

"The woodpile is so beautiful, about all the joy and beauty that I can stand. I am afraid to turn around and face the mountains, for fear they will overpower me. But I did look, and I am astounded. Everyone must get to experience a profound state like this. I feel totally peaceful. I have lived all my life to get here, and I feel I have come home. I am complete."

— Alexander Shulgin, biochemist, rediscoverer of MDMA

it turns out it's possible to feel like this all the time. not just for a moment, but as our baseline.

it turns out humans can improve baseline wellbeing by crazy orders of magnitude, by investigating and undoing particular 10-40hz tensing events which are the correlate of all suffering.

but it's not super simple, and statistically takes a few thousand hours of advanced meditation, and it's hidden by lots of terrible pedagogy and weird poems and antihelpful translation. the field is very nascent.

i believe this is the most promising starting point for any serious anti-suffering endeavors, and i think this is our most important unsolved-ish problem!

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rigorous wholesome happymaxxing :)

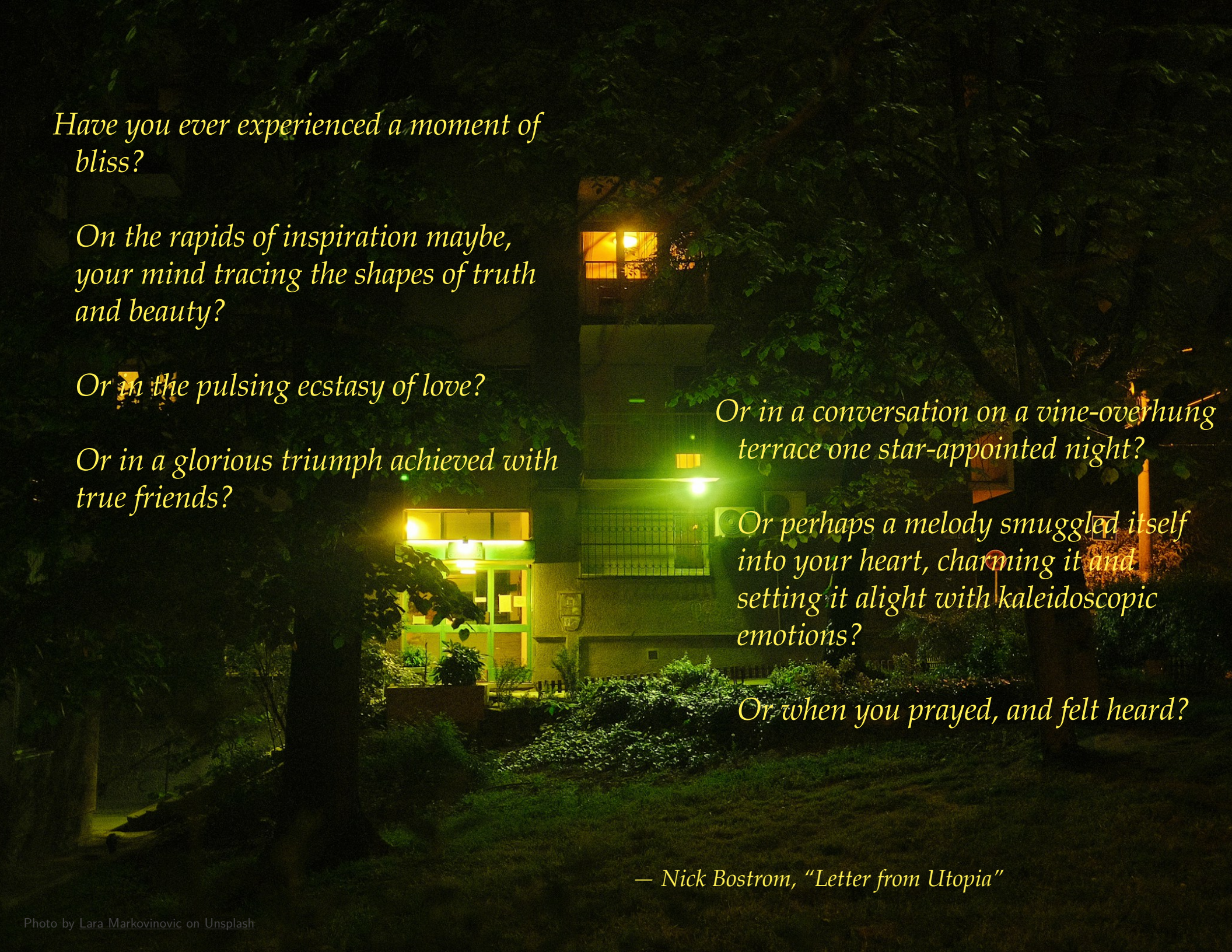
my attempt at a sufficiently anti-confusing
primer on improving baseline well-being by
many orders of magnitude via meditation

by

corbin aquino

*we've known the micro-mechanics of suffering & happiness
for 2500 years // our base layer of experience is free joy,
peace, happiness, connection, meaning, beauty, wholeness,
heaven // 10-40hz tensing-grasping-clenching is the cause
of all suffering // apparently this gives us what we're all
looking for //*

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Have you ever experienced a moment of bliss?

*On the rapids of inspiration maybe,
your mind tracing the shapes of truth
and beauty?*

Or in the pulsing ecstasy of love?

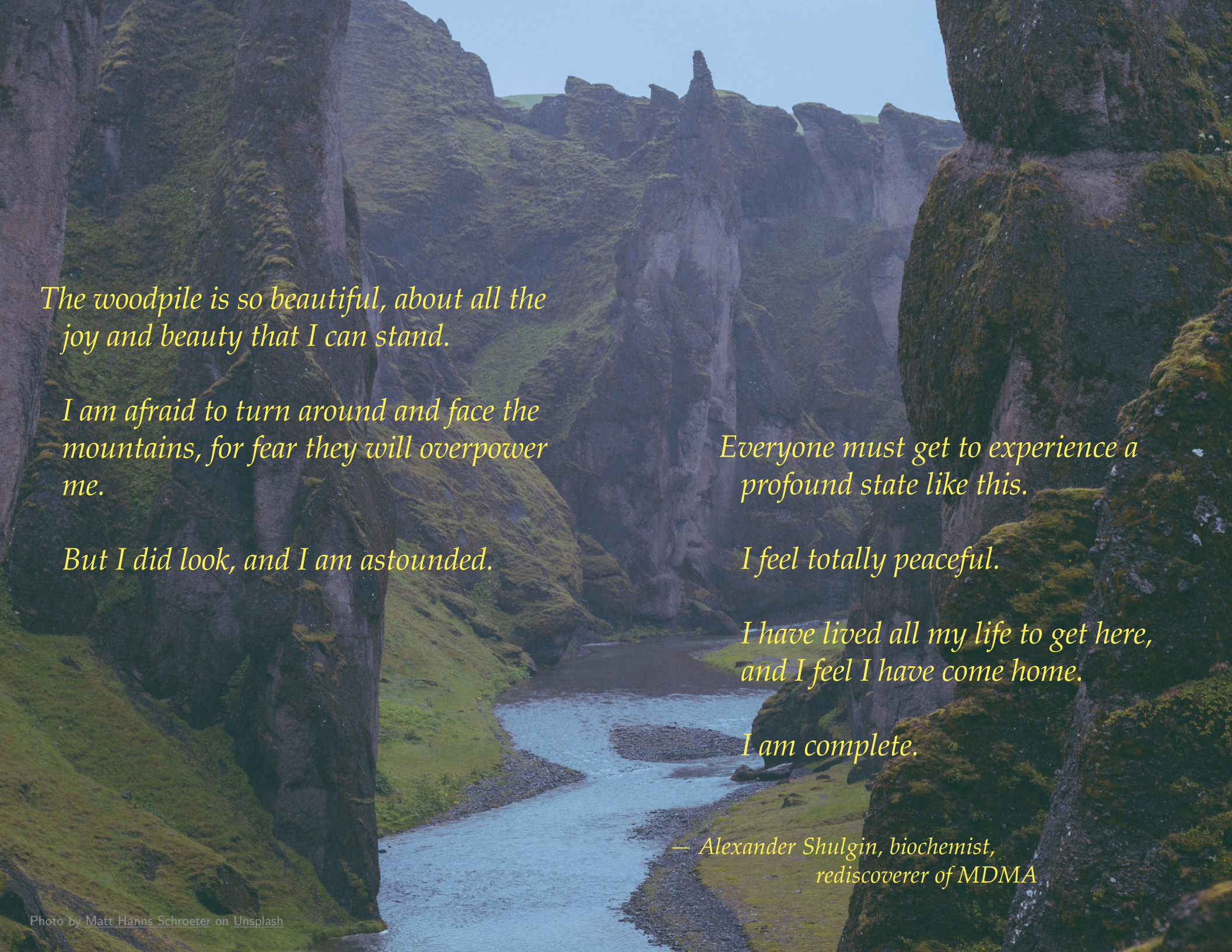
*Or in a glorious triumph achieved with
true friends?*

*Or in a conversation on a vine-overhung
terrace one star-appointed night?*

*Or perhaps a melody smuggled itself
into your heart, charming it and
setting it alight with kaleidoscopic
emotions?*

Or when you prayed, and felt heard?

— Nick Bostrom, "Letter from Utopia"



*The woodpile is so beautiful, about all the
joy and beauty that I can stand.*

*I am afraid to turn around and face the
mountains, for fear they will overpower
me.*

But I did look, and I am astounded.

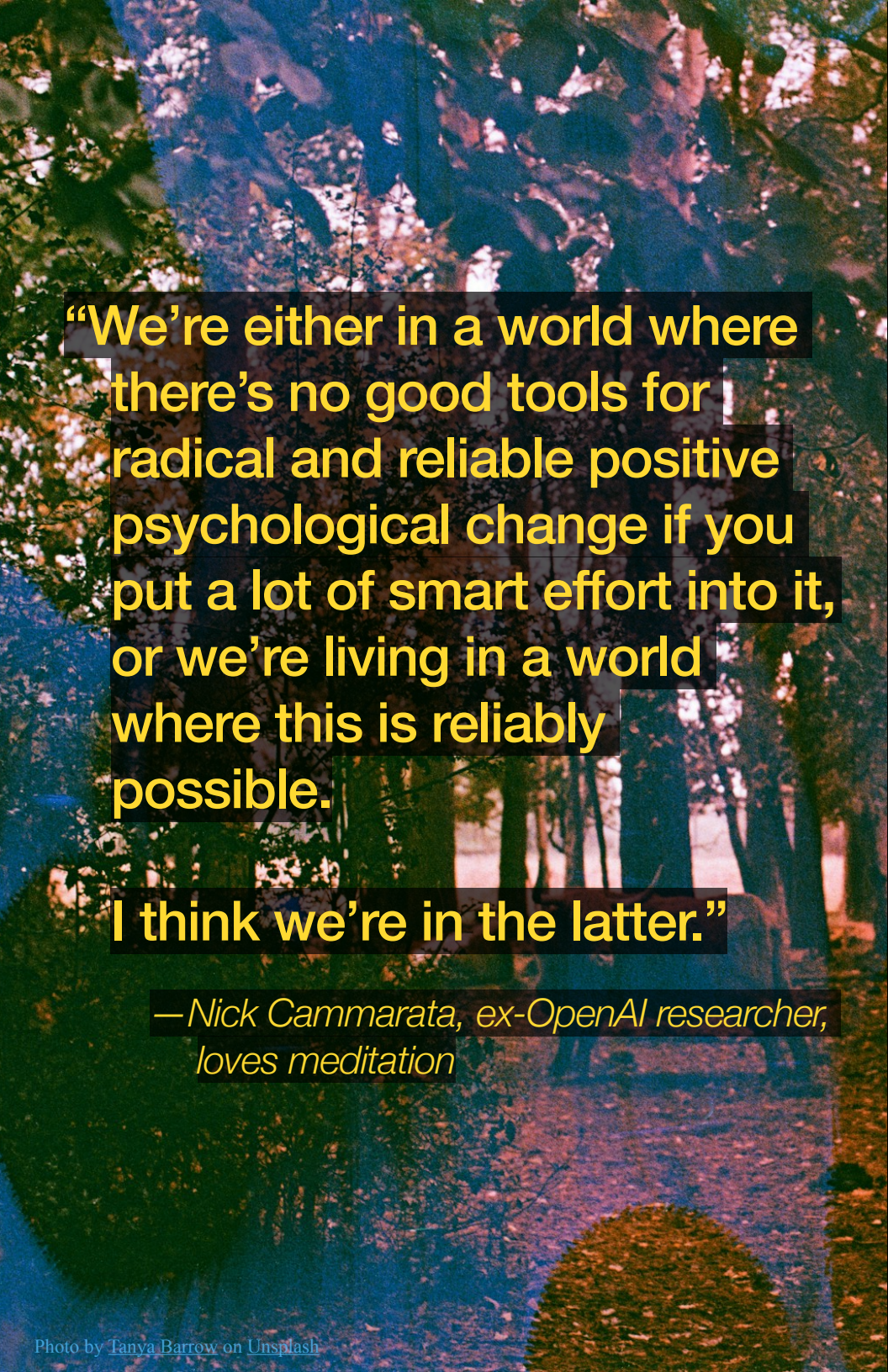
*Everyone must get to experience a
profound state like this.*

I feel totally peaceful.

*I have lived all my life to get here,
and I feel I have come home.*

I am complete.

*— Alexander Shulgin, biochemist,
rediscoverer of MDMA*



“We’re either in a world where there’s no good tools for radical and reliable positive psychological change if you put a lot of smart effort into it, or we’re living in a world where this is reliably possible.

I think we’re in the latter.”

—Nick Cammarata, ex-OpenAI researcher, loves meditation

as it turns out,
we can feel like this
all the time.

not just for a moment,
but as our baseline.

for whatever reason, it turns out humans can improve baseline wellbeing by crazy orders of magnitude, by investigating and undoing particular 10-40hz tensing events which seem to cause ~all suffering.

but it’s not super simple, and statistically takes a few thousand hours of advanced meditation, and it’s hidden by lots of terrible pedagogy and weird poems and antihelpful translation. the field is very nascent, and there’s much to research and improve.

i believe this is the most promising starting point for any serious anti-suffering endeavors, and i think this is our most important unsolved-ish problem!

but, there are still very few anticonfusing, comprehensive, legible explanations/resources. hopefully this document serves as a good primer for people that wanna know more!

rigorous wholesome happymaxxing :)

my attempt at a sufficiently anti-confusing
primer on improving baseline well-being by
many orders of magnitude via meditation

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or, preface

somehow, wow!

ow! how ow?

no ow, wow!

now how?



somehow, wow

summary...

whoa, outlier wellbeing is possible! humans can be almost-continually happy without crashing, just like humans can be almost-continually sad or stressed for multiple months straight.

whoa, meditation is powerful! we can empirically reproducibly induce non-addictive profoundly positive experiences, like MDMA without the drug.

whoa, meditation is not just temporary power-ups, but it can cause permanent shifts in baseline wellbeing! it seems like meditation is currently the only empirically reproducible path we have towards outlier wellbeing!

whoa, we can talk about this precisely!

other misconceptions...

meditation is not just for making us 10% happier.
somehow, we can get people to be 10-10000x happier

meditation is not just focusing on the breath or being “mindful”



*meditation is
surprisingly powerful.*

*this is empirically
reproducible!*



Investigating the complex cortical dynamics of an advanced concentrative absorption meditation called jhanas (ACAM-J): a geometric eigenmode analysis

Ruby M Potash^{1,2}, Winson F Z Yang^{1,2}, Brian Winston³, Selen Atasoy^{4,5}, Morten L Kringelbach^{4,5,6}, Terje Sparby^{7,8,9}, Matthew D Sacchet^{1,2}

Affiliations + expand
PMID: 40037411 PMCID: PMC11879328 (available on 2024-04-11)
DOI: [10.1093/cercor/bhaf039](https://doi.org/10.1093/cercor/bhaf039)

Volitional mental absorption in meditation: Toward a scientific understanding of advanced concentrative absorption meditation and the case of jhana

Winson F Z Yang^{1,2}, Terje Sparby^{3,4,5}, Malcolm Wright⁶, Eunmi Kim⁷, Matthew D Sacchet^{1,2}

Affiliations + expand
PMID: 38803854 PMCID: [PMC11129010](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38803854/) DOI: [10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e31223](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e31223)

Neuroelectrophysiological correlates of extended cessation of consciousness in advanced meditators: A multimodal EEG and MEG study

 Kenneth Shinozuka,  Winson F.Z. Yang,  Ruby M. Potash,  Terje Sparby,  Matthew D. Sacchet

doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2025.09.19.677455>

Multimodal neurophenomenology of advanced concentration absorption meditation: An intensively sampled case study of Jhana

Avijit Chowdhury¹, Marta Bianciardi², Eric Chapdelaine³, Omar S Riaz³, Christopher Timmermann⁴, Remko van Lutterveld⁵, Terje Sparby⁶, Matthew D Sacchet⁷

Endogenous suspension and reset of consciousness: 7T fMRI brain mapping of the extended cessation meditative endpoint

Winson F.Z. Yang, Akila Kadambi, Kilian Abellana-Pérez, Grace Mackin, Isidora Beslic, Ruby Potash, Terje Sparby, Matthew D. Sacchet

Advanced concentrative absorption meditation reorganizes functional connectivity gradients of the brain: 7T MRI and phenomenology case study of jhana meditation

Umay Demir^{1,2,3}, Winson Fu Zun Yang^{1,2}, Matthew D Sacchet^{1,2}

Affiliations + expand
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There's some nontrivial amount of emerging research in the neurological correlates of meditative states called jhanas. The Meditation Research Program at Harvard Medical School [<https://meditation.mgh.harvard.edu/publications/>] is doing a lot of neuro research into advanced meditation.

I think their studies are some of the best currently (and I think it's the best stuff to cite when trying to convince people I'm not crazy! But obviously I think the field is super early/nascent, thus much of the actual frontier theories/research are way less tractable/legible than what's in academic journals right now).