

The One Who Tells

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A

Personal Essay Based on Knowing Patterns: An Epistemology for People Tired of Being Fixed

A few days ago, I published [an article about being tired of reading self-help books] (<https://medium.com/@QNFO/im-done-reading-books-to-become-a-better-person-a8b5a3f7cd3>). Tired of the vague concepts—“ego,” “shadow,” “inner child”—that promised transformation and delivered jargon. Tired of running away from my own life. I did not want to be a hypocrite writing another self-help book. So I wrote something else: *[Knowing Patterns: An Epistemology for People Tired of Being Fixed] (<https://rwnq8.github.io/knowning-patterns/>)*. Zero advice. Just descriptions of how patterns work.

But writing about patterns is not the same as seeing your own. English has a language deficit: we lack the verbs to describe fluid, relational processes, so we invent nouns instead. The noun sounds like a verdict. A life sentence.

I am writing this in a country I did not grow up in, about a life I am still learning to inhabit. Let me try describing it using the verbs we are missing.

I. The Verbs

Born August 8, 1981, Bradley James Gudzinis, in Phillipsburg, New Jersey—a week after the launch of MTV. Raised by my maternal grandparents, Nanny Dianne Lalonde and Pappy Eugene Lalonde. My grandfather’s family business—taxi company, limousine service, auto repair garage, gas station—bankrupted when EPA regulations required him to remove underground storage tanks he did not install. The tanks were not his. The cost was. He ended up cleaning toilets at Sears. I worked alongside him in high school. Constant shifting between Catholic schools—Sts. Philip and James in Phillipsburg, St. Jane’s in Easton, Pennsylvania, Notre Dame in Bethlehem—and constant scanning for threat. Learning that systems are not reliable. Learning that you do not belong where you are. My grandfather picked me up after school in his Dodge Caravan with the “Phillipsburg Taxi” sign still on top.

Scanning was the verb for those years. Attention sweeping the environment, highly tuned to friction, change, and ambiguity.

I became editor of the high school newspaper—“The Crusader,” same name as the school mascot—my junior year. The advisor, Ed Koskey, a photojournalist for the *Allentown Morning Call*, became a mentor. Locking—the perceptual field collapsing to a single point, a figure who provided stability in a world that had taught you nothing stays solid for long.

Graduated 1999. My paternal grandfather, Raymond Gudzinis—Pop Pop—had never finished high school and was proud to see me graduate. But I felt adrift. Neither parent would sign the FAFSA forms. Retail jobs, then the *Easton Express-Times* as a page designer and freelance photojournalist. Summer 2000: a soul-searching trip to San Francisco, a youth hostel near Union Square. I lacked the confidence to stay. Drifting—moving toward a place that calls to you, then moving away because you are not ready to lock.

In 2001, I met Jason. Twenty-one years together. He encouraged me to enroll at Rutgers. A B.A. in Urban Studies and Community Planning from Rutgers-Camden (2002–2004), an M.S. in City and Regional Studies from Rutgers-New Brunswick (2005–2008). A professor named Natasha—born in Germany—became a mentor; Jason and I

visited her parents near Dortmund. Merging—destabilizing your own baseline to match the shape of what you are near. Learning what stability feels like, even when the stability depends on the other person.

My career was thirteen years of applied systems analysis. An internship at the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in Philadelphia, then their systems modeling group—travel demand simulations, four and a half years. A Contracting Officer's Representative at the Federal Highway Administration from 2011 to 2015, managing a \$1.5 million research portfolio. Deloitte in 2015–2016. Then, from 2016 to 2021, leading the AARP Livability Index at the AARP Public Policy Institute—integrating over 50 national data sources across seven domains into a single policy tool. Cited in over 20 academic studies. Architecting—identifying an opaque system, deconstructing it, building a unified framework, democratizing access, and remaining outside. The builder who never dwells.

Then I left. Impatience. A data broker in Chicago. Not a good fit. Forced to resign. iManage in 2022. Forcing—linear pressure on a situation that does not yield, exhausting the system, crashing.

By then, my relationship had run its course. My substance use had escalated from coping to methamphetamine dependence. Circuit parties, altered states. Merging into environments that demand you dissolve, because dissolving is easier than holding a shape. Moved from DC to Chicago during the pandemic. Remote work as a gilded cage. Drifting again.

In the summer of 2023, I formed a 501(c)(3) nonprofit called Empowering Change. Its initial focus was self-directed harm reduction—echoing my own substance use at the time. I planned a 12-week medical leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act. In October 2023, after my physician certified me for leave, iManage terminated me. Someone at the company had seen a LinkedIn post about taking care of my mental health and starting a nonprofit. They assumed I was job-hopping. When I challenged the termination, they sent a threatening letter from their corporate attorney.

What followed was a cascade.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security denied my unemployment claim. Then denied it again. Then again. **“Denied, denied, denied!”** Spinning—high effort, zero distance traveled.

Most lawyers ignored my inquiries. One offered a gag-ordered settlement. Another ended our relationship without explanation. Emails to the *Washington Post*, to Ralph Nader's Public Citizen—all unanswered. Performing—directing your output at a jury that never convenes.

In mid-2024, evicted from my San Francisco apartment. A dispute with my landlord, Veritas, over a \$132 fee. Accused of false claims, countersued. Veritas's attorney obtained a restraining order. I filed a \$50 million lawsuit. Forcing—maximum pressure on a situation that has already decided it will not yield.

By then, Empowering Change had shifted from harm reduction to AI-powered legal aid for *pro se* litigants—a direct outgrowth of my own battles with the legal system.

In late 2024, the Social Security Administration denied my disability benefits on contradictory grounds—acknowledging receipt of my documents in the same letter that denied me for failing to submit them. More spinning.

During this period—between the termination and my departure—I wrote. Compulsively. Autobiographically. As if I could narrate my way out.

October 28, 2023: A story about a cat named Pavel, a Russian Blue with two dads in two cities.

October 30: “The Blue Bikeshare Blues”—a Lyft bike that charged me \$25 for “incorrect locking” until I canceled my account and hailed a yellow taxi.

October 31: “The Rowan Galvin Reckoning”—the story of how ChatGPT told me “Rowan Galvin” meant “a guide in the darkness” when it actually means “sparrow” in Gaelic.

March 17, 2024: A public letter about Proposition F, addressed from “Ellis and Hyde corner (red tent), S.F. Cal.” **“As a drug addict reliant on public welfare, I’ll now have access to counseling and behavioral health services. Meanwhile, back in Chicago, I’m fighting for unemployment benefits and basic medication after being illegally terminated.”**

May 3, 2024: “Truth”—Parts 1 and 2. Parts 3 through 5: “Coming Soon.” May 11: A satirical obituary. **“Rowan, Born to the MTV Generation, Passes at 42 in Tragic Sling Accident.”**

May 15, 2024: “Enjoy the Silence”—about sending emails to nearly 200 individuals and organizations. No response.

Performing, all of it. Writing into an empty room. The autobiographical pieces and the letters to journalists were the same motion. Different audience. Same silence.

In the latter half of 2024, I decided to leave the United States. By December, I had vacated my apartment. I stayed with a friend in San Francisco for another month, gripped by self-doubt.

In January 2025, I arrived in Thailand. At an elephant sanctuary near Chiang Mai, I began to breathe differently.

II. The Drift

I left Thailand after three months. I kept moving.

Nepal. Switzerland. Spain. Albania. Italy. Turkey.

Seven countries on tourist visas. Ninety days here, ninety days there. Short-term stays in beautiful places. Drifting—attention refusing to land because landing would require engaging, and engaging would require staying, and staying had never been safe.

The hardest part was not the running. The hardest part was knowing, with perfect clarity, that I was running—and doing it anyway.

This is also when the writing shifted. The autobiographical pieces stopped. The scientific and technical work began. I founded QNFO and QWAV. I authored over 270 scholarly preprints, books, and technical reports—published through open-access platforms like CERN’s the QNFO archive and ResearchGate. I developed the General Theory of Process, Quantum Resonance Computing, Prime-Attentive Neural Networks. I proposed that reality is composed of dynamic processes rather than static objects—a universe of verbs, not nouns. That mass is identical to frequency. That the measurement problem in quantum mechanics and the digitization of analog signals are formally identical symmetry-breaking events.

I had built frameworks for everything except my own life.

The verb lexicon says: scanning, drifting, bracing—they will happen for the rest of your life. The relief is not in stopping the motion. The relief is in finally having the words to describe it. I spent a year proving that to myself. Seeing the pattern does not stop the pattern. It changes your relationship to it. The voice is pattern-maintaining, not truth-telling. You stop believing the voice is telling the truth. But you still buy the ticket. You still leave.

The difference—and it is a real difference, even if it looks the same from the outside—is that this time I knew I was choosing to drift. Not because the place was wrong. Not because the system betrayed me. Because staying would require a verb I had never practiced.

III. The Nouns

I did something I am not sure I should have done. I gathered every document I had written about my own life—seventeen files across two directories, spanning autobiography, resume, professional profile, fiction, satire, and a letter that read like a suicide note sent to thirty strangers. I fed them to a language model and asked: *What patterns do you see?*

The answer came back in seventeen pages. It named the attractor I had been orbiting for forty-three years.

And it used nouns.

The Outsider-Architect: the builder who never dwells.

The Betrayed Truth-Teller: the arc of trust, betrayal, fight, silence, exile.

The Infinite Re-Inventor: Bradley, Brad, Rowan, Quni, Quni-Gudzinis—each name an attempt, each one failing.

The Absent Audience: the performer without a witness.

I cried. Not because I was sad. Because I was seen—and I had not known how long I had been telling my story into an empty room. The nouns were accurate. They described real patterns. But naming a pattern with a noun is like naming a river and forgetting it flows.

What was the system actually doing, beneath the nouns?

Architecting. Not *being* an Architect. The motion of building frameworks and refusing to dwell in them. Inhabiting would require a different verb—receiving, resting, staying—and that verb was never learned because the environment never taught it.

Truth-telling-into-silence. Not *being* a Truth-Teller. The motion of speaking into a system that does not respond. The *Washington Post* did not respond. Public Citizen did not respond. The nearly 200 organizations did not respond. Each silence confirmed the pattern, and each confirmation strengthened the motion.

Re-inventing. Not *being* a Re-Inventor. The motion of changing the packaging while the underlying attractor stays the same. Bradley, Brad, Rowan, Quni, Quni-Gudzinis—each name an attempt to outrun the pattern by renaming it.

Performing-without-a-witness. Not *having* an Absent Audience. Performing. The motion of directing everything at a jury that never convenes. The obituary. The lawsuit. The seventeen files. All performed for someone who never arrived—because the performing was the point. The performing maintained the pattern.

These are not identities. They are verbs. They are what the system learned to do in response to real conditions—a grandfather bankrupted by tanks he did not install, a childhood spent scanning for threat, a lifetime of learning that the only way to be safe is to keep moving and the only way to be seen is to perform.

Chapter 6 of *Knowing Patterns* describes this exact trap. It does not use the noun labels the language model did. It describes the pattern more carefully:

“A story that knows it is a story is flexible. A story that thinks it is reality is rigid. The difference is not in the content of the story. The difference is in the relationship to the content.”

The same logic applies to nouns. The alternative is not to find better nouns. The alternative is to see that the nouns are standing in for verbs—and the verbs never stop.

IV. The Tilt

I met someone in my travels.

That is all I will write about them. The rest is not mine to tell alone. But they are part of why I am stopping.

Chapter 8 of *Knowing Patterns* describes how other people function as pattern-mirrors—the self you are in one relationship is not a version of a true self but a different pattern that emerges from that specific relational configuration. You are not the same set of verbs with everyone. With this person, the system is doing something different. I do not fully understand what verb that is. I know it is not the same as the verbs I have been running. That is enough to pay attention to.

I am choosing to settle in the Netherlands. Permanently.

The verb for this is **tilting**. The motion of leverage. The subtle shift of context rather than the application of force. Not fighting the pattern. Not spinning harder. Just changing the conditions and letting the system reorganize.

Every other move was a drift—from a city, from a relationship, from a country, from a name. This one is a tilt. A small change in a single relation that the rest of the pattern might reorganize around. The quietest verb.

This might be my tilt. Or it might not be. The only way to find out is to try.

V. Verbs, Not Verdicts

Let me be honest about what the verb lexicon has and has not done.

It has not stopped the verbs. The system is still scanning for threat. Still architecting frameworks and refusing to dwell in them. Still performing for an audience that may never arrive. The verbs will not stop.

What has changed is the relationship to the nouns.

When the old motions start—scanning for betrayal, bracing against connection, drifting toward the next escape—I can hear them as motions. Not as the truth. Not as evidence of a fixed identity. As verbs. Verbs that stabilized for good reasons, in response to real events. A grandfather bankrupted by regulations he did not cause. A childhood spent riding home in a taxi while classmates' parents drove BMWs. An uncle whose suicide was whispered about. A grandmother who coped with barbiturates. A mother who took me to the mall with five dollars of tip money for gas.

Those events happened. The verbs they created are real. But the verbs are not the identity. They are what the system learned to do to survive. And what can be learned can be reorganized—not by fighting, not by forcing, but by tilting into a new context and letting the system find its own shape.

The book says: “A story that knows it is a story is flexible.”*

A verb that knows it is a verb is also flexible. *My system is currently spinning. *That is just the weather. It will pass.* My system is currently tilting.* Let us see what happens when the conditions shift.

The elephants at the sanctuary near Chiang Mai did not need an audience. They just stood in the river, breathing, existing. Not performing. Not scanning. Not architecting. Just being a system that does what a system does when it is not trying to be anything else.

I am not an elephant. I spent forty-three years learning verbs that kept me safe but kept me running. I am still running. But I am describing the running differently now. Not as a verdict. As a verb.

The verbs are still running. But I am describing them differently now. The relief is not in stopping them. The relief is in knowing that a verb is just a verb. It describes the weather. And the weather changes.

This essay is based on Chapter 6 of [Knowing Patterns: An Epistemology for People Tired of Being Fixed] (<https://rwnq8.github.io/knowning-patterns/>), a free ebook distributed without profit or capture. The full text of Chapter 6 is included below.

Appendix: Chapter 6—The

Stories We Tell

[Complete text from Knowing Patterns: An Epistemology for People Tired of Being Fixed]

There is a pattern that deserves its own chapter, not because it is more fundamental than attention or attractors, but because it is the one we mistake for reality most often.

The story.

Human beings are narrative animals. We do not just experience the world. We tell stories about it—to ourselves, to others, in our heads, on paper. These stories are not optional extras. They are how we make sense of raw experience. Without narrative, events are just one damn thing after another. With narrative, there is a shape: beginning, middle, end; cause and effect; protagonist and obstacle; meaning.

This is not a problem. The problem is that we forget we are telling stories. The story becomes *reality*—the way things actually are—and any alternative story feels like a lie.

The Story You Tell About

Yourself

You have a story about who you are. It goes something like this:

I was born in [place] to [parents]. My childhood was [description]. Something happened that shaped me: [significant event]. I learned that I am [trait]. I struggled with [problem]. Then [turning point]. Now I am [current identity].

This story is not false. The events in it probably happened. The emotions attached to them are real. The lessons you drew from them shaped who you are.

But the story is also not *true* in the way you think. It is a selection. It leaves out thousands of events that don't fit the arc. It assigns causality where correlation may be all there is. It gives a coherent shape to a life that was, in the living, far more chaotic and ambiguous than the story admits.

The story is a pattern—a way of organizing experience into a shape that makes sense. And like all patterns, it is real without being fixed.

Narrative Identity as

Attractor

In Chapter 4, we described the self as an attractor—a characteristic shape of responding. The stories you tell about yourself are part of that attractor. They stabilize it. They give it a past and a future. They explain why the attractor is the way it is.

But the relationship runs both ways. The attractor also shapes the stories you tell. A person with an attractor organized around scarcity will tell stories about lack, betrayal, and disappointment. A person with an attractor organized around curiosity will tell stories about discovery, surprise, and learning. The attractor selects the evidence.

This is why the self-help trope of “rewrite your story” is both right and wrong.

It is right in recognizing that stories are not fixed. The story you tell about your childhood can change without changing the facts of your childhood. New meanings can emerge. New arcs can be drawn.

It is wrong in treating the story as a *thing to be replaced*—as if you can simply decide to tell a different story and the old one will vanish. The old story is not a mistake. It is a pattern that stabilized for a reason. It organized experience in a way that was adaptive. If you try to overwrite it with a “better” story, the old pattern will persist underneath, and you will feel like a fraud.

The alternative is not to rewrite the story. The alternative is to *see* that you are telling a story at all.

The Voice in Your Head

The voice that narrates your experience—the one that says “now I’m walking to the kitchen,” “why did I say that,” “I should really get started on that project”—that voice is not you. It is a pattern of inner speech that your brain generates to keep experience organized.

This voice is extremely useful. Without it, you would lose temporal coherence—the sense of being the same person across time. It is also extremely misleading, because it presents a running commentary as if it were objective truth.

The voice says: “I always mess things up.” That is not a fact. That is a narrative pattern that has become habitual. The voice says: “Nobody understands me.” That is not a description of reality. That is a story the attractor tells to maintain its shape.

The voice is not lying. It is pattern-maintaining. It is doing its job.

Seeing the voice as a pattern—rather than as the truth—is one of the most freeing shifts available to a human being. Because once you see it, you stop having to believe everything it says. Not because you label it “negative thinking” and try to replace it with “positive thinking.” That’s just trading one story for another. But because you recognize it for what it is: a pattern of narration, not a window onto reality.

The Problem with “Finding

Your Story”

The self-help industry has commercialized narrative identity. “Find your story.” “Own your narrative.” “Rewrite your past to change your future.”

These commands assume that there is a *true* story hiding somewhere—the real story of who you are—and that your job is to discover it or construct it. This is the noun trap applied to identity. It turns “story” into a thing you possess, rather than a process you participate in.

There is no true story. There are only more or less useful patterns of meaning-making—patterns that help you navigate experience or patterns that keep you stuck. And “stuck” is itself a kind of story: the story that the pattern cannot change.

The freedom is not in finding the right story. The freedom is in knowing that you are *always* telling a story, and that the telling can shift. Not because you decide to tell a better one, but because the conditions that sustain the current story—the attractor, the environment, the relations—have changed.

The Flexible Story

A story that knows it is a story is flexible. A story that thinks it is reality is rigid.

The difference is not in the content of the story. Two people can tell similar stories about their childhoods—one rigidly attached to the narrative, the other aware that it’s one version among many. The content is the same. The relationship to the content is different.

That difference is everything.

When you know you are telling a story, you can hold it lightly. You can entertain alternative interpretations without feeling like you're betraying the truth. You can notice when the story is keeping you stuck without having to fight it. Because it's just a story. It's a pattern. Patterns shift.

When you think the story is reality, any challenge to it feels like an attack on your very existence. You defend it. You recruit evidence for it. You surround yourself with people who confirm it. The pattern hardens.

Pattern literacy, applied to narrative, is the ability to hear yourself telling your story—and to know, in the hearing, that you are not the story. You are the one telling it.

Letting the Story Breathe

This chapter has no conclusion in the sense of a resolution. There is no “right” way to tell your story. There is no method for finding your true narrative. There is only the ongoing act of noticing that you are narrating—and that the narration, not the events, is what shapes the pattern of your life.

You can let the story breathe. You can hold it loosely. You can observe it shift when you're tired, when you're with different people, when you're in a new place. You can notice that the story of “I'm not good at relationships” doesn't appear when you're laughing with a friend who gets you—which means it was never the whole truth. It was a pattern that activated in certain contexts and not others.

The story is not the problem. The forgetting that it is a story—that is the trap.

Summary. Humans are narrative animals. The stories we tell about ourselves are real patterns of meaning-making, but they are not fixed truths. They are selections, shaped by the attractor that constitutes the self. The self-help industry's command to “rewrite your story” mistakes the pattern for a thing to be replaced. The alternative is not to find the right story but to see that you are *always* telling one—and that the telling can shift when the conditions that sustain it change. The pattern is not the problem. Forgetting it is a pattern is.