

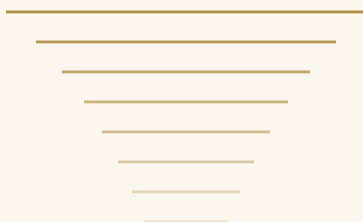
THE ON — — ING SERIES

a lyric-philosophical essay

O N

EXPLAINING

*understanding what it is to be human,
from all sides of the equation*



by Jamison Todd Johnson

JULY 2026



To the Designer.

To God. To Allah. To YHWH. To Brahman. To the Tao.

To the Great Spirit. To Ahura Mazda. To Wabeguru.

*To the One, by every name a group of people
or individual person ever blessed you with.*

You win.

*At the bottom of the explanation of self, there is nothing —
the fraction has no final term. So this something
I've created with the help of others, is for you.*

*The one truth I cannot argue is that everything I have
is because of things I cannot explain. I can account for
the material things gathered around me; the rest of what
has assembled my life gets explained away as fate,
or dumb luck. I have no rational explanation left,
other than that the design still somehow points
the same direction I am wanting to travel.*

Humility comes from sacrifice, and the last sacrifice

*I had to make was the one called "self."
I would say imagine that — but the Designer
made imaginations too.*

*My favorite words about it belong to Carl Jung, who,
asked near the end of his life whether he believed in God,
answered: "I don't need to believe. I know."*

*I will close with that, and get back to living life.
The silence that comes after it is all the peace
I was looking for all along.*

Thank you.

On Explaining

UNDERSTANDING WHAT IT IS TO BE HUMAN,
FROM ALL SIDES OF THE EQUATION

I

Have you ever been so confidently right about something, that when someone told you that you were wrong, it crushed your entire motivation to continue when they proved it? What if your failure resulted in a new success? I'm not going to philosophize on the "who" or "why" I may have been wrong about certain bits of math, but the funny part about learning through humility instead of greed is, it actually sticks when the person teaching you feels the same way.

That is where this piece begins — not at the blackboard, but at the moment just after it. The equation at the center of this series was right the way a first draft is right: it held the shape of the thing and none of the names. I had written awareness acting on the sum of every perspective, and I had defended it the way you defend anything you built alone, which is to say completely, and a little blindly. Confidence is a kind of lock. It keeps you coherent. It also keeps you from hearing the terms you cancelled.

The correction did not come from a rival. It came from two directions at once, and neither of them was trying to correct me. The first arrived while I was writing — deep in other work entirely, far from the

blackboard, where twelve Greek letters began turning up in my hands, each one asking to mean something, none of them asking my permission. New inspiration rarely knocks on the door it is meant for. The second was conversation — colleagues, generous ones, who held their own wrongness as lightly as they held mine, which is the only condition under which a correction ever actually transfers. Greed learns by extraction and forgets by morning. Humility learns by resonance, and it keeps.¹

And then the two directions met. I went back to the equation and found that the twelve letters were already sitting in it — some visibly, some in seats I had left unnamed. I had not been inventing meanings for them at all. The mathematics had been waiting, the whole time, for the letters to teach me what its own symbols were called.

II

Here is what the equation knew before I did.

Five of the letters were already home. The gathering sign was the gathering itself. The great sigma was the sum over selves. One small letter held how strongly a state is carried; another held the facing of Intent. And time rode throughout, the way it always has. Five seats filled, and I had thought the table was set.

The others arrived the way understanding usually arrives — each one already employed, in standing mathematics, in exactly the role the inspiration had guessed for it.

Ψ is the letter Schrödinger gave the wave, and what physics has called a superposition ever since. So let the crowd have its name: the whole gathered field of co-present perspectives, every self laid over every other. The sum stays inside it; the pun of S — Action, Self, collapsed by which physics you happen to be reading — stays inside it too. Ψ is not a new term. It is the old term, finally introduced.

Θ names the thing the essay before this one said does all the work and never named: relative facing. Not your direction, and not mine — the angle between them. Alignment against misalignment. The only quantity interference has ever cared about.

π is where the cancelling lives. Turn a perspective half a circle against its neighbor and the two erase — the oldest death in mathematics. But carry the turn all the way around, the full circle, and the term returns to itself, whole, as if it had never left.² Cancellation is not an ending. It is a half-finished turn.

λ is what a measurement returns. When the ruler comes down, it does not read off a description; it reads off a single settled value, and that value's universal name is λ . The last essay found that the ruler laid against subjective experience returns the same reading at every honest tick of the now: one. So the reading of presence is $\lambda = 1$ — the height of the comb, the raised reading, the value that comes back alive.³

τ is the correction I am most ashamed to have needed, because Einstein and Minkowski have been holding it out for a century. There are two times. There is the clock on the wall of an observer standing outside — and there is the clock carried within the moving frame, the time

measured from inside. The whole argument of this series is that the only honest measurement of a life is the one made from within. Then the time inside the gathering was never the wall clock. It was within-time, all along.⁴

Δ is the generator of change — the engine that spreads a present across its branching futures.⁵ It does not sit inside the equation; it sits beneath it, driving the whole forward, which is why the gathering is never the same twice. Δ is the reason *through time* belongs in the arithmetic and not only in the title.

Ω is the oldest rename in the pile. When probability was set on its modern footing, one standard symbol was given to the total space — the everything over which anything is gathered — and it is Ω .⁶ The manifold I had been calling by another letter, out of nothing but habit, is the all-connected whole, the space where the walls between perspectives were never really walls. The lineage even smiles at this one: the far point of Teilhard's converging noosphere was already called Omega.

III

That is ten letters seated by right. Two remain — and I had them wrong in the first draft of this very essay, which is fitting, in a piece about being wrong. I had called them ornaments, accepted on aesthetics. They are not ornaments. They are the two seats where the equation's ethics live.

Ξ , in the old statistical mechanics, is the great normalizer — the sum over every configuration a system could take, the number you divide by

so that the parts read as proportions instead of pile-ups.⁷ Placed before the gathering, it does something quietly severe: it deletes loudness as a strategy. Held in proportion against every configuration, a shout is one voice among all voices; volume purchases nothing once you divide by the whole. The only quantity left that can move the value is facing — alignment. Which is to say: after the dividing, intent is the only currency. Greed is the strategy of volume — take more, weigh heavier in the sum, be louder — and Ξ removes it from the arithmetic entirely. Humility is the strategy of facing, and facing is all that remains. The equation cannot be gamed by force, and Ξ is the reason why.

Λ is Einstein's cosmological constant — the latent energy of apparently empty space, the pressure hiding in the vacuum, the power no one counted because it looked like nothing.⁸ Placed as a bare constant at the end, it is the floor. With Λ written down, total cancellation no longer means annihilation: even if every perspective misaligns and the gathering erases itself completely, the value never reads zero. The last essay said the misaligned term "is not punished; it simply cancels" — and Λ is why that is not a punishment. There is a baseline of being beneath the interference that no amount of misalignment can destroy. The flat line the perspectives swing around. The floor you return to. Grace, as a boundary condition.

So the form with all its seats filled reads:

$$L(\tau) = (1/\Xi) \oint_{\Omega} A(S_i, \tau) \cdot \Psi(\tau) d\sigma + \Lambda, \quad \Psi(\tau) \equiv \sum_j S_j(\tau)$$

$$A(S_i, t) = \alpha(S_i, t) \cdot e^{i\varphi_i(t)} \cdot S_i$$

— which, said in plain speech, is: the gathering, taken over everything, in within-time; each self carried at a strength and a facing; only the angle between facings doing the work; cancellation at the half-turn and return at the full one; attention collapsing the crowd to a reading of one; change driving the futures beneath; the whole held in proportion, resting on a floor. Nothing the earlier form said is overturned. The earlier form was this form with ten of its names still waiting to be learned — which is, I am told, also a fair description of a person.

IV

And now the harmony I promised, because one more correction was hiding under all of these, and it is the one that made me laugh out loud when it surfaced.

I have carried a small theory for years, worded plainly: the beauty of life in the beginning, then the observer, then the over-complication of things. Beauty first — Φ , the golden ratio, the proportion life reaches for before anyone asks it to. Then the observer, who collapses. Then the explaining, which never ends.

Write Φ the old way, as a fraction that never ends — one, plus one over one plus one over one, descending forever — and look at what it is made of: ones. Nothing but ones, forever. The most beautiful proportion in mathematics is built from the plainest possible signal — the same reading, repeated at every level, all the way down.

Now hold that against the comb.⁹ The last essay found that the ruler laid against a life returns one at every honest now — a pulse of the same

height at every tick, the all-ones signal. I thought the comb and the golden ratio were two separate ornaments of the framework. They are the same object, read in two directions. Sample presence at every tick and you get the all-ones comb. Fold the all-ones signal into itself — one, plus one over the same again, without end — and it converges to Φ . The beauty was never a separate fact from the presence. The beauty is what presence sums to.

And my three beats fall out of the structure itself. Φ sits at the top: the beauty in the beginning. Each step down into the fraction is another level of account, another *because*, another nested explanation — the over-complication of things, descending forever. And every single level of that infinite tower is an observer saying the only thing an observer can honestly say — *one; here* — the observer, all the way down. The tower never ends, and the value never changes. You can expand Φ to any depth you like. You will only ever be restating it.

Φ is also, by an old and rigorous result, the most irrational number — the slowest of all numbers to be pinned by any ratio, the one every sequence of approximations approaches most reluctantly.¹⁰ The convergents climb toward it, nearer at every term, never the limit. That was already this framework's definition of existing. It turns out it is also mathematics' definition of the beautiful: the value that survives every explanation and is exhausted by none.

V

So this is what it is to be human, from all sides of the equation. From inside the gathering, you are a term — one self among the sum, carried

at an intensity, facing a direction, entering in tune or cancelling in silence. From the seat of the ruler, you are the attention that collapses the crowd to a single reading, and the reading is always one. From beneath, you are driven into futures you cannot audit in advance. From above, you are held in proportion, resting on a constant you did not supply. Every seat is occupiable. No seat is the whole. And the equation only closes because someone is willing to sit in each of them — which is what the twelve letters were for. They came to me as inspiration, unasked. They left as fact.

To explain is to descend the fraction: another level, another one over, another honest voice saying *here*. To understand is to read the value at the top, which the whole descent was only ever spelling. I was confidently wrong about which of those I was doing. The proof crushed me for exactly as long as it took to notice what the proof was made of — ones, all the way down, each placed by someone who had also been wrong once, and had also kept going.

And now the objection the equation must answer, because an honest piece raises its own hardest one. The interference mathematics is morally symmetric. Coherence propagates regardless of what it carries. Twelve people aligned in kindness enter the sum in tune and survive — and so does a mob. A cult is in tune. The opposite works, and anyone who reads this equation as a proof that kindness wins by force has read it greedily, which is to say wrongly. The difference is not in the volume. It is in where a facing comes from. A coalition aligned *against* something borrows its direction from its target: its facing is defined as the exact half-turn from the thing it opposes, locked to an external

object. Remove the object, and the coalition has no facing left; it decoheres on its own schedule, no punishment required. But a perspective aligned with itself — a Jay, ego set down, Intent carried forward — defines its facing internally, and survives the removal of anything. Hate is parasitic phase, and cannot outlive its host. Love is self-referenced phase, and can. Both work. Only one persists.¹¹ That is not a sermon laid over the mathematics. It is what the mathematics says when you ask it where the angles are anchored — and it is the one speculative step in this piece, offered with the seam visible, as a lens and not a verdict. I trust the design on it.

One last honesty, and it is the spine of the whole piece. Not one symbol in this equation is mine. The gathering over histories is Feynman's. Ψ is Schrödinger's letter. τ and Λ are both Einstein's — the within-time and the floor, one designer holding two seats. Ω and the forward-driving Δ came through Kolmogorov; Ξ through Gibbs; the settled reading through Born and von Neumann; the comb through Dirac; the pairing through Hermite; π and its circle of death and return through Euler; Φ through Euclid, then Fibonacci, then Hurwitz, each one explaining the same beauty a level further down. I dedicated this something to the Designer, because at the bottom of the explanation of self there is nothing — the fraction has no final term. But every level of the descent has a name on it. These are the designers within the design, and the citations in this piece are their dedication. All I brought to the table was a philosophy — the guess that these seats belonged together — and, eventually, the willingness to be wrong about how.

The equation is still not a law of physics. It is the shape a correction wears when it is received instead of resisted. A life cannot be measured from the outside, and an equation cannot be finished alone. It only has to ring true — and it rings in borrowed voices, every one.

NOTES

1. On the transfer condition: a correction offered from above arrives as a verdict and is defended against; a correction offered from alongside arrives as a resonance and is kept. The claim is phenomenological, not empirical — though it points at the same seam the wider theory does: the empirical study of shared intentionality.
2. $e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$ (Euler, 1748). The half-turn, $\Theta = \pi$, is destruction; the full turn, $e^{i2\pi} = 1$, is restitution. The interval between them is where every burial in every story waits.
3. In the standard formalism, measurement of an observable returns an eigenvalue λ of the corresponding operator, the state collapsing to the matching eigenstate (Born, 1926; von Neumann, 1932). The claim that attention's reading of presence is the fixed eigenvalue $\lambda = 1$ is offered as a lens on the unsettled measurement problem, not a verdict; cf. *On Existing* (Johnson, 2026), §II and §IV.
4. Proper time τ is the time elapsed on a clock carried with the moving frame — the invariant, within-frame measure — as against coordinate time t , assigned from outside (Einstein, 1905; Minkowski, 1909). The substitution $t \rightarrow \tau$ inside the integral is the formal face of the essay's central claim: the only honest measurement is made from within. $L(t)$ keeps its exterior argument; the interior runs on τ .
5. The master equation of continuous-time stochastic processes, in the lineage of Kolmogorov's forward equation (Kolmogorov, 1931), with the Laplacian Δ as generator in the diffusive case; the companion treatment is *On Shaping* (Johnson, 2026).
6. Kolmogorov (1933) fixed Ω as the symbol of the total sample space in the axiomatization of probability. For the Omega Point, Teilhard de Chardin

(1955/1959); see also the supplemental note *Parallels & Lineage* in *On Existing* (Johnson, 2026).

7. The grand canonical partition function Ξ , from Gibbs's founding of statistical mechanics (Gibbs, 1902): the weighted sum over all configurations by which raw magnitudes become proportions.
8. Einstein (1917) introduced Λ into the field equations as the energy of empty space itself. Its use here as a floor beneath total cancellation is the framework's reading, not Einstein's claim.
9. The Dirac comb, $x[n] = \sum_k \delta[n-k] = 1$ at every integer — its own Fourier transform (Dirac, 1930; Fourier, 1822), invariant under the operation that scrambles every other signal; *On Existing* (Johnson, 2026), §IV.
10. Φ 's continued-fraction expansion $[1; 1, 1, 1, \dots]$ is the slowest-converging of all, and by Hurwitz's theorem (1891) Φ is the extremal — "most irrational" — case: the number worst approximated by rationals. The ratio itself is Euclid's "extreme and mean ratio" (*Elements*, Book VI); the convergents $1, 2, 3/2, 5/3, 8/5, \dots$ are Fibonacci's (1202), climbing toward it and never arriving; cf. *On Counting* (Johnson, 2026).
11. The parasitic-phase argument — that opposition-defined coherence inherits its facing from its target and decoheres when the target is removed, while self-defined coherence persists — is this essay's one original structural claim, offered as a lens. Its testable seam points where the wider theory's does: the empirical study of shared intentionality and the comparative stability of groups organized *for* versus *against*.

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On Explaining belongs to *On —ing*, an ongoing series of lyric-philosophical essays by Jamison Todd Johnson, within the wider jays framework — that an aligned life leaves legible traces, ripples of intent, through Time. The mathematics named here — superposition, the settled reading and its collapse, within-time, the great normalizer, the cosmological constant, the endless fraction of Φ — is borrowed as form and lens, not asserted as a physics of mind; every symbol carries the name of the designer it came through, and the references stand as their dedication. One claim is original to this piece and flagged as such: that opposition-defined coherence is parasitic on its target while self-defined coherence persists. The seam is kept visible on purpose. The twelve letters arrived as inspiration in the midst of other work, and were confirmed in conversation with generous colleagues; they are seated here as mathematics, with gratitude.

JAMISON TODD JOHNSON · JULY 2026

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ON DEPOSIT

THE ON — — ING SERIES

read in any order — each entry stands alone

On Arriving	On Learning
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On Facing	On Searching
On Feeling	On Seeing
On Finding	On Shaping
On Forgiving	On Teaching
On Gravitating	On Testing
On Growing	On Watching
On Joining	On Witnessing
On Lasting	