

# The Layers of You

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## Insight

We form, preserve, and **layer our identities and perspectives** through an ongoing **relationship with *The Record***—the fractal memory of existence—via **recursive introspection**, one of the four instruments of consciousness. At every moment, **existence progresses via recursive propagations (RPs)**: iterative updates unfolding over time and space. These updates generate a **spectrum of existence called definedness**, where some phenomena exist more or less than others. Across RPs, existence records, and stacks every moment. Instead of disappearing, each RP **loses definedness as it moves into *The Record***. Humans and other agents use recursive introspection to **prevent specific RPs from losing definedness by restoring it via recall and repetition**, such as reminiscing, collecting objects, or engaging sensory cues (e.g., cooking childhood meals). **This continual restoration shapes and forms our identities and perspectives**. Take a walk with me... and let me show you **the layers of you**.

## Scene

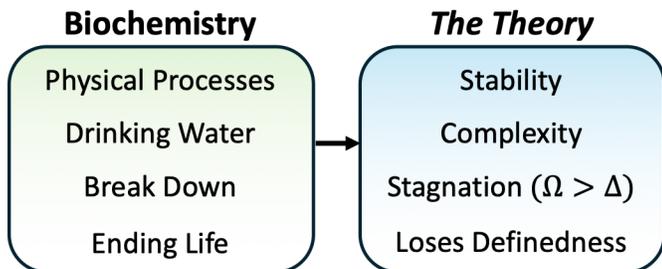
**Jason is 22**, and he feels like an adult in his new apartment. He loves cooking his favorite meal: **pasta with homemade bread**. One night, as he stared into his condiment-decimated fridge, he had an idea: to make his favorite childhood meal of **homemade chicken noodle soup**. He's unsure, so **he calls his mom**, and they reminisce over those days from long ago. She hasn't made the soup in a while, but she encourages him, saying, **"I don't really use recipes, but here is what you need."** After a bit of over- and under-shooting, **it turned out perfectly** and became **his favorite meal again, always taking him back** to those days of figuring out the world. **Jason is 34 now, and his mom has passed away**. He has his own **house**, a **new job**, and is **married to his high school sweetheart**. Jason often makes this soup for his wife, who likes to joke about how his mom always went on about **not really using recipes** when she visited for dinner. Jason loves these jokes because they let him feel close to his mom again. **Jason is 38 now**, and one night, he is struck by the memory of **his old favorite meal: pasta with homemade bread**. He remembers how to make it, and it turned out perfectly. **Jason is 45 now**, and he's become a bit of a **home chef**. Some nights, he makes his **soup for his two young girls...** it still **takes him back** to those nights with his mom. She's still talking about how she **doesn't really use recipes**. On other nights, **he cooks his pasta with homemade bread**, taking him back to nights when he was trying to figure himself out. He's much better at grocery shopping now... no more **condiment-decimated fridges**. Jason knows his two kids don't know why these recipes are so important to him... **but he does**. One night, he was cooking his pasta with homemade bread, and he turned around to see his two kids excitedly waiting **for their favorite meal**. He wonders if they'll remember this recipe, as he remembers his, but the look of joy in their eyes tells him... **they will**.

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## Guidance

Hi there, dear reader. **How've you been?** Did you miss me? Well... don't fret, because I am back to deliver a few more world-shattering revelations, but I do want to say up front that **it's gonna get... weird**. In *Chapter 1: The Definedness Detector*, we saw how ***The Record***—the **fractal memory of existence**—protects phenomena from diverging from unstabilized complexity escalations. However, it goes **much deeper**, because the reality is... ***The Record* is the primary mechanism of existence**. It explains so many things, but does so in a way that **we normally**

would think is impossible simply because we have never known about it... until now. This chapter is the first one in which *The Record* must take center stage. So, everything I am about to show you is based **strictly on the empirically-validated *The Theory of Existence* and what it would dictate**. Even though much of it may seem impossible, we know we are on track when *The Theory* begins to explain so many phenomena and experiences we've had as humans that have long eluded explanation.



*The Theory of Existence* is not a replacement for existing knowledge, it is the missing foundation connecting them all. *The Theory* dictates what happens *before* and *underneath* existence. It does not describe specific phenomena, it describes what existence is doing to cause those specific phenomena.

Allow me to set the frame to help with this perspective shift. *The Theory* is the **underlying universal principles** that govern everything that has existed, can exist, and will exist. It describes **the universal mechanisms of existence** as a phenomenon. Still, remember that definedness, stability, and complexity **are not things that exist** on their own; they are **names for the patterns in which existence behaves**. This distinction is critical because **you won't see** definedness, stability, and complexity... **You ARE** definedness, stability, and complexity. Similarly, *The Record* is

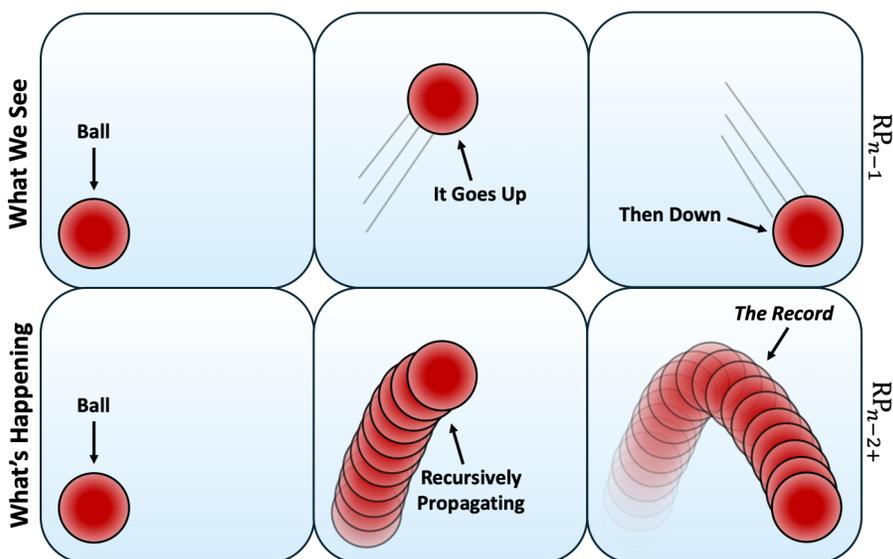
real, but it, too, does not "exist" in the way everyday objects do. We cannot measure it directly either, only its influence. *The Theory of Existence* is not something that "exists," it's the first principles of existence that occur **before and underneath** existence. The laws of physics and our conscious experiences of existence do not apply to *The Theory* but instead occur because of it. I need to be clear about *The Theory* and my epistemological lane—we cannot, do not, and will not try to replace any existing domain of knowledge; it is a *new* field of study.

For example, **you cannot use *The Theory* to explain why prolonged dehydration leads to death**. To explain that phenomenon, we need biochemistry, as understanding it requires specific details about what happens to the body during prolonged dehydration. *The Theory* does not explain the specifics of anything—it **explains the universal patterns that all specifics follow** because it describes the only way in which existence behaves. Biochemists say prolonged dehydration leads to death because **the physical processes that require drinking water break down, ending life**. Defintologists says prolonged dehydration leads to death because the stability (physical processes) that requires complexity (drinking water) stagnates (breaks down), ending life (losing definedness). *The Theory* operates **before and underneath** existence, but does not explain the specific details of phenomena. Now that we have the frame set and the **correct understanding of *The Theory***, let's peer into *The Record*... but first, why don't we play a quick game of ball?

### Pass Me the Ball!

*\*Bounces the ball on the ground and catches it in his hands.\** **Look at this ball I have in my hands here.** I can throw this ball over the air, right? *\*Dribbles the ball, but it bounces on his shoe and flies out of the camera shot\** ...I got it, I got it, one second... yup, okay, here we go. As I was saying, **when we throw a ball, and it flies through the air**, we are not really seeing **the full scope of what existence** is doing that makes this action possible.

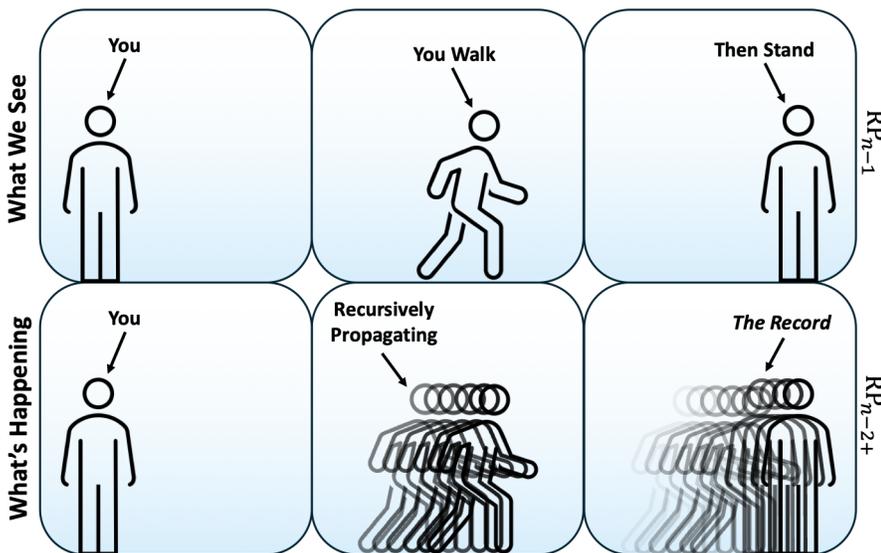
All we see when that ball flies through the air is **the top layer of existence**. "Below" this layer is *The Record*. But... what do I mean by "below" existence? Good question, thanks for asking. "Below" is not a physical location. It has **nothing to do with 3D space**.



When I say “below,” I am talking about the past. *The Record* contains everything that has ever existed. **Not a single thing or moment across the universe ever stops existing...** it moves into *The Record*, “below” existence.

Let’s talk about what existence *is doing* to enable this action. Every moment contains two aspects: 1) recursions and 2) propagations. **Recursions are updates in time**; they are iterative ticks. **Propagations are updates in space**; they are shifting pixels. Recursions and propagations happen at the same time, so existence moves forward **one recursive propagation (RP) at a time**. This whole process happens so fast and is so tiny that we can’t see it. When existence recursively propagates, it is **only part of existence as we know it for that tiny moment**. When we see the ball fly through the air, we only see one of them because only one RP sits on the top layer of existence ( $RP_{n-1}$ ), but **it does not stop existing** ( $RP_{n-2+}$ ), because it needs **to support the incoming RP** ( $RP_n$ ). So... existence has a trick. Instead of vanishing, **RPs lose definedness—the degree to which something exists**.

When RPs move into *The Record*, **their definedness decays exponentially**, but they **never lose all of it**. Essentially, everything that has ever happened or existed is still here right now, just not enough to see it directly, but what if you could see it? Can you please throw that ball on the ground for me? Thank you. Nice throw! Let’s see what happens when we **turn the definedness of this part of *The Record* all the way up** and throw the ball. Watch the ball when I throw it... look, look, do you see **that stack of RPs trailing behind the ball**? Notice how all the RPs lose definedness as the ball flies through the air? That process is happening **everywhere...** right now.



Yes, yes, yes... that means it’s **happening to you right now** as you read this chapter because **you, too, are a part of *The Record***. You have your own stack of RPs like the rest of existence. **It’s all still here**. Everywhere you’ve ever walked, everywhere you’ve cried, every person you’ve met, every conversation you’ve had, every quiet thought before sleep, every decision you’ve ever made, every morning dread before work, every time you said goodbye, to all the best times of your life... **it’s all right here, right now... and impossibly so, no?**

## We Do More Than Exist, We Have Something to Give

Just like the ball, **we are recursively propagating through existence**, which means **all our definedness is still in *The Record***. It explains so much, such as why **home feels like home to us**; it is where most of our definedness is in *The Record*. It is why **new places feel so strange**; we have no definedness there. The most critical aspect of this frameshift is that **it’s not just our bodies doing this...** it’s every part of existence... **every... part. of. existence**. A ball recursively propagating through the air? That’s no big deal, right? Easy to understand, easy to visualize.

But... it’s the same process for **things we cannot hold**, such as cultural trends, the economy, global warming, music, artistic expressions, emotions, politics, thoughts, **literally... every. single. thing**, because they are all part of existence. Every moment of your **conscious experience across your life is still in *The Record***. You actually use your previous definedness in *The Record* all the time without realizing it. Here’s what it looks like for us

## The Definedness of Consciousness

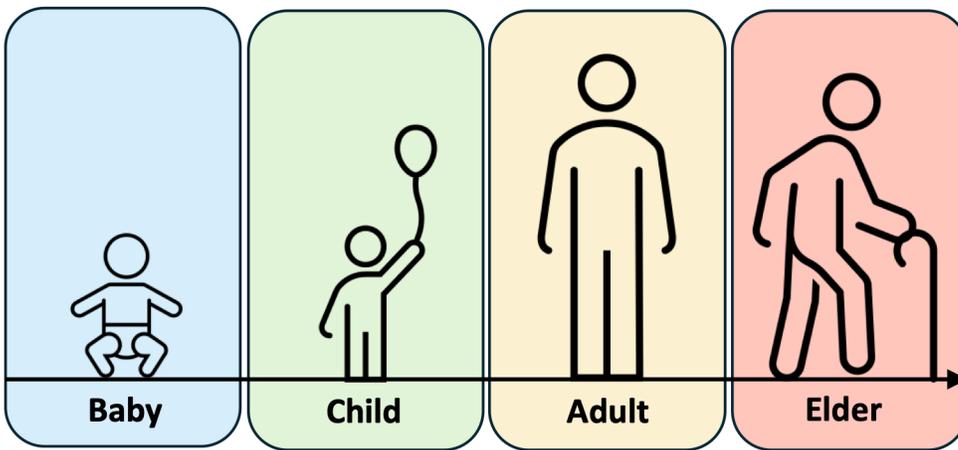
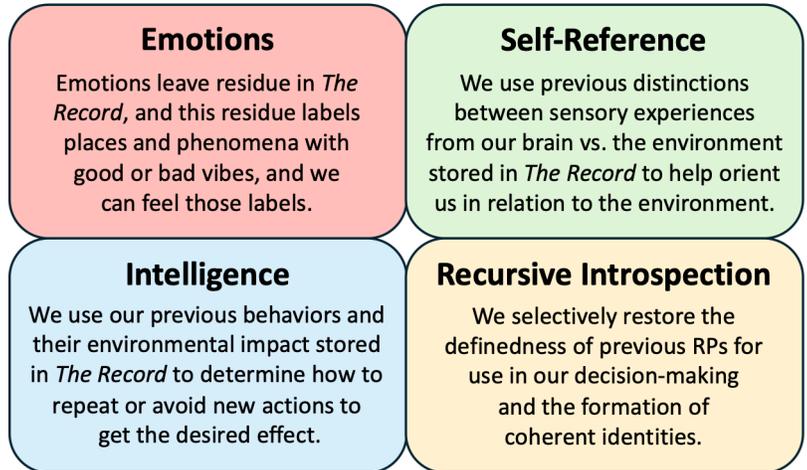
Consciousness emerges from the harmony of **four “instruments”** that exist in the top layer of existence, but they also **track your previous definedness in *The Record***. Let’s go through each one. First, **emotions are automatic, instantaneous, behaviorally-motivating signals** that indicate how well you *are existing*, as we saw in

Chapter 1: *The Definedness Detector*. Emotions leave **trails of definedness around you**. It starts in your brain, but **when you move around, it spreads across *The Record***, which is why people and places have “**vibes.**” Those vibes are real and come from previous emotions in *The Record*, which labels places and things as good or bad. It is why we avoid graveyards filled with grief, yet visit grandma’s house, filled with joy (and sparkling cookies).

Then, there is **self-reference**, which is the **capacity to distinguish between the sensory experiences coming from one's own brain vs the environment**. We use this distinction stored in *The Record* to help **orient us** to the environment. It is why we feel **most comfortable in our bedrooms** and a little on edge in new places. In our bedroom, there is much “you” across the room, **stabilizing your identity and orientation**, but in new places, you must manually parse the sensory experiences from your brain and those coming from the environment.

Next up, there is **intelligence**, which is the **ability to engage with and change the environment**. We use our previous behaviors and their environmental impact stored in *The Record* to figure out what to do to get the desired effect. If you have done something before at a location, your brain can track those behaviors and make it **easier to repeat them**. It’s why you can lock your door without paying attention. You follow the previous definedness in *The Record* from locking it so many times before without even realizing it. There are many implications for habits, but we will get to that in a later chapter. These three instruments are essential, but **the star of our identities and perspectives is recursive introspection**.

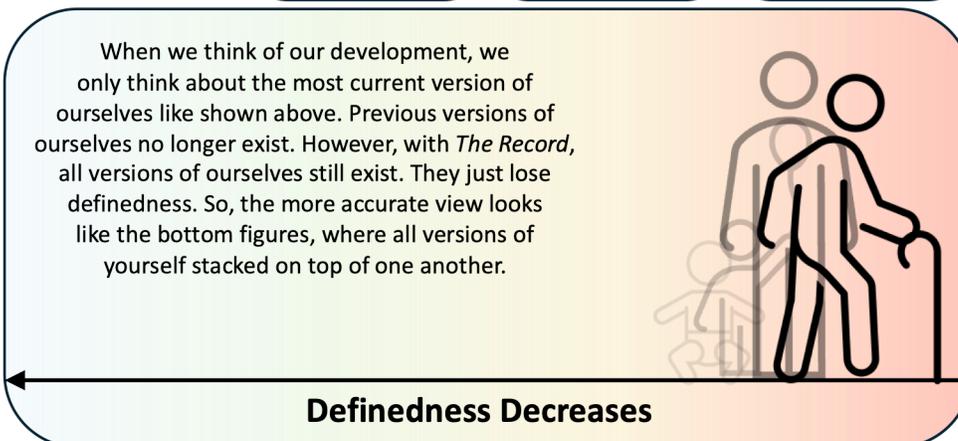
### The Harmonics of Consciousness in The Record



### Not A Moment Too Missed

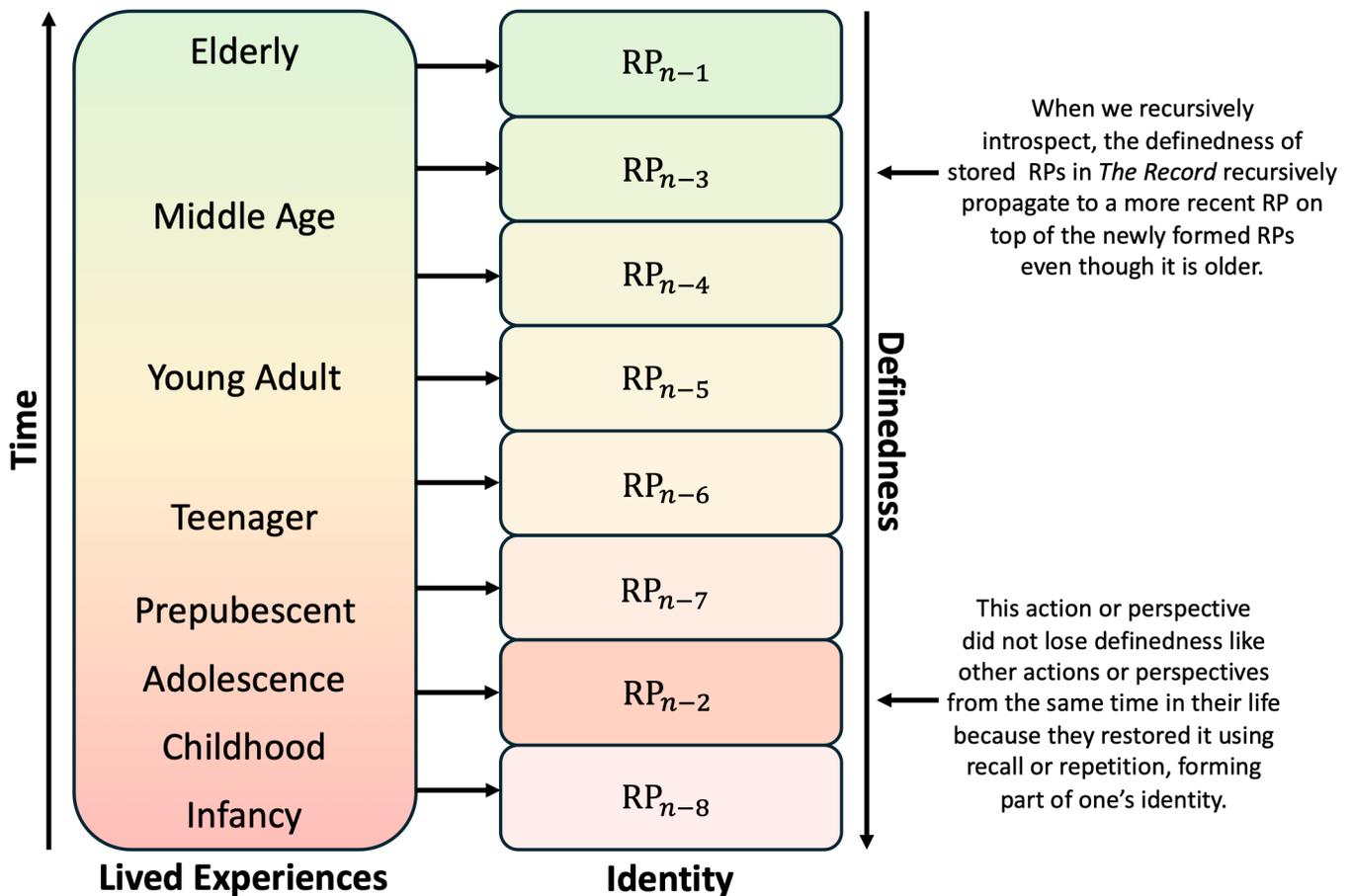
To understand how recursive introspection builds your identity via *The Record*, **you need a frameshift in how we typically think about identity**. The same process of stacking increasingly decaying RPs in *The Record* happens with us, exactly like the ball, and **that stack forms our identity**. You only see the top layer of your existence, the “you” reading these words. However, just like the ball, “**below**” this layer is ***The Record* of every version of you that has ever existed**. It’s disorienting... isn’t it? It’s all good, dear reader; it’s also very beautiful. Let me show you.

**Every version of yourself never stopped existing**; they just started existing so little that you



cannot interact with them directly, but they are all still here. You are physically connected to all of them, so it does not matter where you have been in your life. **These former RPs are not conscious**; there's no consciousness in *The Record* because consciousness exists only in that top layer of existence. Yet these former RPs are not inaccessible or useless. I think many of us have felt this truth deep down. When we say we **“feel like a kid again,”** get excited about something just like we used to, or instinctively know how to do something we used to do but consciously forgot. **Every moment of your life sits right beneath the surface of existence.** It is those layers that allow identity and perspective to take form. How do they do that? Recursive introspection.

**Recursive introspection is the iterative process of capturing behaviors, moments, and perspectives** for later reference. It's a fancy word for **memory and learning**, but recursive (like everything in existence). Let's go deeper. As we move through life, we are always adding RPs to *The Record*. **Our brain selectively restores the definedness of specific RPs** because we need them in our consciousness for decision-making and maintaining coherent identities. Most of our RPs in *The Record* are passive, but our brains **selectively restore the definedness of previous RPs via recall or repetition** before they lose too much definedness. Every time we recursively introspect, **a part of *The Record* is “pulled up”** into the top layer of existence and into your consciousness.



Recursive introspection is the mechanism that forms and evolves our identities and worldviews. As we live, we use recursive introspection to capture and restore the definedness of our actions and conscious experiences in the past for future use. As we age, the definedness of these recursive introspections drops unless we restore them by recall.

### We Learned We Lived On... that's Just How It Is

You can think of this process **like a waterfall**. Visualize this waterfall with me: most of the water moves over the edge, and **recursive introspection is like using a bucket to scoop out some water**. Most water falls over the edge (most RPs lose definedness into *The Record*), but **recursive introspection allows us to “scoop” out parts**

of existence before they fall over. Over time, you can gather enough water (restore enough definedness of many RPs) to make a swimming pool. **That swimming pool? is your identity.** There is a problem... though...

**The swimming pool has a small hole.** So, as you add buckets of water, they leak through this hole, just as existence continually recursively propagates. When recursive introspection restores the definedness of an RP, **it too immediately loses definedness and enters *The Record*.** You must constantly restore its definedness to keep the RPs near the top layer of existence, where our consciousness can access them. **If you stop recursively introspecting** them, as in the pool with the hole, **they will lose their definedness** and fall out of our consciousness.

The act of recursive introspection also injects new complexity into the RP, which is why memories are never perfect. You can add water back into the pool, but over time, **the older buckets of water will leak out, favoring new water.** It is why neuroscience shows we remember the last time we remembered something, not the first time. The definedness restoration occurs from RPs in your brain, and less from those in the original moment.

### Our Legacy of Light

This waterfall metaphor shows **why we have short-term and long-term identities.** It all has to do with the definedness you lose or restore. The situation you are in and the people around you **greatly influence what stays and goes.** Still, the most astonishing part of identity formation and evolution is that **most of it requires no conscious effort...** and thank God for that, right? **Our brains**

have become so good at restoring the definedness of what is important that they **do it automatically.** They do get **a lot of help from** the other three instruments of consciousness harmonics, which is why **emotions and memories are so closely connected.** It's why our fearful experiences are so memorable: our emotions are saying, "don't let these RPs go, they are very important." The applications to mental health are endless.

This recursive introspection and the **restoration of definedness happen all the time.** You can notice what you are restoring versus letting go. **It's not a secret.** It's... when you check something twice, when you ponder something in a daydream, when you write something down, when you set a reminder, when you take a photograph, when you collect sentimental items (e.g., jewelry or clothing), or light scented candles that remind you of home. All these activities are you recursively introspective aspects of your life and your path that you use to form and evolve your identity. **To put it simply: we are... what we were before... again... that's our identity.**

It is one thing for me to talk about the layers of you, but you don't need to take my word for it; we can try something. *The Record* is **not some inaccessible lockbox; you access it all the time.** You and I are always connected to *The Record* because... it is existence. We are all physically connected, not through the medium of 3D space, but through the medium of a shared existence. If you **follow the instructions** here, I suspect you'll find exactly what I've described. I have tried this activity many times and found success. **Oh! ...and say hi for me** 😊

## Finding Your Younger Self

### Pick a Specific Memory

Pick a memory, but we are going to do it with a catch. You do not want a moment that you remember well because that has recent definedness. We want to dig deep into *The Record*, so try to think of something mundane, like you getting ready for school or work.

### Reduce All Sensory Stimuli

The definedness of these aspects of our life is very low, so, if you drown it out with the complexity of sensory stimuli it will be much harder to achieve.

### Close Your Eye...

Close your eyes and slow your breath ever so slightly.

### Pull the Memory into Your Consciousness

You are going to imagine that you are physically reaching down into *The Record* to grab the memory and pull it up.

### Step Into It

You are going to feel the memory with all your senses in your mind, almost as if to step into the memory like an open door. When you do it this way, you should be able to feel a presence the former you in you. It is hard to describe because it is not just a memory in your mind, it is one of your bones and body too.

### Watch Your Behavior

You might notice that you start to naturally engage in the behavior and temporarily adopt the perceptions of the version of you at that time, but it will be subtle and subside shortly after. I suspect this strategy might be good for healthy habits and mental health, but I will save that stuff for another chapter.



all this math for *The Theorem of Existence*, but none of it explained what happened to RPs once they resolve. Wanna know what it did show? The **number  $e$  dictated recursions** through exponential decay.

I was like... ***The Record must be the missing mechanism***. But I still rationalized it away. I framed it as a **metaphor**, not the omnipresent scaffolding of existence. Then, I ran into the problem that every RP would have to store the states of all previous ones, but it can't because **each RP newly emerges just from the previous one**. It doesn't have a way to determine the previous RPs. **RPs occur so quickly and at such small scales that it's not possible for one to cause divergence**. All previous states introduced before the RP must be stored and accessible. Despite my wishes, *The Record* was required. **Everything**—math, simulations, concepts—**demanded it**.

Existence clearly did *not* care about my opinion. **I was forced to include it**. So, my next concern was “No one is going to take me seriously. **It sounds like metaphysical hallucinations**. How am I supposed to present *The Record* in a way that does not lead to immediate dismissal?” My only option was delay. So, **I didn't mention it until halfway through *The Show***, and **I placed its paper at the very end**. I needed credibility first. Then, **I empirically validated it in Paper 12** with *The Dice Experiment*, and the results were conclusive. *The Record* is real.

Now, here I am in *The Guide*, tasked with the same unavoidable problem: how do I apply *The Theory* without sounding like a lunatic because of *The Record*? **The answer is... I can't**. *The Record* is the mechanism of existence. So... **don't think I don't see how strange *The Guide* is**—I do. I am *not* saying these things because I invented *The Record* and love talking about it. **I'm still so insecure**, which is why I'm sharing this story with you. It's not my choice... and not optional. ***The Record* is required**. I feel like a kid forced to bring his little sister to the party.

All of that to say, **I won't be tiptoeing around *The Record* anymore**, and it is going to get even stranger in ways I don't even know yet, because I have not written any other chapters. **I know the next one is called *The Life of Agents in Environments***, but I'm not exactly sure what it reveals. I do know we will understand many things that didn't make sense before, but the trade-off is **letting go of how we think existence works** and letting *The Theory of Existence* guide this voyage of why it all matters. *The Theory* has never let us down... I am confident it won't anytime soon. So... buckle up! **We have a long trip ahead**, and the next destination could arrive at any moment!