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## An Introduction to Psychological Apathismalgia

*Justin Manning*

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A separation exists between those who are happy and in well-being and those who are pessimistic and seem only to fail. This separation has been explored within the discipline of positive psychology over the past five decades. Among other things, the research in psychology explored in this paper shows that a person can either be optimistic and resilient, or they can be pessimistic; these terms refer to mutually exclusive states of mind. An optimist has resilience and a pessimist does not. A cynic who has resilience is still optimistic and not a pessimist. The elements of the resilient optimist include: optimism, passion, imagination, and perseverance. The crucial difference between the person with resilience and optimism and the person who lacks both can be expressed in a single word, which I have coined, a concept and a mindset called apathismalgia. Apathismalgia is the abstract, wistful desire to advance to a future place or time. An antonym to nostalgia, which relies on memory of the past, apathismalgia is about imagined futures. The state of apathismalgia has been studied in psychological research, but until now there has not been a term applied to it. There are three components to apathismalgia that are necessary in order to have the authentic feeling: optimism, imagination, and perseverance. Apathismalgia can grow in a person only with the cognitive mindset of optimism: a mindset that includes belief that good things can happen in the future, creation of a positive imagined future construct, and consequently, motivation to move forward to create the imagined construct. Without the optimistic mindset, there cannot be a positive and realistic imagined future. The absence of an imagination is the absence of specific goal setting. A deficiency in perseverance turns the optimistic mindset and imagined setting into the German *Vorfreude*, a term which denotes the gleeful anticipation of an imagined probable construct. Throughout this paper, I define apathismalgia by investigating imagination and optimism as brain structures and neurotransmitters, exploring the motivation for practising apathismalgia, and detailing transition pathways for a pessimist to experience apathismalgia. Additionally, I offer literature explorations on what imagination and optimism are as brain structures and neurotransmitters, why one would want to practise apathismalgia, and how a pessimist can grow into experiencing apathismalgia.

## What is Aphistemalgia?

The necessary mindset held by anyone who has aphistemalgia is optimism. In psychology, optimism is a cognitive trait, which manifests itself around response to failure; specifically, when the individual responds with a thought process that is non-destructive to the self (Seligman, *Learned Optimism* 4). In contrast to optimism, learned helplessness is a concept created by Seligman where an individual faces adversity and gives up (5). The theory was derived from an experiment where dogs would face electric shock unless they could escape their cages. Ultimately, it was found that the dogs would make little attempt to avoid the painful stimulus until taught how to escape. Seligman concluded that this behaviour was a result of a loss of self-esteem and the perception of being helpless (Seligman, *Learned Helplessness* 409).

The experience of helplessness is the same as being pessimistic. A pessimistic person will have learned to be helpless. That is because pessimism, for Seligman, became the thought process of blaming the circumstances of the self/innate, the permanent, and the global. When a person who is helpless and pessimistic encounters failure, they blame themselves, they consider failure to be permanent in their lives and/or the world, and they think this failure will determine all dimensions of their life (410–411). On the other hand, the optimist perceives adversity and failure as temporary, external to the self, and specific to the circumstance (Lee and Seligman 32). A hypothetical that illustrates the difference between a pessimist and an optimist is their response to rejection by a date. In this scenario, the pessimist would think the rejection is the result of an innate personal characteristic that is permanent and unchanging, and which everyone in their global life will notice and dislike (Seligman, *Learned Optimism* 50). An optimist, in contrast, takes the rejection and thinks that it is about a negative aspect, one that is external to the self, can be changed, and is not negatively affecting their global life (50). Evidently, the optimistic mindset is important for goal achievement, and thus necessary to growth. Aphistemalgia involves choosing a goal to achieve or an obstacle to overcome, and to have aphistemalgia one must believe in triumph over adversity or, in other words, be an optimist.

Aphistemalgia is not just a mindset, as there are behaviours that manifest during the experience. As aphistemalgia is a wistful desire to go forward, there are actions that a person takes to achieve the goal necessary to realize their imagined future state. There are two main categories of goals that people strive to achieve: external and internal. External goals are tangible, such as money and fame. Inter-

nal goals are about personal growth and maturation, such as learning about personal interests and developing hobbies (Sheldon et al. 477). The person who cares only about external goals can be characterized as Machiavellian and is vulnerable to self-esteem loss when they encounter failure (479). There is no explanation offered as to why these people are especially emotionally vulnerable. According to a study done at the University of Missouri that examined external and internal goals, the majority of students displayed stronger motivation for intrinsic goals rather than extrinsic goals (Sheldon et al. 484). According to research, this is a healthy mindset with reduced potential for anxiety, depression, or personality disorders (Sheldon et al. 484). These results suggest that people need to choose their own goals in order to feel increased motivation and positive feelings of accomplishment. Therefore, apathism is a practice useful for achieving personal fulfillment. This is because practising apathism requires the goal to be chosen by the individual; the individual must have mental images of what their own chosen goal would appear, feel, or sound like and then strive to achieve that goal. Before understanding how this process works in practice, it is worthwhile to acknowledge how the process of optimistic imagination functions within the brain.

When analyzing the impact of goals on imagined futures, it is important to consider the constructive episodic simulation hypothesis: a theory that explores what people envision during imagination. According to this theory, the details in imagined futures are taken from memory. For example, if someone imagines a future graduation, they may envision a blue sky, uniformly coloured gowns, and various other details taken from memory (Addis et al. 2223, 2225). In fact, both memory and imagination are located in similar regions of the brain, including the inferior frontal gyrus, temporal pole, posterior temporal cortex, hippocampus, para-hippocampal gyrus, medial parietal cortex, and cerebellum (Addis et al. 2230–2234). This group of brain structures is related to emotional intensity and personal value. These structures were found using an fMRI scanner with prompts for memory as a control and prompts for an imagined future as the test data. The increased activity during imagination was found in the anterior right hippocampus (Addis et al. 2235, Martin et al. 13858). In their study, Sharot, Korn, and Dolan found that, when presented with negative futures, the participants who were not as afraid of a prompt such as Alzheimer's disease had a more active inferior frontal gyrus (1475). It is hypothesized that this part of the frontal lobe has an evolutionary role for further human development by giving hope in tragedy (Sharot et al. 1476). With imagination, optimists have more vivid images than pessimists (Blackwell et al. 59).

A neurological difference between optimists and pessimists, which can be found through MRI scans, is that the left thalamus, left pulvinar, and left para-hippocampal gyrus have less grey matter in pessimists than in optimists (Yang et al. 203). The increased neural connections in these sections of the brain come from increased blood flow in some regions. This observable physical difference may explain why optimists are proactive problem solvers (Yang et al. 202). Creativity associated with the ability to imagine is found in the angular gyrus and supramarginal gyrus (Fogarty et al. 743). The areas stimulated during the visual component of aphisternalgia are the temporal pole, posterior temporal cortex, left para-hippocampal gyrus, medial parietal cortex, cerebellum, pulvinar within the left thalamus, and the pre-frontal cortex areas of the supramarginal gyrus, inferior frontal gyrus and angular gyrus (Addis et al. 2235). These are the sections of the brain that grow and develop with the process of creating, maintaining, and completing aphisternalgia.

A focus on the behavioural aspects associated with strong work ethic and perseverance enables observations to be made about the impact of holding a positive imagined future. The process of choosing a goal and working passionately to achieve it has been observed in existing research. From this research, a model in which the self chooses a personal goal then makes decisions on post-goal formation in order to achieve a particular objective was developed. This process is now known as the self-concordance model, from Sheldon and Elliot. The research conducted by Sheldon and Elliot involved giving students surveys in different parts of an academic year to measure the progress of goal completion. One of the notable findings was that participants who chose their own goals were more likely to achieve their desired outcome. In contrast, those who did not choose their own goals were unlikely to achieve the objective (Sheldon and Elliot 492). Based on this study, the authors suggest that to achieve need satisfaction, a factor for well-being, people can have goals that are not deeply meaningful; however, self-concordance (or self-choice) positively influences goal achievement, which upon fulfillment influences well-being.

In contrast to the self-concordance model factors described above, including goal choice, completion of the goal, and feelings of well-being, the factors unique to aphisternalgia cannot be measured. The self-concordance model was developed years before aphisternalgia, but differs from aphisternalgia in one crucial aspect: aphisternalgia is about the individual and their own perspective as well as a qualitative and vivid imagination. The self-concordance model shows that there is a causal relationship between self-determined goal choice and successful

completion of the goal. Inquiry into the relationship between goal completion and imagined futures was either consciously or unconsciously omitted from the measured factors within the self-concordance research. To illustrate with an example, Sheldon and Elliot state a few of the goals the participants had. One was to “keep myself in good physical condition” (Sheldon and Elliot 486). To follow through with this on the self-concordance model, the subject would have had to choose this goal personally, would have to take active steps in diet, exercise, and sleep patterns, would achieve their goal, and the subject would at that point feel satisfaction for their accomplishment.

In apathism, the subject with the same goal would visualize an appearance or a physical accomplishment (running a marathon), and would think about these optimal futures, believing they were possible, while conducting healthy patterns. The end result of apathism and self-concordance is the same. Both end in achievement and feelings of success and well-being. However, the differences in process remain meaningful because it opens the possibility for building on the self-concordance research by conducting the same surveys while adding questions and hypotheses about optimism and imagination. From the perspective of someone who does not have apathism but who wants apathism, it is valuable that they can see empirical data connecting goal choice, completion, and satisfaction. Apathism as an experience involves active and creative construction of the end point. Understanding apathism results in understanding a personal and internal process for goal achievement. Before inquiring into how to develop apathism, it is useful to understand why a person would want apathism.

### Why Would One Want Apathism?

Increasing rates of mild depression have not been addressed in a way that reaches the root causes of the problem. Although there are treatments for severe depression, such as shock therapy and medication, very little has been discovered to help those with mild depression (Seligman, *Learned Optimism* 12–13). This is critical, as the rate for adolescent depression is now six to eight times higher than it was in 1938 (Hidaka 206). An important step in addressing this growing issue, Seligman suggests, is the use of optimism as a cognitive style that can protect against depression (Seligman, *Learned Optimism* 16). According to Seligman, pessimism creates vulnerability to depression while optimism protects against developing depressive symptoms (4). This is primarily due to the differences in behaviour and disposition between optimists and pessimists. For instance, a behaviour difference

between optimists and pessimists is revealed in the ease with which pessimists quit their efforts to achieve goals, such as salespeople making more sales or students achieving higher grades. Pessimists quit after faced with relatively minor adversities and obstacles. Optimists, on the other hand, continue when the costs are low (97). Furthermore, optimists, as people, have better connections to some kind of family and have more meaningful relationships that establish trust, creating a foundation for resilience against failure (Seligman, "Building Resilience" 104). These dispositions are found across the population, because failure is universal. The defining difference is that pessimists blame failure on internal, permanent, and global causes. Optimists blame failure on external, temporary, and specific circumstances.

To further explain how this difference operates, Seligman, throughout his career, conducted case studies to highlight how optimists and pessimists differ across dimensions. In a case study of two bankers who had lost their Wall Street jobs due to the 2008 financial crisis, Seligman analyzes the difference between optimism and pessimism. One banker applied for a job in New York, but upon failing to obtain the position, moved back into his parents' basement. This former banker believed he was "not cut out for finance" (Seligman, "Building Resilience" 101). The other applied for a greater number of jobs in both New York and his hometown in Ohio, the latter being the setting where he was hired and was able to continue his career (Seligman, "Building Resilience" 101). One banker was optimistic and successful, while the other banker was not. The banker with optimism possibly imagined a future of continuing to work in the industry. The successful banker also had the perseverance to apply to more firms, one of which subsequently hired him. If the successful banker had aphisternalgia, they would have imagined a future of staying in finance as they pursued interviews. The explanation for why one was successful and the other was not is that optimists are resilient and do not give up, while pessimists do not persist in the face of adversity. Those who have and experience aphisternalgia pursue a personal ambition with resilience, as demonstrated by the successful banker in the above scenario.

The optimistic banker saw the financial crisis as the external, temporary, and specific cause to his unemployment. The pessimistic banker believed there was something innately flawed in his own banking ability, that this flaw was impossible to remedy, and that this would affect his banking ability for the rest of his career (Seligman, "Building Resilience" 101). The optimistic banker believed the problem was the economy. The pessimistic banker believed that he did not have the ability to perform under pressure. These beliefs were revealed to Seligman in his

own interviews with the subjects (3). Another career example is insurance salespeople. A practice in which the sales industry engages is cold calls: the phone calls they have to make after hours to lists of random people who may want additional insurance coverage, and with whom they then try to schedule meetings to make sales (Seligman, *Learned Optimism* 97). The pessimistic insurance salesperson stops trying after a certain number of rejections. The optimistic salesperson continues making cold calls with the belief that there will eventually be a person who wants to schedule a meeting and who may buy the insurance (98). The explanatory style of the pessimist salesperson is that they are unable to make sales, that they will always be unable to make sales, and that every new customer knows they are a poor salesperson. The optimistic salesperson knows that most people do not want to buy insurance, but that the number of rejections is unrelated to the possibility of a new client in the future, and that it is statistically probable that someone will agree to a meeting, and a sale will be made (99). Seligman is confident that there is optimism within the successful salesperson (99). It is also possible that these salespeople had imagined what success would look, feel, and sound like; they may have imagined success in the call and the value that successful sales would bring to them. Assuming this is true, and that the salespersons' passionate effort was driven by the desire to achieve their specific imagined construct, apathism was being practised.

Elements of apathism are found not only in workplaces; the same elements can be found in educational institutions with students. In a different study, Eronen et al. conducted research on the strategies of university students in Finland. The method was to use questionnaires at the start of the first year, then during midterms, and then at the start of the second year. The questionnaires included: the Strategy Attribution Questionnaire, the Finish Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck's Depression Inventory, and the Cartoon-Attribution Strategy Test. The characteristics of the student participants being measured are reflected in the titles of the questionnaires. The researchers found that there were two strategies that resulted in academic success: defensive pessimism and optimism. While optimists are motivated by the potential for a positive future state, defensive pessimism operates when fear of failure is the main motivating factor (Eronen et al. 174–175). The difference of optimism and defensive pessimism in these findings is that optimists scored better in the questionnaires about emotional well-being (Eronen et al. 173). Further statistical research found that pessimists drop out of university at a rate of 30% while optimists drop out at a rate of 15% (Carver, Scheier, et al. 884). Therefore, both defensive pessimism and optimism are effective sources of moti-

vation and academic success, but it is the optimist who is able to persist in work where failure is a greater certainty than success (Seligman, “Building Resilience” 103). Optimism is the essential disposition of aphantasia because optimists try to achieve things whereas pessimists see themselves as inadequate. Optimism for something better in the future, which can be achieved with a sufficient and realistic amount of effort, is fundamental to aphantasia. As the findings above show, optimism is crucial to goal achievement. Even if one rejects aphantasia, the importance of optimism for achieving better outcomes than pessimism, both mentally and materially, should be recognized.

As discussed above, one’s mindset can have a direct impact on goal achievement and overall success. Another proven contributor to goal achievement as well as a component of aphantasia, to which I now turn my attention, is grit. Duckworth et al. offered grit as the fundamental personal trait to success: grit being the combination of passion and perseverance (1087). The research on grit, through questionnaires surveying people who are successful in various fields, found that grit features in more success stories than IQ scores or the personality trait of conscientiousness, both of which are often associated with professional success (Duckworth et al. 1090). One of the case studies conducted by Duckworth et al. investigated properties of grit in high school students who attended the competitive West Point Military Academy, a school notorious for its high dropout rate (1094). Among the student participants, conscientious students were better than haphazard students in avoiding momentary temptations. However, conscientiousness was not a substitute for grit because students with high conscientiousness still dropped out of WPMA at a higher rate than haphazard students with high grit (Duckworth et al. 1096). Grit is long-term conscientiousness; it is the ability to stay with a project after repeated failure and to persevere through adversity because of passion for the work (Duckworth et al. 1087–1088). Self-concordance is a model that addresses the sequence of choosing a goal and then attaining it. Self-concordance researchers describe “good days” to their participants as any day in which the individual is working towards a success (Sheldon and Elliot 482).

Grit is needed in self-concordance and aphantasia because all goals worth achieving require the mastery of a skill set and the drive to use the skills to create or control a desired outcome. In aphantasia, grit is the “how to” to achieve the goal, which has been imagined and is believed to be achievable. Optimism is the necessary disposition of those who can use aphantasia, and grit is a description of the process of working towards the goal. Moreover, the catalyst of aphantasia is the imagined future in which the subject wants to arrive and

live. The example of a person who wants to be healthier in order to actualize their apathism of participating in a marathon may imagine their future as they practise. The practice and exercise required for a marathon is long, painful, and boring. To overcome the tediousness of such an endeavor, the individual with apathism would imagine the successful outcome that they want involving the thrill of the race and the sights and feelings they will experience. To achieve this, individuals need the optimism to believe their triumph is likely and the grit to passionately work toward skill mastery.

Apathism is necessary for well-being because the concept has three parts: the end goal vision, the process of building the vision from imagination to reality, and the grit to follow through with the goal despite the certainty of setback. The optimistic perspective has the added benefit of being the mindset or cognitive component of apathism, allowing the agent to believe that they can conquer and grow. The people who realize goals are the people who believe the goal can be realized, generate their own goal, and strive for the achievement of the goal. However, these necessary components of apathism do not have to be innate, because each characteristic can be worked on independently.

### How Can One Attain Apathism?

There are people who do not feel optimism, practise imagination, or act with perseverance, and who, therefore, do not experience apathism. Seligman adopted a methodical process that everyone can use to create optimism, called the ABC process (214). The ABC process was taken from Albert Ellis, who first proposed the model. The purpose of the model for Seligman is to help patients change their reflexive mind from pessimism to optimism (Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 211). The ABC process involves looking at the Adversity, evaluating one's own Belief of the cause and nature of the conflict, then predicting the Consequences or outcome. The next step is analyzing variables that can be controlled and changed for the next time this conflict occurs (Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 210, 216). A disputation is the alternative, optimistic, explanation of why the conflict occurred, one that is temporary and specific to the circumstances. When variables are found on how to resolve the conflict, the individual has the knowledge to improve circumstances (Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 218–219). This is what optimists do. Optimists do not only imagine a life of easy success, optimists rise above adversity and make an effort to improve the quality of life and the well-being of the self.

When the discovery of a pessimistic explanatory style is made, the reflec-

tion and eventual success in improving circumstances is what causes the optimistic explanatory style to become a reflex (Seligman, *Learned Optimism* 214, 218). Therefore, how one perceives and reflects on crisis now, can shape one's optimism later in life. Assuming the causes of adversity to be innate, permanent, and global inhibits the genuine attempt to try. As previously mentioned, there is value in progress towards developing a skill. Optimism is a skill that can be learned through the Adversity, Belief, Consequences method. In other words, to work towards aphantasia, one must go over what the obstacle was, what the cause was, and what the consequences were; then one must engage in self-reflection to recognize evidence of pessimism in their ABC analysis (Seligman, *Learned Optimism* 219). If the problem was identified as one from an innate, stable, and global cause, it is possible to shift this explanation to a more optimistic understanding with evidence supporting external, temporary, and specific causes. Since a pessimistic immediate reaction can be a distorted reality, a third-party perspective can be engaged to assist in developing arguments and evidence against pessimism (Seligman, *Learned Optimism* 220, 229). This is a strategy for improving cognitive optimism and thus achieving aphantasia. The ABC strategy was tested by Seligman in schools with children and in workplaces (235, 255). Practising the ABC strategy is worthwhile for people who do not have optimism, because optimism is necessary to aphantasia, which is, as previously discussed, a probable pathway to success.

Optimists are known to engage in proactive behavioural habits meant to minimize future adversity. For example, before surgery, optimists make plans on what their lives will be afterwards (Carver, Scheier, et al. 882). More generally, optimists are found to hold behavioural habits meant to foster good health and prevent future illness. Therefore, optimists engage in both cognitive interventions as well as behavioural modification to minimize future adversity (Carver, Scheier, et al. 883). In another study conducted on the topic of proactive behaviour, Macleod and Conway conducted research on the correlations between imagined futures and social networks and incomes (368). Macleod and Conway used questionnaires to determine variables about subjects' dispositions and lifestyles (361–365). Notable was the use of the Future Thinking Task, which asks participants to list every future they can imagine and categorize each future as either positive or negative (Macleod and Conway 361). Macleod and Conway found that, with participants who did not have mood disorders, those who reported greater satisfaction from sociability also had more effectively thought-out plans for the future. Those who did not list things they anticipated had less enjoyment from social networks

and had less logical causality in their plans for accomplishing goals. It is unclear if having larger social networks enables aphistemalgia or if the capability of aphistemalgia results in larger social networks (Macleod and Conway 369). Without clear causal understanding, persons trying to improve their ability to have aphistemalgia should try both. Patients may continue working on developing a positive vision while seeking new friends and a social network to enhance well-being and protect against depression. By combining findings from Seligman (*Learned Optimism*, 210), Carver, Scheier, and Segerstrom (880), and Macleod and Conway (357), it may be inferred that taking steps for better health, or any active attempt to improve quality of life, can be a habit built while simultaneously developing an optimistic explanatory style. This process is for persons with pessimism and mild depressive symptoms. A limitation of a single essay and a simplified cognitive strategy is that some persons have symptoms severe enough to require professional help.

This essay cannot substitute for professional intervention, but it is worth acknowledging new directions in cognitive behaviour therapy research. Persons with depressive symptoms are capable of making plans for the future—the difference between them and optimists is that those with mild depression are either unable to make positive plans for the future or have difficulty making them. Working towards an optimistic explanatory style and mindset can aid people experiencing difficulties associated with mild depression, and ultimately enable them to achieve aphistemalgia. Without optimism, one cannot decide on the goal of the future self or career or social circumstance. Moving forward, Blackwell and Holmes conducted experiments for a technological approach to therapy. Mood disorder patients were tasked with using computer cognitive bias modification, software that presents ambiguous scenarios to test interpretation. This regimen was used with patients who were required to read sixty-four prompts a day for two weeks with weekly therapy sessions to monitor their progress (Blackwell and Holmes 341). The prompts were modified from Holmes, Mathews, et al. (239). One example of a prompt provided was “It’s your birthday, and your partner reaches over to you with a present. You open it and *feel incredibly happy*” (Holmes, Mathews, et al. 239). The wording of the prompt was intended to be ambiguous until the final line, which would be in italics and would make the meaning positive (Holmes, Mathews, et al. 237). The result in four of the seven cases was that they learned that positive outcomes are feasible. Based on their recorded verbal responses, the research subjects speak as if it is surprising that a good outcome occurred (Blackwell and Holmes 346). This experiment taught people how to think positively and

was a needed response to Seligman's work on learned helplessness. People can be taught to think more positively with exposure to something more ambiguous than positive. Exposure to this material is a 21st-century method of helping persons with mild depression develop cognitive strategies to create optimism. When optimism is developed as a cognitive reaction, it remains and is consistent over long periods (Eronen et al. 161). The longlasting effects of learning optimism enhance overall quality of life, making the effort to achieve this mindset more than worthwhile. Learned optimism is necessary for aphantasia because it allows the subject to be capable of creating an imagined future. In other words, the optimistic mindset's ability to transform ambiguous and incomplete information into positive future imagining is a crucial first step in achieving aphantasia.

Imagination is not natural to everyone, but most can practise imagination to develop a vision for the future. When imagining the future, the first-person point of view is more emotionally impactful than a third-person point of view. For instance, imagining a future setting with your own eyes instead of imagining yourself in a setting is how one can become emotionally connected to the potential reality (Holmes, Coughtrey, et al. 877). Referring back to the example of the person who wants to be healthier, there can be feelings of excitement and anticipation of lifting heavy weights or running a marathon when imagining from the first-person perspective. Wei et al. makes the case that this pathway within the brain can be improved by engagement in creative activities (96). The imagination of wanted future events has the potential to qualify as the best practise to enhance imaginative and creative ability. By practising different imagined settings and events that the self desires for the future, these visions may become more vivid and complex over time with the improved pathway from the prefrontal cortex and posterior cingulate cortex (Wei et al. 93). There is evidence that daydreaming is a practice for thinking about what the future will hold (D'Argembeau et al. 99). In a study that collected all of the recorded thoughts from participants, 41.25% of all future-oriented thoughts were positive and 21.25% of all future-oriented thoughts were negative (D'Argembeau et al. 100). Future-oriented thinking by visualizing the desired future event can lead to greater motivation, which might have previously been absent. The additional step from this specific research is that successful people have a positive imagination of the work in pursuit of their goal, while unsuccessful people only imagine the achievement without positively thinking about the process (D'Argembeau et al. 101–102). The practice of imagining small positive future outcomes is the first step to developing the capacity to imagine an aphantasia. The remaining steps involve imagining the process to the goal,

acting for the goal, and then after completion, imagining goals in greater ambition with a lengthier process. Just as the person who wants to improve their health in order to run a marathon requires optimism and diligence, imagination requires the belief that one can have a more dynamic imagination and the grit to practise. Attainment of apathism comes after the enhancement of imagination.

## Conclusion and Future Directions with Apathism

The state of apathism can be cultivated by persons who will it so. Apathism exists in neurological actions, internally revealed in optimistic thought patterns, manifested in work, and realized in accomplishment. Apathism is simultaneously a human experience but also exclusionary against those who do not practise optimism, imagination, or skill development. The benefits of apathism can be assumed to be similar to the benefits of optimism, which is greater numbers of general accomplishments, the benefits of imagination, which include enhanced creativity and feelings of connection to goals and processes of attainment, and the benefits of grit, which involves achieving more difficult goals. The practice of optimism comes from thought patterns to make adversity external to the self, temporary, and occurring in one specific place. The practice of imagination comes from trying to construct more novel and unique circumstances or outcomes. Grit comes from working for a purpose, especially in non-ideal circumstances. By connecting imagination with positivity and productively trying to achieve an objective, persons can create a dream and realize it.

As evidenced in this paper, apathism is useful for individual growth and well-being. However, there are a number of other useful applications of this mindset. For example, one can look towards resolving global conflict by imagining an improved future, planning for achievement, and employing the grit to achieve. This direction is inspired by the attempt to use imagined interactions as a method of ending racial prejudice within groups from Crisp, Birtel et al. (261). Neural and behavioural economists can use apathism to compare it with the unrealistic optimism that causes economic, financial, and price bubbles. Examples of economic bubbles range from tulips in 17th-century Netherlands to the 1929 stock market crash to the 2008 mortgage crisis to ongoing speculation about Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies. This research direction is inspired by Sharot, Korn, and Dolan (1479), who blamed the 2008 financial crisis on unrealistic optimism. A third possible direction is applying apathism to youth at risk of delinquent behaviour or persons in need of rehabilitation from a criminological

perspective. Finally, those who choose to pursue research or publishing of aphisternalgia have the visions of reading sources and then writing about them. They possess grit and the drive to work towards the goal of publishing one's own material, and the optimism to believe success possible.

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