

purpose & profit



Dan Koe

Essays Volume 1

purpose & profit



Dan Koe
Essays Volume 1

KOE
PRESS

Copyright © 2025 Dan Koe. All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the publisher.

ISBN: 978-1-936961-28-3

Published by KOE Press

www.koepress.com

If you would like to support this book, consider [purchasing the paperback or Kindle version on Amazon.](#)

Contents

Introduction.....	5
The Truth About Jobs.....	7
Employment vs Entrepreneurship.....	15
The Unignorability of Money.....	25
Deep Generalism	37
Levels of Purpose.....	45
Progress and Knowledge.....	63
Your Life's Work	79
Value Creation	91
The Meta Skill.....	105
Self-Monetization.....	113
Become a Creator.....	127

Introduction

This is not a practical business book. At least not by what most people deem “practical.” I thought about writing one but soon realized that it would not help you in the slightest. If I were to tell you exactly what to do, some people would do it, fewer would get results, and even fewer would be able to pivot when my map does not directly match up with your territory. You do not have my mind. You do not have my experience. You do not have my thousands of tiny failures that subtly influence my decision-making. That is not arrogance but beauty, because neither do I have your mind, experience, or the failures that make your journey unique enough to succeed.

My goal is not to give you actionable steps. My goal is to inject better ideas into your mind that frame how you think about the actions you take. Belief comes before action, and if you don’t have a mind composed of beliefs that nearly guarantee success, you will struggle. But these beliefs can’t be dogmatic. Instead, we need to go meta. I want to provide you with a frame from which you can create your own actionable steps, and when those fail, you will have a mind built to persist and iterate until they don’t.

I do not plan to glorify money. Society has already done

enough of that. But here's the thing: The answer isn't to reject money. Money is the lifeblood of society as we know it, and unless you want to hide off in the woods because your perception of money got the better of you, the only option is to merge purpose and profit. If you were fooled into believing abundance is bad and you aren't supposed to have more than you need, this book may not help you. If you are one of the few with an open mind and your curiosity is piqued, all I ask is that you read this short book in its entirety, twice. Read through once for consumption and a second time for digestion. It is short enough to only take a few reading sessions. Any questions you have will be answered the further you progress and seek to understand.

Lastly, this book is for creatives, unfulfilled workers, and those who fear replacement. People who know they have something more to give the world, but have lost trust in the way they are "supposed" to do things. This book is not meant to be like my others. There is minimal editing or attention put into making things sound fancy. I aim to keep this writing as close to the words my mind wanted to spit out at the time of writing. I am very open to this book being wrong, but no matter the back and forth in my head, I find it silly not to share a perspective that may help another. I hope you enjoy it.



The Truth About Jobs

We have been conditioned since birth to work for everyone but ourselves. While they taught us our ABCs, they silently encoded a deeper lesson: Your purpose is to build their dreams, not your own. From cradle to grave, you are given assignments that lead you down a known path, not a new one. You work on these assignments without struggle or conscious thought, leading to a mechanical and replaceable role in a society filled to the brim with people who try to prove their happiness to hide their internal misery. You don't know any better because all you know is what you've been told.

You are told to learn things you don't care about to complete projects you don't care about to prepare yourself for a life you don't care about. Before you know it, you are trapped

in a dense cloud of responsibilities. The resources—time, energy, and money—that could be used to change your life are exhausted like clockwork so you have no choice but to remain a useful worker as society’s plan for you intended.

If you hate your work, and it comprises one third of your life, and it drains your energy to enjoy the other third, and you are asleep the other third, there doesn’t seem to be a higher priority than to create, build, design, write, sell, invest, own, experiment, and discover a way to control what you do with your day.

A job is some unpleasant work you do for someone else for the sole purpose of making money. A job is a survival mechanism. A job is one milestone on the path to living up to those who shaped your mind. A job is similar to schools from the perspective that good marketing can make up for a bad product. After centuries of failing to get results, they’re still alive and well for the simple reason that very few people go through the trouble of thinking for themselves. Most people do what most people do. Most people aren’t okay with getting the same results as most people, but by the halfway point, it’s incredibly difficult to escape.

A career is a commitment to development in your work. A career demands that you pursue a hierarchy of challenging

roles and tasks. Psychologically, this brings long-term order and clarity to your mind. With each level of challenge, life becomes more complex and interesting. New paths for knowledge and skill acquisition become apparent. A career is extended schooling. If you want to progress further in a career, to an extent, you need to have your life together.

A calling is work you can't pull yourself away from and others can't help but pay you for. A calling can't be assigned to you. A calling cannot be pursued under the orders of another. A calling cannot be defined by a set amount of working hours because your mind is always working on it. A calling is found at the point where improvement turns into obsession. A calling is something others won't understand. Something that must be cared for, protected, and maintained by the one pursuing it, like a gift that others could accidentally steal.

A job is not a career or calling, but a career and calling are both jobs. A career is not a calling, but a calling is a career. Jobs are great for young people who don't know what they want or simply need to survive. Careers are great for those who want a bit more satisfaction in life, because they understand the need for challenging work as a forcing function for self-development. A calling is for those who know they are meant for more. The select few who are willing to take the plunge into the unknown and take full responsibility for the outcome

of their life.

It's a sad reality that the term work is now perceived as a curse. When the average person thinks about work, their mind floods with familiar pasts and predictable futures of stress, overwhelm, and anxiety. When you are at work for too long, you crave to be at rest. When you are at rest for too long, you crave to be at work. A disastrous cycle of never feeling like you are where you want to be. Your mind is anywhere but the present moment. People dream of the perpetual vacation we call retirement, but once they achieve that delusion, it normalizes, as everything does. Within a few weeks, you can't help but want to balance being with doing.

We work and work and work until we earn enough to rest, all to find ourselves unsatisfied with how much we have and how little we are. We drown in survival mode. We never succeed in seeing beyond the responsibilities we were assigned and accepted without question. Wake up, go to work, deal with the boss, eat convenient foods because you don't have the time, skip the good habits you promised yourself you would do because you don't have the energy, watch your life slowly crash as your mind, body, and relationships unravel into chaos, and do nothing about it because it's the only life you know.

Realize that work is a necessary part of life. Work is energy

invested in solving a problem. Humans love to solve problems, but not just any problem, problems we deem meaningful and interesting. The right problems narrow our attention and allow us to forget our worries. The wrong problems enslave our attention and amplify our worries. The difference between the two is that one is chosen, and the other is assigned. Problems are the limits on your mind and potential. Once solved, they allow for growth, expansion, and evolution.

Purpose does not exist without problems. They are bound by relationship. Your purpose is the inception of your suffering, and you have the option to choose what you suffer for. In a society that takes advantage of and turns us against our problem-solving nature, it only makes sense to create work that doesn't feel like work no matter the difficulty of that grand task.

There is this unconscious stigma that it is bad to make money. When you express your desire to earn more, a feeling of guilt springs up as if it is something you aren't supposed to do. The pursuit of money almost always starts as superficial. That doesn't mean it's a bad thing to do. It may be the only way to expose yourself to the depth of life; you can't start digging anywhere else but the surface.

Like lifting weights, you start for the vanity, stay for the

therapy, and cultivate a philosophical sense of mastery behind the pursuit. When it comes to money, you don't start making more because you want to change the world. You start because you want to survive. Once that purpose is actualized, you make more because you want to be accepted and perceived as valuable. Only once that next level of purpose is actualized is your mind developed enough to care about creativity or contribution to humanity. That is to say, your journey from job to career to calling will not be one without mistakes and ego, and that's okay. It isn't supposed to be any other way, and you will experience significant emotional backlash if you try to skip steps. At the start, you create to make money. In the end, you make money to create.

Material is a portal into the immaterial. Most people reject the pursuit of material objects because they can't see beyond the material object. Someone can buy a fancy car on impulse, but they can also grow to become obsessed with the depth of the car itself. They can study its parts, be introduced to new paths, turn it into a career, and use it as a vessel into the unknown.

Someone can start a business in the pursuit of status and money, but that same business can introduce them to the depth of skill, the success of their customers, and the inner workings of their mind required to run that business.

All pursuits are materialistic until a philosophical sense of mastery is formed, even the most “spiritual” pursuits. Then, it becomes your vehicle into the unknown. A vessel to expand and evolve. Like a relationship, you are attracted by their looks and are only then introduced to the depth of their being. Looks, in all domains of life, are as important as depth. But most people fear what lies beneath, so they bounce around on the surface, distracted by anything that allows them to forget their pain.



Employment vs Entrepreneurship

I am going to make a strong prediction here, which may come too early in this book. I do not intend for it to be interpreted as fear mongering. In fact, I intend for it to be one of the most empowering statements. Here it goes: The future of work will consist mostly of entrepreneurs, specifically *creators*, and if not entrepreneurs, elite employees who have the traits of entrepreneurs in increasingly rare positions. The “entry level” is going extinct. This leaves individuals with two options: rely on government support for a basic income with a marginal possibility of living a good life because your mind is controlled by those who it is dependent on or take full responsibility for your future and become an entrepreneur.

In fact, this was a prime driver behind this writing. With endless headlines about job replacement and artificial intelligence matching human capabilities, the future of work is a dark and unknown place. But with this book, I hope to change your viewpoint on that. I hope to equip you with a mind that can adapt, perceive, think, and thrive no matter what the near and far future may hold. Let's begin.

It's unfortunate that "entrepreneurship" and "business" have become dirty words with immature meanings. One mention of them and most people shut off their minds and allow their thoughts to be manhandled by their programming; beliefs they failed to question. Beliefs that entrepreneurship is only for talented or special people. Beliefs that business is complicated, requires a lot of upfront money, or is some kind of industry filled with unethical people. Because of this, we must start by redefining entrepreneurship.

The difference between an employee and entrepreneur is the difference between low agency and high agency. In this context, high-agency individuals are those who create their own goals and actively pursue them without permission from another. Low-agency individuals are those who are assigned goals and pursue them because they don't have a mind that allows them to see any other option. True agency can only be developed when you blame yourself for every problem, even

when you're not at fault.

When we are young, we have little to no control what purpose is assigned to us. And if we don't have high-agency parents who also understand how the mind works, we become subservient to the dominant paradigm. In this case, that's going to school, getting a job, and retiring at some age with far less than what you were promised.

Most children are plopped in front of a government-trained expert for hours each day soaking in information with the sole purpose of becoming a useful worker. This is not up for debate. The school system serves that which created it: the state. The way you serve the state is by becoming a useful worker, paying your taxes, and obeying the rules like you always have.

Now, this is not all bad. It's necessary in many cases. An interest-based self-education is a freeing path, but unless accounted for, things like grammar, writing, and other useful things taught in schools may be skipped over. Many useful workers can live great lives, but I'm not speaking to them. I'm speaking to my past self. The kid who knew he was meant for more and couldn't stand the thought of an average life.

It is impossible to form an accurate opinion of that which you have not experienced. The same holds true for business and

entrepreneurship. By closing your mind to the possibility of creating your own work, you close your mind to discovering your calling. You close yourself off from creating the work from which you can tap into as a source of happiness.

I see assignments from the default path—like schools and jobs—as a stepping-stone. They are useful for skill acquisition, status, and exposure to people, ideas, or interests that can shape your future. My problem with them is that they breed complacency and are dangerous for your psyche. They go against your nature of needing uncertainty, challenge, and constant improvement to thrive.

People climb the ladders placed in front of them because their mind craves challenge. It's rewarding, but you can only climb so high. The challenge will cease to exist unless you take the first step to forging your own path. People inherently know that challenges make life interesting, so they pursue more, but once they reach their limits, they begin justifying their newfound comfort with statements like, "I just like the stability of a job." Then and there, your calling disappears. You eliminate the possibility of further novel challenge. That is dangerous.

Without a challenging, self-generated goal that expands your mind in something as important and life-determining as your work, you drastically slow self-development and throttle your

impact, because other domains of your life can only advance as high as your ability to contribute to others through your work. Work, for most people, consumes one-third of their life. If that massive chunk of time is spent in stagnation, stability, and comfort—while also considering how much the effect of your work spills over into every single area of your life—your decline into chaos is inevitable, and you will have difficulty solving that problem, because you are not an entrepreneur.

If you halt your personal evolution by never pursuing something more, you lose purpose, meaning, and fulfillment. This isn't about achieving a final goal that allows you to opt out of work for the remainder of your life, as that is an impossible delusion that leaves you empty. This is about falling in love with the endless string of problems that expand your circle of concern—from self to others to world to universe—and expand your complexity of self, allowing you to perceive and enjoy the finer things in life. With every problem solved, you increase the potential of unlocking your next layer of evolution. Your mind expands. Your identity expands. Your skill set expands to help more people solve the problems that prevent their own evolution.

Entrepreneurship is the only logical option for long-term thinkers. Entrepreneurship is the path of uncertainty, like slashing your way through a dangerous jungle. You are

required to learn skills that aren't taught in schools. You are required to be okay with failure, rejection, and slow progress. You are required to learn from your mistakes, show up again tomorrow, and push until you strike gold.

This isn't an argument against jobs or employment. This is an argument for knowing when to evolve your work because it will inevitably lose novelty, progression, and everything else that makes life worth living. If you are wondering where your child-like zest for life went after the progression of your schooling ended, now you know. Being an entrepreneur is hard, but being an eternal employee is harder. Not because of the work, but because of the mind. Self-development is a gateway drug into entrepreneurship because it teaches you that improving others is the next level of improving yourself.

“Employee” and “entrepreneur” are not titles, they are states of mind. They aren't a role you play, but who you are. Employees are rather passive individuals who are told what to learn and work on. Entrepreneurs are assertive individuals who set their own or adopt a shared vision, learn by their own curiosity, and create solutions to the problems of life, pushing humanity forward by distributing empowering products and services. As an entrepreneur, the problems are not defined. You must be in a constant state of movement and let your path reveal them.

Employees are not always entrepreneurs, but entrepreneurs can be employees. Since entrepreneurship is a state of mind, you can have a job and still cultivate a sense of agency. The fundamental understanding is that you, as a developing individual, will eventually have to continue down the unfolding of evolution, and that will demand that you leave, change, or create your work when you have exhausted the level of purpose you can attain. The evolution of your work is a direct reflection of building your vision. Sometimes that entails working at a job you hate, at a startup you love, or on a little creative side project, as long as they fuel your vision.

Stop thinking of entrepreneurship as an unachievable goal reserved for those who want to work long hours to make a pipedream reality. The entire purpose of entrepreneurship is to have full control over your earnings, lifestyle, and suffering by creating solutions to problems. Even when the future of work seems uncertain, true entrepreneurship—creative adaptability to any problem or opportunity—will never go out of style, because problems never go away. The future holds a set of problems that we can't even fathom yet. That should feel liberating.

If you don't want to work long hours, solve the problem of prioritization. If you like the "stability" of a job, solve the problem of self-management. If you don't like the way you

look, solve the problem of perception or health. If you don't enjoy your current state of mind, create a solution that allows you to sustainably occupy a new one. These are lofty goals, yes, but if you solve them, you increase your earning capacity with experience, status, and creativity because they force you out of a mindless bubble of comfort.

Entrepreneurs who lack fulfillment aren't entrepreneurs. They may seem like it in their work, but they have the mind of an employee. They are employees to an invisible employer—residue from their programming—that secretly planted a new goal in their head that shapes their ability to identify and solve the right problems. If the entrepreneur could gain awareness of their lack of fulfillment by reorienting their mind, they would be able to solve that problem as they now have awareness of it.

Start thinking of entrepreneurship as other-development, the next logical step after self-development begins. To become valuable, you find purpose in solving the problems that limit your potential. To earn a living from that value, you distribute the solution to your problems to those who suffer from the same. Entrepreneurship is how you contribute to the evolution of humanity, live in accordance with nature, and fulfill your need to survive in a meaningful manner. Those who think we will ever live in a post-survival era are deluded.

The secret is to cultivate a skillset and mindset so impactful to your life that you can't help but share it with others. You solve your own problems, share the solution that changed your life, and improve humanity as a result. That's the definition of entrepreneurship (in my humble opinion).

Entrepreneurship is an extension of yourself. It is the distribution of your value. It is your connection to something greater. It is your vessel into the unknown. It is your filter for distraction. It is your protection against replacement. It is in your nature to create, give, and survive. Your ancestors were entrepreneurs, but they didn't need a label to do what was in their blood. They each served a role within their tribes, communities, and cultures that gave them purpose. Even if money as we know it wasn't a thing, they created a meaningful life by cultivating value and distributing it in return for another form of value or profit.

Employment isn't our natural state. Your psyche is wired to hunt, but physical threats aren't an issue anymore. The real threats of today's world are psychological and spiritual. A mental game. We are built for survival, but the question is no longer how to survive; the question is how we evolve beyond and integrate our survival to make life meaningful. That is the goal of this book.

Nobody wants to be a monkey in a cubicle. And I believe deep down everyone feels that pull to achieve something greater. But the longer you suppress that pull, the longer you live in the known where few discoveries can be made. You get bored, depressed, and see life as meaningless because the only novelty you get is from superficial sources. You never take risks, push into the unknown, and discover new knowledge, tools, and potentials that send a signal of meaning to your core.



The Unignorability of Money

The fastest way to stunt your growth is to demonize money. That is, to view money for something that it is not. This is difficult to do because many people are unaware that their perception of money is the result of social conditioning, but we'll get to that. For now, we need to define what money is, why it controls so many people's lives, and how to approach money now and going into the future where money may take a completely different shape.

Money decomposes into currency and capital. Currency is a medium of exchange. Capital is a store of value. Since this book isn't about investing or money management, we're going

to focus on money as currency because the typical dollar we are accustomed to is a rather poor store of value. In that sense, money is a neutral measure of value sitting between a person and a good or service. When money gets put into a person's hands, the perception of value increases or decreases according to the good or service it is being exchanged for.

How you perceive something as valuable depends on the problems and goals that frame your mind. If you struggle with relationships, and your goal is marriage, you will see the value in a niche dating service, presentable clothes, and a curated bouquet of flowers. Someone who is already married or doesn't care for a relationship may not be willing to spend their money on the same things. On the other hand, a monk in a monastery and a businessman on a yacht have different wants that shape what they are willing to purchase. The lesson here is that problems, and therefore your perception of value and money, evolve as you develop certain domains of your life.

Everything starts to go wrong when people are not developed in the financial or psychological domains of their life. People tend to project their beliefs and insecurities on money—absolving themselves of blame—rather than fixing the root problems that led to their dysfunction that may be able to be helped by money. Little do they know, those beliefs and insecurities are not permanent—problems are soluble—and

they were probably passed down to them from their parents, teachers, and society at large. Most people who demonize money without critical thought are often not in control of their own mind.

These people are the same ones who despise the leaders of large corporations. They do mental gymnastics to avoid confronting the fact that they got to that point by providing goods or services that provide at least some kind of value to humanity. Some of that value is contrived, yes, but not all of it. That alone should be proof enough that money can be used for and generated from something purposeful. These people are also the ones who say they support independent creators but turn on them the minute they try to earn a living from their creations. What used to be a supportive friend or follower quickly turns into a rage-filled creature who will not back down until you conform. They want individuals and businesses to provide free products or services and only rely on charitable donations to stay afloat. It seems like the power they despise from others is a signal of their own lack.

Freeloaders have not understood that free things aren't taken seriously. Value is perception, and if something isn't worth a bit of sacrifice, it probably isn't of much use to your life, and you were only trying to get something for free to collect a short-lived feeling of pleasure. When people pay, they pay attention,

because they perceive that thing as important and are more likely to use it to solve a problem in their life. If value lies in transformation, and free products are seen as commodities, the psychologically underdeveloped in the financial domain of life are in a constant war against any form of improvement.

What is more amusing is that everyone in this crowd sells a product or service for the employer they work for. Or they spend their money on mindless pleasures—usually the concoction of a large corporation—rather than something that will improve their life from someone they can relate with, costing them more in the short and long run. If you don't create a product to sell, you will be forced to sell a product for someone else, or you will become the product. If you don't consciously invest money toward the world you want to see, you will unconsciously spend to fill a soul void of purpose.

Even more, the money-haters are selling the idea that selling is bad. They say sales as a skill is manipulative, yet they are hypocritically manipulating their way out of realizing that their life is ruled by money. Sales, marketing, and persuasion are not manipulative when used by developed individuals as a way to educate, inspire, attract, and transform.

Here's the truth: Money is often the one thing holding people back from reaching their next level of personal development.

It dictates almost every single action a person takes, even the most developed individuals, because money is deeply intertwined with modern survival. Since the survival state of consciousness is one of reactivity and egocentrism, money can either be seen as some out-of-control domineering master or a tool to expand your consciousness into higher states of care for those around you.

The unignorability of money is real. Why do you work eight hours a day for forty-five years? To pay the bills and support your family. Why do you go off to the woods to live like a monk? So you can pursue personal development, ignore money for a bit, but often fail to realize that spirituality isn't about disconnecting from the world, but contributing to it. Why do you eat healthy foods and care about your fitness? To be healthy, yes, but there's more. You want to increase your perceived value so you can attract better opportunities, advance your career, and make more money. Even if your main reason isn't to make money, it is almost always a sub-reason because survival isn't something we rid ourselves of, but integrate. There is never only one reason behind a person's actions. Once you realize this, you also realize that the people who you think are "only doing it for the money" to feel better about your own life decisions aren't, in fact, only doing it for the money.

Why are you reading this book? To gain a new perspective, yes, but it will also open your mind to removing the limits on your earning potential. Almost every action you take has money attached as a reason. To think this is bad is self-deception. Like a skill tree in a video game, you need money to unlock new paths. To achieve health, you need money. To achieve fulfilling relationships, you need to solve the problem that destroys most of them . . . money. To enjoy life, you need to progress toward a meaningful goal and distribute the value you acquire along the way. You need to build. Building requires resources. Resources require money. Notice that I'm not saying you need millions of dollars to live well; I am saying that you need money as you already do. For most people, enough is not much, but how that money is made is also a factor to consider.

It is a popular idea that once you reach a few million dollars a year in income, more money won't help you live a better life. You can do most things that rich people can do, and you already have the same phone and technology that rich people have. But I'm skeptical. This feels like a shallow half-truth. The world doesn't need more fortune-cookie advice that discourages improvement in the financial domain of life. Most people have not reached that level, and even fewer people have reached beyond that level.

You don't need more than a few million, sure, but money isn't

only about buying material to fill your life with. That's a rather poor use of money. Money is a great tool to continue a life of novelty and challenge. You know, the thing that disappears after you graduate school and get acquainted with your job. Not because it allows you to buy material items. Not because it buys happiness directly. But because it buys the resources to solve more challenging problems since time and labor only go so far. Further, by solving those problems, you have the capacity to pass down novel solutions. Both are critical for depth of happiness.

When you ignore the need, not want, for money, you limit the development of your mind, body, and spirituality. If you live in a stressful cloud of never-ending responsibilities solved by money, you cannot become aware of the depth that life has to offer. The only people who view this as some form of oppression are those who lack agency. And at that point, money is the least of your worries.

This is why I stress the path of entrepreneurship. If you don't start a business that provides information, education, goods, services, or the rest that make a better humanity, then unethical people rise to the top without competition. You are indirectly contributing to evil by ignoring your entrepreneurial and agentic human nature. By doing nothing but demonizing money and businesses that are the lifeblood of civilization,

you are assigned work where the employer is more than likely unethical by your standards.

You won't start a business because of your delusional assumptions and conditioning that it is unethical to make money—but you are working for a business that makes the population sick, contributes to bombing people across the world, and locks employees into mechanical routines so they wouldn't dare achieve their potential. And even if you aren't working for that business, you are more than likely connected to them by relationship, allowing them to survive with the work you do carry out. The greatest act of rebellion toward the money-centric culture you despise is to make more of it, with purpose. Funny, isn't it?

If humanity is only as strong as its weakest link, and most people continue to suffer from the same problems, and true education is what allows the individual to solve their own problems (rather than assigning general temporary relief), and problems are what prevent personal to collective evolution, and if the education system is focused on training people to be useful workers for their own benefit (because you aren't the one paying for that education system), and finally, if the fate of humanity depends on conscious leaders to educate, inspire, and attract, then the tech-enabled emergence allowing for everyone to distribute their value globally is one realistic

path out of this mess. We'll make sense of that later.

By choosing to do nothing, you accept the path of assignments and allow people less conscious and intelligent than you to have more attention, impact, and money than you. The only way you can stop people from paying attention to one thing is to give them something more attractive to pay attention to.

I ask this for perspective, not to trigger a reaction: If you hate money, do you not hate your life? Everything around you right now, from the phone in your hands to the roads you drive on to the desk you sit at to the food that keeps you alive, is a product of a business that makes money for its contribution to the advancement of civilization. You are drowning in a world built by the drive of money stemming from survival and status. There are obvious flaws with this system, but building a potential solution is almost always a better option than casting a tiny vote.

Now, the next elephant in the room is the labor theory of value. The belief that through pure hard work you can make a lot of money. The fact of the matter is that you can work hard at anything, but that doesn't mean it's useful. You can put four years of work into getting a degree. You can put ten years of work into climbing a corporate ladder. You can put thousands of hours of blood, sweat, and tears into writing a book. And

still, you may not be paid anywhere close to what you want, because hours worked does not guarantee that anyone will care.

So, rather than taking your future into your own hands, the popular option is to whine and complain. *I deserve to be paid more! I've spent fourteen years working hard and this is all I get for it? I barely have any time for my family. I don't have enough to take a vacation. I slave away with no light at the end of the tunnel.*

The world's complainers are missing one crucial piece of the puzzle. People invest in things they care about, see the importance of, or consider useful for their lives. Nobody is going to give you, independently, money if your work doesn't benefit them in some way.

The labor theory of value is that you should be paid for the amount of work you do. To feel as if you have jumped through hoops. To feel like you deserve something for struggling just like every other person on this planet. But that's not how reality works. The amount of money you make is directly correlated to how valuable you are: the level of problems you solve, the results from the solutions you create, and your ability to inspire and persuade people to know and care about your creation.

If you aren't happy with how much you make, it may be time

to take a brutally honest look at what you contribute to the world. It does not make sense to pay someone based on the amount of work they do, especially in a future where that work will be more efficient, worth less, and require fewer resources to complete. However, it does make sense to pay someone based on the level of problems they solve, as problems constantly evolve as work does. No matter how far technology goes, problems will continue to emerge.

If enjoyment comes from the feeling of progress being made, connection to something greater than yourself, and receiving meaningful feedback from both, then conscious entrepreneurship is how you sustain and control the enjoyment in your life. And by filling your own cup, you begin to overflow, and your natural desire shifts to helping other people.

Humans have created a way to enhance and transcend their survival with money as a baseline to trade value and create the desire to build new tools and technology. If money didn't exist, the luxuries you have today wouldn't exist. The history of money goes back 40,000 years, but trading beads and seashells don't cut it anymore. Why? Because we don't live in small tribes. Nobody is going to trade you a car—that helps you do things that weren't fathomable in the past—for a pile of a million seashells. Even further, charitable donations aren't going to take you to the moon. The dollar, on the other hand,

is something the recipient can take and trade for something they deem valuable.

There's one thing we know for certain: The future of money is going to be more digital than today. Money will evolve beyond the dollar, as it has evolved beyond seashells. The way we use money will also evolve. With artificial intelligence moving faster than we could have imagined, who knows what the ongoing material use of money will be when cost of living moves closer to zero. Money could take the form of attention or status. Money as we know it could become meaningless. But that doesn't change the fact that entrepreneurship, solving problems, and creating value is one of, if not the only, worthwhile path to take. If we bet on human nature, which we should, money will likely continue to play a massive role in those endeavors.



Deep Generalism

From fire to rocket ships, humans are creators. Natural-born generalists meant to master many domains. The ones who built the tools that allowed us to survive and overcome the harsh environments that keep animals in their place. Never were we supposed to become the tools, but here we are. It's no wonder why people are so afraid of replacement, because they aren't the ones doing the replacing. When a tool is no longer needed, it loses purpose. When a tool costs less, works around the clock, and doesn't experience stress, it becomes a profit machine but only for the people who have the vision, agency, and knowledge to apply it in that manner.

The problem starts with our education system. In the 1800s, when America was industrializing and needed to educate large

numbers of immigrant children, educators like Horace Mann traveled to Prussia to study and learn their methods. The Prussian education system was designed to create obedient soldiers, compliant citizens, civil servants, and well-behaved workers. It accomplished this with its focus on mandatory attendance, training for teachers, national curriculum and testing for students, division of students by age, and the concept of grade levels. Students were taught how to work, not how to think. Impressed by its efficiency and standardization, Mann and others implemented these methods in American schools, particularly in Massachusetts, which became a model for other states.

Since you did not create this system, it does not serve your interests. Since you do not fund this system, you do not control what is taught. Instead, you are plopped in front of a government-trained expert educated by government-trained experts. You are told to read this, memorize that and, if you don't, you receive a letter that you take home to Mom and Dad, who proceed to scold you—the negative feedback of the system—for not reading this and memorizing that. Even further, it's painful to think that such a standardized education must bias the bottom quintile. You are prevented from rapid development because you must study the same thing, at the same speed, as those who are not as gifted. The less gifted are almost bound to their fate because there is no room for

creative methods to enhance their learning.

If you understand how the mind works, you understand how dangerous this can be for your development. And if you lack agency, you may have difficulty taking the initiative to undo this damage because it is engrained in your psyche to play victim to past circumstances. Your mind automatically accepts or rejects information that aids in it achieving the goals it deems important. If you only learn as much as your top-of-mind goal allows, and that goal is to get a high-paying degree for the sake of status and security, then by the time you exit this system you are no different from a lion in the Savannah or polar bear in Alaska. If you were to swap the two, both would fail to survive because they are niche specialists.

This is not education. Education is discovery. Education is pushing into the unknown, allowing interest to be your lighthouse, collecting the dots, connecting them, and sharing them with the world because the teacher learns more than the student. The beautiful thing about being human is that we build and apply tools in a way that helps us adapt to different environments and situations. We can survive in the cold with a dense coat and in the heat with shade, filtered water, and maybe a sprinkle of specific knowledge if we need it.

If you don't choose your own goal, you do not choose what

you learn or what problems you solve. Your destiny is decided for you because the only potential you know is the one you were assigned. Whether this was intentional or not, it is an observable fact: Schools were created to enslave the brightest minds by promising the prestige of specialization so they remained narrow minded and didn't overthrow the true rulers. A Royal Historian—or well educated employee of the past—may be perceived by the nation as someone who is smart and valuable, but the pirates—or high-agency entrepreneurs of the past—understood many things like geography, celestial navigation, the crew on their ship, the ship itself, economics, history, and science, as those were the necessary tools to succeed in trade in dominion. The rulers of the land were powerful, yes, but only as powerful as the resources the pirates allowed them to have for the price they determined.

Even further, if we look at Roman civilization, slaves were trained to do one specific task for the entirety of their lives. They were tools for their masters. The sovereign individuals, on the other hand, were expected to act on their own interest and do many things throughout their lives. They were expected to forge their own path and acquire the resources that allowed them to sustain it. A good metric for determining if you are on the right path is if your work changes at a minimum of every year. You evolve. Your interests evolve. You identify new problems once previous ones are solved. You persist and

iterate. Do not allow yourself to get trapped in a depressing state of mechanical, replaceable work.

All that is to say that your future depends on your education. While I can't tell you exactly what to learn, I do believe I can point you in the right direction. Everyone is worried about what skills will be relevant twenty years from now. This isn't anything new. We've been asking this question for hundreds of years. And frankly, it's a low-quality question because it has already been answered.

As we go through school, we ask, "What should I study for the best future?" Nobody ever ends up with exactly what they want. In most cases, they take the most comfortable opportunity presented to them and accept the sacrifices it demands without much of a fight.

As we go through life, we keep a light check on the pulse of where the future is heading. We fill our minds with the doomsday perspectives the news provides, but we never do much about it. We've wondered what the best path is for hundreds of years, but nobody has ever cracked exactly what it should be, because that's impossible for someone else to tell you.

The end to your worries is finally taking responsibility for your

future. To be resilient, teachable, open-minded, perceptive, creative, adaptable, and everything else that separates the caged from the free.

The first lesson of any teaching should be to question what is taught. True education, not the clone-producing machine we call public school, is an orientation toward how to live, how to think, and how to learn. True education does not only teach career skills that produce results by performing a specific string of tasks. It teaches how to release and constrain entropy. The dance that makes us human. To push into the infinite unknown, live at the edge of your abilities, and use the creative gift of your mind to turn insecurity into security. That is the path to a meaningful life.

You can't sustain authenticity when you need something from someone else. You are worried about what career skills will be relevant twenty years from now because you are dependent on everyone but yourself for your success. The highest-paid earners are the visionaries, strategists, and innovators of the world. You can work hard, you can work smart, but you will never beat those who work toward a vision for the future with nature as their greatest teacher.

If you want to have some sense of control over your future, you need the traits that allow you to succeed in any environment.

You need to cultivate self-governance:

Self-experimentation—how to solve complex problems through trial and error and come to your own conclusions.

Self-awareness—how to understand the motives of your mind, so you can understand the motives of others.

Self-development—cultivating a valuable mindset and skillset that can help others expand beyond their limits.

Self-reliance—how to get what you want by taking responsibility for the outcome of your life.

Self-education—the ability to gather, make sense of, and utilize information on an unknown subject.

Self-sufficiency—the ability to sustain one's ideal lifestyle and acquire the resources necessary to do so.

Self-mastery—an unwavering dedication to the process of navigating reality.

When you understand yourself, you understand the world, and you can position the value you've cultivated to get what you

want in return. At the start, selfishness is selfless. If you don't have anything to give, your only option is to take. Every single individual on this earth must self-actualize in order to contribute to humanity in the best way they can. If entrepreneurship is about solving problems, and self-actualization is about solving your own, you can combine both into a meaningful way of life. Free yourself, then free others. Both can be done in unison.



Levels of Purpose

Any serious consideration for what you should do in this life must start with the question, “Who should I become?” Of course, that question carries many more, like “Why am I here?” and “Why does this matter?” For the Pythagoreans, the world was viewed as a Kosmos. We usually translate this as “cosmos,” but the original Greek meaning was used to describe the universe as an ordered and harmonious system. This is the complete opposite of the reductionist, merely physical universe we mean today. The difference is that one views the world as a whole greater than the sum of its parts, maintaining respect for the parts, while the other views the world as just parts.

To the Greeks, the universe wasn’t composed of atoms or

matter; it was composed of these “*whole parts*.” Everything was a whole in itself but also a part of something greater than itself. Each part served a purpose toward the harmony of the Kosmos. Understand that the world does, in fact, contain what we call atoms and matter, and while for certain types of science this is useful, it often leaves us lost in a winter storm when it comes to why we are here and what we must do.

Arther Koestler, in an attempt to reconcile this problem, coined the term *holon*, which is a combination of the Greek word “*holos*,” meaning “*whole*,” and the suffix “*-on*,” which denotes a particle or part (as in proton or neutron). In other words, *whole parts*. Atoms are both whole and parts of molecules. Molecules are both whole and parts of cells. Cells are both whole and parts of organs. This natural—not to be confused with dominator—hierarchy, or “*holarchy*,” continues up, down, left, and right. Organs to organisms to ecosystems. Letters to words to sentences to paragraphs while words can be parts of the lyrics of a song. One paragraph can discuss fire, while another can discuss water. Water evaporates, condenses in shade-providing clouds, rains down into life-sustaining streams, and finds its way back to the ocean. The universe can be thought of as uni-verse: one beautiful and ever-evolving song.

While this universal order can be used to enhance your

thinking and problem solving, it also points toward something more profound: Reality consists of a great chain of knowing and being. Matter to body to mind to soul to spirit. Even further, it points to levels of development such as egocentric, ethnocentric, worldcentric, planetcentric, and Kosmocentric. Individuals, cultures, and societies all move through these levels of development. These macro levels illustrate their circle of concern: Care for their self, their tribe, other humans, other beings, and reality itself. In other words, you're increasing your capacity for care. Humans find fulfillment in caring for others, like how you may be better at taking care of your dog than you are at taking care of yourself. The more you can care for others—through the progressive overload of responsibility or training with emotional weights—the more fulfillment you receive. In this sense, money isn't the only form of profit. One could consider it their life's work to evolve through these stages to contribute to humanity at their highest potential. Note that you do not break free from lower levels. You do not break free from the care of your family for the care of an animal. You integrate the former into the latter.

Other philosophers, like Alan Watts, speak of the world as an organism. A functioning *ecosystem* bound by relationship. Aristotle believed that the final cause of a thing is its function, and that a full explanation of anything must consider its final cause. This presents the fields of teleology and cybernetics.

Teleology (*telos* meaning goal, *logos* meaning reason) is the idea of explaining something by referring to its purpose, end, or goal. Cybernetics studies how systems self-regulate and self-organize toward the end goal of a system. It comes from the word *kybernetikos*, which means “to steer” or “good at steering.” Similar to the Nature’s Compass concept we will discuss in a future chapter, acting toward a goal, sensing where you are, comparing to the goal, and steering in the right direction like a ship blown off course. Trial and error. While the Kosmos illustrates the overarching order, cybernetics illustrates how to move through each stage toward a greater purpose.

My reason for illustrating these concepts is to provide you with a non-dogmatic highest order from which you can orient your life. A direction. An aim. Kosmos, teleology, and cybernetics can all be integrated as a high and holistic perspective to orient your decision-making and discover a sense of meaning for your existence. It doesn’t matter if you believe in a God or not. You can directly observe and experience the properties of this grand harmonious system.

Now is a good time to distinguish vertical development from horizontal development. At each macro level, individuals can expand their capacity at each level through knowledge and skill acquisition (horizontal). Advancing to a new level, after a certain amount of time and effort in it, can often open their

mind to new perspective. By doing so, they can observe their previous level, integrate many aspects of it, and transcend into a more holistic baseline state of consciousness. The problem is, people can, and often do, get trapped in any given level leading to psychic entropy and an unnecessary number of problems that can't be solved without a higher level of mind. Much of the time, individuals go through a period of intense pain until they get fed up with their lack of progress. Their mind is able to “flip the switch” and break through to the next level. To understand this best, we must understand the essence of problems.

Problems Are the Path

You can only become as successful as the identity you expand into, and problems are the limits on that expansion. That is, problems are the limits on your potential. When you solve problems and remove your limits, you become more complex, more skilled, more knowledgeable, more open, more connected to reality. With each problem you solve, the perceived difficulty of life goes down, and your level of purpose goes up.

Problems keep your attention boxed within the boundaries of those problems. Why does this matter? First, you may have difficulty seeing life for what it is. Second, you can't seem to find your passions or interests. You struggle to find a challenge that you actually want to take on. So, you search and

search within the little bubble of awareness confined by your problems and start to feel like you're trapped, or that there isn't anything more than what you can see.

If your mind is consumed by how you look in the mirror, how tired you feel every day, your lack of a partner or mate, all the bills you have to pay, and the job you don't care to go to, it becomes obvious why your life doesn't seem that great. People will tell you to accept your situation and find joy in it, which is a good idea, but that is a band-aid solution that won't heal the inner voice begging you to discover your potential.

Humans find joy in solving problems. In other words, we find joy in what we choose to suffer for. Our mind narrows on the challenge. We identify room for growth. We plan, educate ourselves, and acquire the skill that increases the power of our mind and self. We see progress as feedback and learn what it means to be fulfilled.

Now, you can only solve a problem once you expand your mind beyond the problem. You need to stop, zoom out, and open your mind to view your problems from a higher perspective. From there, you can create a goal that opposes the problem, collect ideas that form a theory, and experiment with potential solutions until the problem is solved. Once it's solved, you solidify a new level of purpose.

From my experience, I've noted four macro levels of purpose. These are like big milestones in your development. These apply to each domain of your life and your life as a whole. By domain of life, I mean things like your work, relationships, finances, health, energy, and sense of well-being. For the sake of this book, I will be providing examples relating to money.

With this philosophy, none of these levels are bad or “less than” another. They are simply developmental stages. They are guides to identify where you are at in your development. We can think of problems existing at each level as increasing in selflessness and decreasing in selfishness. Meaning, you can't avoid being selfish at the start. The purpose of money changes as you develop yourself. Your purpose shapes how you perceive situations. You need to solve the superficial problems like health, money, and confidence before you can even think about solving deeper problems like spirituality and meaning. In fact, spirituality and meaning are found in solving the problems themselves.

1. Survival

The survival level of purpose is the starting point for most people. That point when you haven't begun to pursue your own path in life. All you know are the goals you've been assigned and what that worldview has allowed you to notice and learn. You are doing what you've been told to do to survive. You

don't pay attention to the default lifestyle you've accepted by society, and it slowly chains you into a narrow-minded state.

All you can pay attention to are the bills you need to pay, the argument you had with your spouse, the job you don't want to go to. You're living the same experience over and over again. Your mind is stuck in the predictable future and familiar past. You wake up, think about the stressors ahead of you for that day that also happened yesterday, tolerate them, go to bed, and repeat the process.

You believe money is difficult to make. You think making money has a luck factor when luck is a concept used to describe a lack of understanding of a system. You don't see money as a domain of mastery like fitness, mental health, or relationships. You may believe money is evil, which limits your ability to make it, trapping you in your cloud of problems. You don't think you can make a lot of money in your field, or just haven't chosen a field to develop yourself in. You aren't interested in becoming an entrepreneur for various reasons, but those reasons are often a failure to uncover your programming. In survival mode, you can't see your higher potential and make the connection that, at some point, entrepreneurship is a necessary aspect of achieving it.

The first step to advance from survival to status is to become

deeply aware of the beliefs that hold you back and how, when gone unchecked, create a ripple effect of destruction in your life. The second step is orienting your focus from problem to solution. In a sense, you must become so disgusted with yourself and your situation that you have no choice but to use that negative energy to commit to something positive.

Start where you are. Focus on solving the problems that are staring you straight in the face. Your money problems. Your energy problems. Your health problems. Your relationship problems. Immerse yourself in environments and education that begins to change the goals your mind operates on. Block out time to work on improving the value you have to offer. Acquire complementary skills to the ones you use in your job or career. Experiment with side projects. Expose yourself to massive experience until you are able to make enough money to see beyond your survival.

2. Status

The only people who did well, and do well, in society were those who had power and influence. The people who put effort into their goals became valuable, built businesses, built their body, and built their mind to increase their capacity for wealth—the ability to create. There has never been a time in history where weak, average, or mindless people weren't treated like cattle. Now, stick with me here. If I come off as arrogant, I may be

just that, but there is more to the story.

The mentors of the past and present that you look up to, like Gautama Buddha, Jesus Christ, Plato, Krishna, or any other influential individual you hold in high regard have a high degree of status and power. Otherwise, their message would not have captured your attention, persuaded you to change your mind and behavior, and persisted for thousands of years. But that's the thing, they didn't have a marketing budget, they had a message. A life's work to spread. That was the source of their power. My point is that you only view status as bad because of the code written in your head by people who failed to question their assumptions. Or, you simply have a half-perspective of what power is, and you tend to bias the negative.

Some people will naturally filter into being average and weak, as there are weak stars and plants, but it is the duty of the strong to bear the load of responsibility. Once you reach the contribution level, you realize that a sole purpose of yours is to do just that. To solve bigger, more meaningful problems that increase the baseline level of purpose of humanity. But you can only do that once you've attained some form power and influence. Once you've created the art, products, or services that improve the lives of the recipients. Once you've built the body that reflects the character by which you interact with the world. Once you've built the mind that harnesses power with

persuasion, not force or deception.

This is one problem with today's teachers and gurus. They are respectfully developed in the mental or contemplative domain of life, but they are often sickly or overweight and verifiably sexist or racist. People pedestalize these everyday humans for their rare development and latch onto their beliefs out of blind ignorance. They reject the manifest world of money, food, and sex as that rejection is inherent to the purely ascending philosophies that arose during the axial period. They failed to integrate the descending. They lost their grounding by identifying with what they deem "pure" out of desire for status that they can cover up with the guise of spirituality. They haven't broken through the superficial perception of money and value exchange as the world evolved. They haven't realized that contemplative development is, in fact, separate and holds equal importance to development within lines such as aesthetic, cognitive, emotional, ethical, interpersonal, mathematical, moral, and those that make up your basic needs. I am not trying to knock down these great leaders. I am trying to expose their humanity. That you can, and should, learn from them, but there is much, much more to learn.

The status level of purpose is reached when you feel a sense of security around money. You have a skill set that allows you to pursue a new career or start a business. That career or business

allows you to pay the bills, focus on other areas of your life, and make moderate to extravagant purchases.

This is where many people continue to reside because they get trapped in the materialist paradigm. You haven't found your calling, so you don't have a guiding light that is greater than yourself. You get stuck in the superficial and lose sight of the depth. You like the job title more than you enjoy the challenge of the problem. You like the expensive watch more than you enjoy the brand's mission and craftsmanship. Neither of these are bad, but if you find yourself stuck in this narrow view, things can become bad very fast.

The trap of traps is trying to avoid this stage. You try to jump to spirituality without the experience and mistakes that breed spirituality. You don't realize you are using your spirituality as a status symbol in and of itself. You often use it to garner attention and power from how others perceive you. That's why many start down the spiritual path. They see someone of higher consciousness, admire them, desire to be like them, and start imitating them. That's a status game, and that's okay. You simply need to be conscious of it, so it doesn't do more harm than good in your life.

I am giving you permission to pursue your desire for acceptance through power. Start training so you can look good even if it

seems vain to other people. Start the business to make money as that's the only way to control what you create, who you create for, and its impact on the world. You may not care about that now, but as you fulfill your status needs, your mind will begin to open and notice things you couldn't have before.

You find spirituality in experience. You find it in the story of creating your own way. You find it in the highs and lows of pursuing goals and solving problems. You find it in correcting the mistakes you made and learning how to move in a better direction. Spirituality comes from the journey, but that journey is only possible with a conscious destination. If you can't find meaning in life, it's because you haven't started pursuing the goals you've been suppressing because you've been tricked into thinking they're bad.

3. Creativity

Once you've achieved some level of status, your mind will start to transform. And if you don't close your mind, you'll begin to realize all your mistakes. You may even feel the need to reject everything you've acquired. You won't find the same joy you used to in those superficial pursuits. The money gets old. The cars and watches get old. Much of your material acquisition gets old.

That doesn't mean everything you did was a waste. You have

a vast vat of experience to pull from and pass down to those who may need it. In the creativity level, you begin to realize your value. You have the desire to break away from external dependencies and assignments. At this point, your focus must shift to developing a philosophical sense of mastery around a few key pursuits.

For fitness fanatics, going to the gym starts as a pursuit to feel good about themselves. After a few years, they either quit, or they reorient toward a new, deeper destination that makes the journey more meaningful. They find joy in feeling good from healthy food and movement. They have a deep understanding of how their health choices impacts their future. They gain fulfillment from the process of making tiny improvements with their training. They integrate the finite game and fall in love with the infinite.

In the status stage, much of what you learn and do will be from what others teach you. In the creativity stage, you take your expanded knowledge and begin to create your own way of doing things. You've tried different training regimens, business models, and coping strategies to the point of realizing the patterns and principles between them all. You've unlocked a perspective that allows you to navigate intersecting domains with grace.

Your job in the creativity stage is to simply create. Experiment. Break free from the dogmas and ideologies and processes you've adopted from others. Build novel solutions from scratch. Try everything and see what sticks. It may take some time, but this is where you discover what you were meant to do, even if it's not absolutely clear. A vague idea of your full potential sets you up nicely for the contribution stage.

4. Contribution

At some point—I can't put an exact timeframe on it—you will understand the second half of creation: contribution. You come full circle and realize that art must be merged with business for that art to take full effect. You feel a deep desire to share the things that have improved your life. You will see life from a new lens and wonder why others are constantly distracted with menial things. You can see where their life is heading, but they can't.

The contribution stage is where the separate domains of your life collapse into one. You don't see work as somewhere that you clock in and clock out. You don't see rest as a treat that you can only indulge in once work is done. You don't see play as a hobby that lasts thirty minutes at night if you have the time to do it. You see all of them as necessary counterbalances to one another. Work, rest, and play become difficult to distinguish.

Rest becomes a way to regenerate your creative ability for your work. Play becomes what you do for work. Work is so deeply integrated with your life that anything you do can pay back tenfold in more ways than cash. Your footsteps leave pits of value in their path.

Your entire life begins to revolve around how you can best contribute to the world. You become a perspective vessel for reality. The true value lies in the mind you've developed, and you are able to adopt the perspective of a strategist or visionary. You hunt for and gather information, synthesize it with your experience, and distribute it to those who want to benefit from it. You become less of a leech. You don't only consume and take from reality for your selfish personal gain, but you create, share, and contribute back to the world.

The four levels of purpose listed above are just that. They are general worldviews. They are the vantage point from which you perceive and act on opportunities. Understand that you can, and should, contribute to others' lives even if you are in the survival stage. Understand that you can be creative at any time even if you are deep in a status game.

Survival, status, creativity, and contribution are simply labels that best encapsulate the general outlook on life one has. With that said, there is a path to move through these levels faster.

This isn't a set and strict path that someone can give you (whether that be in school or from a guru, those are simply processes you can experiment with).

The best path to take is the one you create for yourself. But understand there is a best "meta" path to create your own path. The path is illustrated by the main domains of your life. Mind, body, relationships, and work. The health and development of each.

The peculiar one that needs much attention is "work." Work is a major part of life. It determines much of what you learn and do. It determines what you spend most of your time on. Because of that, it determines much of your development. So, the "best" path to take is a commitment to discovering and pursuing your life's work.

You can't do that in a job, although a job can be a stepping-stone toward it. A job is the "secure" and "safe" route touted by those who haven't discovered the depth of life. It can quickly chain you to responsibilities that narrow your mind and drain your energy. You can't effectively pursue your life's work by neglecting your relationships and mental and physical health.

If you are passionate about your work, late nights and bad

habits will impact your ability to create. If you aren't serious about your work, these problems won't register in your mind as problems. They will stick around and lead to entropy. When your work demands your best self, the path to developing your mind, body, and relationships becomes clear. You must uphold them or else your work suffers.

The answer, again, is entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship spans across all levels of mind. It solves survival, aids in status, allows for creativity, and results in contribution. Entrepreneurship requires you to be a generalist, not a narrow-minded specialist that limits your perspective and development beyond that specialization. Entrepreneurship requires you to escape starving artistry. You must transcend your selfish desires to do random work that others don't perceive as valuable. Entrepreneurship requires you to be conscious of your impact. You have much responsibility in how large you grow and how that influences the evolution of consciousness.

You have the path; now you must learn to navigate it.



Progress and Knowledge

You aren't where you want to be because you don't have the knowledge to be there. In the broadest sense, a person's quest for a better life is, as David Deutsch puts it, "a search problem, in an abstract space of ideas far too large to be searched exhaustively." As we break free from the known goals, systems, and comforts our mind adopts to maintain a sense of security, how do we explore this vast idea space in the search for new knowledge that equips us with the power to do what we want? How do we navigate the unknown, in the right direction, in a way that leads to progress in our personal lives and in society? How do we pursue our purpose? We'll get to that, but we need to cover a few bases so your mind is primed for understanding.

Now would be a good time to bring up the elephant in the

room: *artificial intelligence*. To understand what AI is and what it means for us, we need to start at the origin of that term. Before AI, there was *cybernetics*, an idea laid out by Norbert Wiener in 1948. Cybernetics—ancient Greek for “helmsman” or another word for “governor”—is the idea of automatic, self-regulating control in a system. Acting, sensing, and comparing to a goal is a fundamental loop to intelligent systems. His key insight was that the world should be understood in terms of information. That complex systems like organisms, brains, and societies error-correct toward a goal, and if these feedback loops break down, the system breaks down.

Intelligent information systems—or life—can be observed as a tightrope walker’s constant adjustments. As they cross the wire, each tiny wobble sends a signal to their brain. Their body responds by shifting right, then adjusting again and again to stay balanced. This back-and-forth flow of information keeps them stable. Similarly, a ship approaching a lighthouse at night uses constant feedback. The captain sees they’re drifting left of the light, steers right, then adjusts again when they’ve gone too far right. These small corrections, based on steady streams of information, keep complex things working smoothly. But if the feedback stops—if the tightrope walker gets dizzy or the lighthouse goes dark—the system falls into chaos. This knowledge will come in handy later.

Two years after Wiener's introduction to cybernetics, he published *The Human Use of Human Beings*. Now out of print, the central idea relevant to today's world is: "We must cease to kiss the whip that lashes us." Wiener knew the danger was not in machines becoming more like humans but humans being treated like machines.

Around this time, a new perception of technology emerged that by inventing computers, we had externalized our central nervous system—our minds—and that we all now shared one singular mind. One infinite intelligence. All potential information at our fingertips. Unfortunately, we don't hear much about cybernetics today. Why? Because this new perception fueled poor incentives. Wiener's warnings about intelligent machines ran counter to the aspirations of his colleagues, who were interested in the commercialization of new technologies. They wanted to profit from this. Second, John McCarthy, a computer pioneer, disliked Wiener. He refused to use the term "cybernetics" and instead coined "artificial intelligence," becoming a founding father in that field.

With the meteoric rise in discussion around intelligent machines, we're left wondering what makes humans special or if we were even special to begin with. For being the only species that's made it to the moon, there has to be something

there, right?

David Deutsch, influenced by Karl Popper, believes there is, and it lies in our ability to create infinite knowledge. It starts with the need for creativity. The process by which all knowledge that is created happens through conjecture and criticism. Trial and error. Variation and selection (in Darwinian terms). In other words, guessing and correcting one's guess is how you accomplish anything you set your mind to. This is how we learn, innovate, make progress, and understand almost anything in the universe. This is how we discover unknown goals or ideas and achieve known goals or ideas.

Deutsch believes that humans are “universal explainers.” That we are capable of understanding anything that is understandable within the realm of possibility. We create explanatory theories that reveal the deep structure of reality, allowing us to guess and predict in a more efficient way that breeds faster progress with time. This knowledge allows us to understand things we've never directly experienced, like stars and galaxies. We can understand what a star is by viewing it through a telescope, but that only comes after the explanatory knowledge of how that telescope changes how we perceive the star. Just as a universal computer can compute anything computable (that we now have in our pockets), humans can understand anything that is understandable. And if we don't

yet understand it, we eventually can.

The reason many people are worried about the future is because artificial intelligence and its more evolved forms may render humans irrelevant. This is not the case. There is not a limit to what humans can compute if we either augment our brains or use the devices in our pockets for more than rotting our brains. There are no limits to what we can transform—or turn raw materials into things like rockets—given the right knowledge. There is no difference between the basic order of operations that we as humans can perform that AI can somehow surpass. Further, there is no limit to the transformative ideas that AI can come up with that we cannot.

Beyond that, humans may have a slight edge when it comes to attention. We have the ability to change our focus by changing our perspective. When a problem occurs, we can adopt a perspective that allows us to solve it. If we want to build a rocket, asking the old gods to do it for us won't help. We can change lenses to view the situation in a way that allows for new opportunities. If we want mental peace, spirituality will help, but if one gets locked in that paradigm, they may struggle with the practical aspects of life. These perspectives we can change like lenses on a camera are backed by consciousness and experience, one thing that AI may never fully grasp, but my perspective stays open to the possibility that it one day may.

The point is that you can achieve anything within the realm of possibility, but only if you have the knowledge to do so and a perspective that allows you to apply that knowledge. You are not doomed to the default path of society or the rule of intelligent machines. Now, on the topic of knowledge, it serves two functions. The first is to make specific things happen, preferably good things rather than bad. The second is to capture patterns in reality. This allows us to store information in an efficient way so that we aren't always starting from scratch in our pursuits. We understand big-picture concepts like the sun rising and falling each day and seasons changing every so often. Without this understanding, much of our lives would fall apart. Capturing patterns allows us to plan by proximity. We understand that we would freeze to death in a cold environment, so we use deposits of knowledge like a jacket and hotel to keep us warm while we travel.

This doesn't take away from the fact that most people feel lost. It's nice to know that you can achieve anything you want, but how do you create the knowledge that allows you to do so? The answer lies in the unknown. The undefined. In using your agency to take the step out of what you know is possible, or what has been defined by another as possible for you. To set a new goal—even if, and especially if, it leads to uncertainty—and navigate through the dark until you strike gold.

Think of the unknown as a universal map with light and dark spots. The light spots are areas you've explored. The dark spots are where your potential lies. This map is a surface area for ideas that can be discovered and tested against reality to verify their validity. When those results do not move you closer toward your goal, or move you further from that, a problem is revealed, and you must error correct toward the goal. It may sound simple, but as life proves, this is a difficult process. But here's the thing, your purpose is the source of your struggle, and nobody said that struggle can't be fun.

The fundamental problem, or problem of all problems, is that people rarely dive into the unknown and fail to recognize that as the problem that begins their problem-solving journey. This mostly comes down to conditioning, identity, and perception. You don't become aware of good problems because you don't have a goal that those problems prevent you from achieving. You don't prioritize health, so nutrient-deficient food and sluggishness pass you by as problems to solve. You don't have high standards for the money in your wallet, so you don't register that as a problem that sparks the desire to create your life's work. Without problems, there is no creativity. Without creativity, there is no life. A life without problems is a life without purpose. You have no reason to step into the unknown, discover ideas, create knowledge, deposit it as a contribution, and live fully. Problems, like ideas, are infinite.

There will never be a time when we rid our lives of problems. There will only be a time with better problems to solve. There is no final destination. If there is any point in your life where you are not wrestling with a meaningful problem (this includes mindfulness, meditation, and other forms of spirituality that make it seem as if you aren't solving the problem of an entropic mind), it is safe to say that you are not in the process of producing value or creating the potential to contribute to something greater than yourself. You lose purpose.

It's wise to note that there is an enemy of progress. When you encounter a problem—or a conflict between where you are and where you want to be—entropy has the potential to increase. Entropy, in brief, is that all systems fall into chaos unless an effort is made to maintain order. A dirty room is a simple example. Your room starts out clean, but if you don't have a system for maintaining it, slowly, then all at once, the room will become a disordered mess, making it much harder to regain order. It may start off as an unmade bed with a few shirts or socks on the floor, but soon enough, it becomes a wasteland that would make your mother go insane. When applied to the mind, entropy plays a much more pressing role.

We've learned that animals are different from humans in that they thrive within a specific niche while humans build tools to thrive in any niche, but we haven't learned why humans

do this. Animals survive on the physical level. They attempt to reproduce the information in their genes. Humans do the same, but they also survive on the conceptual level. They attempt to reproduce the information in their consciousness. Whether this is some form of evolved extended phenotype is up for debate, but the explanation holds up. Humans protect and prolong their identity, or self, through concepts because it is a concept. We write books to spread our mental seed, we argue our beliefs when our identity is threatened, and we invent conceptual knowledge to survive when our genes can no longer handle that job.

The sources of psychic entropy, or the mind falling into chaos, are boredom and anxiety. Both stem from a mismatch of your skill level and the challenge of a situation. If your skill is too high and the challenge is too low, you get bored. Boredom leads to self-centeredness. Your mind starts thinking of something better, and often more pleasurable, that it could be doing with its time. If your skill is too low and the challenge is too high, you get anxious. Anxiety leads to self-consciousness. Your mind starts thinking of how it's not good enough. In both scenarios, one thought leads to another until you find yourself drowning. One thought about your strained breathing could lead to one hundred more about difficult food choices, routines, doctors' offices, bad news, having a heart attack and more unless you refocus your attention on what you can do

right now to solve the problem.

When you stay in the known or latch onto to your current way of life that probably wasn't chosen by you, boredom sets in, and you begin wondering why your life is getting worse while your days remain the same. Most people's lives are determined by how they choose to cure their boredom. When you decide to step into the unknown, you are effectively reinventing yourself. You are reborn. And when you are born, you are vulnerable. There is little order and a whole lot of chaos. Stay mindful of this. The first leap into a new way of life will have a buffer period of high anxiety. This is nature's way of testing how serious you are about seeing what you're capable of.

The key to reversing entropy is to dance between boredom and anxiety. To take on challenges that are just above your skill level. You wouldn't try to fight a level fifty if you were a level one, and you wouldn't care to fight a level one if you were a level fifty. When you shoot just above your weight, you find the magic you're looking for. You've felt it before. When you're living at the edge of your abilities. The flow state. Locked in. You feel invincible. Nothing else matters but the task in front of you. You become one with the problem. You move with purpose. People gravitate toward you because you have something they've lost. Your life's work is to maximize your time in this optimal state of ordered consciousness, to

any greater or lesser degree, because this is when you create a reality worth living in. This happens when mental energy— or attention—is invested in your plan. A hierarchy of goals that reprograms how you view the world when your skill matches the challenge of an opportunity.

I call this Nature's Compass. True learning. Engaging with the process of trial and error, creation and destruction, secure and insecure. The oscillation of life. Like a ship heading toward a lighthouse in a storm. You may get blown off course, but it is a test of your intelligence and skill to be able to sense where you are, realize you are, in fact, off course, and steer in the right direction. Again, it would not be wise to hop in a boat in the middle of the ocean if you are not a skilled navigator. Start where you are but challenge yourself.

This is how you acquire an interest-based education. You view your life as a story that unfolds in chapters, phases, and cycles. Each chapter has goals, problems, highs, and lows that reveal themselves as the pages turn. Each chapter is a macrocycle of life. Once you understand it, you can identify which part of the story you are in, become aware of its components, and ease your mind until you enter the next phase. The cycle is composed of three phases.

You feel lost. You don't know what to pursue next. You've

solved a problem, achieved a goal, and thought it was the end. For most people, this happens either when they leave school or stay at a job until the challenge is no longer novel. In the lost phase, you are attempting to notice a problem. Boredom or anxiety are the signals. If you listen to them, you will become curious as to how you can overcome them.

You become interested. You experiment with different topics, interests, ideas, techniques, and solutions until you become fully aware that you are, in fact, able to solve that problem. It becomes your purpose. In the context of a job, after becoming fully aware that it is a problem preventing your growth, your mind actively seeks information to solve that problem.

You become obsessed. You dive deeper into that crevice of reality. You can't stop learning and building toward your goal. You start to realize that your problem wasn't as shallow as you thought. You discover that to start a business, you need to learn persuasion. To learn persuasion, you must understand the mind. To understand the mind, you must understand reality. And before you know it, what started as a money problem becomes a deepened understanding of reality itself. This is the power of an interest-based education if you don't get distracted from the endless string of problems or the greater purposes that lie ahead.

The cycle repeats. Once that cycle ends, a new one begins, and you will feel lost once more. You've stacked few interests, which is great, but you still feel as if you are just dipping your toes in. However, you are now at a level of mind that can start to solve deeper, more challenging problems. When you feel lost, here are a few things you can try to collect vision (or ideas that culminate into solutions).

Experiment inward. Rest. Nap. Journal. Walk. Embrace silence. Observe and deconstruct your thoughts. Attempt to catch a signal of opportunity. Follow your thoughts to a root problem. Reject your stupid busy life and set aside time for deep contemplation.

Experiment outward. Learn. Read. Scroll. Build. Try new things. Refocus on the only things that matter in life. Health, wealth, relationships, happiness. Experiment with techniques that invest energy into a goal. Any goal. During the experimentation phase, you are trying to accumulate new experiences until your next quest becomes visible.

Like a game, you are at a point where the quest is still locked, but you don't have any other to pursue. You have to fumble around in the dark until you find a dimly lit candle off in the distance. If you lose your mind, you won't notice it.

Now, understand that there is no time limit for this phase. It could last weeks, months, or years. You must stick it out until you accumulate enough vision to stop going wide and start going deep. When you progress through the lost phase and become interested, you must act fast to turn that into obsession. The experimentation never ends.

Experiment downward. The secret is to try everything until you find that one thing that you can't pull yourself away from. When you find that one thing, go deep. Learn everything you can about that domain. Dissect all perspectives and avoid becoming dogmatic about one.

In nutrition, collect perspective and patterns from veganism, keto, carnivore, flexible dieting, and other ideologies until you are confident enough to create your own that is closer to truth. In business, collect from e-commerce, freelancing, software, and other models until you note the principles that bring clarity to your own endeavors.

The only way to solve problems for good is through obsessive self-experimentation. Otherwise, it is a band-aid. A prescription. An assignment. And you know the dangers of locking your mind into someone else's prison. People can diagnose and prescribe a solution to your problems, but they lack regard for the difference in perspective, goals, and experience from

those prescribing the solutions. You will never have access to another person's state of mind, and they will never have access to yours. This is the essence of human uniqueness.

Experiment upward. Persistence and iteration. I'm assuming that once you've found your obsession you want to make it a consistent part of your life. This means you must earn a creative income from that interest. You must integrate it into your entrepreneurial path.

In today's world, that means a few things. Build a project to help others solve their problems. Write in public to attract people with those problems. Sell your project so you can continue pursuing your obsession. Improve your project as you learn what can only be learned through feedback. Evolve to a new project when you've reached the level that can only be reached through business.

Your life's work doesn't happen at some imaginary future moment. It happens at every passing moment. One foot in the unknown. Not so deep that you get anxious, and not so shallow that you get bored. But right where the meaningful flow of information is maximized. A gradual increase in challenge and complexity on the path of entrepreneurship. A mind framed with the constraints of a vision and anti-vision. Identifying a problem, accepting the challenge, experimenting

with options, discovering a solution, and sharing it with the world to solidifying your growth as a gift. When you do this, I can't promise that you will achieve the success and fame you've always dreamed of, but I can assure you that you will not end up a mediocre clone.



Your Life's Work

Your life's work is to reach your potential. To see what you are capable of. To expand your capacity for knowledge and skill to tackle deeper, more interesting challenges. Your life's work is getting paid to be yourself. To profit from purpose. By doing so, you become a beacon of value for others to follow and improve. The only other options are the opposite. To work for the sole purpose of survival and status. No creativity. No depth. No contribution to something greater than yourself. A selfish and unconscious existence where you become a puppet to society. You will never escape work, but everyone has the potential to fill their day with work that feels like play.

The question isn't "*what do I do?*" The question is "*which way do I go?*" Your life's work, like everything else that is unknown and

worthwhile, doesn't become clear in an instant. You feel lost at one moment, but if you have faith, you soon become curious. That curiosity leads to a period of intensity, a season of rapid progress where there is nothing you'd rather be doing but pursuing your purpose. Post-intensity, you enter a period of consistency where you maintain a higher baseline than before. You reach a new level of purpose and continue your ascent from a similar point in the spiral. You may not feel like you are progressing, but if you look down the mountain, you will see how far you've come.

Instead of obsessing over discovering your life's work, pay attention to the opposite: where your life will end up if you keep performing the same actions. If you understand entropy—that all things tend toward disorder—you understand that by doing nothing with your life you choose to slowly drown in chaos. You don't stay the same. You dig yourself deeper into a hole without trying. The good life demands consistent effort toward reaching a new level of purpose.

But how do we transmute that negative and brutal awareness of what we don't want out of life into something good, true, and beautiful? The secret lies in learning how to think, learning how to learn, and learning how to earn. All of them are found in the same process of making a goal conscious, creating a path to achieve it, and focusing your attention on lever-

moving actions that bring results as feedback. We're already aware that infinite knowledge lies in the unknown waiting to be discovered. Now, you need a smart way to course correct along your journey. You can try to wander around the desert in hopes of finding water, but there is a high chance you'll wander in the wrong direction from the start.

When you identify a problem that, once solved, lays a stepping-stone toward your vision, you need a plan. A plan is your surface area for luck, and if you don't have one, or think you don't need one, you may not realize that you are already acting toward one. Or your "plan" is not having a plan (which is still a plan). Now, a plan isn't what most people think it is. It is not a list of steps that will never happen. It is an evolving blueprint that takes shape through trial and error.

A plan contains the rules of the game for how you live your life. The longer you play, the better you get, and you often forget the rules and win anyway. A powerful plan, composed of a vision, mission, projects, levers, and the rest prevent overwhelm as you progress toward your goals. A plan accounts for how you release and constrain entropy to achieve self-generated goals. I want to make this absolutely clear: *nobody can tell you how to achieve your plan*. They can only tell you how they achieved theirs. You can study their processes to help along the way, and you should, but the rest of the process lies in

continuing to solve problems.

I don't say this to sound high and mighty. But I've never had a problem with knowing what I want in the future. When people say, "I don't know what I want," what they're really saying is, "I don't want to do the work it takes to get what I want." It's not that you don't know what you want. It's that you know what you don't want—meaning you know what you want—and are hiding from the pain of reinventing yourself. You are hiding from the slow structural redesign of your identity.

I've always known what I wanted because it's extremely simple to observe society and know what I don't want: A job I hate. Work I don't care about. A body that lacks energy and aesthetics. A partner I can't stop arguing with. A mind that I can't come to grips with. These are the main problems that lie in the conditioned human experience. The problems that are the product of being treated as a machine. If you don't know where to start, start there. You'll be surprised where infinity takes you. From that alone, it's easy to figure out what I had to do: Become an entrepreneur no matter how many times I fail. Gain the power to get rid of work I don't want to do. Train on a daily basis and prioritize my energy. Then, allow those three things to open up more opportunities in every domain of life.

Everybody knows that some form of this path is what

they are meant to do. Your psyche craves actualization and transcendence. The depth of your being wants these things, but your ego is distracted by things it thinks it wants. That's the problem. You don't have a way to focus your mind. You don't have a plan for your future that has more gravity than the distractions in your life. You struggle to maintain a long-term time horizon and get trapped in never-ending, short-term, stress-inducing tasks.

In this chapter, I want to show you how to become valuable. How to create your own plan. In the next chapter on *Value Creation*, I want to show you how to use that value to persuade and inspire others. I will include snippets for how this chapter's teachings translate to business and entrepreneurship, but ultimately, this entire book can be applied to both yourself and your supporters and customers. I would encourage you to read it twice. Once while improving yourself. Once while packaging up the value you've created to improve others.

Humans make sense of the world in stories. The mind is a story engine. When you learn how to create a story worth telling by forging your own path, how you attract others becomes trivial. Leaders naturally attract followers, and leaders still follow other leaders. So, learn to lead your own life through the depths of the unknown where all untapped potential lies. I will not be discussing details with this. I trust that you can hold these in

your mind and figure it out through trial and error.

Anti-Vision. We start our story with an anti-vision. The bane of your existence. The first polar end of the worldview you will cultivate. A positive-fear mechanism that kicks you into action. Your anti-vision is the future that you do not want to live.

Start a running note of experiences you do not want to repeat. The material you don't care to learn. The work you don't care to complete. The arguments you don't wish to have. You won't get rid of them in an instant. You are meant to identify them as problems to be solved.

Vision. If you don't have a vision, you are lost. You can't create outcomes, so you are doomed to the mechanical living of determined outcomes. Every decision you make in any domain of your life must be filtered through your vision. That is how you bring meaning to your actions and minimize distractions.

Write down exactly what you want out of life. Don't miss a detail but realize this is an iterative process. You won't get it right the first time around, and you probably never will. That's not the point. Spend thirty minutes generating a minimum viable vision. Come back to it often to add, subtract, and

improve as your desires inevitably change with your failures.

The main trait of an entrepreneur, a brand, or a company is their vision. Without a vision, your supporters can't see where you are going and why it benefits them. Without an anti-vision, they don't have a metaphorical enemy to rally against. They don't have awareness of the life they don't want to live, so you give them no reason to change it.

Mission. Your mission is the most important thing in your life. It is the bridge between what you do and don't want. The path you are forging toward your vision. Your life's work. Reaching your potential. Anything that leads to decay is a distraction that must be wrestled with and pinned.

Your mission evolves with awareness of new beliefs, opportunities, and knowledge. Your mission requires faith. You can't see the next step unless you take the first. And once you do, the second may be completely different than anything you could have possibly imagined.

Standards. You aren't where you want to be because you are okay with where you are. But most of your standards are unconscious. As an example, if you are okay with having a few dollars to your name, you won't register that as a problem to be solved. You relinquish your agency. This isn't negative, this

is empowering. If you view it as negative, you may be holding onto a rogue belief that shoots fear into your psyche because it is trying to survive the change. Your old identity won't go down without a fight. Be mindful of that.

Standards are absorbed from your environment. The friends you hang out with. The books you read. The media you consume. The parents who raise you. The teachers who knew it all. The greatest decision you can make is to change your physical, mental, and spiritual environments for good. Immerse yourself in a pool of new people, new ideas, and new potentials that challenge you to create, expand, and transcend.

Goals. Big goals are for direction. Small goals are for clarity. You don't need motivation when the task in front of you is so stupidly simple that you can't help but complete it. Break down your vision into goals by decade, year, month, week, and day. They are your guide, not your master. Be stubborn with vision and loose with details. Your goals will change, and that's okay.

As stated, a plan is not a list of steps that won't happen. It is an evolving blueprint. Your anti-vision, vision, and goals are necessary for decision-making, but do not hesitate to iterate as your wisdom develops. Goals come after vision, not before.

Projects. Projects are how you turn problems into solutions. Projects create a frame for your mind to expand into. Projects, after a period of invested mental energy, become a magnet for ideas and experience. Serendipity increases. Pattern recognition increases. Dopamine increases to signal information that helps you actualize the project.

Learning comes from struggle, not memorization. You need a series of tangible projects to build that will actualize your vision. Turn your goals into projects. Architect an outline, milestones, deadlines, and areas of research. Build, then learn. Start the project, expose your lack of knowledge and skill, and use that as a reference point for your education.

Constraints. A fool becomes rich at the expense of everything good in life. A creative becomes rich at the expense of his choice. Limitations on your goals force creativity. The question is, what are you not willing to sacrifice to achieve your goals?

The creative challenge appears when you attempt to achieve a goal without betraying your vision. You can become rich without sacrificing your family. You can become healthy without sacrificing your work. You can become valuable without sacrificing what makes life worth living.

Levers. Every day, you need priority tasks that move the lever

toward your projects, goals, and vision from the ground up. These are often perceived as boring fundamentals without the cultivation of a sense of mastery. Do what needs to be done but grip your vision as the anchor into the unknown. If you aren't making progress, it's because you aren't moving levers, even if you think you are.

Challenge. When a novice plays against a master, neither has fun. The novice becomes anxious while the master becomes bored unless they are not playing to win. When your skill is the perfect match for the challenge of a situation, the world goes quiet, and you become one with the problem to be solved.

Challenge is the source of enjoyment. Enjoyment is found on the tightrope between boredom and anxiety. Enjoyment comes from solving problems. The path to meaningful living is often found in a simple shift in perspective. Problems aren't the bane of your existence. They're the reason for it.

Curiosity. Be willing to steer off course and discover new potential. It is too easy to lock ourselves in the mechanical routine we were trying to escape. Be curious. Dive deep into your interests. Let few questions go unanswered. Avoid getting locked into paradigms and beliefs that narrow your mind on one idolized path. Your vision is like a battery. You must fuel it with experience, education, and misdirection.

When you are lost, run through this process. When your relationships are failing, run through this process. When your business won't get off the ground, run through this process. Every successful interaction with reality starts and ends with a clear image of the want, clarity on how to achieve it, and creative execution to acquire rare results.



Value Creation

Few people have realized this, but you can learn and build almost anything thanks to the internet. You have the mind of Einstein and DaVinci in your pocket. If you have the agency and desire, you can find a path to acquiring the knowledge you need to build what you want. It's an uncertain path, but very possible.

Building a website used to take multiple engineers to build and maintain. Now, you can sign up for a website builder, choose a template, change it to your liking, and not have to worry about it much after that. Even further, with the development of AI tools, you can simply tell it to build a website with certain specifications and it will spit out the raw code for you. Then, you can chat with the AI to refine it further, learn how to host

it, and learn how to start getting customers.

This seems to be the general trend of today's world. What used to require more resources and labor now requires less, and with AI, "less" is inching closer to zero. For high-agency individuals, this is liberating, as they can unleash their nature as deep generalists. For low-agency individuals, this is oppressive, as they themselves are tools that can be replaced. We will discuss this later. For now, understand this: The ability to earn with your mind, not your time, labor, or looks, is how you become in control of what you do and how much you make. Especially as we go deeper into this uncertain future.

When anyone can create anything, getting people to care becomes the problem, and finding people in the first place stems from that. Most people think their problem is that nobody finds their interests interesting, but the reality is that they don't know how to make their interests interesting to other people. You adopt new interests every week, month, and year. That means other people can too if you understand the process behind what generates interest. When you can do that, you unlock the key to creating something valuable. It's less about what you create and more about how you create it, why people should care about it, and what makes it unique. Let's start with that.

Money is a unit of value. Value is a measure of how much people care multiplied by the magnitude of problems you solve, and problems are infinite. Power is the degree to which one can change behavior. In the past, the main way of acquiring power was through force or deception. But when gunpowder came along, force became a less viable method (for obvious reasons). Deceit still exists, but if you choose that as a way to make money, it's only a matter of time before reviews and reputation catch up with you. It's not wise. It's not hard to see that money that stems from force or deception won't make you happy.

We all want people to care about our creations, and persuasion is the only way to do that while still being able to sleep at night. Persuasion, in the way we will define it, is the act of inspiring people to see the importance of what you do by how it impacts their life for the better. If power is the degree to which one can change behavior, and behavior change is the root solution to both personal and global problems, then persuasion is the most ethical form of power anyone can develop. When most people want something, they explain what they want without understanding the mind of the other person, so they rarely receive it. Learning to persuade allows you to strive for mutual benefit—a positive-sum game—because you are able to articulate their desires often better than they can.

As an entrepreneur, you are not only persuading one person but an increasing number of people over time. The way you get in front of those people is through *media*. In the past, this was through handwritten letters, newspapers, the radio, billboards, or TV, which are highly limited for obvious reasons. Paid advertisements and other forms of media are also promising, but for beginners who don't know a thing about it, I do not believe it is the wise option. Of course, be adaptable. We're heading toward an uncertain future, but the fact remains that you will need to persuade with media as one major part of your entrepreneurial journey.

It just so happens that the highest leverage place to create—right now, at least—is on the internet. It is the path of high agency. You don't need permission to create something and post it on the internet. You don't need permission to navigate idea space and find the information you need. This may change in the future, but that only reinforces the point. No matter if it's the internet or intergalactic space or virtual reality, the answer has been and always will be to share the value you acquire in a place where the right people can find it.

With the internet came the under-appreciated power of building an audience. In the past, there weren't any good ways of retaining communication access with the people who trust you and support your work. As people have grown tired of

centralized institutions controlling the flow of attention, more people have been taking to the creator economy as their source of news, education, and sense making. To me, it seems like the path forward for sovereign individuals is to build their own audience, rather than being at the whim of any given system that allows you to tap into their audience. Publishers, record labels, employers, and the rest. When you have an audience, you can write a book, make music, or find work by the simple act of sharing what you do, who you do it for, and why you do it in public.

To dumb this down, you need to attract people to what you create with persuasive writing, speaking, video, or images. As we will discuss in the next chapter, the best way for most people to start is with writing. Anyone can write. Now, this statement typically makes specialists lose their minds. They don't want to do anything other than type code, make music, or design graphics. They want to focus on their craft but don't realize their craft is worthless if others don't know or care about it. They don't realize that the only way they can currently make a living is to work for someone else who creates the media that brings in customers.

There are a few moving pieces here. In business, you need a product—your value packaged in a way that others can benefit from—and a group of people who care about that product

enough to buy it. You can place your product in front of people, but if they can't see why it benefits their lives, they won't care about it. You can have what you believe is the most valuable product, but if you don't place it in front of people, they don't have a chance to care about it.

This pattern is reflected in relationships. You can place yourself in front of a group of potential partners, but if they can't see where you fit into their life, they won't care about you. You can believe you are the most developed individual, but if you sit inside all day, potential partners don't have a chance to care about you.

For both scenarios, some individuals won't have an identity that meshes with yours. You or your product can be objectively promising, but it won't matter if the individual doesn't have a mind that can relate. You must be in the right place, at the right time, in front of the right people. When you publish your work in public, with intention, persistence, and iteration, you increase the surface area of people who may care about your work. For those who think this sounds uncertain or difficult, I must remind you that the other option—what you've been doing—is more uncertain or difficult while hiding under a veil of comfort and ease.

As a species, we are wired to seek approval from others. We

don't want to be outcasts from our tribe. That desire has built the beautiful, self-corrective world we live in. If we don't want to be cast out, we must contribute value to a group of people who can benefit from that value and give us what we want in return. If we don't contribute value, we close ourselves off to the progress, purpose, and profit that makes life worth living.

The point is clear: You need people and a product. You attract people to that product with media. But neither of those things—media or product—are valuable in and of themselves. You need to package them up as an offer. You don't ask people to pay you. You offer them value in exchange for another form of value. In the case of a product, it's money. In the case of media, it's attention. Both are valuable. Don't waste people's time.

Value is perception. Perception is the difference between a basic t-shirt that costs a few bucks and a luxury t-shirt that costs a few hundred. It's the difference between a Rolex or Porsche and any other watch or car you could buy for much less. This isn't to say that you need to position yourself as a luxury brand—because both options have clearly led to successful business ventures—but it is to say that different people value different things. One man's trash is another man's treasure, as the platitude goes.

So, how do we shape perception? How do we package up our media and product that allows us to leverage the power of persuasion? How do we make ourselves and our creations valuable? The solution is quite simple, but as with any skill, it can take a lifetime to master. Answer these five questions.

1. Who can you help the most? Personality is the largest influence on perception. Someone who does not identify as a coffee drinker will not see the value in an expensive cup of craft coffee. Someone who identifies as a “car person” will not see the value in a cheap and easily purchasable car.

By all measures, the most fulfilling and impactful person to help is yourself. People with a similar personality. People who are attracted to your vision and anti-vision. People who have shared goals but aren’t sure of a way to achieve those goals that they, of all people, will enjoy and stick with. When you create for your past self, the rest of this process falls into place. This is the topic of the Self-Monetization chapter.

2. What problem are you solving? The first step of persuasion, storytelling, sales, self-improvement, and progress as a whole is identifying the most burning problem to be solved and making the person aware of it. If they aren’t aware of a problem, they won’t have the desire to change. Your creation will lose all potential to be perceived as valuable. The problem

always comes first. In stories, it sparks curiosity and hooks the reader. It is the first qualifying checkpoint the reader uses to determine whether it's worth their time to continue or find something else that tickles the right part of their brain.

The levels of problem awareness are unaware, problem aware, solution aware, product aware, and most aware. Most people you come across will lie between unaware and solution-aware. Your job is to speak to them where they are. You aren't going to speak to someone who isn't aware they have a problem the same way you would speak to someone who's already tested solutions. This requires creativity and dexterity. It can't be taught through words. It can only be learned through persistent trial and error on a long enough time horizon, which is why so few people have this irreplaceable skill.

In your writing, speaking, designs, videos, products, and the rest, you must make an educated guess at the majority awareness level of the people who will see the media or product. This is how you capture attention in a world of noise. Pull from your personal experience to start, then keep a finger on the pulse of the information in the space you are trying to join. What problem did you solve in your life? What was your mindset then? What objections came to mind when presented with a solution? As you come across persuasive ideas you can use on your journey, write them down and keep them safe.

3. Where do they want to be? The second step of persuasion is the desired outcome. The purpose. The direction. The ideal lifestyle that—once the problem is solved—they make progress toward. You don't need to give them the full solution, as that's near impossible due to the nature of change and evolution, but you can help them take a few steps, and that's more valuable than staying the same. Entropy isn't kind to those who stay the same.

Pull from your vision and get specific. What are you helping them achieve? What is the *transformation*? The more specific you can get with this, the more desire it will generate in a reader, viewer, or listener who is already aware of the problem. Most people don't want to “revolutionize their mind,” but everyone wants to “have ten less negative thoughts by tomorrow.”

4. When will they get results? The greatest marketing strategy is clarity paired with pure honesty. When the reader can make sense of how long it will take them to solve the problem and achieve the goal, they are much more likely to act. Creating a timeframe—like six months, fourteen days, or five minutes—does two things: First, it requires you to shrink or expand your content or product to be more direct and impactful. Second, it adds another structural pillar to the reader's mind. The more clarity they have, the more likely they are to change their behavior, and behavior change is the only

metric that matters. Otherwise, your content or product won't get results, and they are not valuable.

As you can tell, these tips are not immediately practical. I am not trying to tell you exactly what to do, I am planting seeds of awareness in your mind. If you were to take these ideas with you as you push into the unknown, you will notice these persuasion principles everywhere you go, and that will teach you more than the words on this page. That, by all measures, is the best way to learn. Perspective, persistence, and pattern recognition. Keep these ideas top of mind as you go about your new life.

5. Why should they care? Persuasion ultimately boils down to a strong stack of “whys” that empower the reader to change their mind, then their behavior, then their life. The simplest way to do this is by thinking in terms of pains and benefits. This is best done by writing them out on paper and capturing more as ideas come to mind.

Take the big problem you plan to solve and break it down into smaller pain points. You are attempting to amplify the problem to show the reader that it is a higher priority than they think because the longer the problem goes unsolved, the more damage it can do. If the big problem is “weight loss,” then a pain point can include how feeling sluggish can pull

energy away from their work or relationships. If we continue to ask, “Why should they care?” then we can dig deeper until we reach the core. Having little energy to pour into your work can cause poor performance. Poor performance eventually leads to earning less or losing the source of income. In the relationship, their partner either joins them and the attraction fades, or their partner fixes the problem, deems them unfit, and leaves.

On the more positive side, you can balance out the pain points with the benefits of reaching where they want to be once the problem is solved. In this case, they do better at work—leading to benefits I don’t need to state—and create the potential for a relationship of attraction, desire, and fulfillment due to the increase in energy and confidence.

How do you solve the problem? You solve the problem with a process. A process that you’ve created through experimentation in a way that works for your personality. Your process is the product, but that process can come in many forms, and sometimes it needs education or guidance to implement it best. Of course, a product like a cup or shirt isn’t a process, but they also aren’t solutions to a problem unless they are positioned as such. At that point, a simple cup or shirt can very well be a part of a process to solve that problem. If you want to be more persuasive when selling a commodity,

then you will have to get creative as to how that product can help someone progress through the story toward your vision.

A process, in this context, is a creative system that breeds knowledge, skill, and awareness to bridge the gap between problem and solution. You create this process by either reflecting on your experience as to how you achieved the goal or creating the process through experimentation.

You can find a plethora of daily planners on the internet, but if you want to create your own, your process needs to be slightly better for the personality you are selling to. If you are attempting to create a process for the goal of productivity, you would purchase multiple planners, experiment with them, pull the best parts from each, refine it with your own ideas, package your solution up, and put it on the market.

In summary, anything you create does not come in a form that is often perceived as valuable. You must determine who it's for, what problem you solve, where they want to be, when they will get results, and why they should care. Any one of those will increase the persuasive capacity of your creation, but all of them together will make your offer irresistible.



The Meta Skill

Before humans, simple organisms like amoebas could only gather information with the sense of touch. They only knew what was in their direct vicinity. As evolution hurled forward, organisms were able to gather far away information with sight, smell, and sound. Then, memory developed, and animals could base their decisions on the past.

When humans came around—and after a very long period, slow progress that then increased exponentially—we gained the power to control the planet. We have become creators of our destiny, not just consumers of our environment. Information could now be stored in consciousness, not only genes or traces of memory. When writing was invented during the axial period, information took a step toward universality.

Information is what we use to avoid danger, discover new potential, acquire knowledge, and make decisions that lead to a good future. It started with songs, myths, and stories told around campfires. It advanced with the printing press, radio, and television. Now, attention and the spread of information are dominated by the media. With the emergence of the internet, there is hope. People no longer need to rely on either the information in their environment or the information controlled by institutions to make better decisions and achieve any version of success. Writing and speaking are the foundational modes of communication, and since speaking was often written down to preserve, writing as a whole has acted as a collective memory, allowing humans to avoid past mistakes and thrive.

Here's where it gets interesting. Information is the code of your mental operating system. As humans, we adopt goals we are forced, deceived, or persuaded to adopt. Then, we collect ideas to help us achieve those goals. As these goals and ideas form an interconnected web of systems, we call it our identity, or self, and it either limits or expands our potential in life.

Before the internet—and still to this day, but to a lesser degree—the spread of information was centralized. The government, education and employment systems, religious establishments, and mainstream media held the most attention

in the minds of children who grew into parents. Parents held the attention of their children, who went on to engage, learn, and work for a groundless construct that no longer serves us.

With the goals of society injected as a homing mechanism into your mind, your only option was to become a hard worker toward the goals of that society. The information you gathered was perceived through the lens of those goals. The default outcome for the masses was slavery. Not physical, but mental. This is important. The ideas that occupy your head are what determine your potential. If the only ideas you are exposed to are the ones that your goals allow you to perceive, and those goals weren't decided by you but where your attention was placed, and the default magnet for your attention was society at large, then there doesn't seem to be anything more important than changing and contributing to the primary set of ideas floating where most of the attention is. Right now, that's on the internet.

The internet has sparked the potential for the decentralized spread of information to those of high agency. There is still centralization in the media, but it will only continue to dissolve as more individuals create the media they want to see in the world. The ideas that hold the most mental real estate will determine the outcome of humanity. We need more writers, entrepreneurs, and creators who develop their

minds to distribute valuable knowledge and products that impact the course of evolution. Most people don't need more assignments. They need more powerful ideas that shape their worldview so they can think and earn for themselves.

The world needs more creators. More synthesizers. More people who set their sights on a vision, develop themselves accordingly, solve problems along the way, and pass down their knowledge with what they create so others can benefit. To create is to pass down knowledge. To pass down knowledge is to contribute to the cumulative progress of humanity. If we always had to start over from scratch, we wouldn't be very developed as a species, and we probably wouldn't be here right now. Writing, on any scale, is responsible for the world we live in today.

Let me make this as clear as I can. In a world where most people are worried about what skills they should learn, start writing. The mark of a free individual is that they do many things throughout their life. This requires them to learn how to learn, how to think, and how to earn. Writing checks the boxes of all three. Schools and jobs tell us what to learn, hinder our ability to think, and prepare us to earn within narrow boundaries. Writing is how you solidify understanding of your studies, mold your thoughts in physical form, and create something worth paying for.

Writing is a meta-skill. If you strive for mastery, writing is a shortcut to future-proofing yourself because to write in a valuable way, you must write in public. When you write in public, you are exposed to feedback from which you error-correct to improve your writing. To improve your writing is to improve your thinking, leaning, and earning. Through that error correction, you inadvertently learn psychology, marketing, sales, persuasion, human nature, and the topic being written about. Writing is how you engage in an interest-based education.

Now that technical work and intelligence are on tap thanks to AI, what is left is taste, agency, coherence. Humans must provide the vision, experience, and execution to bring their ideas to life. They must tell a story, and what better way to practice storytelling than by writing them in all shapes and forms?

Writing is permissionless leverage. The front end of the internet is media. The backend of the internet is code. Writing is the foundation of impactful media. Posts, articles, video scripts, outlines, newsletters, and more all start with writing. With the advances in LLMs and artificial intelligence tools, code has begun to take the shape of natural language. Clear writing—paired with an understood goal—leads to clear code. Of course, this isn't perfect at the time of this book, but it

may be shortly after. The point is that anything you create will start with and potentially end with writing. If it doesn't end in writing, then it ends in the physical or digital manifestation of knowledge, which can probably be articulated and passed down with writing. In the future, the cornerstone habit of all successful work will be writing. What we consider writing today may change, but only because our language itself may change. We may speak with new concepts that breed efficiency of information, but writing itself will continue to persist as it has.

The incredible aspect of writing is its accessibility. You already write every day. You may have a journal for your thoughts. You may send messages to your friends and family. You may send emails to your coworkers or boss. You don't need an English degree to think, so you don't need one to write. Understand that the only place to start is at the start. Rock bottom. Absolute zero. This should be liberating. You get to make a fool of yourself when nobody is watching. Writing is only daunting if you are projecting too far into the unknown. Writing becomes less daunting when you view it as a tool to create a future you do have control over.

Writers are DJs with ideas. When I write, I do not attempt to write it all at once. I start with an outline. I jot out thoughts, topics, sections, and key points. Then, I let it sit. I allow that

outline to frame how I perceive the world. When you have an outline, you have a structure from which your mind can think. From there, I let ideas stick out to me when I read, watch, or listen to information I am curious about. Then, piece by piece, I add to my writing—like brush strokes of ideas—and refine it until it is almost complete. This is where most people let their writing collect dust on their metaphorical bookshelf. This is where I publish no matter how I feel about the writing because I know it is not optional for the ideal future I want to sustain. People don't care about the words; they care about how the words make them feel. Perfection is for the unsuccessful. Writing is how you explore idea space when pure thinking falls flat. To write is to store ideas in a way that allows your mind to discover new ones.

Start small. Use the value creation framework in the previous chapter to ideate media like a post or article, or to ideate a product like a short book, software, or gadget. Yes, even products that aren't writing are best created through writing. Of course, you can also choose to write without a destination and see where you end up in the unknown. Pick a topic. Outline the problem, goal, process between them, pain points of potential readers, and benefits of achieving the goal. Structure it into a coherent line of reasoning to persuade a specific individual.

If you can, write every morning with your ideal future in mind.
It will change your life.



Self-Monetization

The only way to control your income, and therefore your life, in today's society, is to create a product. For the sake of this book, I use the term “product” to represent anything that is a *creation* that you plan to give to someone in exchange for something, be it a few dollars or whatever form of money may emerge. For most people, and as a recurring theme, their entire life has been spent building everyone else's dreams at the expense of their own. This seems to be one common self-deception: You believe selling a product is unethical or evil, but if you don't create a product, you will work for someone who does, or you will become the product of that which funds your lifestyle—the government writing universal basic income checks is one potential example. The average person doesn't have any other options. I'll leave it up to you which is the lesser

of three evils, and if you really want to reject them in hopes that you find a better way to contribute to the world.

When you venture into entrepreneurship, the first three words you'll learn to hate are these: "Choose a niche." For the unaware, a niche is a specific market that is best illustrated by the phrase, "If you target everybody, you target nobody." The purpose of a niche like "bioenergetic nutrition for those with low thyroid function" is to narrow your focus on understanding the individual whose big problem you plan to solve. When you get specific on *who you can help the most*, you lay the groundwork for a valuable product. Now, there isn't a problem with a niche. In fact, it's a necessary aspect of doing business. The problem comes with choosing a niche . . . as if it's something external that must be found.

When you choose a niche, you end up like most beginner entrepreneurs scratching their heads and begging to go back to their life of poisoned comfort. You either stick it out long enough to make a decent chunk of change, or you realize that choosing a niche and a life of fulfillment mix like oil and water. You end up working with people you don't care about on projects you don't care about doing work you don't care about. You escaped narrow, repetitive, and assigned work just to end up in the same exact spot with a few more luxuries that can't patch up the hole in your soul.

There are a few more issues with this approach. First, you don't have experience with a niche you choose, and most entrepreneurs fail because they try to solve a problem they haven't experienced. And since you will probably never experience that problem outside of theory, you are working by proxy. You are studying the map, not the territory. It can work, and plenty of people have found success with this method, but I am here to help guide you toward a life of deep purpose. Second, it prioritizes finding, not attracting or becoming. You learn a skill for someone else. You take on projects you do not create. You chose the first problem to solve but have no control over the next hundred that spring up.

What seems to be the biggest problem with choosing a niche is that it is static. You box yourself into a little bubble of thoughts. Similar to the pursuit of prestige that comes from focusing on one area of study like a college degree, this creates a stupefying conformity that has high potential for replacement. You can only learn so much within a box. The beauty of becoming the niche is that it evolves as you do. Your niche isn't a static target—it's a living, breathing extension of your personal development. As you solve new problems, discover new interests, and create new knowledge, your business naturally expands to encompass these areas. Choosing a niche is for specialists.

Let me make this simple for you: You are the niche. Most people spend their lives searching for their niche, never realizing they're standing in it. They fail to practice self-awareness, the greatest business, marketing, and sales skill. You already purchase products that improve your life. You already get hooked in by marketing that doesn't feel like marketing. You already consume information that piques your interest. But what you may not realize is that you can reverse engineer this entire process, study it's parts, and recreate it with you as the central pillar that makes every aspect of it unique.

When you are the niche, you don't need to obsess over new market opportunities. However, you do need to obsess over solving your own problems. If you were to solve your own problems and sell the solution, you would kill two birds with one stone: Self-improvement and other-improvement. Purpose and profit. No amount of complaining or excuse-making will change the fact that if everyone were to do that over and over again (solving problems and creating solutions), engaging in the process of error correction to reverse entropy, everyone would have something unique and real with high potential value. Your identity is distinct from every other person on this planet in some way. When you relinquish that power by "choosing a niche," you open up room for competition. Conformity is a finite game. Authenticity is an infinite game.

The thing is, starting a business costs a lot of money, right? You need capital and a warehouse and a marketing budget and an LLC and all of these other things, right? Wrong. Remember, the way you get in front of other people is through media. The most accessible way to do that, at least right now, is on the internet, with writing as the overarching skill that shapes everything else you do. That is an incredible starting point for almost everyone. The internet and writing are a meta path. If everyone does it, there is no increase in saturation and competition because they are a vessel for any type of information, interest, or skill.

Individuals in search for their life's work are realizing the power of this path. They are becoming *one-person media companies*. After they build an audience—no matter what size—that trusts and supports them enough to sustain work they enjoy, they have two options.

First, they can be like Justin Welsh. Before his one-person business reaching \$8 million in revenue at 92% margins, he worked as an executive at two billion-dollar healthcare companies. High pressure. Little time. Big payday. He was making good money, but his personal life took a backseat. Eventually, he reached his breaking point. When Justin realized that he had a few skills that more people—not just his employers—could benefit from, he started building his own

thing on the side.

Justin's progression went like this. First, he did not quit his job outright. He saw the opportunity the internet presented and started sharing his knowledge through writing. His skills, his opinions, and most importantly, his story—the thing that makes his skills desirable to those who relate. In fact, that's still all he does to this day. He writes. He has seen immense success without the need for more time-consuming skills like video filming and editing. By following the principles of value creation, he started attracting an audience of thousands of people.

Given enough time and error correction, Justin created high-margin media-based products. The first was business consulting. Since he had marketing and sales knowledge, he decided to work one-on-one virtually with small businesses and solopreneurs who could use his expertise. And since he had an audience of people to tap into, this wasn't the most difficult thing in the world to pull off. This consulting offer allowed him to charge more, work with fewer people, and earn enough to leave his career behind in the pursuit of his calling. As his audience grew, he knew he could help more people, so he took the systems he had helped others with and packaged them up in the form of a self-paced course. This leveraged approach allowed him to take full control of his lifestyle.

Justin built a business around his life, not a life around his business. His family and well-being come first. His public writing does the rest, attracting people to the value he has available to anyone who is the right fit. The point with Justin's path is this: You can build a one-person business, make more than enough money to live a good life, and focus on the things that matter most to you without the outdated business bloat of the past.

I was in the same situation for a few years, but I decided to pursue more. I'm young, so why not push myself a bit? At the age of sixteen, I'd observed society enough to realize that the conventional path—school, job, and retirement—wasn't for me. As I became interested in psychology and philosophy, I realized that the default path could not possibly lead to a good life. So, I started experimenting. I scoured the internet for education on how to earn a living doing what I wanted to do. I had always wanted to do something creative, and I could see in plain site that public figures on the internet were doing just that. I tried quite a few things. Photography, web design, physical minimalist wallets, and more. But it wasn't that easy. I spent nearly five years—as a young person who could scrape by working part-time jobs—becoming good at one thing: Failure. I accepted my fate and got a job with one of the skills I had picked up, web design, but knew that wasn't the end of the story.

With persistence, those failures turned into clarity. I knew that if even one person could execute a series of steps to do what they enjoyed for work, I could too. It may take me much longer than them, because I needed time to piece together the psychological skill puzzle by exploring the unknown, but it was possible. While at my job, I procrastinated most of my work in favor of working on my own endeavors. It happened slowly. Family friends started to pay me for small websites. Using knowledge from both the job and my previous failures, my little websites turned into custom lead generation flows for service businesses. Within about eight months, I was able to leave my new job behind.

But now I had a new problem. I was working for people I didn't care about on projects I didn't care about. I had built myself straight into a new job. With that problem framing my perception, I began to see the internet in a rediscovered light. People were sharing web design, self-improvement, spirituality, and psychology knowledge under their own names. I loved those topics. Why couldn't I do the same? Even further, what was stopping nearly everyone with an internet connection—heading into a digital first future—from creating this “public resume” to attract opportunities that aligned with them as a person?

As the ideas came together in my head, I started writing free

posts, articles, and newsletters. Then I started writing small digital books and guides around my interests. Then people started asking me questions, so I wrote them thoughtful replies. Then I created a paid community platform where I wrote weekly articles, made useful templates, and hosted live calls. It was eye opening to see that people—even such a small group—wanted to listen to what I had to say, let alone pay for it. After all this time, I realized that I was writing so much that writing itself was the missing piece all along. It was something that I, someone who despised English class in school, could publish in a place called the internet that could reach thousands to millions of people per month.

As I got better at writing, my one-person media company evolved to reflect my new obsession: writing. I loved to teach it, and I had a unique way of utilizing the skill for more than just writing essays to be graded by a school. My audience and customers didn't care about writing, they cared about how it helped them attract supporters to their skills, interests, and expertise. I weaved my personal philosophy into my skill set, put that perspective in my first book, *The Art of Focus*, and started to teach it to those in my audience who wanted to do the same, because that's who you, and I, can help the most.

My story was similar to Justin Welsh's up until last year. I made enough to live a peaceful life, but something was still missing.

Even when I thought I had solved all my problems, yet another emerged. Problems are infinite, problems are soluble, and my realization that I loved personal development led to a new path revealing itself. The next level of challenge—and therefore fulfillment and growth—was using the resources I had acquired to start my own company. A writing software that fit my needs to perfection. I disliked having to split my focus between various apps that added friction to my workflow, but I didn't register starting a full company as within the realm of possibility until now. I hadn't solved the problem that made the next, more purposeful problem available to discover.

Business became my vessel for personal growth, not some shallow and isolated pursuit of money that small-minded people believe it to be. By building products I cared about, others like myself started to care about them too. From manning my own operation to managing a team of people, I had transformed into an entirely new person. A person I believe my younger self would be proud of.

Now here's the thing: this path is not limited to information alone. You don't have to write media-based products like a book or teach what you know, but I still believe that is one of the best starting points for most people. When you log onto the internet, you can easily find individuals solving their own problems and selling the solution. Some people suffer

from migraines and create blue light glasses that fit their style and ease their pain. Others researched the harms of polyester clothing and created 100% cotton clothing lines that finally fit them well. In rare personal situations, someone who suffers from eczema—who hated the soulless white bars of soap for sensitive skin—can pursue an interest-based education in horticulture and botanicals to create a line of soap that brought life and relaxation back into their routine. All these examples illustrate that an old product paired with your story paired with the internet can overcome the overwhelming sense of competition in the business space.

Jordan Peterson is yet another example that helps drive the overarching point home. He is not your typical influencer, although many people believe him to be. Once an everyday professor, Peterson has written best-selling books, started his new Peterson Academy for a better education experience, and has spoken at public events around the world. The important point is this: Peterson uses the best tools at his disposal to pursue his life's work and impact the most people. Social media has been a useful tool to do that, but knowing Peterson, he will utilize whatever emergence in technology that will allow him to continue this path. His story, his knowledge, and his depth outweigh any flavor-of-the-day marketing hack. People can't help but be attracted to his mind. And his mind, unlike his time or labor, can be distributed to anyone with an internet connection.

I often wonder what the great teachers of the past—like Watts or Socrates—would do in today’s world. I have no doubt that they would take advantage of how media has evolved. They would realize how limited they were in only writing physical books hoping that their word would spread. Thanks to the internet, great minds have a semblance of control over how far their value can reach.

As we push further into the future, we can already see people doing more as one person than teams of a dozen more could in the recent past. Media is the most accessible and high margin starting point for now, and when paired with the essence of your being, it is difficult to replace, but there are incredible options becoming more available to the average person. In my own start-up and start-ups I admire, members of the team are taking on the entrepreneurial mindset even more.

Single skills have always been replaced by machines. This won’t stop. During each round of evolution, humans abstract out a layer to a broader set of meta skills. Now that artificial intelligence can spit out production-level code at the click of a button, individuals can put on multiple hats and tie them together with taste and coherence. What used to be a software engineer is turning into a design engineer or product engineer. What used to be an author is now a full-fledged media department. The engineer can spend less brain power

on design, coding, and product. The author can do the same for writing, marketing, and sales. But the fact remains that a human must orchestrate the tools at their disposal toward an evolving vision for the future.



Become a Creator

For most of human history—millions of years—creativity was reserved for the gods. Somewhere along the way, they used this power to create humans. Or at least that's what we believed. Humans were these helpless little beings subject to the wrath of hunger, cold, predators, and each other. They couldn't explain the world around them, so they couldn't use that knowledge to create better means of survival. But slowly, then all at once, the tides have turned in the last thousand years or so.

We began to understand how things work. We built tools that allowed us to survive in any environment, unlike animals, from freezing cold to extreme heat to outer space. The entire face of the earth has transformed to be a more

hospitable place (with obvious consequences), thanks to the invention of machines, harnessing of energy, and our desire for discovery. Humans have taken over the role of creator, but so many have lost, or have never found, their path. They are not entrepreneurs, the great high-agency generalists. They are employees, the subservient task-completing machines. Remember, entrepreneurship and employment are a state of mind and are not limited to a specific type of work.

Unfortunately, we don't know what the future holds. We don't know how many jobs and livelihoods technology like artificial intelligence will displace. We don't know whether Earth will end up a garden or a wasteland. And on a personal level, we don't know if any of the actions we take will lead to the life we want. But we know two things for certain: *Problems are infinite.* *Problems are soluble.* No matter how developed we as a species or the technology we develop becomes, you can find solace in the fact that there will always be a next problem to solve. Thankfully, that's all you need to know if you want to live a life of meaning, money, and mastery.

If happiness—or enjoyment—is the combination of progress being made and contribution to something greater than yourself, and both are accomplished by solving problems, for yourself and others, and problems are solved through creativity, then the only logical and fundamental aim for your

future is to embody creativity by becoming a creator. In other words, you find the intersection of purpose and profit by creating solutions to problems you deem interesting, passing on those solutions to contribute to the progress of humanity, and repeating the process when the next set of more complex problems arise. Although problems become more complex, you become more equipped with knowledge, skill, and experience to solve them. Life gets better as problems get harder, if you learn to keep chaos at bay, which is a problem within itself. With every problem comes the opportunity to reach a new level of purpose.

Becoming a creator has always been possible, but never has it been so accessible. What used to be reserved for those with access to the right resources—time, money, and information—is now available to anyone with an internet connection. With AI and subsequent revolutionary forms of technology, your ability to embrace your agency will only continue to increase. The amount of people who seize that opportunity, however, may decrease.

We've all heard of the Renaissance. The transformative period in European history that marked the transition from the Middle Ages to modernity. Spanning roughly from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, this era was characterized by a cultural, artistic, political, and economic rebirth. It is my belief

that we are in the middle of a Second Renaissance, but this time, it's happening on the internet, everywhere, and much faster than before. A new society is emerging. A digital society where anyone can be an Einstein or Shakespeare (or at least have one in their pocket).

In this society, there are three types of people: consumers, creators, and companies. Creators are a special type of person, and no, I'm not talking about a "content creator" or other type of narrow new age job. While there is nothing wrong with that, and that is technically what creators do at this point in evolution, adopting that label is a surefire way to get lumped into the trash heap along with those distracted by metrics of engagement. When I say "creator," I'm talking about the essence of your being. Like an entrepreneur with the definition we set earlier of someone who is doing something, a creator is someone who is creating something. To create is to self-reflect, identify a problem, explore the unknown, hunt for ideas, test solutions, and create something worth passing down, potentially in exchange for their desired form of value be it money, attention, status, or the inexplicable feeling of helping someone. A creator is the definition of someone living at the intersection of purpose and profit. Said profit is a measure for how you improve yourself, improve others, and improve the world at large. To create is to pursue your life's work.

What's unique about a creator is the role they play in this new society. They can act as one-person companies who have the generalist stack of skills to be self-sufficient. They build their own distribution and create their own products. On the other hand, they can work for companies or start their own from the leverage they have. A creator, like an entrepreneur, can go from job to career to calling to sustain the novelty and challenge of solving problems that makes life worth living.

Creators and companies are beginning to lay the foundation of the future going forward. The education, economic, meaning, artistic, and political domains of the past are slowly being phased out in favor of something more personal, profitable, and efficient. Trust isn't decreasing in today's school system because the masses are waking up, it's decreasing because there are more options. People can jump on the internet, pursue their curiosity, find a creator who shares their unique knowledge, learn skills that conventional schools are too slow and dogmatic to teach, and evolve who they follow as their interests, beliefs, and values take new shape. It's no longer about sitting in front of a government-trained expert and "learning" the same thing as everyone else to end up with a soon-to-be irrelevant skill stack that keeps the brightest minds subservient to the dominant paradigm. It's about finding someone you relate with. Someone with a shared vision for the future. Someone who is a few steps ahead of you and can

provide relevant ideas that breed specific knowledge. In the past, heirs like Marcus Aurelius would receive the best personal education to prepare them for the throne. An individual today can pursue an effective interest-based education with their creator of choice as guidance and artificial intelligence as a synthesis tool. Of course, this places responsibility on the individual to vet creators wisely. Filtering signal from noise will be the high-value skill of the future.

But this isn't only about education. Creators are the sense-making pillars of the new society. With the rapid spread of information, increasing complexity, and growing chaos, people are left wondering what to believe in. They can no longer trust a static and singular belief system to make sense of their place in the world or show them how to live. Political talking heads and polarizing institutions aren't dissolving, but they're losing attention to creators who present deeper knowledge without the poor incentives.

Creators can be companies in and of themselves, but companies are also seeing a radical shift in their structure. Companies are hiring external creators as a way to connect with new audiences and bring in new business. Companies are training in-house creators to survive in an economy where most of the attention is on the internet. To that end, companies solve problems that demand resources inaccessible to the individual,

which are very few, and creators—like boutique stores—create personalized goods and services for the like-minded audience they attract with the value they distribute. You can connect to the internet right now and find people from all walks of life generating a more than sustainable income from the problems they've solved in their life. While some mastic chewing gum to aid in gut health, others sell information, software, or tasteful crafts that can benefit those who are at a similar level of development as they were at the time of creation. All in all, creators are the decentralized education system, economy, and cultural sense makers.

The path to becoming future proof comes down to shifting from consumer to creator. When you solve your own problems, publish the solutions in the global town square, and help an audience of like-minded people, even if that audience is a “tiny” 1,000 true fans, I find it hard to believe you won't find the power in you to create a good life. At that point, your only enemy is yourself, and that is but another problem to be solved.

Do it all. Write. Design. Market. Sell. Film. Code. Be the generalist you were born to be. Be the orchestrator of ideas. The governor of thought. New technologies are but a tool, not a master, to help you learn and do these things faster, cheaper, and with leverage so you can design a lifestyle that's within your control.

If you enjoyed this book, consider leaving a review by scanning the code below. Or, head straight to Amazon or Goodreads to do so.



If you'd like to receive my weekly newsletter (where many of these ideas first spring up) head to thedankoe.com. That is where you will also find my products, courses, and guides.

Lastly, consider picking up my previous book, [The Art of Focus](#), for an overarching view of my personal philosophy

Thank you for reading this far. I can only hope that the ideas presented in this book shape your decision making for the better.

– Dan Koe