were their access. Life not found on Cati was not completely out of the interests of the day, let it be clear. Catians paid unique reverence to the dead. History and loved ones passed were central to their worldview.

The average Catian was not philosophical. It would have been hard to be with the speed of the city world seeming to leave you behind. To them, finding the meaning in life by arguing with each other and reading philosophy seemed fruitless. Why, they may ask you, would they search for their most deep desire as a living being in a place like that? They may not ask you that, so that they may not get so caught up in that place. That place is so far from anything that they think might be the answer, so they will not go.

The wealthy class in Cati was *very* wealthy.

**Atton shifted his gaze back toward the window. The loud tram continued out of**

**ATTON: a 23 year old student interested in making Cati a better place. His interests lay in reform through sustainability and preservation.**

sight and mind, and the light returned to the shadows it left behind. He hadn't really looked away; not towards anything else in particular, anyway. More so, he had been looking at nothing at all. Lately, his perception and its mundanity was causing him to dissociate. As the focus raced back across his eyes, he remembered what it was he thought about before he blanked. It was the same thing as he had yesterday, and two days before, and countless other days before that.

When Atton turned 14, he experienced Naza Center of Excellence for the first time. It seemed to gaze back at him when he saw it up close for the first time, as if it had been waiting for him. He had been excited for a few years now, ever since some of his classmates shared their amazement in the place.

It was a horribly long wait, it was expensive, and the seats were not very good. Naza's societal and ecological footprints were second to none. Atton had always wanted to come to experience what it was like to escape from the lower class. These ones get dressed up, they go somewhere quite loud, and they do things Atton and people like him do not do. Commoners do not put aside their worries for a fun night, they're too real. They cannot get from it what the elite can. Even still, he wasn't even certain he was enjoying it. Was it worth it? For the lights, cameras, streamers, smoke, and the sheer volume and stench of the place? He was certain he was not enjoying it. Seemingly in isolation, the popularity of its praise has no place with him. He hated it. Hated not just that he was in it but the fact that even for a second he thought he wanted it. He wanted the opposite. It amplified the pain of a planet that he wanted to heal. It threatened his existence - everyone's existence - with a little help from everything it inspired.

The Notta was Atton's Dream of transforming the Noza Center. The Notta would house green spaces and gardens

with a community focus. Rather than employing teenagers laboring for scraps, Atton wanted to help those that were worst off in Lindo. provide food and shelter from the elements in exchange for help maintaining it. Atton did not want the Notta to be a space that draws attention and adoration, but that draws respect and gives inspiration. It was Atton's only strong aspiration. His thought of the Notta was connected to his bitterness towards Cati's short-sighted elite.

**He thought of it often. Brianna walked back into the door behind Atton. The door creaked behind her as she shut it quickly and slid off her shoes. After plopping the newspaper face down on the table she skipped to the couch. "It is cold out there, I didn't even check the weather. What a drag." He had lived with his sister since moving to Lindo. He was excited to start his third year of studies in the city; he looked for milestones to motivate him everywhere he could. She knew the Notta very well, and she had figured he was thinking about it. She knew the overflowing emptiness in his attentive eyes and what it must be hiding. It had been some time since she had given her brother the idea for the name. They hadn't seen green growing from the ground since before he started school, as the cities of Cati virtually sprawled over every square mile. Atton always thought she might have the exact same picture of it in her head that he did. He was not a good artist, or he would jump at the chance to show everyone who would pay him any attention. *If more people could understand, I could change their minds. I'm sure,* he often thought to himself. Occasionally, she would inform him that he was indeed not thinking to himself, but muttering. She could only laugh at him.**

She could not relate to him. Not entirely, anyway, despite their similarities.

Brianna showed that she did care about the way things were going, and did not dismiss their consequences as if they did not affect her. Still, she rather enjoyed some of the things he held in disregard: clubs, vehicles and transportation, and other products of luxury which were ever so slightly more customary than what they ought to have been. She would speak highly of them to him and would occasionally illicit a negative response, but there never was much energy behind it. He loved living with someone familiar in such an unfamiliar place, and they had always gotten along well.

Lindo was not unfamiliar to Atton. He knew the city quite well. It was the energy, the loss of self which sat at odds with him. What seemed to escape people here is their value to the world. Their priorities are exactly backwards. Everyone there thinks their goals, their appearance, or their connections are valued. They appeal to aesthetics. They think these things will earn them praise and add something to the world. What matters to them - that's what that is. They try to universalize their desires, but they're wrong. We all matter: what are we bringing to the table, or are we only taking from it?. What do brand new shoes and a skyscraper office matter if the world tiptoes around our litter on the sidewalk? What value is added screaming at someone who spilled coffee on our cuff, or driving the car which would kill us all left to its own devices? In Lindo, the growing belief in the glorious exception creates the ugly rule.

**"Hey At, you're gonna want to read this before class, it's a good one today!" she chuckled as she flicked the paper resting on the table. He realized then that he had already turned around and was facing the table. Brianna knew where his buttons were and entertained the idea of pushing them from time to time. She knew this would get whatever was trapped in his head into the air. He reached out to flick her as she passed by and let out an unmotivated groan. He looked down to**

the newspaper, spun it around, and flipped it over so that he could read the words, slightly blurry through his dirty glasses:

He tossed the paper on the table. He let out a chuckle, though nothing was funny. He fixed his glasses and ran his hand through his brown hair and rested it on the back of his neck. "They're soulless! They don't care." Brianna knew he was right,

## LINDO INFORMANT

Fourth of the Fifth, 2209

# Lindo Nature Exhibition Vote In: VETOED!

**A vote in order to protect a section of land within the heart of the city of Lindo to preserve biodiversity and a presence of nature within the city has been turned down by the city.**

Several stakeholders were among Cati's elite, who had ventures within this land which interested them.

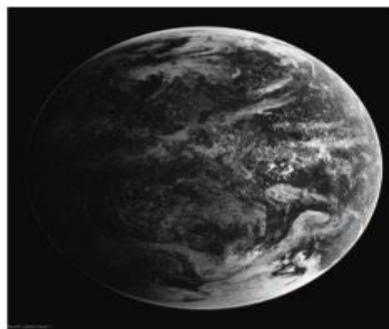
This vote comes amidst the latest sets of data from the Global Science Group which indicate that by 2400, our current trajectory could lead to the extinction of 97% of living species on Cati.

"The people need places to work, they

need places to get food and essential supplies, they need hospitals, schools, and libraries.

This green space is a lovely idea but it is not practical, much less in Lindo. This is not the place. The proposal will hurt Catians."

Protests were sparked by the decision. (See Vote p.2)



PICTURE: Cati, as captured earlier this year from near orbit. No green is visible in the picture from orbit, a stunning visual.

### Seven Art Gallery's Record Breaking Event?

At an event on the Third of the Fifth, Catian history was made. Between 72 patrons and 91 artists there were 212 transactions at this extremely elite art gallery.

The highest price fetched was a whopping \$481b for a two-story-tall model of Cati in pure white marble, flawless silver, and a single flowing piece of pure onyx.

The event grossed a total of \$1.91t, 20% larger than any before. (See Art p. 6)

### Bindo Taxes Withheld, Charitable Donations Not as Promised?

Jolee Bindo, CEO of Naza Group was set to release his 2208 tax record on the First of the Fifth.

In lieu of this, examiners have begun to scour public records to try and piece together what may be in the withheld documents.

According to sources of the Informant, the charitable donations contained in his 2208 records "do not hold a candle" to those he promised in the beginning of the year after criticism for his massive displays of wealth amidst a homeless crisis. (See Bindo p.3)

**but could never help but to regret getting him going. She could have done without the tone. "They are going to kill us all, Brianna. But they don't care. They have no amount of care about our lives. They can't. Hell, there's no way they even care about their own! It makes no sense." He stared out the window to the same tall building he always did when he was upset. It didn't help.**

It was the largest in the town, and the most insulting. It stuck out like a sore thumb by design, shaped like a giant number seven.. Housed there was one of Lindo's most powerful playboys and the center of his business operations. Its gaudy appearance was made unbearable contrasted with the rest of the city. Everyone who looks up to it remembers the crew of construction workers who lost their lives in its construction, to which the owner erected a monument: *in his own entryway.*)

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**It didn't help. Little insulted Atton more than this building. "Look at it, they live in the busiest part of the busiest city on this entire planet, and no amount of money is ever gonna get them off of it. They're gonna be killed off by Cati and its response to how horrible we have been to it, even if it takes them a bit longer to croak, and they know it! Even if most of us were to cut it out and get our shit together, it probably wouldn't matter. We're peanuts to them and the harm they cause. If they all fixed up their acts and threw away enough cash to buy us another ten generations so we could finish fixing their mistakes, they'd still live where they live and eat the dinners they have and nothing would change in their day to day. But no, spend a small fortune on a sculpture for your bathroom because the sculptor was executed just last week? And anything else, probably." *Evil pricks*, he thought, careful not to say it aloud. She hated name calling. He was**

pacing quickly now, eyes locked on the newspaper. Her sympathetic eyes were locked on him. She felt sympathetic often, even when it was unwarranted.

He was not. "Typical. And who is gonna buy their 'beautiful' art when that happens? Nobody is going to care

CATIAN ART: IF THE UNIVERSE COULD BEAR WITNESS TO CATIAN ART IN TIME WITH THEIR CULTURE, ITS PEOPLE WOULD WEEP TEARS OF ENCHANTMENT. CATIAN ART WAS UNLIKE ANY OTHER, AND WAS DEEPLY MEANINGFUL.

anymore, it's not like they ever got anything out of it anyway. Not really, anyway. They just like to look like they know what the fuck they're talking about because they only live for the applause. I bet if they got applause for sitting on the sidewalk staring at the sky, they would do that all day. At least it's honest."

She felt sad. She knew he wasn't wrong. Still, she responded, "It's still on all of us."

He cocked his head slightly. "I hate that they are able to do so much and take so much instead, and I wish that better people had that power to do what's right.

Still, it's all of our faults for letting them rise to the occasion. We have better. *You* are better. You don't have to worry about making anyone proud except yourself, because that's gonna be the hardest thing you have to do." He looked at her and gave her a quick hug from the side. He thanked her, migrating to the couch to wind down.

The Catian elite are well aware of the trajectory of the planet and their influence. The science is clear, and it's everywhere. It gets around no matter how much they might try and keep it quiet: the planets withering. Within the end of their lifetime, the curtain could draw. Not upon them, or at least not right away, but first on the lower classes with less protection. The rich will persist, for a while, but certainly not forever.

Persist they will, but no more. Even the powerful needed to cope. Some of them distract themselves full-time, a luxury even to the luxurious. Some of them have convinced themselves that it doesn't matter. They will drink to try and help themselves be persuaded, often without succeeding. Others still are out there that deny their responsibility. They assume the role of an individual in a world of hundreds of millions, and love to play insignificant. These men and women have to convince themselves of these things. They are used to feeling significant in the eyes of others, but when others are no longer concerned their comfort evaporates. If they were to accept the guilt that is warranted for them, or if they sought peace in remembering their past, they would no longer be who or where they are. This is not uncommon either. Many fell back into obscurity when confronted with guilt. Their good conscience returned to them, or they became afraid of persecution. Cati and its people appreciate it all the same. Others? Many of the rest fell from grace: the ones that took their own lives, went mad, or the ones who disappeared entirely.

**His body relaxed, but his mind kept racing. She was familiar with his ranting. He was never as angry as he sounded, the way that others thought he was. He was tired. He was jealous of her. He did not envy her talents or experiences, sharing many of them.**

Brianna's dreams were in reach: she was an extremely talented writer. She came home every day with her same childhood dream in hand: to write books for a living. She had already found some small success at her young age, being recognized early for her prose. More importantly, she had been selected to begin



work at a publisher and was working her way into the industry. They wanted her to succeed, or they would if they did not yet. Atton had always wanted her to succeed more than anyone. As much as he wanted to succeed himself, if not more.

**"I just get worked up because I'm scared. It's a lot of pressure." She glided over to the other side of the couch and sat down to pay him her attention. She looked at him sympathetically. "What is there to be scared of? You're just in your head, aren't you?"**

It was obvious that he was.

*Probably.* He shrugged and began, "I always just felt like my life had to be aimed at something, ya know? Something real, something that I could achieve that mattered. Mattered to me, sorta." She joked, "Well, I can think of a couple things you could go for, but I wouldn't recommend centering your life around them. Sleeping and eating are achievable." He chuckled. He needed to chuckle, he felt like he hadn't in years. He couldn't remember the sound of his own laugh sometimes. "You're right I could accomplish that easy, yeah, but that's not what I mean. I'd have achieved all of my goals in life but they'd all suck! Utterly meaningless." She fell back in her seat and looked at the ceiling. "I don't know what I'd do if I didn't have the Notta to look forward to and chase." He looked down and let a long deep breath out. "Well, unless I accomplish it, because then I don't know if I'll ever dream of anything else to chase. Then I might not care. If I accomplish everything I am supposed to and the world is still too far gone, I might not care anymore. I will have done everything I could and everything I wanted to. I hope it matters. I know it will matter, and nobody and nothing should be able to take it away from me. I'll die happy. But I feel trapped still. How is it that I know that it's all up to me, but I still have this fear that it's not in the end, y'know?"

Atton *knew* his people, his planet, would not last forever.

**He thought of the statue he would erect in front of the Notta if he built it. *When I build it*, he thought, unwilling to give any thought to failure. It had to be gorgeous. Atton had never been interested in pursuits of vanity. His mother's small stature, mighty brow, and kind heart distinguish the most passionate woman he had ever met. The most incredible person he had ever met. She had been a politician and activist for Cati's health when discourse surrounding sustainable practice had first been vilified by the planet's elite. It was one week before his fourteenth birthday the last time his mother was seen alive. Her son could hear the rush of emotion knocking on his mind's door. She would always continue to knock if he ignored it, so it was better to answer. Knowing she was there was worth the pain, even if only barely.**

**If he were to make any difference in the world, especially one that she would want him to make, he wanted to make sure she could see it forever. He wanted everyone impacted by that thing forged from his blood, sweat and tears to see her standing outside every time they think of the Notta.**

**His blood was cooler now. He pushed his hair from his eyes and took his glasses into his sweating hands. Featherlight tears welled in his eyes. They fell single-file from his eyes then cheeks, each drying quickly on his shirt.**

**Atton reintroduced himself to reality. Somber reverence had abducted him from his perception. His shirt lay on his chest wet and heavy when the tears had bid him farewell. He sighed as he wondered how much time had passed. Brianna lay quiet behind her door. *I need some sleep*, he thought.**

Atton *knew* his people, his planet, would *not* last forever.

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We are responsible for all which we are and are not and possess neither the power nor prerogative to fill in even a single point or period of another's masterpiece – even the undeniably important muse is themselves no artist. We are responsible for all that we are but for one most defining attribute: we were given life, and with the life which flows through us share a connection to each other that is unique in its authority. It is the pen with which we can write our own story, but with this pen comes responsibility. Our story can be written only so long as there is ink to dip into and is otherwise in our own hands alone. Let us not be naïve and dry up the inkwell before the ink vendor sends his inquiry, else how may we continue to write?

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**“At this rate, we’ll be at that one-planet barrier galaxy before our kids are born Tarre. We may get to see them soon. We’re going to return as *parents*.”**

Alek may have been two years younger than me, but this never made up for his naivety. That assignment had persisted for eight months. They had taken us nearly to the edge of known space, and were not finished with us yet. Never mind the trip home. He was always happy at the thought of seeing his child,

<p><u>SOLAR DIPLOMACY AND REJUVENATION BRIDGE:</u> A TEAM OF INTERGALACTIC DIPLOMATS UTILIZING HYPERSPACE TRAVEL TO BUILD A NETWORK BETWEEN PLANETS WITH INTELLIGENT LIFE, SUPPLYING AND SUSTAINING EACH OTHER. THEIR MOTIVATIONS ARE MIXED: GREED AND IMPERIALISM ARE PRESENT, BUT THOSE WITH A PASSION FOR LIFE FIND APPRECIATION IN SDRB.</p>
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but did not see issue with *not* seeing his child. I remained displeased by any of it.

Planet C4-71 was the furthest stop of this route planned for Tarre and Alek. It was projected to take them nine months to arrive, at which point they would follow a loop around to arrive back at home, which was estimated to take place after the fourteenth month had begun.

Solar Diplomats were, on average, unhappier than most. With family light years away and nothing but lines in space around for most of the year, baseless optimism

and foolish selectiveness in reality were nearly the only thing which kept anyone from falling prey to this recurring rut.

**I wondered then if he was as foolish as I had thought for the past few months. He had not a bad bone in his body, and it's not like they hired anybody for this job. We were the best at what we did, anyway, and that counts for something. He seemed so happy out here though, like just the thought that he would return to somebody was enough to get him through just fine. Our children *were* going to be waiting at home, and it's not exactly like we were any danger.**

It never made sense to me. I have spent most of my life with Alek nearby, and our entire careers have been together. After meeting hundreds of species, discovering ways to communicate with them, and spreading the otherworldly planetary restoration technology we had saved our galaxy with across the universe, I never knew if I really believed in any of what he said. It all sounded like bullshit to me.

**"Alek, do you think what we're doing matters?" He returned a confused glance. It wasn't naive. The disconnect did not result from a lack of information or exposure. He fundamentally could not comprehend the thought that it did not. "I mean of course it does! Right? Think about it, we have saved worlds on the verge of self-extinction by doing what we do. We have established allies in different *galaxies*, and met more different sorts of life than we could ever explain to our kids once we retire. Does that not matter to you?" I replied with an earned "Yeah, when you put it that way, yeah I guess."**

In reality, I did not have the same intuitions he did in that cabin, and I could not understand them. I did not feel it.

**"I guess it's just-," I got out before a cough came over me. "It's - man we have to make sure we do something good, something that really matters, and it keeps me**

up sometimes thinking about it." He looked back at me as if he had nothing to say, but he spoke: "I know that you might not feel a connection to these places and the life there. I don't. Not really, anyway. But you have to get past that: me and you and people from Sol and your family aren't the only ones that matter."

Alek and I had been close since we were small. Through all of our memories, for our entire careers, he never knew that my parents were the only relatives I'd ever had. Nor did he know how abusive they were, or that I'd never spoken to them since the second I moved to the academy. My wife and the family we built from the ground up was the only family I had ever had, as far as I was concerned. It never really occurred to me to tell him.

"I never said they didn't, I-" He stopped me. "I know you didn't, but you don't feel fulfilled by helping them. Maybe it's not all about whether we do what we want, maybe it's just about making that difference anyway. I know I want to make a difference. What I really wanna do is make the world I grew up on a better place, a better place to live. A better place to be born, grow up, grow old, and die in. I didn't want a life that they couldn't write an obituary about - I don't. It scares me as a man."

He paused. His usual light heart was bleeding out on his sleeve. His expression fell to gaut from grace. "Tell you the truth, I'm just as scared to have an obituary that takes up a full page of the paper that says nothing about how I helped my ma, my family, my *children*, and all my friends back home. It fucks with my head and haunts me almost every day. Tarre you have to try to understand that everyone else wants their family to be better off too. Just because you're not helping your own doesn't make it all meaningless. If someone had done for us what we have done for so many, we'd give damn near *anything* to give them the gratitude we would feel. Remember that, it's all that gets me through most nights out here."

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He pulled out his seat, sunk down with his drink and looked across at the girl he could not quite remember the name of, who looked up from her textbook as if to warmly welcome him back. *I've gotta get better with names man, this is awkward and she's cool!* She didn't quite understand Atton's angst, and certainly couldn't understand how he stayed so motivated and hopeful nevertheless. Having graduated atop their class was not something he would have had going for him if he cared as little as he acted like he did sometimes. He looked behind her to the wall, hoisting photography prints from the district's newest art gallery. He spent a particularly long moment staring down the inviting expression of a fjord, separating a green stretch of hills and the dark, craggy outskirts of a volcano. "I don't know, man. 'The grass is always greener on the other side.'", he said mockingly. He started to talk to nobody, with his date looking on, "Is it really? \*sigh\* Even if it is, it is so typical, such a copout to ditch your dump to go find another one. Won't it just end up being as shitty there as it is here? It's \*so\* typical isn't it, looking for the greenest grass and leaving behind everything else. If we all wandered around instead of watering and fertilizing what we got, the whole pasture would be downtrodden and dead and nobody would ever be happy. But we'd all keep looking 'til everyone withered away, wouldn't we? Everyone here is too damn stubborn to do anything else."

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We both had the feeling that C4-71 would be an anomaly. Data gathered from home, though it was old and unclear, pointed towards volatile activity on the planet's surface. Energy fluctuations here were not much unlike that of the more sophisticated planets they had encountered. Remarkably, these had all been long standing members of intergalactic federations. C4-71 had been *isolated*; no other body had the resources or technology to come to the fringes of existence like this. If they did, they wanted to keep their hands on them. Although it was past the halfway point and far from the finale, this has been on our minds as the focal point of the entire assignment. It was the furthest we had ever gone and the furthest we ever went.

Tarre and Alek touched down in the middle of a historic battleground of sorts. From orbit, the place looked green and brown and grey. There were scattered shiny splatters of white, silver, and onyx. Closer to the surface, it was clear that what was now belonging to C4-71 had not always. A repossession of property it

never wanted from those who it did. Lower down into the reclaimed dirt were remnants of streets, tracks, lanes, buildings. There were echoes of the living, nondescript as they were.

Silent.

Far beyond the green and brown and grey the splatters became splendid. In shiny white, silver, and onyx existed countless misplaced marvels. Monuments to sin, which were as criminal in their creation as in their crumble.

Silent.

One thing caught the full attention of Tarre and Alek. They may not have been fully aware of it, but the only logical connection between the downtrodden trivialized green and brown and grey and the air of opulence of the white, silver, and onyx lay in front of them. Not taken over, but functioning as intended.

Neither of us went into C4-71 expecting anything to the scale of what we found.

**We had been on C4-71 for roughly a day. Exploration led us nowhere and everywhere. We left only to return there. Our ship lay in its heart, seemingly in the gaze of the massive structure nearby. It was far more overgrown then the rest around it. It was interesting. We had tried to enter, but did not get very far. The inside was unnavigable and sternly unwelcoming to visitors. We had walked beyond it to the right. There, we sight saw for a while. Shiny white, silver, and**



**onyx stood atop our heads. Within and along every structure was unintelligible imagery, accenting regal colors.**

**“We have spent a good amount of time here like you wanted, Tarre. Do you want to start heading back?”**

**He shot a nervous, kind smile. I could tell he was being patient. He had indulged me. “It should be all smooth sailing from here, we can cut schedule and get home real quick. You in?” I had little choice, but I had seen what I needed to see.**

I have no idea why, but visiting this place instilled something in me. I had never felt anything like it before. I knew absolutely nothing about C4-71 besides what we had been briefed on. I had never been here before. Such would have been impossible. Nevertheless, its strange reach grasped my doubt and pulled it forth, wrapping it around its finger. It was replaced with a feeling of loss. It was not the loss of my doubt, but something more painful. It was not familiar to me. Maybe it was once before and it was forgotten. Maybe it could have been familiar, but it was unfamiliar to me.

It *is* unfamiliar to me. But I’ve spent my days coping with it. It no longer haunts me the way that it did.

**“Yeah, let’s go. This place is crazy, but it kinda freaks me out.” I stared up again to the tower that had caught our eye from low orbit. I stared as I kicked rocks down the bumpy, dirty street. Alek raised his shoulder for a nudge. He joked, “Bet that guy died up there with all his shit stuffed in his mattress.” he jeered. “Looks like there was a lot more going on down here, lot of people who don’t get to see over the horizon from their bedroom window every morning. Least they probably mattered to somebody, huh?” He was chuckling, perhaps perturbed he was still here. He wouldn’t have taken it**

out on me, anyway. "You couldn't have a family up there, in a place like that? C'mon, your kids would turn out weird." I hadn't tried to make any expressions to elicit a response from him. I made an agreeable noise. He seemed satisfied.

We approached the ship. Once again we passed back around the massive structure, which stands most authoritatively. It was a familiar site by now.

"Hey, I see it, we're pretty much back at the ship!" I barked back to Alek. He had been lollygagging behind. We had arrived at our designated landmark of reference. It was probably the most spectacular thing I had seen on C4-71 during our stay there. For this category there were *countless* contenders. I soaked its sight in for a moment before we returned to the ship.

If I wanted to remember anything about that place at all it would have been the statue. It lived in my head for many years. It still does. I wonder about who it depicted and why it was there. They must have been as vain as all, to erect such a piece of themselves in such opulence. Or perhaps it was someone whose impact was so undeniably great that it was erected in their honor. I could gather little from the figure's appearance. Their small stature and mighty brow gave impressions of reverence and kindness, though I have never suspected the two to be compatible by the evident fate of the life on C4-71.

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What *was* is something which no longer *is*. Burning a book is an act of disdain. Burning a library is an act of desecration. However, neither are an act of erasure, or at least not a successful one. The will of word is a strong one, and that which *is* has a particularly pesky persistence, a resistance to those who wish it were not. Without burning with the library its every reader and all of those to whom the words of what *is* has spread from its pages, what *is* ought never become what *was*.

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# Obituary<sup>1</sup>

Alek Squinquagesimus, a former intergalactic diplomat as a member of the solar diplomacy and rejuvenation bridge and co-owner and operator of See 471 Café, took his own life on February 2nd, 2701 at the age of 61.

Alek is survived by his former SDRC partner, business partner, and longtime closest friend Tarre Vizsla and his family. Alek himself has no living relatives. Alek is predeceased by his children Juhani and Bandon and his wife, Meetra Surik.

Alek earned formal training and education from Star Forge Academy, graduating early at age 20. While studying there, he met his future wife, who would give him his two children in Juhani and Bandon. He served as an intergalactic diplomat for the SDRC from age 21 until age 45, at which point he and his partner Tarre returned home to Earth to be with their families. In early 2688, the pair sought to improve their community by giving back. Living off of their retirement from their previous professions, they began the development of See 471 Cafe in their hometown of Enclave. Alek and Tarre donated the proceeds towards providing opportunities for the city's youth to further their education and professional development in order to build a brighter future. Unfortunately, soon after the project went underway Meetra and their two children were involved in a fatal accident on their way to the construction site of the business. Alek spent his remaining years operating the cafe and giving back to the community with Tarre and his family, mourning the loss of his own with each passing day. He never remarried and had no more children before his death.

The worlds touched in his career are hundreds in number and are unrecognizably better off as a result. As a diplomat, he was involved in peace agreements, environmental rejuvenations, and sustainability outfittings that have changed the intergalactic network of relationships we have forever. Countless lives have his work to thank, and the universe would be certainly worse off without the work that Alek did in his life.

Alek is dearly loved by the members of the community in Enclave. A deep sense of sorrow built around the death of his family, and his dedication towards them was redirected with unbounded love towards his community. He treated everyone as if they were his family, and helped brighten the futures of over 120 children in his community. Enclave's youth will miss his involvement in their experience in the town and the protecting guardianship he offered to the town. The latter part of his life was synonymous with See 471 and its outreach, Tarre and his family by his side but largely focused on the operation of the cafe.



A final service will be announced by the end of the week, with the Vizsla family undertaking full responsibility for the proceedings.

*May you rest in peace, Alek Squinquagesimus.*

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<sup>1</sup> Image - Screenshot taken from: *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*, BioWare. 2003.

I did not feel it then, but I feel it now. I have for some time. I wish he had felt what he taught me to feel, even for a second. He spent his life trying to feel it; he had only ever chased it. I guess he got tired of running.

***Arriving at the argument.***

The issue that struck me as both appropriate to address to non-philosophers and interesting enough to want to write about is meaning in life. I did not want a view which would be contingent on contentious premises. Conversely, I did not want one whose conclusion would draw repugnant implications. Thus, I decided on first finding a view consistent with axioms that were very unlikely to be rejected by most people: the view ought to be universalizable, it ought not invalidate our intuitions, and it ought not self-defeat. In my opinion, few existing views of meaning in life accomplish all of these three things well, privileging the desire to have a very precise account of meaning in life over having a good one. My view aims to create an objective standard for life to have the *capacity* for meaning. It does *not* seek to define meaning or narrowly define what makes a life meaningful, as I believe that our own free actions are the only thing which may give meaning to our life, and that subjectivity has a role in describing meaning in life given that it is possible. It does not seek to justify a religious or similar dogmatic view of meaning in life.

Rather, I aimed for a pragmatic view of the capacity of life for meaning. The position that I sought to defend in this story is that a life cannot have meaning if the net effect of their life's free actions atrophies the conditions which give it life (and gives life to others) in the first place. For humans, these "prerequisite conditions of life" include water, food and soil fertile enough to grow food, air to breathe, a temperature we can survive at, and other similar fundamental biological necessities. This view is universalizable because if all life were to live in this way, it would lose the capacity to exist. In its resulting nonexistence it is doomed to meaninglessness. It does not largely invalidate intuitions on the meaningful life because it gives an objective standard by which a life can lose its *capacity* for meaning while allowing individuals the respect of personal intuitions and values. Crucially, the view was designed specifically with the "no self-defeating" axiom in mind. I wanted subjective, personal accounts of the meaning of life which are central, foundational beliefs on which people are unlikely to be persuaded to be compatible with my view. However, subjectivity alone permits repugnant implications to be drawn. If a life which fulfilled one's subjective desires were always meaningful, a life filled with actions which

would make life impossible (and therefore meaning in life impossible) would be said to be meaningful. This is an absurd and paradoxical conclusion I was determined to *not* permit with my view. This view is attractive to me personally, as it provides some sort of rigidity to what kind of things can bring meaning in life while still largely allowing for subjective values to be recognized in an individual's conception of a meaningful life, which is persuasive to those with preexisting emotions regarding the view. Furthermore, horrible things like the Holocaust could be permitted as meaningful under a purely subjective view, but universalizability of a life involved in the Holocaust would result in universal genocide and the extinction of the species, so it fails to maintain the capacity for meaning.

One prime inspiration and source of support for this view was Jean-Paul Sartre. He was an existentialist, which means only that he believed that our existence is not meaningful *a priori*. Sartre believed that meaning in life is created only by acting according to subjective values. While these values are internal to us, they are thought to be something which must be valued universally in order to be valued individually. He notes that to have a conception of one's self as an individual, they are necessarily inseparable from and incomprehensible without others. This quote<sup>2</sup> by Sartre is one of many that helped me find confidence in my argument, detailing how giving meaning to our life ought to be formed through a process which is universalizable and not self-defeating while arguing a different topic altogether:

When we say that man chooses himself, not only do we mean that each of us must choose himself, but also that in choosing himself, he is choosing for all men. In fact, in creating the man each of us wills ourselves to be, there is not a single one of our actions that does not at the same time create an image of man as we think he ought to be. Choosing to be this or that is to affirm at the same time the value of what we choose, because we can never choose evil. We always choose the good, and nothing can be good for any of us unless it is good for all. (p. 24).

The story aimed to make a compelling case that life loses capacity for meaning when a group of lives which are interconnected in some way die out. Specifically,

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<sup>2</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul, John Kulka, Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre, Annie Cohen-Solal, Carol Macomber, and Jean-Paul Sartre. *Existentialism Is a Humanism =: (l'existentialisme Est Un Humanisme) ; Including, a Commentary on the Stranger (explication De L'étranger)*. Page 19-, 2007. Kindle.

through collective inexistence all lives, or “life” in some overarching sense, loses meaning. What could be known of individuals’ desires, the actions inspired by them, and the contribution of the individual to the collective and its lasting effect on the universe will be lost without a living consciousness maintaining their permanence. Alas, these lives lose their capacity for holding meaning. Obviously, the remnants of their existence could in theory be stumbled upon by a subsequent group of conscious, intelligent beings, but even then the meaning that would have been held had those lives not collectively ended would surely be unintelligible and indistinguishable between individuals without this possibility of context, especially comparatively.

### ***The story and its connection to the argument***

With the story, I sought to portray characters with different outlooks on a meaningful life and methods of obtaining it. I used the different societies between the two parts of the story in tandem with the various characters to create a variety of different lives and paint them as able to be interpreted as meaningful or not meaningful in various ways. The character’s lives were envisioned as follows:

- Atton had a clear goal in life that he believed would give him meaning, which he achieved. Furthermore, this goal was specifically aimed at preserving life on Cati.
- Brianna cared about preserving life on Cati and her life would have ultimately led to not harming it, and she sought to gain meaning from her goal in life to be an author. However, this was not the aim of her life.
- Catian elite pursued vain and hedonistic ends, filling their lives with things that are full of meaning (art, experiences, success stories) but whose lifestyles and choices directly cause the extinction of the Catians. They were aware of the effects of their actions and continued.
- Alek’s actions were meaningful by everyone’s standards but his own, and tangibly helped countless people. However, he was never happy and never felt as if anything he did had meaning because he felt like he

cared about the wrong things. He had good values aimed at helping others. His society never became extinct.

- Tarre's actions were similarly meaningful to Alek's, and he also helped countless people. He eventually came to find great meaning in this, and his values were aligned with this sort of life. His society never became extinct.

Because of the Catian elite uniquely, life on Cati died out some short number of years after the first segment of the story was written. As there was no new members of Catian civilization to maintain a contextual connection to the universe or as a medium to understand what a life meant as a part of a bigger whole, the meaning of all Catian lives was destroyed.

Note that Catians revered their historical figures, found great meaning in art and literature, and were highly enough industrialized to create a lot of helpful technology (as well as a lot of detrimental technology), mirroring the sort of external signs you might look for in looking for meaning in lives in any particular society. In addition to this, there were Catians like Atton and Brianna who lived lives with what we would imagine were the correct sorts of ambition and good intentions to be able to live meaningful lives, especially if everyone were like them, because they aim at meaning: Atton's directly and Brianna's indirectly. Regardless, their forced extinction as a species at the hands of the elite destroyed their *capacity* for meaning through no fault of their own. As I believe that meaning for life may not be objective but that the capacity for meaning in life is, much like how a cup can hold any liquid at any amount less than its capacity so long as it is indeed a cup, and moreover so long as it does not contain any leaks. This creates reason to believe that universalizability is a characteristic of an attractive view for the capacity for meaning of life, and using the Catian elite we can see that their actions, if universalized, guarantee that life cannot have meaning, meaning that any individual life which knowingly killed their own environment and species cannot be meaningful either. This can be seen as Alek and Tarre refer to the "7" shaped building, where even Alek is able to gather that anybody so



wealthy that they make such a ridiculous and unsustainable home would be unlikely to live a life of real true meaning, despite actually knowing nothing about any of the previous life of Cati.

Alek and Tarre were used as those who do *not* face the problem of a species extinction, or to take the analogy further, they were presented as cups which would not spring a leak by way of the actions of others. Similarly, both had lives which led to the preservation of life's persistence, or of all cups as such being without leaks. The difference between the two was that Alek did not ever feel fulfilled; he never felt as if he was actually satisfying his desires for meaning nor that he ever actually had done anything meaningful. He was phibbing to himself as he carried on through his career, but he was driven so much further down from the immense pain of his family's passing that he could not possibly see how there could be any value or satisfaction or pride in the world. He felt guilty for ever spending time away from them and responsible for their deaths, inconsolable by the countless lives he saved and helped. Tarre, on the other hand, eventually realized the words that Alek had told him on their past assignment held weight, and started taking motivation from them and using it to satisfy the desire for feeling he had achieved meaning in his life. This is used to show that it is not obvious whether someone's subjective analysis of their own actions may by itself affect the capacity for meaning, as both are meant to portray valuable lives which helped countless people. Their actions are supposed to be identical, only with varying attitudes towards them, which seems like a strange thing in which to base a fundamental difference in the capacity for meaning in life. Whether Alek's life was less meaningful than Tarre's is not something I am interested in arguing, because I am not taking a position on whether life gains meaning through actions, desires, feeling that one's own life has meaning, or any other prescription of specifically what gives meaning and what does not. Rather, I sought to show that both of these characters can reasonably be said to each lead meaningful lives despite their differences due to their similarities granting them the capacity for meaning.

The story draws obvious influence from problems of climate change which currently threaten a large amount of life on our planet. It is not designed to make one feel insignificant, only to put in perspective the scope of this sort of issue and the forces underlying. C4-71, or Cati, suffered a fate that is not out of the scope of reality of our own, despite Atton's Notta Center being opened and satisfying his life's dream, which did not spark the sort of global wake-up call he had hoped they would experience. The statue of his mother withheld its beauty even when gazed upon by Tarre, though it could only be appreciated for its aesthetic value without any other roots in reality.

As previously mentioned, I used different fonts, font weights, and formatting in texts to differentiate between different modes of storytelling. All fonts used in the story (besides in the text boxes used to define terms) were a form of the font Roboto. Roboto Slab, a serif font, was used for the main body of storytelling. **Paragraphs typed in bold font weight Roboto Slab** were the primary mode of storytelling, spatio-temporal. **Paragraphs typed in normal font weight Roboto Slab** were the personal reflective passages. Finally, **paragraphs typed in light font weight Roboto Mono** were the second-person, broad reflective passages. The aphorisms were **typed in normal font weight Roboto Condensed** in order to give them a smaller effect on your focus, emphasizing that while they do aid in using analogous reasoning to understand and agree with the argument presented, they ought not take attention away from the story. To draw attention to the premise markers and definition-containing text boxes, I typed in **BOLD FONT WEIGHT DELIUS UNICASE**.

*The argument revealed and a reflection on the project.*

My goal in this project was to experiment in creating a new modality of literature containing a procedure which could turn philosophical argumentation into fiction. Within this modality, I sought to preserve the linear function of an argument in a nonlinear manner of presentation. I believed that this could work because justification for the premise in the text precedes the premise itself, making readers more likely to already agree with

the premises and therefore the argument. I sought to utilize juxtaposition in many ways, drawing from Surrealism. The first juxtaposition was of Atton and the elites of Cati, as they were opposite in their effect on the planet both in direction and magnitude. The second was between the Cati of Atton and Brianna and the Cati encountered by Tarre and Alek, then hidden in plain sight denoted as C4-71. The third was between the informed reflection upon Alek's life after his passing in the obituary and the lack thereof after the passing of all of the Catians when Tarre and Alek walked in their footsteps centuries later. The setting being foreign to the reader was intended to make the "familiar" problems of climate change, personal responsibility, and of the weight of one's own actions seem foreign to them, stripping them of their preconceived notions about these issues and allowing them to look at the attempts at rationally persuading them to accept this argument with a more open mind.

Whether I was entirely successful in this endeavor is up to the reader to decide. I believe that I hammered out countless imperfections in this view, story, foreword, and afterword and have arrived at a work which is, at the very least, thought provoking. I think that other modalities could have potentially been as effective through less effort, but the use of creativity was important to me in this project. Furthermore, as my goal laid in uncharted territory and my project was deeply experimental in nature, I feel that it served as an exercise of potential for a formerly uncreated modality for philosophical argumentation in literature. At worst, may it serve as proof that this form of creative fiction ought not be employed as a vehicle for philosophical argumentation or a call for revisitation by those more inclined in such literature.

The following set of numbered premises is the original argument I write and referenced in writing the story in logical form.

1. Something can have meaning ( $\Omega$ ) if and only if it exists.
2. If unended lives exist, any ended lives which are connected to these unended lives exist.
3. Lives ( $\Sigma$ ) which are all and exclusively, directly or indirectly, connected to each other refers to both ended and unended lives, and in the event of these lives no longer existing can still be understood as parts of past reality.
4. If no unended  $\Sigma$  exists, then no ended  $\Sigma$  exists. (2,3)
5. If no unended  $\Sigma$  exists, then no  $\Sigma$  exists. (3,4)
6. If no unended  $\Sigma$  exists, then no  $\Sigma$  can have meaning ( $\sim\Omega$ ). (1,5)
7. No unended  $\Sigma$  exists if and only if no new lives come to exist such that they could connect to and thus become a  $\Sigma$ , and all  $\Sigma$  have ended.
8. No new lives can come to exist such that they could connect to and thus become a  $\Sigma$ , and all  $\Sigma$  have ended if their prerequisite conditions are not satisfied ( $\sim A$ ).
9. If  $\sim A$ ,  $\sim \Omega$ . (6,8)
10. For any  $\Sigma$  the net effect of their life's free actions (predicated on their desires) on the satisfaction of the prerequisite conditions of  $\Sigma$  can be expressed as a negative or positive value  $\Theta$  such that a negative value results from a life which weakens these conditions and a positive value from one which reinforces them.
11. A sum of every  $\Sigma$ 's  $\Theta$  ( $\Theta+$ ) totalling zero represents the bottom threshold for  $A$ , values below which represents  $\sim A$ . (10)
12. The value of  $\Theta+$  determines whether  $A$  or  $\sim A$  is true. (11)
13. The value of  $\Theta+$  determines whether  $\Omega$  or  $\sim\Omega$  is true. (9,12)

14. If any  $\Sigma$  is such that their  $\Theta$  holds a negative value ( $\Sigma^-$ ), they could only make a difference in determining whether  $\Omega$  or  $\sim\Omega$  is true if it were to unilaterally make it such that  $\sim\Omega$ . (13)
15. If any  $\Sigma$  is  $\Sigma^-$ , this could either unilaterally make it true that their own life cannot have meaning, or it could have no effect on whether their own life can have meaning. (14)
16. If any  $\Sigma$  desires their own life to have meaning, they must universally desire that no  $\Sigma$  be  $\Sigma^-$  instrumentally, as any  $\Sigma^-$  is only capable of making a difference to the ability for their lives to have meaning by making meaning impossible for themselves and others, which undermines their desire. (15)
17. If any  $\Sigma$  is  $\Sigma^-$ , they cannot desire their own life to have meaning. (15,16)
18. If one cannot desire their own life to have meaning, then they either desire their own life to have no meaning or do not care if their life has meaning or not.
19. If a life has meaning, it comes either from its internal features like desires and intentions, its external actions, or it has nothing to do with the life itself.
20. If a life has meaning through internal features, its internal features cannot be centered in meaninglessness.
21. If a life has meaning through its external actions, its actions must be able to give meaning.
22. The meaning of a life must have something to do with the life itself.
23. If any  $\Sigma$  is  $\Sigma^-$ , its internal features are centered in meaninglessness and its external actions can never give meaning. (16,18)

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Conclusion: If any  $\Sigma$  is  $\Sigma^-$ , it cannot have meaning. (19,20,21,22,23)

A simpler, less precise, but more digestible version is as follows:

1. The capacity for having meaning comes from existing.
2. The dead are kept “in existence” through their memory and connections to the living.
3. All living and dead lives which have some sort of link through connections and through memories comprise a group of lives giving meaning to the term “life”
4. If no living have memories or connections to the dead, the dead lives no longer exist. (2,3)
5. For this to be true, no lives can exist anymore. (3,4)
6. If no living exists, no lives have meaning anymore. (1,5)
7. The only way that there will be no living is if no new lives can come to be and all of the living have died.
8. No new lives can come to be and all of the living have died only when that which gives life is destroyed.
9. If that which gives life is destroyed, no lives have meaning. (6,8)
10. The net effect of a life’s free actions have an impact on that which gives life and its health. If it hurts whatever gives us life, it can be written as a negative number and vice versa.
11. If a value of 0 or higher maintains that which gives us life and a value lower than zero will will destroy that which gives us life, the sum of every single person’s value from premise 10 is what tells us the sign of this sum. (10)
12. The sign/value of the sum determines whether that which gives us life survives or not. (11)
13. The sign/value of the sum determines whether life has the capacity for meaning or not. (9,12)

14. For anybody who contributes a negative value, its either going to get outweighed by the millions of other voters or you will unilaterally make it such that all lives lose the capacity for meaning (13)
15. For anybody who contributes a negative value, it's either going to get outweighed by the millions of other voters or you will unilaterally make it such that *your own life* loses the capacity for meaning. (14)
16. You ought to want other people to have positive values because every additional negative value gets you further away from giving your life even the capacity to be meaningful (15)
17. If your value is negative, you cannot desire for your life to have meaning (15,16)
18. If you cannot desire your own life to have meaning, then you either desire your own life to have no meaning or do not care if your life has meaning or not.
19. If your life has meaning, it comes either from its internal features like desires and intentions, its external actions, or it has nothing to do with the life itself.
20. If your life has meaning through internal features, your desires and dreams cannot be centered in meaninglessness.
21. If your life has meaning through its external actions, its actions must be able to give meaning.
22. The meaning of a life must have something to do with the life itself.
23. If your value is negative, your desires and dreams are centered in meaninglessness and your actions, if universalized, would make meaning impossible, and could only ever take meaning away. (16,18)

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Conclusion: If your net effect on that which gives life is detrimental to its persistence, your life does not have the capacity for meaning. (19,20,21,22,23)