

E1 Christos Tsagkaris

Speaker1: Good morning, sun, scuttled through my window and knocked on my eyes. I stood up slowly. I guess I was a tad slower than the average 25-year-old man. Although it was late spring, I felt a bit cold and tired. Quite strange since last night was pretty normal. A usual Friday at work until I received that text about rescheduling my vaccination appointment for the same evening. Having no other plans, I appeared vaccination centre as recommended. Before signing out the officer quickly advised me not to worry in case of low-grade fever, and muscle and bone aches. It hasn't happened to me before. I know. They then went on my way. The sound of the thermometer stopped my memory recollection at the time. I quickly replied to a friend who text me about joining a short hike on a nearby hill and took the thermometer out. I was about to push the button muted when I noticed the number 37.3 on the screen. I blinked for a moment before deciding to take my temperature once more. I didn't expect to have a fever, even a mild one like this. You can never trust these things in any case, so a second measurement would work. The next measurement was, however, 37.4 again, mild fever. I abruptly put a thermometer on the table, but my arm felt a bit heavy while I was putting the thermometer back in each box. I didn't pay attention, but I had the same feeling on my legs while biting a couple of things that I would need for the hike.

Speaker1: In any case, I locked the door. I left and hopped on the bus. The bus was nearly empty except for a couple of people sitting two rows after me. I couldn't really follow their conversation, but I got a male name and the words short light, fever, light or no pain and collapse. I didn't want to listen to all of this discussion, so I put on my headphones and started scrolling through the local news. After a couple of weeks, I stumbled upon a story about a young man more or less my age. A few days ago he was admitted to the local hospital with great muscle weakness after having received the COVID-19 jab while reading. Despite being the doctor myself and knowing that this type of side effect is super rare, I can say that my head was burning. I hardly managed to get up and descend from the bus when the time came. And even walking these 100 metres to the meeting point was already as tough as climbing the mountain intended to climb. Overcoming the fear instigated by the news, bouncing back all over my head was making each and every step harder. It wasn't certainly the first time I was listening to or reading what under normal circumstances I describe as fake news or best-case scenarios exaggeration. It is difficult to recall actually, how many times I have navigated

acquaintances, friends, and even family through the hidden passages between time and cost.

Speaker1: Let's say that the man collapsed in the street, and let's suppose that he decided to get a haircut the same morning after having spent a sleepless night drinking. A lack of sleep together with alcohol consumption, as you understand, can be held accountable for the main finding that makes sense. On the other hand, the chances that shortening his hair affected his blood circulation and level of consciousness are, of course, minimal. I would often bring this example up to stress that a disease like a stroke or heart impaction is more likely to be caused by unhealthy lifestyle choices over the years rather than a single event such as receiving a vaccine in our case. During any debate, my example could have only one weakness that likely I would still walk through this by repeating that the likelihood of any of the hypothesized side effects was still lower than the frequency of the same diseases in people who suffered from COVID-19 without being vaccinated. While walking I was really amazed why my mix of allegory and facts. A powerful spell against any awkward story so far did not work on me this time. I was approaching the meeting point when I realized that persuading a third person is easier than persuading yourself. Like an arrow flying to its targets. My stories would often pass through the gaps of knowledge of other people and hit the bullseye of ignorance. To put it in different words, connecting the dots of evidence with fiction would learn that like an avalanche or the misconceptions of people with a lower level of knowledge.

Speaker1: You may say that altitude difference gravity would boost its impact enough to show up the fake news away. However, one cannot throw a snowball, let alone an avalanche on himself. Getting the vaccine, experiencing the physically mild side effects, and then confronting fear was a different height and admittedly a more difficult one. These thoughts cover the rest of my way to the beginning of the Path to Real Mountain. Although I have raised some level of inner peace, I felt mentally exhausted. I have seen the hoax of my fear, but I was still unable to unhook myself from the feeling that something bad will happen to me, something that would rather not happen during a hike. My friend was a few minutes late, so I thought about typing the message, asking to postpone our meeting when I heard her calling my name. I had to put my phone in my pocket to get it quickly. However, before I managed to tell them that I would not rather join that hike today, we got into a long discussion. It started with some gossip about

some political demonstrations in our university, and then it even rates the political roots of uprisings in the decades after the Second World War. By the time we changed the subject of the discussion, we had already reached the plateau, a great plateau.

Speaker1: And behind the greenery, a captivating view of the city was revealed, boosting us to climb the hill up to the top without any other thought. About 3 hours later, I was back home. As I was leaving my things, I spotted the thermometer and remembered all my grand. I put my hand on my forehead. I rotated my arms shaking as if they were still sore. It felt normal. Everything is back to normal. And one minute later, the thermometer showed 76.8 degrees Celsius, which is also normal. I sat down and instinctively opened my phone, my half-type message to cancel the meeting because I didn't feel well and so on was still on the screen. The new stuff about the young man was also open. I closed up. Walked to the other side of the room and opened the window. In the end, it takes two or even more to hear that click. It is like climbing a mountain. Every one has, of course, their own path, faster or slower. No matter how knowledgeable we are. We will gust to reach the top. We have better chances if we zoom zoom out from the object of our fear, acknowledge it as a part of our lives, and go on discussing the whole spectrum of life and admiring the view. Friends, family, acquaintances, and even random people on our way can be either our hiking companions rather than our debate opponents. And this is something that we should think about further.