

PRACTICE  
BEING  
HUMAN

**practice being human**

PRACTICE  
BEING  
HUMAN



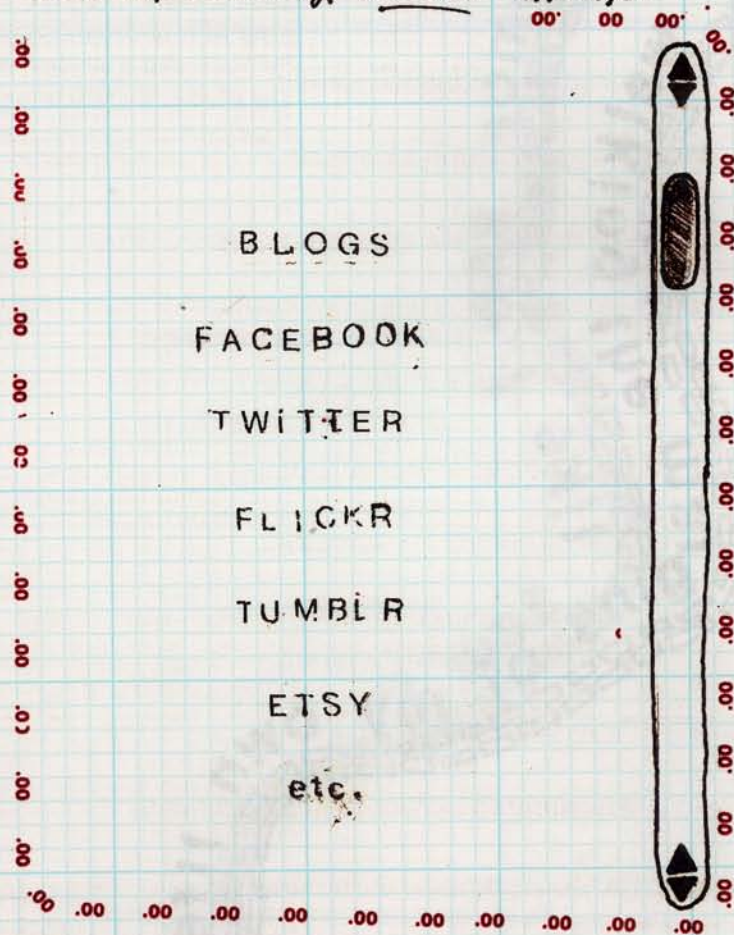


I WAS STARTING  
TO FEEL  
LESS THAN HUMAN.

it was like I was sometimes

only walking the margins of my own life.

i was spending hours online.



o o o  
o o o  
1 o o o o o o  
o o o o o  
o o o  
o

every now and then,

i'd be engaged

in

something

7

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0

(not

that)

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9 o 4 9 9

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and i'd feel,

just faintly,

like there was a

very small voice

screaming at me,

trying to get me to hear.

I'D BE  
WORKING ON  
A PROJECT  
WITH MY  
HANDS, OR  
WALKING

ALONG  
THE SIDE-  
WALK WITH-  
OUT HEAD-  
PHONES ON  
+ THERE IT'D  
BE

WHAT IS IT  
GOING TO  
TAKE TO MAKE  
YOU PAY  
ATTENTION ?

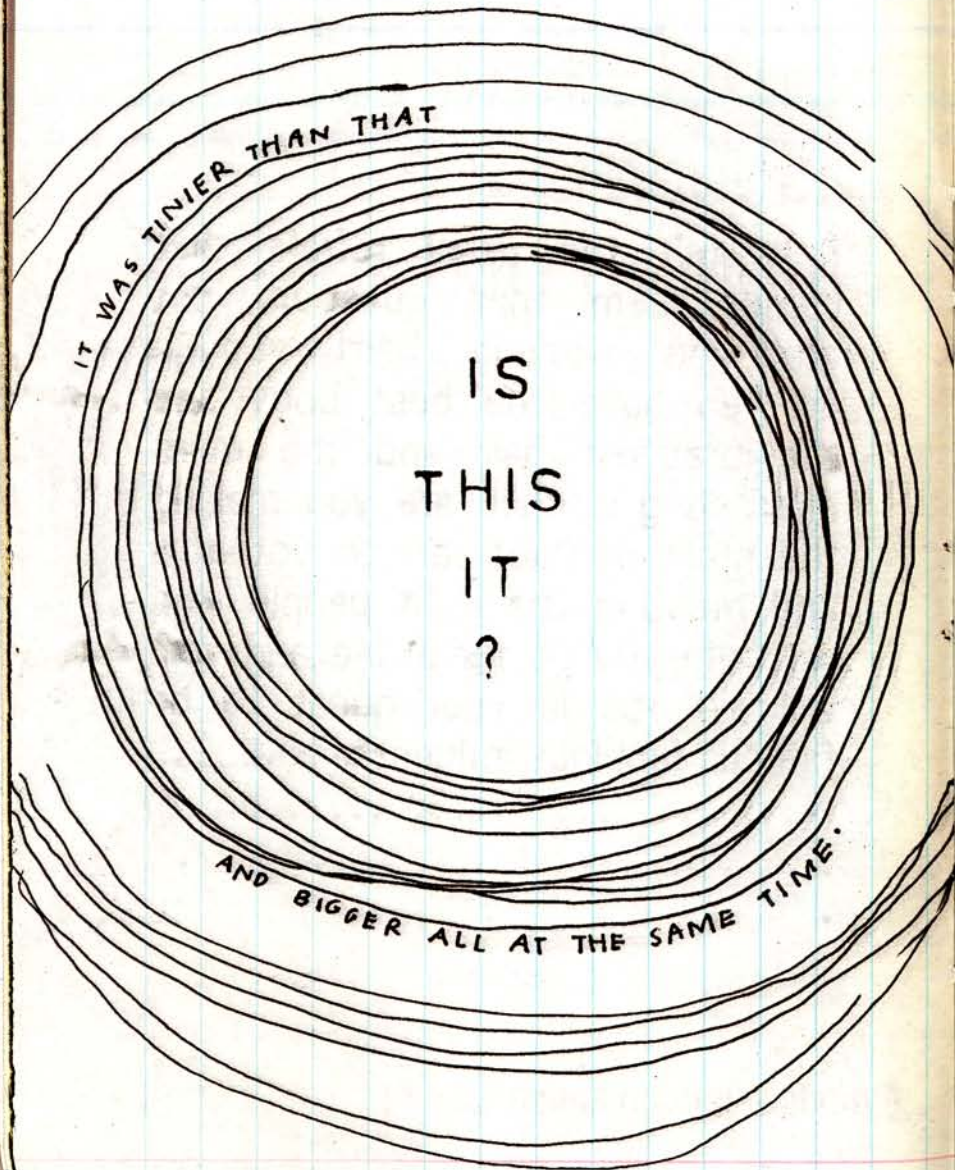
WHAT  
are you doing  
with your  
only  
life?

it wasn't the usual refrain that comes from that question. not are you working hard enough do you have the best body and the prettiest hair and the most interesting clothes are you making the most of your earning potential and meeting the right people who will help you go far in life and who will aid you in your quest to be famous fabulous influential and.....

.....

.....

.....



IT WAS TINIER THAN THAT

IS  
THIS  
IT  
?

AND BIGGER ALL AT THE SAME TIME.

(it) meant:

my spacing out **OUT**

filling the void  
my filling the void

my **DINKING** around...

... **ONLINE.**

it meant that for me.  
what the voice says to you,  
i don't know.







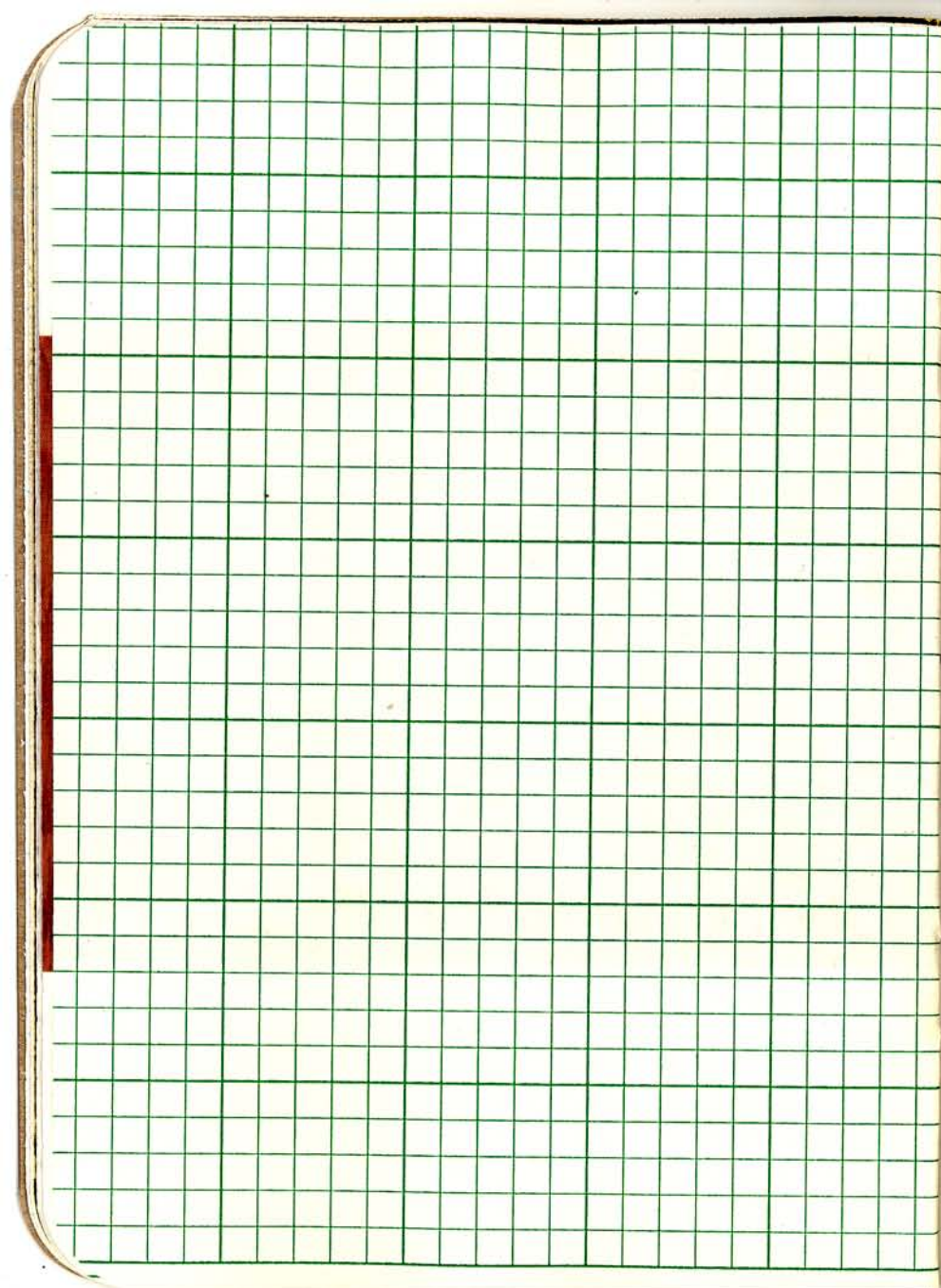
wha

on,

PRACTICE

BEING

HUMAN





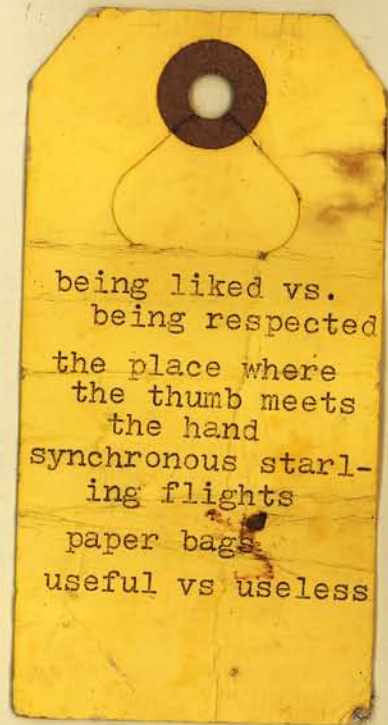
I decided I would just stop.

stop  
scrolling  
scrolling  
scrolling.

no facebook  
no twitter  
no blogs  
very limited email.

for one month,  
I did other things instead.

i wrote letters.  
i read books.  
i had thoughts.



( some things I thought about )

( i found this tag on the ground. )

V

i realized i had been  
scrolling not just to entertain  
but to shut up my thoughts.

why was i doing that?  
why was i choosing the void?

i didn't have the answer.

So I took walks up and down the hills of my neighborhood, and I tried to notice which things I found myself noticing. I paid attention to what I was drawn to and which things I normally would have just let pass by.

Some of the hills are VERY steep, and I started finding evidence that a lot of paint and tar had accidentally been spilled down the streets and sidewalks. Incidental art, made in error and probably accompanied by some curse words....



When I let myself look up, I started seeing the secret codes of the telephone poles. Everything has a meaning to someone, **SOMEWHERE.**

For the rest of us, the not-knowing is the making of mystery, and wonder, and fiction. Tags and keys and codes aside, there might just be secret messages **EVERYWHERE.**

When was the last time you looked for a message?

WE  
ARE  
MADE

TO  
WON-  
DER

the internet provides instant gratification—but I was realizing that I missed thinking about things. I was missing the itch of wondering about things, of yearning after ideas without the absolute certainty of instantaneous resolution. I was replacing that itch with the need for constant connection. I can go online, and I can satisfy my curiosity whenever I want.

I think we are made to wonder.



created

I think we are made this way and that it is an important aspect of the human part of us that invents things. The part that writes poetry and creates music and tries to find a way to get through the mountain, up into the clouds, and out into space. I was missing the part of my brain that was my laboratory and my library. The place with the comfortable chairs, where it's nice to just sit for a while and wonder.

BECAUSE

wondering isn't efficient, it's not productive, and it doesn't like to be interrupted. it doesn't like the brain that is constantly being pulled away to another link, or a pretty picture.

i didn't go into this project believing that the internet is evil.  
i still don't think it's terrible. it won't ruin your life or turn  
you into a drooling imbecile. but i realized that it was definitely  
changing the way i was thinking and what i was able to think  
about. i realized that maybe i don't need to be constantly  
sloughing off little parts of myself all over the digital universe.  
i don't always want to depend on the dopamine infusion that  
comes of being "liked" or "friended" or having my photos  
"favorited". i don't want that to be all there is to my life.



i don't want all the empty spaces filled in.

during my month off, i found that a lot of people had very  
certain opinions about what i was trying to do with  
my experiment.

they thought it was overkill.

they thought it was pointless.

they thought it was brilliant.

they thought the internet was the devil.

they said, "i wish i could do that."

they said, "you'll get SO MUCH DONE."

they said, "i could never do that."

over the course of the month,  
some of them forgot about me.

they said, "it feels like you're dead."

they also said, "thanks for your letter. i missed that."

i missed it too. so i'm doing it again.

in 2011, i'll give up everything but limited email  
on every prime day of every month. (that's  
around 11 days per month.)



am i crazy to keep working on this experiment?  
am i just putting off the inevitable by living in denial?  
i don't really think so.

was it foolish to try to recover my old ways? to chase after things i did during periods of time i remember well and fondly? i remember the letters i wrote by the window near the trees; the piles of library books that filled my days; the strange places my wanderings and wonderings took me and all of the things i learned by accident.

before the computer was in my every waking hour, there just seemed to be more space. there was more room to breathe when i didn't feel strangely compelled to read everything in my blog reader; to check my email every twenty minutes; when i didn't "relax" by mindlessly refreshing and surfing and searching and scrolling scrolling scrolling.

i realize now that my thoughts are like small, shy creatures hiding under a sheltering rock, and that the always-on, extreme **LIVE WILD HOT EXCITING INFO NOW NOW NOW** of the internet is the hovering hawk.

all of those beautiful, successful people and bursting intellects and "been there done that" mentalities that were making me feel itchy. cranky. and defeated, because, hey--"it's all been done already, and better than you ever could" .....

is it true? i wanted to see if it was true.  
if there was nothing in there anymore,  
if that old feeling had gone away.

in that one month, i found that the feeling is alive. and what's better, i found that those thoughts--MY thoughts, my opinions, my ideas-- have been waiting, very still, for a safe moment to emerge.

i want to give them more of a chance.

TO \_\_\_\_\_ YOU  
FROM \_\_\_\_\_ ME  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_ TODAY

Further thoughts on this topic  
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IS GOOGLE MAKING US STUPID? - NICHOLAS CARR,  
ATLANTIC MONTHLY, JULY/AUGUST 2008

I'M QUITTING THE INTERNET - WILL I BE  
LIBERATED OR LEFT BEHIND? - JAMES STURM,  
SLATE.COM

PUTTING A BRICK IN MY MAILBOX - STEVE  
PAVLINA, STEVEPAVLINA.COM

WHAT HAPPENED TO DOWNTIME? THE EXTINCTION  
OF DEEP THINKING + SACRED SPACE - SCOTT BELSKY,  
THE99PERCENT.COM



this zine is quite obviously a digital reproduction of a real object.



it was originally created in Dec 2010 & re-released so that more people could see it.



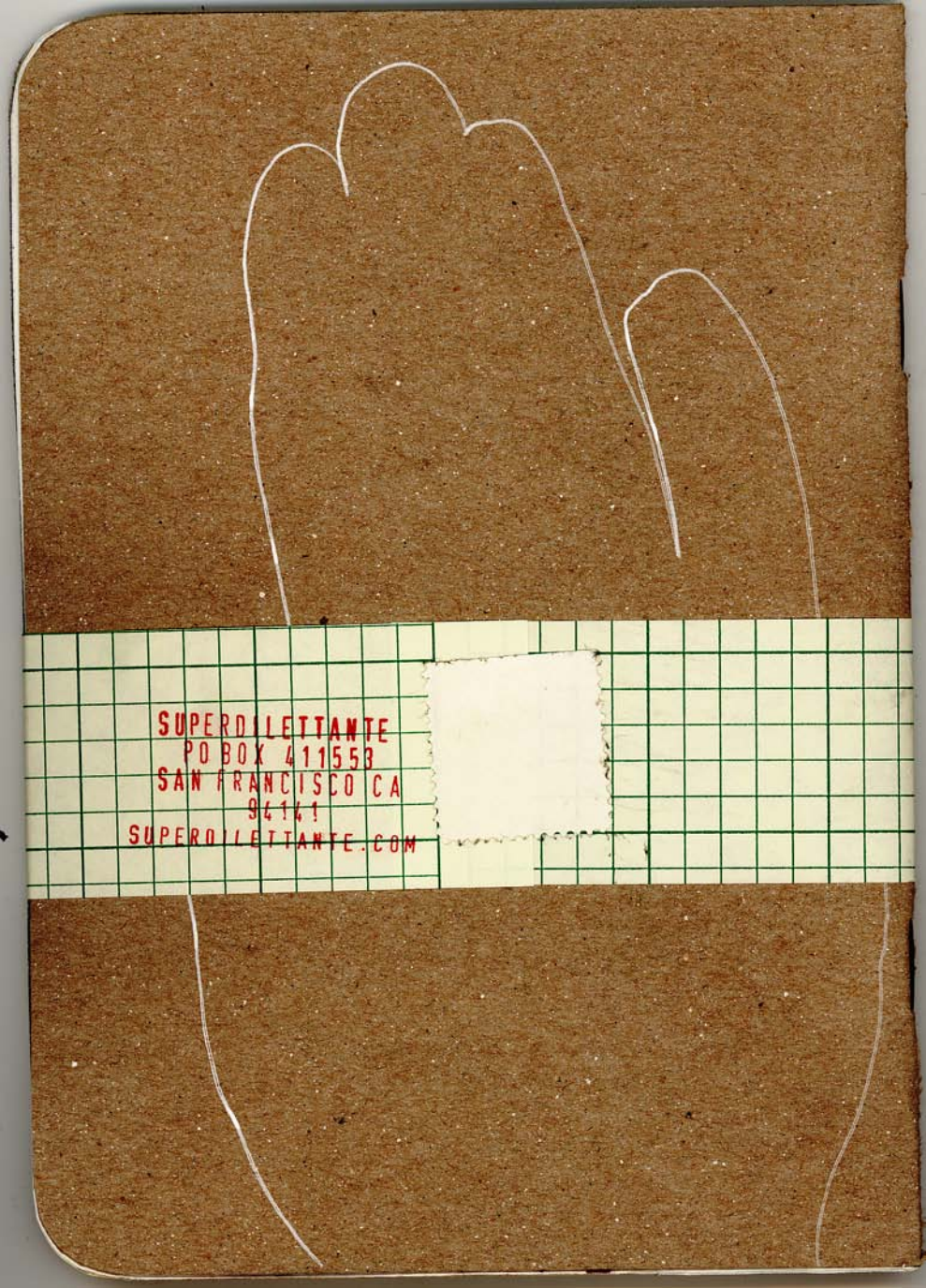
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