



The Unshakable Ground

Prologue

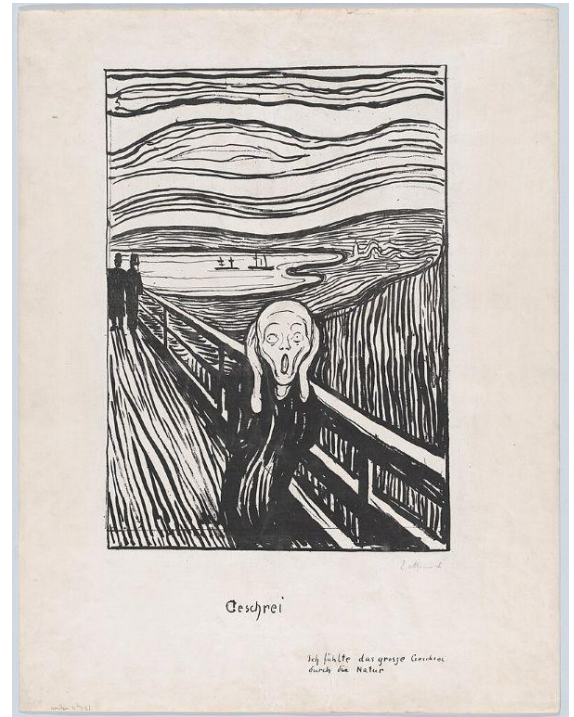
I vividly remember being an angst-ridden teen, just finding my feet at university and questioning why I was here—as in, alive. It was a soul-searching “*Why me? What did I do to deserve this?*” As if being alive was some sort of punishment, a trial, something to be endured.

I was drawn to tortured writings like Kafka’s *The Trial* and *The Castle*, and to music steeped in longing and despair: the *Adagietto* from Mahler’s Fifth Symphony, Albinoni’s *Adagio in G minor*. I even wrote embarrassingly turgid poetry, questioning whether there was any meaning to being alive, whether there was any value in going on.

The surprising thing is that I was also having a really enjoyable time at university. This soul-searching wasn’t the whole of me, but it was an identity I clung to, believing it represented something fundamental about being human.

At some point, most of us face a similar existential crisis—a dark night when the very fact of existence feels precarious. Questions arise like shadows: *Why am I here? What if there is no meaning? What happens when I die?* In those moments, the ground seems to give way, leaving us suspended over an abyss.

Edvard Munch’s painting *The Scream* captures this cry of the ego in its rawest form: the sense that existence itself is unbearable, threatened, or void. But what if the terror belongs not to life itself, but only to the fragile construct of “me”?



The Crisis of Existence

Beyond dramatic crises, many of us carry a subtler, ongoing background hum: the need to keep checking that we are “real,” that we measure up, that we won’t be unmasked as frauds. We carry a sense that life cannot be trusted, that we are under constant threat from something we cannot quite name.

This insecurity—imposter syndrome, self-doubt, the anxious “Am I okay?”—is simply the ego making its presence felt. It is a subtle but all-pervading “No” to life itself.

The ego presents itself as a friend in times of need, the prop you can always rely on. Yet it is also the quiet saboteur within. It pretends to be *you*, yet constantly undermines the ground you stand on, then offers itself as



consolation. In truth, it is the most fragile of constructs—a knot of impressions woven together before we could even put our experience into words.

We learn quickly that the open, undefined self we are born as, must develop an identity in order to function in the world. In many ways, this is an essential part of development. The problem comes when that identity hardens into a brittle shell, too inflexible to respond with grace to life's shifting terrain. That's when the trouble begins. We find ourselves out of our depth, and the ego realises it isn't up to the job. But instead of yielding, it digs in—and here lie the roots of the existential cries that torment the soul.

Being Needs No Support

The truth is that Being itself requires no reassurance. It does not need props, explanations, or guarantees. It simply *is*—infinite, eternal, prior to every form and every fear. Like the sky, it remains untouched by the clouds of doubt.

For some of us who long for something beyond the tormented self, the light of Being begins to break through cracks in the shell. A thread appears, and the truly curious follow it. Slowly, they rediscover the self they were born as—pure Being without boundaries, without beginning or end. Undefined and undefinable, yet the very ground of our experience. A universal “Yes” to life.

The Ego's Fear

What trembles in an existential crisis is not Being, but the constructed self. Woven from stories and fears, it senses its fragility and mistakes that for the fragility of life itself. All existential fear arises from this confusion—as if the collapse of “me” were the collapse of reality.

Discovering the Ground

When fear is traced back to its source, the illusion of threat dissolves. The ground of Being is not shaken by crisis—only the structures of identity tremble. To rest in this ground is not denial of fear, but recognition of its limits.

The Freedom Beyond Fear

Freedom does not come by conquering fear, or by defeating ego, but by seeing through it—becoming intimately familiar with the ways it operates and the tricks it deploys. Sensitive to its attempts to manipulate our relationship to life, we gradually withdraw our allegiance and start to rest in our true nature.



The unshakable ground is already here—unconditioned and untouched. When it is experienced directly, and lived rather than held as a concept, existential questions lose their sting. They become invitations into mystery rather than threats of annihilation.

To rest in Being is not to answer every question, but to discover that the questions themselves are held in a silence that does not tremble—a silence that welcomes curiosity and exploration.

Perhaps those cries never vanish entirely. They rise and fall, sometimes loud, sometimes faint. But what changes is our relationship to them. Instead of proof that existence is fragile, they can become reminders to look deeper—toward the ground that was never in doubt.

Image: Edvard Munch, *The Scream* (1895, lithograph). Public Domain.

Further listening:

- [Mahler's *Adagietto* from the Fifth Symphony \(Leonard Bernstein & Vienna Philharmonic\)](#)
- [Albinoni's *Adagio* in G minor](#)