

I've always been fascinated with the inner workings of the mind. I look out to the people around me and i see the beauty of intelligence harmoniously building itself. My favor aspect is learning, the capacity to change our thoughts to the better. It never stops, every thought we have is utterly new. Every time you have a thought, even the same thought, it's different. It's always created with the new understanding and context we have gained since the last time we experienced the very same thought. In a sense we are recreating our ideas every time we think of them. This is how we learn, we take the new and we refine the old. If you look at the neurochemistry of the brain, memory is no different. Our memories are fundamentally connected to our thoughts and feelings about them. Furthermore we create them the very same way. This is why we will often think we are bad at remembering, because they are different from the reality of the experience. Every time we remember them they are influenced by our thoughts and experiences since the time of the memory. A lot of people would say this is a bad thing. A good memory is one that is accurate to the reality of the situation, and on some level i agree. After all if you took a video of the events it would be the same every time you watched it. But i see something great behind what many might call mistakes, i see stories.

Much of my understanding of the concept came from a story called the hunger games. In it the antagonists the capital capture peeta a character important to our protagonist katniss, and they hijack him, hijacking is a unique form of torture, Peeta is exposed to video and images of katniss while being poisoned with a substance that causes fear and hallucinations. By the end of the procedure his memories are so corrupted that Peeta who previously loved katniss on a deep level is now aggressive towards katniss and views her as a threat. In response district 13 a faction allied with katniss attempts to do the same thing in reverse, exposing to calming drugs while peeta watches the same video and images of katniss. This works, sort of, peeta is no longer afraid of her but he still doesn't see her the way he did before. His memories of her have been entirely reshaped twice, so now he must relearn how to interact with her and work out what is real and what is a result of the torture as well as treatment.

It's amazing to me how much our experiences are shaped by the stories we tell ourselves. A few years ago at a time when I was in conflict with my mother i ran away from home. I started couch surfing as a means of preventing her from taking away the things that i felt were important to me. I hadn't given up on diplomacy, knowing that she didn't want me homeless, I asked her for a round trip plane ticket to see family in maryland, she saw this as an opportunity and gave me a one way ticket, I had trusted her and never checked until I got there. I then spent 6 months there until i could find a way to come back. What i found to be true about those memories is for a long time the stories I told myself were far more important than what actually happened. The story I told myself was I was thousands of miles from home because of a betrayal from my mother. I was a refugee, a vagabond. I spent

most of my time there obsessing about the idea of getting home. That's a very pessimistic story, had i been a little more optimistic I would have seen a mother who despite the conflict we had been in sought to keep me off the streets and took the opportunity to do so. Leaving me in a household with a family that loves and cares for me deeply and did everything in there power to help me grow from the experience and even enjoy it, giving me what could be a whole new life seeded from a strong familial love. I wonder what it might have been like if that was the story I chose to tell myself.

As powerful as stories are I've found sometimes it doesn't even have to start from an experience. My father is a storyteller, he has a decent collection of them by now many of which include me. Some from before a time I was capable of remembering. But I remember his stories. A great deal of memories are once i created in my mind from the very stories i have hear. When I describe these memories back to my father they are accurate to the story but every other element is inconsistent with what happened, makes sense seeing as I don't actually have any memory of it.

Right now I'm facing something that fills me with both fear and wonder. After living here for nearly a decade i have found stagnation and struggle beyond what i have a solution for. So in the interest of my own growth i have chosen to move to maryland.

Now I think the biggest question is what story do i want to tell. Am I fleeing a place where despite how much I tried I wasn't able to much it work, going to a place where I had been imprisoned, or maybe I'm going from a place where i did a lot of good, made a lot of progress, and left a lot of stories to a place where i will be surrounded by new opportunities with a family that will support me in pursuing everything.

Whatever life I end up living I hope the memories I have gathered here I can craft into stories that will help me on my journey.