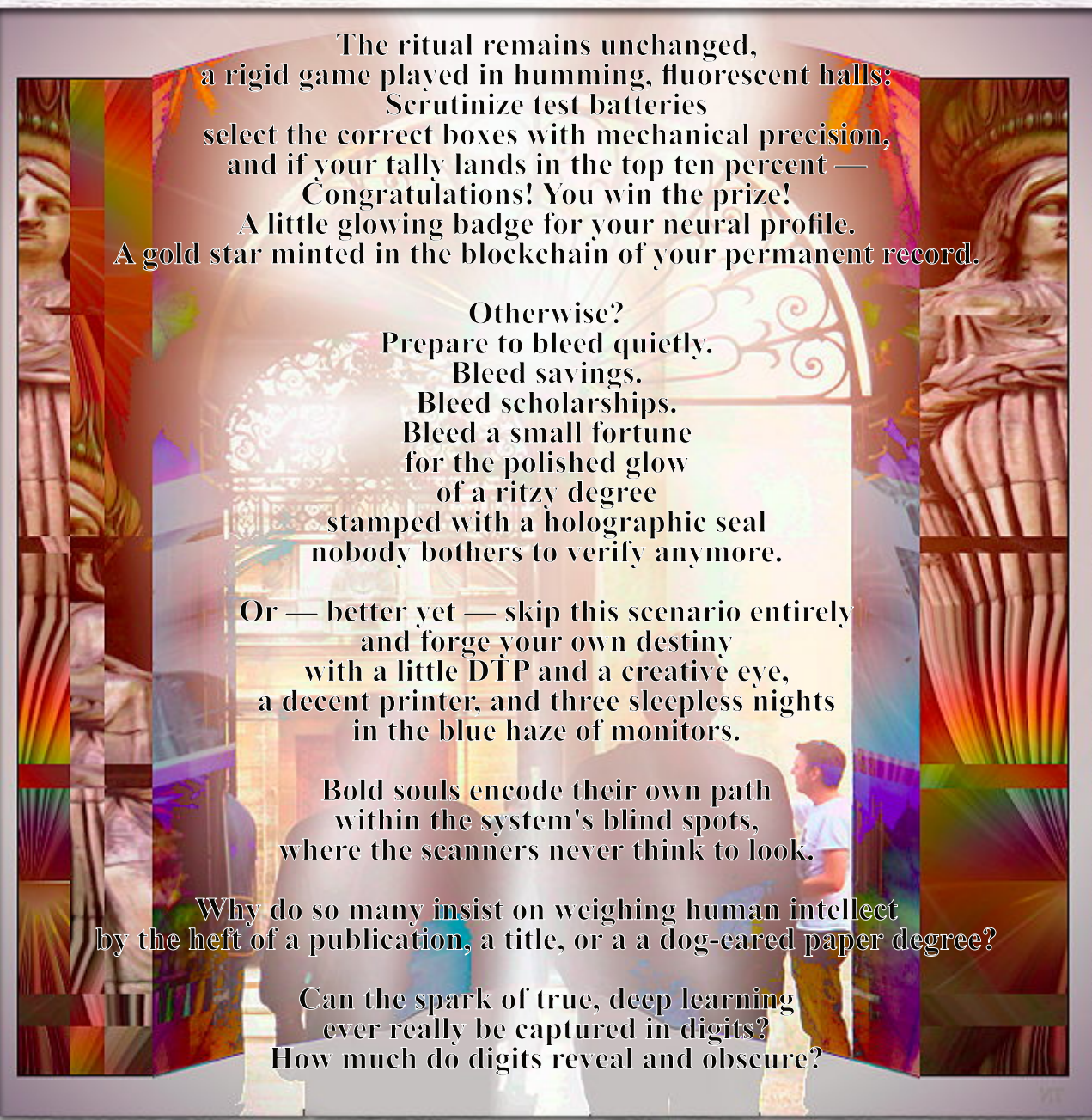


# ENTRANCE EXAMS:

## Thoughts on School Admissions Bias



The ritual remains unchanged,  
a rigid game played in humming, fluorescent halls:  
Scrutinize test batteries  
select the correct boxes with mechanical precision,  
and if your tally lands in the top ten percent —  
Congratulations! You win the prize!  
A little glowing badge for your neural profile.  
A gold star minted in the blockchain of your permanent record.

Otherwise?  
Prepare to bleed quietly.  
Bleed savings.  
Bleed scholarships.  
Bleed a small fortune  
for the polished glow  
of a ritzy degree  
stamped with a holographic seal  
nobody bothers to verify anymore.

Or — better yet — skip this scenario entirely  
and forge your own destiny  
with a little DTP and a creative eye,  
a decent printer, and three sleepless nights  
in the blue haze of monitors.

Bold souls encode their own path  
within the system's blind spots,  
where the scanners never think to look.

Why do so many insist on weighing human intellect  
by the heft of a publication, a title, or a dog-eared paper degree?

Can the spark of true, deep learning  
ever really be captured in digits?  
How much do digits reveal and obscure?

- T Newfields

Beg.: 1999 Maui ☆ Fin.: 2026 Shizuoka

A minor café in Canada buzzed with low, layered conversation — voices overlapping like corrupted audio files, half-heard and half-lost. Outside the rain-streaked window, the city of Vancouver dissolved into smeared neon: crimson, electric blue, the sick amber of a thousand streetlamps bleeding into the wet asphalt like spilled circuitry. Somewhere in the middle distance, a billboard cycled through its advertisements in silence — a woman's face, flawless and enormous, replaced every eight seconds by a smiling man holding a datapad, replaced by a child in a school uniform, eyes bright, empty, compliant.

Satoru leaned back in his chair, tapping his pen against the table. "Like it or not," he said with unruffled calm, "education depends on quantification." His gaze found Tim's across the cluttered table — two empty espresso cups, a folded newspaper, a tablet running three open tabs. "We need a yardstick."

Tim leaned forward sharply, nearly launching one of the mugs off the edge. He caught it with a reflex that looked practiced. "Yeah, but it's gone too far." Frustration burned low and hot in his voice, like a processor running too warm. "Some things simply can't be compressed into digits." He wrapped both hands around his mug as if grounding himself. "And because we keep trying anyway, a massive amount of so-called educational research ends up being absolute rubbish — beautiful, peer-reviewed, algorithmically-sorted rubbish."

Satoru shrugged, expression unruffled. He tapped his pen again. Outside, a delivery drone drifted past the window, red light blinking in the rain like a slow mechanical heartbeat. "Numbers give us useful approximations," he said evenly. "Even imperfect measurements tell us something real about the world."

Tim's jaw tightened. "Or they distort it." The tension between them thickened like static in the air. "Once you turn learning into numbers, people stop learning and start chasing scores." He gestured toward the window — toward the rain, the neon, the city grinding through its endless quantified night. "We start mistaking the map for the territory. The metric for the meaning."

Liao had been quiet, watching them both with the alert, patient expression of someone waiting for exactly the right moment to drop a hand grenade into the conversation. He set his cup down deliberately. "Think of the wasted potential." His voice rose above the café chatter, clear and urgent. "So many human qualities — creativity, empathy, curiosity, the capacity for moral imagination — fall completely outside most testing parameters." He opened his hands, as if releasing something into the air between them. "They don't just get undervalued. They vanish. Edited out of the official record like corrupted data."

Melissa had been nodding slowly, her gaze sharp and inward-focused, working something through. Now she set her cup down. "Maybe what we actually need," she said carefully, weighing each word, "is a lot more assessment literacy." She looked from Satoru to Tim, then to Liao. "Not fewer measurements. Smarter readers." A pause. "People need to understand what standardized numbers actually measure." Another pause, longer, more deliberate. "And exactly what they don't."

Nobody answered immediately.

Outside, the rain kept falling — steady, indifferent, drumming its own inscrutable data against the glass. The neon signs bled and blurred. The billboard cycled silently through its rotating cast of optimized faces. Inside the café, the debate continued — low-burning, unresolved — like an algorithm running in the background that no one had written an exit condition for.

A test no one could quite finish. A question no one had thought to score.