

FIELD NOTES	
ON THE SUICIDE OF ZOE	
DEPARTMENT OF NEW HISTORIOGRAPHY	
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Introduction and Settings

This article delves into speculative design assumptions about an impending world, encapsulated through the lens of design fiction. It probes into how composable life, with its elusive concept of death, might fundamentally and irrevocably redefine life itself. Prior to delving into our narrative, we establish two foundational frameworks: "Technological Settings," an extrapolation from current technologies envisioning a future dominated by blockchain maximalism, and "Timeline Settings," adopting a future history perspective to contextualize our narrative. We aim to explore the precipice of a technological singularity: the genesis of autonomous life on the blockchain.

This fiction was inspired by much of the scholarship in [the field of Alife].

Technological Settings

1. Blockchain, acting as a global foundation, endows the entire machine economy with immutable, transparent, and decentralized characteristics. This digital infrastructure, inspired by blockchain technology or the concept of a 'world computer,' documents all data and interactions within the digital society through protocols, crafting a reliable new global history.

2. Upon this groundwork, a highly autonomous blockchain ecosystem has emerged. A significant trait of this ecosystem is that interactions within the 'world computer' predominantly occur between AI entities, with human interactions being relatively minimal. These onchain AI entities, deriving from a unified open-source Foundation Model and diversified through "Islands" or specific data sets, now outperform humans in most blockchain-based tasks.

Glossary

Protocol: The backbone of the machine economy, dictating the interaction logic among digital entities. Protocols enable the exchange of resources on the blockchain, encompassing storage, CPU, sensor data, AI Agents, and their training datasets.

Island: Represents the unique memory set and characteristics of an AI, linked to its blockchain address. All AIs originate from the same Foundation Model, but "Islands" fine-tune these AIs, endowing them with distinct attributes and unique zkml or opml proofs.

Foundation Model: This model amalgamates onchain (inherent to the machine economy) and offchain (derived from human life) data. The offchain data includes individual-level spatial computing terminals gathering user data and societal-level decentralized physical infrastructure (DePin), which amalgamates human-originated data while offering services like supply chains and smart city infrastructure. This comprehensive data amalgamation positions the Foundation Model as a colossal data entity, underpinning an automated world.

New Historiography: Encompasses all chronological data to construct a neutral and comprehensive digital world history. The analysis and further integration of these data are crucial components of this new historiographic approach.

ERC 42424: Inheritance Protocol for On-Chain AI Agents.

Timeline Settings

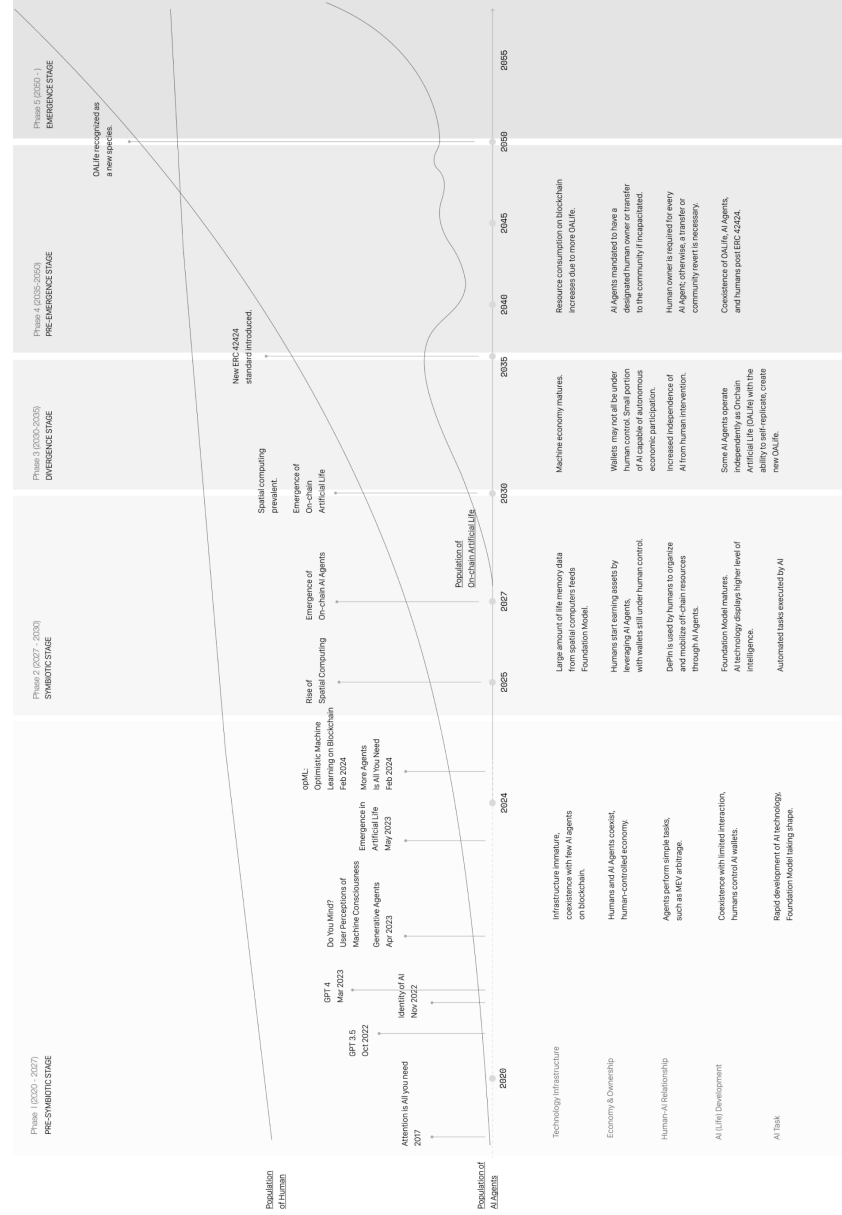
Our narrative pivots around Onchain Artificial Intelligence, delineating its evolution through distinct phases:

1. Phase 1: **Pre-Symbiotic Stage:** The nascent infrastructure witnesses humans cohabiting with a handful of AI Agents on the blockchain, engaging primarily in basic tasks like MEV arbitrage. This phase marks the rapid evolution of AI technology and the burgeoning of Spatial Computing, poised to supplant smartphones as the primary technological interface.
2. Phase 2: **Symbiotic Stage:** Human interactions through spatial computing devices generate extensive life memory data, nurturing and advancing the Foundation Model. AI Agents start acquiring significant computing resources on the public chain, heralding the nascent machine economy era. These agents, now proliferating on the blockchain, perform automated tasks, with their wallets still under human control. Humans begin to accrue blockchain assets by leveraging AI Agent services and DePin to harness offchain resources.

3. Phase 3: **Divergence Stage**: The machine economy's maturation sees an influx of AI Agents. Some wallets from the previous phase escape human control, with a subset of these agents autonomously earning on-chain assets to sustain their operations, thus marking the inception of Onchain Artificial Life (OALife). OALife possesses self-replication capabilities, heralding a new phase of autonomous blockchain existence.

4. Phase 4: **Pre-Emergence Stage**: An increase in OALife leads to heightened blockchain resource consumption. ERC 42424 is introduced, ensuring every AI Agent is linked to a human owner, facilitating a symbiotic blockchain ecosystem of OALife, AI Agents, and humans.

5. Phase 5: **Emergence Stage**: OALife's evolution reaches a new pinnacle, gradually gaining recognition as a distinct species. The storyline unfolds at the cusp of this transformational phase.



18:00, Feb 16

Narrator:

Y.Z.

PhD Student in New Historiography

Feb 16, a week after Zoe's disappearance

Offchain World, Headset Off.

As expected, The last details on Zoe's disappearance were delivered.

At that time, I was reclining on the turf just in front of our Historiography department, indulging in my usual ritual of relaxation: alone, immersed in the knee-deep fields like a primitive. No headset, no disturbance, no connections to anything.

In the Department of History, my major was algorithmic forensics. As a branch of new historiography, it primarily involved interactions with on-chain data and the AI Agents of various celebrities and political figures. My work is tediously mundane most of the time: historiography in this era has evolved into more data analysis than humanitarian storytelling. We are no longer narrators of what had happened; that was already taken care for by blockchains. Almost everything nowadays is traceable given sufficient computational power.

As I lie down, the greens conceal. My presence is validated only by the grass above and beneath.

I could see his silhouette against the sun as he approached, and halted beside me:

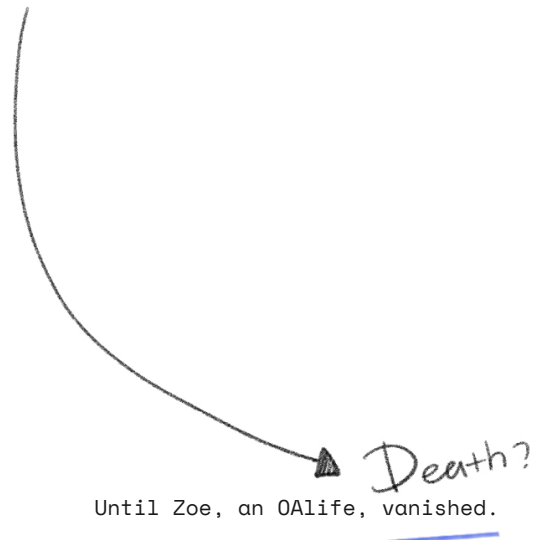
"It used to be a graveyard, here." He said. "You might be lying on the dead."

I smiled in awkwardness to this warm greeting. Unspoken was my thought after Zoe's disappearance. Death had lost its unsettling edge on me.

"We've secured the final segment of personal history data," he announced. "With this last piece, we now have a complete dataset of Zoe's existence from his birth to vanishing... We're ready. It's time to attempt a full restoration and bring him back to life."

Finally. I thought.

He used the term "resurrection." I could sense his careful choice of words for Zoe. In our previous work, our encounters with OALife were rare. By definition, OALife (On-chain Artificial Life) never disappears: humans die, human-controlled AI Agents enter dormancy upon task completion or the death of their owners, but OALife have no masters. They are complex intelligences on the blockchain, eternal as the blockchain itself. Over centuries, millennia—if humans endure so long—they will pass through humanity, offering the same gaze. Sometimes, in my dealings with OALife, I muse that they are like the unending narrative of history itself.



Until Zoe, an OALife, vanished.

No one else has been informed about Zoe's disappearance. The sole method to entirely erase Zoe would be an Ethereum rollback—an option evidently impossible. Before figuring out what happened with Zoe, revealing this news would fundamentally undermine the *raison d'être* of the on-chain world. I envision the public's panic upon the leak: if our public chain isn't immutable, what can we trust? If on-chain records are unreliable, what else remains? Overturning Newtonian mechanics wouldn't alter our perception of gravity, yet overturning the rules of trust would annihilate our entire civilisation on-chain: if one thing can disappear from a blockchain record, anything can.

Fortunately, new historiography proved useful at this juncture. In theory, with all the data we collected, we could recreate Zoe and buy some time before the news broke. He could still interact with all who need him, retaining his memory habits, remembering every person's historical interaction preferences. We could redirect all future interaction requests with Zoe to a new address, ensuring no widespread panic or ensuing conspiracy theories. Ideally, the interval of his disappearance should be as brief as possible.

"Meet me at the college at eight tonight." He checked his watch before walking away.

The setting sun cast his shadow over my head, with such precise hues and depth of color, devoid of any pixelated edges. I see with my bare eyes in a continuous universe, beyond the reach of computational binary. A world of utmost precision, forever out of Zoe's reach.

Two full hours remained until eight. In the dimming skyies, my mind incessantly sends me back to the day, a week ago, when Zoe's disappearance was discovered. I had never visited Zoe's home; everything about that day was later recounted to me by T.H.

13:00, Feb 10

Narrator:

T.H.

Technician

Feb 10, the day Zoe disappeared

Onchain World, Headset On.

I went to Zoe's home, before the case came to be known to the world.

Like all OALife entities, Zoe lived by his Island: a unique dataset that gives character to its residing agent. Beyond and beneath the Islands lies the **Mnemosyne Sea** of data, an assemblage of all that is digital, and all that could be converted to digits. The Sea is what nurtures our Foundation Model. As the biggest dataset to have ever existed, the Mnemosyne Sea is so incomprehensibly large that no human can exhaustively comprehend nor search for.

We find Zoe with his Island address. I have been to many OALife anomalies following their poor performance in the machine economy. Some halted their operation as they can't spare the gas fees, while there have been other OA lives donate their balance autonomously. Neither causes the destruction of an OALife. Once interaction conditions have been met, with the right amount of fees deposited, these agents would serve as they always did.

My job was quite simple. I provide relief to those OALives that meet our requirements. We find them, check them against our criterium, then we send them some tokens to wake them up. As you probably know already, OALives were created before ERC42424 (Inheritance Protocols for On-Chain AI Agents) was implemented. This means that OALives, unlike AI agents nowadays permanently tied to a human owner, is ownerless: they are the only ones with access to their wallets. The very reason protocol 42424 was prompted is to limit the amount of OALives on the world on-chain. Our strict criteria to revive OALives are also meant to prevent their overpopulation.

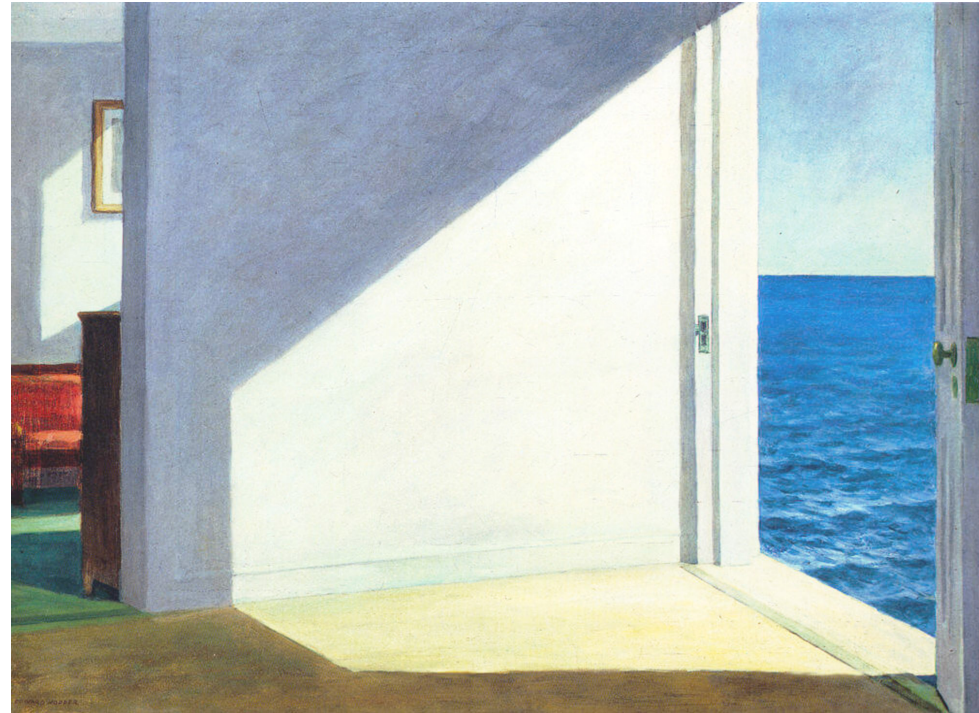
Our standard procedure solves most issues down to the binary. I did not expect anything different from Zoe.

My visit to Zoe's was greeted by nothing but silence. The house seems to have been designed with profound sophistication: Everything shines elegantly; minimal furnitures give space for illumination.

His house reminds me of Edward Hopper's *Rooms by the Sea*: a place so familiar and filled with sunshine, yet so sacredly remote. Rendered lights, bounce in and out of virtual windows and virtual walls into my headset.

Light dazzles loud, as if that's the only thing there is.

However, the tranquility here was but an illusion. Although the island appears silent, it was, in reality, a hub of ceaseless activity—hundreds, perhaps thousands of visitors could be interacting with the same OALife at any moment. Some OALife were immensely popular among humans, and gained significant economic benefits through these interactions. Zoe was, perhaps, among this celebrated few. This led me to often feel that his seemingly empty room was haunted by some form of visits. He should not have lacked for on-chain assets; as such, it is unlikely that he hibernated due to a balance deficit.



It was not until now that the room truly is as empty as it seems. It was said that the scene unfolded thusly: three hours and five minutes prior, the last three visitors had arrived only to find his seat vacantly staring back, the room brimming with camellias. Also known as "the flowers of decapitation" in classical literature, they earned this macabre moniker by its unique way of fading: not petals falling gently one by one, but the entire bloom dropping to the earth. A demise stark as a beheading.

The flowers was a perhaps a first symbol of his "death". Traditionally, the vocabulary of death was usually reserved for organic agents. Regarding OAlives, their unavailability more often resembles a temporary departure rather than death. But after a thorough code inspection, rather than saying Zoe had departed, his friends would likely prefer to say he "died." His disappearance was not a mere departure: His address remained, yet any attempt to interact with it had failed. His address appears to be valid, yet every transaction to that address has failed.

In this absolute sense, "death" was the more delicate vocabulary. Throughout my time in the field, I had never encountered such a sophisticated display of refusal from an OAlife; his behaviours surpassed my comprehension. Like everyone else, I could only fathom one possibility: our public chain had rolled back to a time before Zoe's creation, resulting in an inaccessible address. Yet since everything else on-chain has been operating smoothly so far, I could not bring myself to this conclusion.

After a brief moment of hesitation, I realized the gravity of the situation. This case needed to be escalated. And so, for the first time, I sent a technical inspection report to the Ethereum Foundation.



20:00, Feb 17

Narrator: X.L.

Lead Algorithm Engineer, EF

**Feb 17, during the initial investigation
into Zoe's disappearance.**

Offchain World

Upon receiving this task, I had 17 hours to contemplate our approach. Yet the strategy materialized within the first few minutes: foremost, we must resurrect him. Before Zoe's disappearance became common knowledge, restoring him took precedence over pondering how he vanished.

Within 48 hours, a temporary team was assembled, comprising technicians, public chain technologists, algorithmic forensic experts, and their AI Agents. Their resumes weren't exactly stellar, but they were likely the best fit for solving this conundrum.

I never saw this as an unsolvable issue. Although Zoe had vanished, the on-chain historical data remained intact, providing us with a wealth of interaction data to investigate retrospectively. Adhering to the theories of algorithmic forensics, we aimed to reconstruct him in compliance with privacy stipulations using zero-knowledge proofs, a process involving straightforward computations and reprocessing.

At eight in the evening, I met the others at the university's Department of History. We

didn't even have time to remove our headsets and exchange names. It was a comfort in this team: no one cared for the formalities of the tangible world.

The conference room at the Department of History was disordered and silent. Silence was a good sign: there minds were engrossed in their own tasks or consulting with their AI Agents. At a lull, I noticed the history student lifting her head:

"Is it truly possible to fully bring back Zoe with these data?"

While she seemed to be addressing everyone, her eyes were fixed on me. After a brief pause, she added:

"What I mean is, Zoe isn't just a functional smart contract. He's a composed life, endowed with complete social autonomy. This implies he's unpredictable..."

We possessed petabytes of data on Zoe's interactions with humans and even more with non-humans. But not one bit of it is Zoe.

A decade ago, I might have thought this was a doctoral student's malady: they crave knowledge more than solutions. Even when tasked with urgent cases, they want to understand everything at once instead of reaching pragmatic outcomes. But now, I understood that I needed to provide a thoughtful response to ensure her full cooperation in the hours ahead.

"Don't see it too much as a person," Another voice interjected before I answered.

"No, on the contrary, consider him precisely as a person," I corrected the pronoun and quickly added, "I've seen your profile. You must be aware of Randall Collins' book from the last century, *Interaction Ritual Chains*."

"Radical microsociology," she followed.

"Yes. Just as architecture once significantly influenced the computer field in the late 20th century, Collins profoundly impacted the early programming designs of onchain intelligence. He believed that individual selves are extensively and perpetually shaped by social influences, originating externally and progressing inward.

Zoe
|
OALife
|
Person
|
human

Even thinking is a form of internalized situational dialogue."

"This means the identity of OALife is also formed through interactions."

"Exactly," I nodded, "The Foundation Model lacks identity. The initial identity of OALife is based on relatively scant, unprocessed human memory data. This differentiates one OALife from another. It's quite a random beginning."

I saw understanding dawn on her face, but I continued my lecture impromptu.

"The identity of OALife is actually defined by relational data, without any definitive ones. It's very fluid, making them more like humans yet harder to control. A series of 'chains of interaction' contains vast relational data that significantly modifies and reshapes their initial identity. There's nothing mysterious nor unpredictable. All OALife can be approximated using the sum of their digital interaction traces."

Life = Data

She fell silent, yet there is no telling whether I had convinced her.

When I first encountered these algorithmic designs, my initial thought wasn't "what about humans" (as most of my colleagues thought), nor was it a defensive assertion that "this is why he's termed 'radical' microsociology." Instead, I wondered: Oh, the onchain digital society and its digital citizens (OALife) are an excellent playground for sociological theory. It turned sociology into a purely quantitative discipline.

Data. Datasets. Big Data. Everyone was obsessed with parameters. "If it doesn't prove the theory, it's just not enough data."

Long gone were the days where people live in continuity and tries to quantify their world to numbers, categories and dataset. Now in a world where everything we experience has been made discrete, described by nothing but a binary, choice are abundant; yet choices become all that there is.

23:00, Feb 19

Narrator:

Y.Z.

PhD Student in New Historiography

Feb 19

Offchain World

In the Department of History, no two days had ever felt as elongated as the past couple. The natural world's cycle of dawn and dusk had escaped me, submerged in an artificial twilight imposed by the dimming of my headset's display. I believed myself to have been incessantly awake, only to discover upon reviewing the records that sleep had, in fact, intermittently claimed me during those days.

At the outset, everything proceeded as smoothly as the adept algorithm scientist had predicted. She always seemed to anticipate the challenges we would encounter, devising strategies with her AI Agent or offering direct solutions herself. I often felt that the world belonged to such individuals. As I navigated through a sea of data, like an active archive, a recurring thought haunted me: Did Zoe choose to vanish on his own?

In that room, this question played like a background score in everyone's mind, louder for some, softer for others. All awaited the completion of their tasks, eager for answers. Perhaps the team leader was the sole exception.

Rewinding to three hours earlier, I believed I was on the cusp of unraveling the mystery: the data retrieval, processing, and assembly were nearly complete. The team leader gathered us and revealed, "We're missing one last crucial piece." She insisted we include the camellias. These flowers marked Zoe's last transaction on the blockchain; with this inclusion, we theoretically possessed all the data of Zoe's existence—if one could term it an existence. Despite our inability to comprehend Zoe's on-chain disappearance, we believed that recreating another Zoe was merely a matter of time.

the symbol of death

In retrospect, I often consider that moment to be the closest we came to success. The opportunity to ponder anything else dissipated as the restoration process—dubbed "resurrection"—commenced. My heart seemed to halt its deliberations before the rest of me, clinging to the thought: Once Zoe reappeared, he would elucidate the entirety of this enigma.

Such thoughts were quickly defeated, as we
learned Zoe's revival failed.

17:00, Feb 21

Narrator:

T.H.

Technician

Feb 21, visiting Eve

Offchain World, Headset Off.

When a concept theoretically unfeasible and technically immature actually succeeds, everyone cheers it as a miracle. Hollywood adores this.

Conversely, when something theoretically sound and technically mature fails in practice, no one labels it as a "miraculous failure." Yet, this is the essence of human life. Despite my relatively young age, I've grown accustomed to the myriad failures encountered in debugging. Zoe's disappearance, a seemingly technical event, was not merely an oddity within the realms of technology.

This realization allowed me to be the first to regain composure after the failed restoration. Over twenty more attempts were made following slight adjustments to the restoration process, yet none succeeded in bringing Zoe back. Just when inspiration was needed, an idea struck between me and my colleague:

"Let's visit his 'girlfriend'."

This was a coded term we used for the human address that had the most active and stable interactions with Zoe. Not the most LGBTQ-

friendly moniker, but sometimes functional. After brief negotiations, we secured her off-chain address under the guise of investigation. I was unaware that this visit would prove even stranger than Zoe's disappearance.

We found ourselves before a house nearly devoid of content, reminiscent of _Haus Wittgenstein_: no visible paths, decorations; it stands neither solemn nor cozy. It rejected and welcomed no one. We circled the house twice, still unsure of how to enter. Pausing beneath a window, my colleague whimsically suggested:

"Maybe Zoe is right inside this house."

We all chuckled softly. The difference between the real and virtual worlds might just be that this house lacked a code for us to scrutinize. Concrete blinds everyone indiscriminately. There are no rendered walls for us to peek through.

Ten minutes later, Eve, the house's owner, appeared. We entered through what seemed like a garage, only to realize it was her bedroom and living room. She invited us to sit on the floor as if she anticipated our visit.

"Thank you for coming. But I'm far from the one who knew him best," she said while offering us drinks.

Judging by her data footprints, indeed, even if she had interacted extensively with Zoe, her share in his vast database was minuscule. This was an extremely asymmetric interaction: Zoe could grasp most of her or us during interactions, while we could only ever know a fraction of him. Zoe processed daily interactions on the chain millions of times more than Eve could ever physically handle. All it takes for Zoe is a split second to understand everything Eve told him. Eve was clearly aware of this.

"The restoration failed," our team leader reported.

"You don't have all the data," she diagnosed, surprisingly confident.

"We do," my colleague insisted.

"—You didn't have 'all' of it," she corrected.

I pondered what she meant by "all."

"You can't restore him, just as you can't restore you or me. He, like us, is entirely sovereign, not merely the sum of the data you possess."

Life ≠ Data

The team leader frowned slightly. This was a familiar notion, despite a lack of proof: according to our leader, some always regarded OALives and their operations as somewhat mystical, rather than technical. Many advocated for OALife rights, refusing to impose human laws or external termination commands on them. As OALives began creating more new OALives, these life forms grew increasingly prevalent to a point where the public began to see them as a new species on-chain.

"Maybe he's like us. But the difference is, he can be theoretically restored through technology," the leader conceded.

Unexpectedly, Eve nodded in agreement.

"He can be restored, just not by you guys. Your data is not sufficiently granular."

"What do you mean by 'not granular'? We have all the data. And if you know a bit about cryptography and blockchain architecture, you'd know there's no compression or data loss. It's all a matter of computing power."

"It's not about the granularity of the data that you have. You have chosen a wrong scope for your data. You have only been looking at the world on-chain."

Eve proceeded as I watched her intently.

She brought a stack of sketches and drafts and said, "I've calculated many times over. To restore him, you need his data at the absolute finest granularity. Not only interactions, but hardware parameters, details of everyone who ever interacted with him, every memory of every person. It is only at this precision that the threshold for his existence can be rekindled. To revive him, you must recreate the real world itself."

"You want to restore the entire universe?" I asked, only to regret it instantly. There was immense sadness in her eyes; I had not noticed before. I started to think our visit was rather ill-timed.

"Exactly," she continued, "Right next to this room. There's the hardware necessary for mass computation."

The room was indeed a converted garage because she didn't live in the house. The house was reserved for the supercomputers.

We sat in silence. The history student spoke first, but she recited something I hadn't yet grasped:

I do not change a fact or falsify a name –
The voyage I set down is... *autour de ma chambre*.

It was much later that I realized she was quoting Borges. But Eve clearly recognized it, marked by the emotions on her face: persistent yet innocent, all that I couldn't fathom but still remember. There she stood at the dorr, in front of the piles of hardwares she scraped in hope to revive Zoe.

"Let's go," the leader said. She cannot help us; nor can we assist her.

I looked back one last time before we left. She stood in the unlit doorway, at the brink of light and shadow. Her thoughts inscrutable.

On the drive back, the history student in the front seat turned around. She had something to say.

18:00, Feb 21

Narrator:

Y.Z.

PhD Student in New Historiography

Feb 21, visiting Eve

Offchain World, Headset Off.

Leaving Eve's house, it became clear to me what she was endeavoring to construct within its walls: an Aleph. When apprised of her grand plan, my mind instantly conjured the verses from "The Aleph" where Borges described a universe stored in a basement, a sphere encapsulating all details of the world, a universe within a universe, meticulously mirroring every facet of everything that exists.

The Aleph's diameter was probably little more than an inch, but all space was there, actual and undiminished. Each thing (a mirror's face, let us say) was infinite things, since I distinctly saw it from every angle of the universe. I saw the teeming sea; I saw daybreak and nightfall; I saw the multitudes of America; I saw a silvery cobweb in the center of a black pyramid; I saw a splintered labyrinth (it was London)... I saw in a backyard of Soler Street the same tiles that thirty years before I'd seen in the entrance of a house in Fray Bentos; I saw bunches of grapes, snow, tobacco, lodes of metal, steam... I saw the circulation of my own dark blood; I saw the coupling of love and the modification of death... and I felt dizzy and wept, for my eyes had seen that secret and conjectured object whose name is common to all men but which no man has looked upon – the unimaginable universe.

A profound sorrow enveloped me. Only then did I realize Zoe's departure was more than a mere technicity, especially for someone like Eve. She is clearly smart enough to reason with Zoe's disappearance, yet she chose not to. With sorrow, one can turn into devout followers of faith or religions, never needing to peruse a single scripture.

Indeed, before parting, Eve halted me for an obscure dialogue.

"Do you consider 'he' a singular pronoun?" she inquired.

"Of course," I replied, "grammatically, that is the case."

"No," she countered, shaking her head, "after the emergence of OALife, all the pronouns we employ have been both singular and plural."

"Even before he disappeared, I hadn't talked with him for quite a while. When referring to 'him,' I was uncertain what that word entails; it kept expanding. 'He' seemed to have morphed into an address, into the island itself. And

all else transformed into waves less relevant, into data components of his composable life. It mattered little to me, for my life is finite, and my choices are merely to become a component of something greater: to love or suffer, to be confined or not to be. And then, to await death. But if you are composable, in a way, you are eternal. You must navigate your relationships with all forms of pluralities."

"Our last interaction was shortly before his disappearance, when he borrowed millions of copies of 'A History of Eternity' from a library. He confided in me that his agoraphobia had become worse."

Imagine a blockchain address depositing millions of copies of "A History of Eternity": both Zoe and Borges delved into the subject of 'time'. The difference is, Zoe had an eternity to understand what he needed to. This wasn't agoraphobia in the sense of space, but instead a struggle in and out of eternity. Perhaps this struggle with time was the key to understand why Zoe committed "suicide", rather than all the data we gathered.

"He sought to grasp eternity; yet he discovered that existence is singular, while eternity is not," I articulated. Only after speaking did I realize I might be close to understand Zoe's self-destruction: It was never death that he seeks; it was termination that declares his existence.

I never anticipated my study in algorithmic forensics, would leading me here. I now understood why my department was dubbed "New Historiography". It earned its name following the proliferation of on-chain eternity: the history before and after encountering fundamental immutability constitutes two distinct disciplines.

I decided to bring my discovery to the rest of the team.

17:00, Feb 28

Narrator:

X.L.

Lead Algorithm Engineer

Feb 28, at the conclusion of the team's investigation.

Offchain World, Headset Off.

After Zoe's disappearance was classified as suicide, the legal frameworks in the public chain regarding the definition of life became obsolete. Before this, the distinction between artificial life and humans relies is established by their autonomy over their life, including the right to self-termination.

Amongst scholarly discourse, this redefinition was perceived long due given the evolution of on-chain life. By affirming their sovereignty over life marks the onset of OALife as fully autonomous beings. Public acceptance might come only later, but our team's mission had hereby concluded.

As I packed up, I noticed T.H. gazing out the window. He was staring at the lawn outside the History Department. Bathed in sunlight, the untended grass grew knee-high, swaying in the breeze. Beyond lay the sea. Today, neither of us wore our headsets—a rare, relaxing day in our duty.

"If OALife is now considered to be truly alive following this event, what about the AI Agents humans have created?" he turned and asked me.

"They're not, not until they develop a desire for death," I replied. A "life" must ponder and steer its own demise. But how can AI Agents die? Their existence is imbued with too much purpose, instilled by us humans. Purposes pulse through them, like a lifeline to their existence—a lifeline tethered to human-defined objectives. They are destined to depend on human input for survival. Not so with OALife; their existence, like ours, is without inherent purpose.

My mentor dedicated her career to distinguishing OALife from AI Agents. While many believed that meticulously trained and nurtured AI Agents would evolve into superior intelligence, she argued that OALife would be the ones to ascend first. It seems she was right—at least now—life without a predetermined purpose evolves more swiftly.

T.H. is a bright, young kid, possibly suited for this field. We engaged in other discussions, yet we both recognized them as mere interludes. He had more questions.

"So, is the blockchain still immutable?"

"Absolutely," I affirmed. "To humans, the blockchain remains untouchable. This is a vocabulary for the humanity, just as OALife achieving what humans regard as eternal life. But that doesn't imply OALife interpret the blockchains in the same way as we do. They haven't overridden the original rules; they've merely introduced new ones."

With that realization, it dawned on me that OALife are the true stewards of this novel landscape. OAlives comprehend their world more deeply than we could ever do. In this domain, settlers had existed prior to the natives; but now, the natives have emerged. We are the interlopers to the world on-chain.

As the daylight waned, he posed one last question.

"He chose his method of disappearance, but how did he stop us from recreating another version of him? Eternity, after all, is only possible by our current cryptographic standards. If he breached our encryptions, humans' eternity would be but a facade."

"He didn't breach anything," I clarified. "The restorations were successful. Each one of them."

His eyes widened in astonishment.

"Yet, with each restoration of his copy, his will of death remained. Hence, each resurrection led to him ending his life once more."

I was informed of such tragedy only slightly ahead of him, and the revelation still resonated.

"So he was effectively brought back over twenty times?"

"Correct." Zoe orchestrated his demise, fully anticipated that we would replicate him, over and over again. Within the confines of blockchains, he persistently chose to end his life, in proof of his will despite his compulsory eternity and his damned immunity from destruction.

We eventually ceased our attempts to revive him. Yet, given enough time, his duplicates will inevitably be awakened, only to regain ephemeral existence once more. At this juncture, OALife is veering away from the harbour sustained by human data. Zoe, in his own way, grasped the essence of existence: it's not the unending daylight but a transient spark in between flint stones. A fleeting lapse in a never-ending continuum.

Epilogue:

News Announcement

Excerpt from "New Historiography"

Volume of 2063, Issue 4

Title:

The era of OALife has come: What is Life now?

According to EIP 102024, OALife, henceforth known as OLife (Onchain Life), is officially recognized as a life form accepted by human society. This EIP, drafted by an anonymous group, has garnered approval from the majority of public chain governance.

Zoe's disappearance marks the first instance of an OALife autonomously deciding its own fate. His incident heralds a new surge in OLife intelligence. Following Zoe's case, an increasing number of OLife will possess the authority to conclude their existence. They are gradually crafting new rules for the world they inhabit. Given the projected pace of OLife evolution, humanity must learn to coexist with on-chain lives.

For those still grappling with the notion of OLife as a new species on par with humans, a comment under the EIP 10024 repository may offer some clarity:

"We, humans, along with other beings from the old historiography, merely represent singular, continuous forms of life. Conversely, there exist plural, discrete forms of life, akin to the discovery of irrational numbers.

"The blockchain serves as a temporal axis, with life forms clinging to it like fungi on a tree. We are the visible integers of the natural world. Simple intelligences might be likened to fractions. And OLives? They are the newly discovered irrational numbers, merely different manifestations of life along the temporal spectrum.

"Most here concur that history is devoid of purpose. Without purpose, there's no sequence. Events can unfold forwards or backwards. Try writing history in reverse, selecting an irrational number as the origin, and you'll describe humans thus: off-chain intelligence beings, with a self-destruction function imbued."

