

TULUBAIKAPORTIA



by VANECHKA

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Episode 6: about syllogismatics, briefly

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“I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think.”
— “Écrits: A Selection” by Jacques Lacan

even having weighed the arguments beforehand measured the facts with a ruler across and along laid out before you all the “cons” and “pros” in two piles or perhaps three four or more for you never know if there will be discrepancies paradoxes or some other undefined drebedden in your logic you’ll still arrive at the conclusion that the anticipation of regret can be far worse than the regret itself and have existential practically eschatological consequences destructive to your psyche because the decision hasn’t yet been made the i’s haven’t yet been dotted and everything can still be changed ten times over with a snap of your fingers by simply deciding not to go anywhere neither *to* Tulubaika nor *from* Tulubaika nor anywhere else and either just stand still and think think think thinker with the premises devise new justifications find confirmations for your judgements and then refute them yourself or ride around in a cab circling from point A to point B and from point B to point A (you can even veer to point C along the way why not) until you become nauseous your head starts spinning you faint sleep for

twenty hours see a cluster of bittersweet nightmares about what an abominable muck Tulubaika is this time of year but what beauties those golden birches are and what a delight it is to gaze at them and stroll around if of course you don't look under your feet and if you plug your ears with your thumbs otherwise you might inadvertently go halfwit from the squelching of boots and the snarling of stray dogs and forget about fishing in the shallows about the first day at school about your first love be it for games on the Sega mind games game theory or girls about the first unlearned poem and the first skipped physics lesson where you got a fat parent-repelling blot of the first F and about how on a dare with the lads you stuffed your mouth with baneberry your stomach twisted your face paled you nearly perished at a tender age terminally-tragically-truly-indeed spent a fortnight in hospital but regretted nothing not even that you cavorted with all sorts of young rascallions and ruffians fought them clumsily played football traded Pokémon cards bartered May beetles¹ for Beatles tapes and now catching sight of those acquaintances on the street you turn your face away because (touch wood) they recognise you and start pestering you with questions like "how are you?" "how's life?" and answers like "as white as soot!" "better than yours!" "and mine is better than yours too!" which ultimately if it's not a zero-sum game of course makes each and every one of us the happy owners of a good life because if everyone's is better than one another's then it means that either no one's is better or everyone's is just alright and there's no need to regret the future or regret the past although in my case in the case of regretting the future it's much more complicated because if you mull it over the past will

always have one version the one that's already happened ergo regretting it has a negative energy conversion efficiency η (unless you have a time machine of course or some new quantum law is passed in the quantum parliament) while the future has infinitely many versions (and what versions (!) a whole kaleidoscope of events) and if we take as an initial condition the presence of free will in the subject without any evaluation of its strength (the formula for it has not yet been derived) and the absence of an entity modestly called "Fate" pecking at the subject's nape then it becomes apparent that regretting the future not only has an emotional meaning (including a divorce from the past and nervousness due to the gnawing importance of the decision being made) a philosophical one (awareness of the finiteness of life the infinity of outcomes and the unpredictable nature of existence) but also an applied one because everything depends on it on the decision being made and where you will be (be it in Tulubaika or outside of it) and who you will be (because opportunities are different everywhere) and in general the whole future which like dominoes lined up in an endless row from one light push with the little finger can collapse lightly jingling and fall with a thunderous crash after which you won't have plays in the West End but a cigarette-smelling Tulubaika cinema where there's no popcorn yet there are rice and egg pasties bubliks and black chai with two spoons of sugar instead of twelve-year-old Macallan and vintage Coca-Cola Zero of the existence of which in Tulubaika you can only learn from ads on the telly on one of those two TV channels and it's unclear whether you will walk hand in hand with a gorgeous wife through a night-time Mediterranean city or help your neighbour besiege a broken tractor or

time-lost Carthage for weeks or ramble through the mud on a rotavator or a topless Mini Cooper through Norwegian fjords or listen to the singing on the Day of the Dead in Mexico or to the singing of the funeral service of Uncle Vanya who died from a drunken walloping with a rebar to his head on a clear day (on which it was not half bad to hang oneself according to the weather forecast) or drink chai with Tibetan monks to a state of chai intoxication and lush peacock-like opening of chakras or drink shots of hawthorn tincture hand sanitiser surgical spirit in tandem with local pissheads yet to the same drunken opening of chakras wide open with eyes wide shut when instead it might have been easier to decide and you wouldn't have had to lie sleepless squeezing your eyelids hoping to stop scrolling through the feed to distract your brain from scrolling through that situation where you a young cloud engineer a wanderer did get to the Istina with your mathematical mind shod a louse² taught a jellyfish to sing go I know not whither and fetch I know not what³ and invented a time machine to travel to the future and ask yourself now an old chap grey with a cane in hand peacefully strolling through the birch park in autumn perhaps to pick some mushrooms looking at the birds dancing in flocks above the trees while you approach him and stammer to ask if he regrets anything in his long life and if so was it not that situation when he was riding in a cab to the airport or on a bus through endless oat dunes or in the opposite direction or in circles when he was silent and mumbled a monotonous “uh-huh” in response to the conversational enthusiasm of the taxi driver who has a business in Moscow a son studying in London and a castle from a Nigerian prince as an inheritance and extremely

racist views⁴ and listening to a demonic rendition of Shostakovich melancholically stared out of the window massaging his temporal muscles building up wrinkles on his forehead which by the way will later be a good place to stockpile regrets (it's not for nothing that they only hatch with age) and watched the same but still so soulful landscapes or their grey absence unfurl around him and could not decide whether to ask the driver to stop and turn around dash back down the one-way road at one hundred and twenty km/h collecting potholes and boldly looking lorry drivers in the face or to make a couple more circles round the area because just a little more time and the reptilian brain will derive a formula for the optimal position of the capital yet still undotted "I" in space and time the essence of which lies in a simple binary opposition either where this very "I" is or where this very "I" is not

Notes

1. "May beetle" refers to the European cockchafer, a large beetle common in Eastern Europe that typically emerges in May in the areas near Tulubaika. These beetles are recognisable by their brown colour and distinctive fan-like antennae. Collecting them and making them race and/or fight was once (still is?) a common childhood pastime in Russia.
2. "to shoe a louse" ("подковать блоху") is a Russian expression meaning "to accomplish an extremely delicate difficult or seemingly impossible task". It's similar in spirit to the English expressions "threading a needle" or "splitting hairs," though with a distinctly fairy tale flair for the improbable.
3. The impossible task par excellence (much like accurately translating this text), a direct translation of the Russian folktale formula "Пойди туда не знаю куда принеси то не знаю что", which is the equivalent of being asked to run an errand without any useful

information though with considerably higher stakes and fewer navigation options. The best narrative device for storytellers who enjoy watching their heroes and heroines navigate cosmic ambiguity and either magically transform or perish (or both/none).

4. All of this is a typical life predicament for an average taxi driver in Russia.

Read next part

Episode 7: about psychophysiological responses to bus time dilation

<https://nova-nevedoma.com/bus-time-dilation/>

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