

Why the Center Does Not Run Out

Hope, Thirst, and the Source That Does Not Deplete

From the Gaitan Topology

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I. Why Hope Is the Last Thing That Dies

“It is a loop that sustains itself by the very fact that it never arrives.”

— Oscar Gaitan, *One Day*

We say “hope is the last thing that dies” as if it were consolation—as if the persistence of hope were proof that something in us remains unbroken, that the soul retains its capacity for life even at the edge of dissolution. And this is true. But the topology reveals a second, darker reading: hope is the last thing that dies **because the loop needs it to survive.**

The alternate lemniscate—the false curve the self builds when it leaves the crossing point—runs on unfulfilled hope the way an engine runs on fuel. If the “one day” ever arrived, the loop would collapse. If the person ever got the job, ever heard the parent say “I’m proud of you,” ever reached the oasis—the curve would break, because it was never built to hold arrival. It was built to hold *approach*. The structure sustains itself precisely by keeping hope alive and fulfillment permanently out of reach.

This is the mechanism the proverb unwittingly describes. The person does not hope *despite* the fact that nothing arrives. The person hopes *because* nothing arrives. The non-arrival is what feeds the loop. Each unfulfilled day generates the next day’s hope. Each deferred crossing produces the next deferral’s energy. Hope, on the serpent’s curve, is not the antidote to displacement. It is **the fuel of displacement**. And it dies last because the loop requires it until the very end—until the body fails, or the mind breaks, or the person finally, by grace or exhaustion, stops orbiting.

A dream, a hope, or—worst of all—a memory keeps the loop alive because it never returns in the form the person needs. The memory of the father who left. The dream of the career that was promised. The hope that someone will see. These do not weaken with time. They *intensify*, because each year of non-arrival adds

another layer of investment to the orbit. The person has now spent not one year but twenty on the curve. To stop hoping would be to admit that twenty years were spent on a geometry that had no center. And that admission is more terrifying than another twenty years of orbiting.

Hope dies with the person because it was never separate from the person's displacement. It was the displacement's voice, speaking in future tense, saying "one day" in every language the soul knows.

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II. The Water That Makes You Thirsty Again

"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

— John 4:13–14

The Samaritan woman at the well had five husbands. Five orbits. Five alternate lemniscates. Each one a center that could not hold. Each one a drink that made her thirsty again.

The topology explains why. Every fulfillment received *off the crossing point* generates a new lack. The Self outside the center converts every arrival into a new departure. The dream job arrives and feels empty. The relationship arrives and feels insufficient. The recognition arrives and the person immediately needs more. Not because the things are bad—a husband is not bad, a career is not bad, water is not bad—but because the person is receiving them on the serpent's curve, where nothing can be received as complete. **Off the center, every drink generates a new thirst.** The loop feeds on its own satisfaction.

What is traditionally described as concupiscence appears here not as a moral defect in the object of desire, but as a displacement in the position from which it is

received. The objects themselves remain unchanged—a husband is not wrong, a career is not wrong, water is not wrong—but received off the center, they cannot satisfy. Each fulfillment generates a new lack because the Self, outside the crossing point, cannot receive anything as complete. The same water, received at the center, would satisfy. Received on the serpent's curve, it produces thirst. The difference is not in the gift, but in the position.

Christ's answer to the Samaritan woman is not "I will give you better things." It is not "I will give you a better husband, a better career, a better orbit." His answer is: ***"I will give you water that ends the thirst itself."*** The spring that wells up to eternal life is not a bigger oasis on a better curve. It is the *end of the curve*. It is the crossing point—the present tense—the "I am"—where the Self is not reaching for the next thing but *receiving* what is given.

A gift received in presence does not generate thirst. It generates **spring**—a source that wells up from within rather than being chased from without. The person at the center does not need the next drink because the first drink was real. It was received at the crossing point, in the Now, in the presence of the "I am." And a gift received in the "I am" does not deplete. It replenishes. Not because the quantity is infinite, but because the source is God.

Five husbands. Five orbits. Five drinks. And still thirsty. Because she was drinking off the center. Christ meets her at the well—at the crossing point—and offers not a sixth husband but the water that ends the sequence.

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III. The Relativity of Fulfillment

What determines whether a gift satisfies or generates new lack is not the gift itself but the **position on the curve from which it is received**. This is the principle of topological relativity that runs through the entire framework.

Consider two women who hope for the same thing: the return of the man they love.

Penelope waits for Odysseus. Twenty years. The suitors press. The household deteriorates. By every external measure, her hope should have collapsed long ago. And yet it does not—not because she is stubborn, but because her hope is *inhabited*. She weaves the shroud by day and unweaves it by night—not as production aimed at a “one day,” but as a strategy to remain at the crossing point, to hold the center open against the forces that would replace it. She is not orbiting Odysseus as a false center. She is holding the position where encounter will occur when he returns. Her hope is present tense. She does not say “one day he will come.” She says, in effect, “He is coming, and I am here.” Her hope does not displace her. It anchors her. She weaves because she is inhabiting the Now while the Now includes the expectation of return. Twenty years, and the jar does not run dry—because the hope is being held at the center.

Esther, in *Ben-Hur*, is sure that Judah will return. She holds the correct proposition. She can state it. She may even defend it. But her surety does not transform the waiting into presence. The proposition sits alongside her rather than inside her. She knows—but she does not *believe* in the sense that inhabits the crossing point. Her hope is sincere, genuine, uncorrupted—and yet it floats above her like a truth she can see but cannot pour from. She has the jar of flour but her hands are not yet at the center.

This is not a moral failure. It is a positional one—and the topology can name it without condemning her. Esther is not on the serpent’s curve. She is not displaced by pride or desire or deferral. She is a faithful woman whose hope has not yet become habitation. She holds the truth about Judah’s return the way the Ghost Zone holds truth—with knowledge that is present but presence that is absent. The proposition has no traction. Not because it is wrong, but because it is not yet *inhabited*.

And then she finds the young Rabbi. The encounter changes the position. What the proposition alone could not accomplish—the transformation of surety into belief, of knowledge into presence—the encounter accomplishes. Esther arrives at the crossing point not through willpower but through *meeting*. The same pattern the

topology identifies in every Gospel healing: the displaced person does not return to the center alone. The person is met. The person is found. The position is restored from outside.

Penelope and Esther hope for the same thing. The content of the hope is identical: the return of the beloved. But one is nourished by the hoping and the other is eroded by it. One's jar does not run dry. The other's jar, though technically full, cannot be poured. **The difference is not in the hope. The difference is in the position from which the hope is held.**

The same evening—dinner, tiredness, a beer—is either the most ordinary form of presence or the most invisible form of grace, depending on whether the person is *there*. The same career, received at the crossing point, produces fulfillment; received on the serpent's curve, it produces emptiness. The topology does not evaluate the content of life. It evaluates the *position from which life is lived*. This is why Christ does not promise the Samaritan woman a better life. He promises her a different *position*. Not better water—living water. Not a better husband—the end of the sequence. Not a better curve—the crossing point itself. The gift is not improved content. The gift is **restored position**.



IV. The Jar That Does Not Run Dry

“For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.’”

— 1 Kings 17:14

The widow of Zarephath is the mirror image of the Samaritan woman. The Samaritan woman had five husbands—abundance that never satisfied. The widow has almost nothing—a handful of flour, a little oil, enough for one meal. “That we may eat it—and die.”

There is no future tense in her sentence. There is no “one day.” No alternate lemniscate. No orbit. She has been stripped of every deferral. There is nothing left to project, nothing left to chase, no curve left to sustain. She is at the absolute bottom—and precisely because she has nothing to orbit, she is available to the present. She is at the crossing point *by exhaustion*. Not through holiness, not through theology, not through choice—but because every alternative has been consumed. The serpent’s curve has nowhere left to go.

And then Elijah asks her to give. Not from abundance. From the *last of it*. “Make me a small loaf of bread first.” The request is impossible by every rational measure. She has enough for one meal. To give from it is to advance her death. And yet she does. She gives *at the crossing point*—in the present, from what is present, without guarantee of return.

This is the precise inversion of the first extraction. Eve *took* from the center what could only be received within it—converting presence into object, gift into possession, encounter into acquisition. The widow *gives* from the center what she cannot afford to lose—converting scarcity into offering, possession into gift, the last meal into an act of trust. Eve extracted and the curse began. The widow gives and the jar does not run dry.

The jar never runs dry because it is being poured at the crossing point.

The oil is not consumed by the loop. It is not fuel for an alternate lemniscate. It is not projected toward a future that recedes. It is given in the Now, received in the Now, and replenished in the Now. The scarcity is real—a handful of flour, a little oil—but because it is *inhabited* rather than projected, it becomes inexhaustible. Not infinite in quantity. **Inexhaustible in presence.**

The jar runs dry on the serpent’s curve because every drink generates a new thirst. The jar never runs dry at the crossing point because every gift is received as complete. The difference is not in the jar. The difference is in the position.

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V. Three Scriptural Positions

The topology produces three distinct positions, each with its own scriptural figure:

The serpent's curve: the Samaritan woman. Five husbands. Five orbits. She drinks and thirsts again. Every fulfillment received off the center generates a new lack. Hope sustains the loop. The loop sustains the thirst. The thirst sustains the hope. The cycle is self-perpetuating because it was never built to arrive. It was built to *approach*. “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again.”

The crossing point by exhaustion: the widow of Zarephath. Nothing left. No future tense. No orbit. The Self stripped of every alternate lemniscate, available to the present because no alternative remains. She gives from the last of it—at the crossing point, without guarantee—and the jar does not run dry. Scarcity inhabited in presence becomes sufficiency sustained by grace. “The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry.”

The crossing point by gift: Christ at the well. He does not offer a better curve. He does not offer a sixth husband. He offers the end of the thirst itself—water that becomes a spring welling up from within. Not a source to be chased but a source to be *received*. The “I am” meeting the person at the crossing point, where the gift does not deplete because the giver is the Eternal Present. “Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.”

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VI. Why the Center Does Not Run Out

“I am Who I am.”

— Exodus 3:14

The answer to the question—why the center does not run out—is the same answer the entire topology gives, from the first essay to the last:

The present, when inhabited, is sustained by the Eternal Present.

The crossing point does not deplete because it is not a resource. It is a *position*—the position at which the human “I am” meets the divine “I am.” And the divine “I am” does not run out. It is not a jar with a bottom. It is not a well that can be emptied. It is the ground of being itself—the Eternal Present that sustains the crossing point from outside the curve, that makes the Now possible, that holds the center open even when the person has not inhabited it for decades.

The serpent’s curve runs out because it is parasitic. It borrows its energy from the hopes, dreams, and memories of the person it carries. When the person’s energy is spent, the curve collapses. The alternate lemniscate has no source of its own. It feeds on the self until the self is consumed.

The crossing point does not run out because its source is not the self. Its source is God. The “I am” that spoke to Moses from the burning bush is the same “I am” that holds open the crossing point of every human life. The jar of flour does not run dry because the jar is being sustained by a presence that does not deplete. The water that Christ offers does not run out because it becomes a spring—not a reservoir that empties but a source that wells up from within, fed by the Eternal Present itself.

Hope, on the serpent’s curve, is the last thing that dies—because the loop needs it to survive.

Hope, at the crossing point, does not die at all—because it is no longer hope for something that has not arrived. It is **trust in the One who is already here.**

The jar does not run dry. The water does not run out. The center does not deplete.

Because the center is not ours. It is *given*. And what is given from the “I am” is given without end.

I am—because I am given.



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