

# State of the David

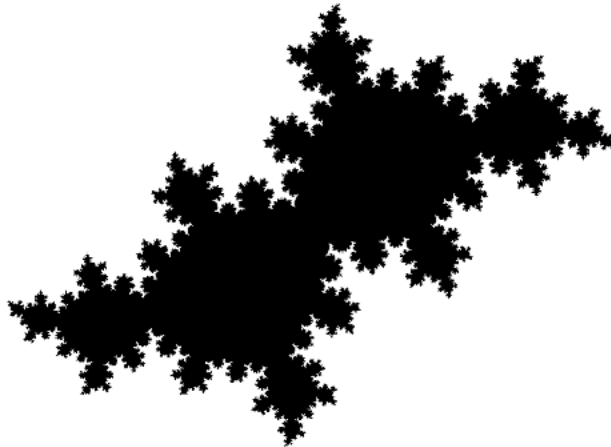
Summer 2014

**Q: What did you do as a 21-year old?**

I finished school and got a job!

**Q: Is there a philosophical narrative that ties the year together?**

Yes: this last year I explored the fractal nature of things. A fractal is a structure that is equally complex at all scales. That is, it looks the same as you zoom in or out. Tree branches and coastlines are natural suggestions of fractals. I like to use fractals as a social analogy. It captures something I've observed – that the path ahead grows in front of you; that any pursuit can be fully absorbing.



This plot shows a Julia set, which is a fractal.

*"Where do you come from? / And where do you go?" - Nina Simone*

Last summer I worked in Manhattan at the private equity firm KKR, and met Associates there for whom the storied firm was a stepping stone to the next fund. Last fall I took a PhD finance class at the Booth School

of Business and studied with doctoral students competing for tenure-track positions and preparing for a life in academia. Last winter I volunteered at a dog shelter attached to an elephant sanctuary in Northern Thailand, where I worked alongside evangelical vegans.

So by living extremes, this year has been a demonstration to me of the immensity of the world, and how one can spend an arbitrarily large amount of time pursuing any end. I find this latter observation simultaneously comforting and alarming. But living multiple extremes was intimidating. I entered these particular paths far enough down their respective rabbit-holes that I felt out of my element. High finance, academia, animal advocacy – all left me insecure because I was revealed to be something other than their respective norms of entirely East-coast, entirely academic, and entirely liberal.

Retreating from these extremes, I spent the spring socializing and phoned in my last undergraduate classes. I saw Outkast perform in Alabama and helped host the final coffeehouse-style party at my college house. I graduated from the University of Chicago with a double major in math and statistics and then went to the North Woods with my family and the Dominican Republic with my girlfriend before starting my full-time job.

**Q: What job did you get?**

I am excited to have returned to Aardvark Trading, an algorithmic trading group in Chicago that I have worked with since high school. They offered me an engaging position that will fully leverage my quantitative and communication skills. The job is entirely engaging so far. Of course, Aardvark taught me to hedge my bets. So I reserve the right to accept a standing offer from the Booth School of Business to join their full-time MBA program, which would start in either two or three years.

*"I don't hate players, I don't love the game / I'm the shot clock, way above the game" - Mos Def*

**Q: What's your plan for next year?**

I will work hard at Aardvark and take advantage of living in Chicago to see my loved ones frequently. To make this coming year better than all the rest, I have made a few resolutions.

- First, a meta-goal: I will make specific, actionable goals that promote building healthy habits.
- I will be more assertive and aggressive, and will ask for a favor or inconvenience someone at least once a week.
- Having grown increasingly discontent with, and bored of, my self absorption, I will participate in at least four volunteer events this year.
- In my ongoing quest to get ripped, I will pursue a mix of martial arts, weight training, and maybe even yoga, and will work out at least twice a week.
- I will continue to lead a low overhead lifestyle where I live well within my means and avoid the bourgeois trappings of a typical young-urban-professional lifestyle.
- I will learn two new songs on the piano.
- In general, I will be more awesome – and more humble.

*"I sit around / With my head hanging down / And I wonder / Who's loving you?" - Jackson Five*

**Q: What is the State of the David?**

The State of the David is too damn serious. I need to lighten up. At times I feel cynical and middle-aged. In my 2012 address, I mentioned the importance of my environment in shaping me. The University of Chicago is highly critical, extremely serious, and mostly impractical – and has shaped me accordingly. I have become critical, but not generative. This unproductive criticism has turned inwards, as I perceive some febleness of character, mind, and body.

*"Look what they've done to my song, Ma / Look what they've done to my song" - Miley Cyrus*

I am glad to be done with school. I am excited to work, where I will develop a mastery and build. After my intense college experiences, I retreat to a stable medium to put myself together and nourish my fatigued mind with restorative rhythms and routines. Then I can approach the open questions of how to blend glamour with substance in my consumption and lifestyle, and how to balance my rogue narrative with humility and practicality.