

WHAT I WANT  
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**MODEL**

*The following text is a small contribution to a larger project that records speculative origins of binaries and the binary system. Here, I focus on the legend of Zero, nothing, the void, its implications, its character, and its history.*

1.

In a world of numbers, who among us can say they've never counted. The 19th Century scientist Francis Galton loved counting so much, he had special gloves made with a hidden panel attached to the fingers of the interior of the hand. There, he could hide a piece of paper that he would prick with a pin attached to the thumb of the glove to collect data without being observed. The so-called "Data Man" used these gloves primarily to count and rate the relative attractiveness of women who walked past him on the street.

We count, too, though perhaps not as skillfully. A building goes up, streets are lined with litter boxes, chairs are set out, lamps light the halls, birds sing, masses rise, movements are quashed with hails of rubber bullets, we wash the windows, sweep the floor of our eraser dust. A tree sways too far, is cut down, seeds find their way to distant shores, your feet hurt, a sore throat, I watch a cloud-covered night sky. We fall short, the numbers just don't add up.

Unlike Galton. His numbers always added up. They added up so well, he was able to use his glove-data as a basis for the development of his crowning achievement: eugenics.

**2.**

I have found the solution for making simple daily decisions and not going insane.

That's right, it's AI that decides for you what you should do next. Just brain dump everything that goes through your head, your tasks, errands, hunger pangs, desires, deepest fears, and it runs an algorithm that gives you instructions for your day.

You'll never have to think again!

**3.**

I tried to find nothing in words. I tried to find a history of absence written in the present tense. I ear-felt a mocking knock at the door, let in Dionysus, kicked him out. No one mocks me in my own home.

Twenty-seven hours is enough to drive anywhere worth mocking. A bird could mock me, but it stays outside. On a tree branch, detritus from a health crisis makes for a lovely nest. Whose laughing now? Blink and you miss a news cycle. Best keep those pretty little eyes shut.

**4.**

I drew a picture of nothing, now I can't seem to find it.

5.

I spent months trying to find a way to convince my ten readers that the number Zero has shaped the physical and ideological basis of our daily thoughts and movements.

I spent my days shuffling through pages, articles hyperlinked, podcasts, adding pins to the wall of clues.

When narrative failed, I made a dictionary.

6.

Zero is a place where nothing happens

Zero is before One, but also after it

Zero keeps other numbers in their place

Zero is the space left behind, the unused spots on a counting board

a washboard is used for removing dirt from clothes

dirt or sand like the kind left behind on the unused spaces of the counting board

language comes from somewhere, sure, but I had nothing to do with it

language like the kind made from sounds and symbols

symbols like Zero, that develop over time leaving behind tiny clues for those who wish to claim inheritance, so that they may develop a sort of cultural supremacy

supremacy, like the thing Zero both makes and abolishes

abolish, like the thing you want to do to something, but can't remember what

**7.**

Nothing is beyond reach.

8.

The enclosure is a continuous effort. It builds and builds and one day you think "it's what I want, what I want," so you can get your piece of it, finally, yours all yours. Down the boulevard, you walk, point to that thing and say, "I could have that," point to the other thing, and say, "that could be mine someday," something to work for, something to strive for, something to spend your days thinking and dreaming about, walking down the streets and avenues, planning, thinking. So you spend your time on this, this enclosure you can take a piece of, all for yourself, yeah, you can have it, too, spend your time worrying about if and when and how it will happen, not why, or why you're thinking of this and not thinking about planning an insurrection. No, no, you're going to get a piece of the enclosure, yeah, one of these days, you're going to get your piece.

9.

After endless ponder, I've figured it out: Zero is an enclosure. It makes the void manipulable. It makes nothing real. It contains what was previously assumed uncontainable, making everything containable. Land, contained. Bodies, contained. Behaviour, contained. Desire, contained. Decisions, contained.

The enclosure is relentless.

10.

something felt more distant when it was right next to me  
is this loneliness?

a rock is still until it is moved

11.

My body slowly deteriorates under  
the weight of my past, but  
I'm a new man! I walk  
down the street and no one  
sees me. It's like I'm in disguise!

I listen very carefully, but can't  
hear myself. Best get a hearing test.

I drape my ashes over  
my body like a velvet  
cape.

There is a nonzero chance that  
the laws of the universe  
are inconsistent. Every day,  
one rule creates an exception of  
itself until one day, all we have  
are the exceptions.

12.

Turns out we're in a bubble. Like the space between leaves that let the wind through, like the space between walls that let the light through, like the space between each strand of hair, like a spring awaiting a trigger, like the space between a cam-powered hammer and grain, like the space between a bullet and flesh, like the space between the ink of a letterform and paper, like the space between seed and soil, like the space between ceiling and ground, like the space between self and other. That uncomfortable gap between what is and what isn't, can or cannot be contained, known, named.

“Names for numbers narrow down to signs of them.”

- Robert Kaplan, *The Nothing That Is*

