

## Ask HN: What books have made the biggest impact on your mental models?

568 points by baran 1 day ago | hide | past | web | 228 comments | favorite

It's ok to "forget" what you read (<https://medium.com/the-polymath-project/its-okay-to-forget-what-you-read-f4ef1c34cc01>) as books update our mental models or how we perceive the world. What books have made the biggest impact on your mental models?

austenallred 1 day ago [-]

Fantastic question.

The selfish gene - for understanding human behavior

Meditations of Marcus Aurelius - for understanding how to be content

Debt, the first 5,000 years - for understanding money and finance from the ground up

Wright Brothers - for understanding how technological breakthroughs happen

Snowball (Warren Buffet), Andrew Carnegie and Rockefeller biographies - for understanding the mental mindset to win in business (it's not what you think)

Hackers and painters - for understanding startups and how/why they work

Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance - for understanding beauty in the routine

Essentialism, the disciplined pursuit of less and Walden - for understanding how "stuff" gets in the way of happiness

Les Miserables - for understanding love

[reply](#)

PappaPatat 1 day ago [-]

I am... shocked as this 80% is is my list for the very same reasons. Surely you've enjoyed Gödel, Escher, Bach by Douglas Hofstadter as much as I have, if not (yet), this is my thank you to you.

[reply](#)

synapse0 1 day ago [-]

To anyone who read GED in the past, more than a few years ago I mean, I highly recommed reading it again. Your updated self will appreciate its beauty even more.

[reply](#)

arsmoriendi 1 day ago [-]

Yes. I found this to be true in general, and not just with books but also film, music and even programming languages.

[reply](#)

austenallred 1 day ago [-]

I have not but I absolutely will

[reply](#)

shubhamjain 1 day ago [-]

> Debt, the first 5,000 years - for understanding money and finance from the ground up

Having picked this a few weeks ago, I am finding it hard to finish because of the ponderous writing. I admit that first few chapters were a revelation, but the cultural verbosity regarding everything becomes wearing quickly. "The Ascent of Money" is much better primer on the evolution of financial system.

reply

deepakjois 1 day ago [-]

A good summary of the key arguments in the book can be found in this programme that aired on BBC, hosted by David Graeber himself (the author of the book)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05447pc>

reply

vpribish 1 day ago [-]

I started "The Ascent of Money" and was very happy with the first half or so - then I set it aside for a few years and worked for a hedge fund. When I picked the book up again I couldn't stand how basic, boring, and mistaken the second half was. I wish I could follow your example and suggest a better book :)

reply

sirspacey 1 day ago [-]

enlighten us - what did you learn?

reply

vpribish 1 day ago [-]

fair question, but I don't recall the specifics that disappointed me. It's totally possible that the first half of the book was just much better than the second, and it wasn't anything about my thinking that was responsible. it wasn't a controlled experiment :)

ok - paged through the book a bit again and the main thing is that the early stuff was totally new to me (18th century Dutch bonds!) - and the latter is a well-researched rogue's gallery of recent, well-known failures (Enron, Japan's lost decade(s), the recent financial crisis (the book was published in 2008) ). Overall there is a focus on failure and a bunch of editorializing that didn't impress me on the recent stuff and casts doubt on the objectivity of the more distant historical parts.

edit: uh - i didn't answer your question. i learned that, holy-crap, it's hard to attribute cause to effect and very very easy to fool yourself. The market is not efficient - but it's usually close enough that correcting doesn't pay that much.

reply

LrnByTeach 1 day ago [-]

Great to see my favorites here ...

> Snowball (Warren Buffet), Andrew Carnegie and Rockefeller biographies - for understanding the mental mindset to win in business (it's not what you think)

> Hackers and painters - for understanding startups and how/why they work

> Essentialism, the disciplined pursuit of less and Walden - for understanding how "stuff" gets in the way of happiness

reply

yodsanklai 1 day ago [-]

> Debt, the first 5,000 years

It's often cited on HN, but I've found it very dense and difficult to read.

reply

luckyt 1 day ago [-]

I agree 100%. The beginning was good, gave many unconventional views of what is the essence of debt and money, especially in other cultures and

periods in history. But in the middle of the book, the author started rambling about the history of everything with a loose connection to money or debt, with no real point to be made. I gave up reading somewhere around there.

[reply](#)

eliben 1 day ago [-]

It is dense and difficult to read, I agree. But it's also very insightful, and hence recommended. I agree with the other comment that listening to difficult books is generally easier than reading.

[reply](#)

ashark 1 day ago [-]

Probably depends on the kind of stuff you're used to reading, but I thought it was relatively light and lively, haha.

My favorite part was the author's knack for writing a paragraph that caused me to think of several critical questions or potential holes, then immediately follow it up with a few paragraphs addressing most or all of those questions and plugging the holes.

[reply](#)

mashmac2 1 day ago [-]

I've had the audiobook version recommended for this exact reason - easier to listen to than to read :)

[reply](#)

thefuzz 1 day ago [-]

I've heard exactly this about the book, audio book > text

[reply](#)

pklausler 1 day ago [-]

The Selfish Gene is a great book but human behavior is hardly its main topic.

[reply](#)

austenallred 1 day ago [-]

Yup, that's just the mental model I gleaned from it

[reply](#)

steelframe 19 hours ago [-]

Selfish genes can result in completely altruistic and sacrificial behavior in an individual.

[reply](#)

etplayer 1 day ago [-]

>Debt, the first 5,000 years - for understanding money and finance from the ground up

For me it's nice to see this is being recommended even outside social anarchist/Communist circles.

[reply](#)

austenallred 1 day ago [-]

Interesting, I see it most often in anarcho-capitalist circles

[reply](#)

etplayer 1 day ago [-]

That's very strange for me to hear, considering the position of the author himself and some of the views espoused in the book. Though I shouldn't be saying that books ought to be restricted to certain ideological followers. As a Communist myself I have my own favourites but I doubt they'd be so useful to anyone here.

[reply](#)

alehul 1 day ago [-]

I'm definitely pro-capitalism personally, but I think a collection of books that offer a convincing argument towards another

perspective would be well received in the HN community. You should consider posting some.

[reply](#)

padobson 1 day ago [-]

I have to agree with this. I have strong opinions about economic and political systems, but I also recognize these are some of the most contentious questions and viewpoints out there.

In light of that, a thoughtful and reasonable look at alternatives is the best way to reduce some of that contention.

[reply](#)

frgtpsswrdlame 1 day ago [-]

The Progressive Assault on Laissez-Faire by Barbara Fried.

It's more pragmatic, aka not Marx/theory but it has some good arguments against our current econ/legal framework.

[reply](#)

phaus 1 day ago [-]

For Andrew Carnegie and Rockefeller, which biographies do you recommend?

[reply](#)

kornish 1 day ago [-]

Not the OP, but Ron Chernow's *Titan* is a phenomenal chronicle of Rockefeller.

[reply](#)

austenallred 1 day ago [-]

Yes. And the Carnegie biography by Nasaw is long but very good.

[reply](#)

RealityNow 1 day ago [-]

Debt, the first 5,000 Years (David Graeber) - Learned that most of history has been communist (eg. hunter gatherer societies), shops of the past were run on credit (eg. tally sticks), money/capitalism tended to emerge with the rise of the state, taxing to feed soldiers for war, and that the drive to pay off one's debt fueled a lot of the cruelty of mankind (eg. Hernan Cortez, Casimir).

21 Things they don't tell you about Capitalism, Bad Samaritans (Ha Joon Chang) - Learned that free trade is generally bad for developing countries, countries need to build out high productivity industries to grow their economy in the long term and avoid a balance of payments deficit (unless blessed with oil or something), manufacturing is vital to a country's economy and its service sector, "free markets" are a constantly evolving political definition with numerous inherent double standards, the only reason most of us in first world countries are paid well has nothing to do with our own superior ability (eg. bus driver in India vs. Norway), but due to immigration control and the institutions we inherit.

Also looking for more book recommendations, so feel free to send some my way!

[reply](#)

cgmng 1 day ago [-]

> Learned that free trade is generally bad for developing countries

The consensus among experts on the matter is that protectionism has a negative effect on economic growth and welfare, while free trade has a positive effect.

There are challenges to be sure, but free trade is most definitely a net *positive* for developing countries. Countries whose governments prevent their citizens from engaging in international trade tend to be much worse off.

[reply](#)

RealityNow 1 day ago [-]

Well read "Bad Samaritans" to see why the consensus amongst economists is wrong.

There isn't a single first world country that developed under free trade. The US and the UK were highly protectionist with steep tariffs, and it was only after they gained world dominance that they started opening their borders and demanding free trade from everyone else.

The economic "miracles" of Japan, Korea, and Taiwan were all highly protectionist, and their now world-renowned industries were heavily subsidized by the government over decades. Toyota took 30 years to make a profit and 60 years to become a dominant player in the auto industry. Had these countries adopted free trade policies, these industries never would have developed due to being unable to compete with foreign competitors, and Korea and Japan would still be third world countries exporting textiles and refined sugar.

The developing countries that did adopt free trade policies (at the behest of the IMF/World Bank/WTO) all grew slower than they did before those policies were in place. Latin America's growth rate since the 80s has been a third of what it was prior, in Africa's case I believe it went from like 1-2% to .2% (don't remember the exact numbers).

The analogy in Chapter 3 titled "My six-year-old son should get a job" is brilliant. If a child is told to get a job and fend for himself, then he'll likely end up working low-productivity dead-end minimum wage jobs for the rest of his life. However if he's able to focus on his studies, get parental support, go to university, maybe do research for a professor on the side - then this insulation from the free market via parental subsidies will pay off in the long run as the child will end up doing much greater higher productivity work. Similarly, developing countries need to invest in high productivity industries to develop.

Highly recommend the book, it's a quick read. I took the same Econ 101 classes where I was taught that free trade is unequivocally good. This book changed my mind, while also helping me realize that much of economics is completely divorced from reality. Even if you ideologically can't let go of the theory that free trade is good, history and the data clearly say otherwise.

[reply](#)

binarray2000 1 day ago [-]

The point you make about protectionism is a very good one. But it doesn't tell the whole story.

Isn't it interesting that in books about the economic development of the "first world" you never read about imperial politics? It boils down to how looting of other peoples resources and selling/keeping these people as slaves is the key reason for the riches in the "first world" (particularly its western part). And how protectionism came after (or in parallel, in later phases) to protect the looted. And how the West still does the looting of other peoples resources today and (thanks to that) keeps and grows its riches. And how the only thing that has changed is that it doesn't do the slave trade anymore, but how it still uses and profits greatly from the slave labour.

Maybe someone can recommend a book on this.

[reply](#)

lackbeard 16 hours ago [-]

I think Japan is actually a counterpoint to your argument. Post WW2 was not when it became a first-world economy. I'm pretty sure that when it first industrialized in the late 19th century, it did so under free-trade. (Its government wanted protectionist economic policies but the British forced free-trade on them!)

[reply](#)

Daishiman 1 day ago [-]

You are oversimplifying a tremendously complex issue. You can have a net positive wealth creation that's reserved for only certain economic sectors while leaving out everyone else. Absolute gains in economic growth are not really indicative of life satisfaction towards everyone in society

[reply](#)

baddox 1 day ago [-]

I'm curious if the commenter meant "free trade" in the sense it's used by most politicians, which is to say deals between nations involving trade, which is to say effectively the opposite of "freedom of trade."

[reply](#)

thundergolfer 1 day ago [-]

I read the book a while ago, and the general point was that it is a misconception that capitalistic free trade was a driver of high growth in today's powerful western economies. These countries actually engaged in significant levels of industrial protectionism during key parts of their economic history.

I don't think the book was making a point about what is best for developing nations *today*, just attacking the the idea that laissez-faire capitalism built the US economy.

It's quite a good, short book, if you want to get a perspective on capitalism that's neither from a Communist or a university's Business & Commerce faculty.

[reply](#)

ageofwant 1 day ago [-]

This only holds for developed economies and trade between peers. Developing economies is much better off protecting themselves against external competition. Of course developed markets would decry this "protectionism", they after all, only care about their own gain.

[reply](#)

PeterisP 1 day ago [-]

Coincidentally, "the only reason most of us in first world countries are paid well has nothing to do with our own superior ability (eg. bus driver in India vs. Norway), but due to immigration control and the institutions we inherit" clearly explains why a bus driver in a first world country would/should vote for anyone who promises more immigration control and sticking to the institutions we inherited.

[reply](#)

afarrell 1 day ago [-]

> money/capitalism tended to emerge with the rise of the state, taxing to feed soldiers for war

There is actually a musical about the way that the US federal government and financial system were founded in order to be able to provide capital for warfighting.

[reply](#)

selimthegrim 1 day ago [-]

1776?

[reply](#)

lackbeard 1 day ago [-]

Masters Of Doom - The value of an unbalanced life and focused hard work. Also, how to start a startup. A really fun read, to boot.

Fooled By Randomness - a) Survivorship bias. b) If you look at revealed preferences, people choose regular small gains with a rare huge loss over regular small losses and a rare huge gain even though that choice is -ev. c) Much more!

Hackers and Painters - One of the most insightful, subversive, and surprising texts out there.

C Interfaces and Implementations - Great examples of good API design and how to build clean modular code.

The Paleo Manifesto - Explains how the origin of religion was probably as a set of models for coping with the transition from hunting/gathering to civilized agriculture. The part of the book where he points out that the story of the fall of man in the Bible is probably the story of this transition is super interesting.

The Game - Made me realize that the narrative told by boomer and gen-x parents about how to attract a woman is probably doing young men (and women) more harm than good. I would not try to treat this as a how-to manual, though. A fun yarn.

Starting Strength - After years of fumbling around in the gym this cut through a lot of bad ideas about fitness, exercise, strength, and health. It lead to the first real (and lasting) progress I've ever made physically.

Understanding Comics - Understanding art and visual communication.

Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman! - Up there with Hackers & Painters in its rate of insight & surprise per page.

Fail Safe Investing - Thought provoking ideas about why we invest and how best to go about doing that. (The ideas stand up, IMO, but some of the concrete advice on how to implement those ideas is very dated.)

Good Calories, Bad Calories - It turns out that even scientists can be dishonest and corrupted by politics.

[reply](#)

orthoganol 1 day ago [-]

Wow, The Game I had totally forgotten about. Along with the 4 Hour Work Week, those are two books that gave me totally new measuring devices for success and attractiveness when I was in my early 20s. 4HWW redefined 'elite' as young entrepreneurial globe trotters (location freedom), and was probably the main igniter of the digital nomad movement, while The Game redefined attractiveness (for men) as a predominantly behavioral thing - boldness, non neediness, confidence etc. - not a wealth, credentials, or even primarily physical attributes thing (and pretty much ruined going out to bars for half a decade). Agree or disagree, those books really, really impacted thinking for millennials.

[reply](#)

vpribish 1 day ago [-]

Goedel, Escher, Bach -- If you're reading this page you will dig this book.

Guns, Germs, and Steel -- how circumstance drove civilizations. Fun storytelling even if it's a bit too "just-so". definitely trains you to look at any situation and seek it's origins with less initial judgement.

The Visual Display of Quantitative Information -- gets at the essence of communication and medium. more than it seems!

The Alchemy of Finance -- "reflexivity", but if you're also interested in Soros or some finance storytelling it's worth it.

The Selfish Gene -- as everyone else has said.

The Prize -- the history of oil. huh? yeah. Likely to change how you look at the history of technology, government, power, the saudis, and geopolitics.

[reply](#)

enkid 1 day ago [-]

By the way,Guns, Germs, and Steel, while an interesting book, and brings an interesting perspective, is largely discredited from what I've read.

[reply](#)

vpribish 1 day ago [-]

yeah, i was trying to allude to that. I found the way of looking at things compelling, regardless.

[reply](#)

autarch 1 day ago [-]

In no particular order ...

I Am a Strange Loop by Douglas Hofstadter - strongly influenced my beliefs about how consciousness works

Godel, Escher, Bach by Douglas Hofstadter - made me think more deeply about so many topics

Animal Liberation by Peter Singer - made me both an animal advocacy activist and strongly influenced me towards a consequentialist moral

Neuropath by R. Scott Bakker - more on how consciousness works, this time through a work of fiction

The Dispossessed by Ursula K. LeGuin - strongly influenced my beliefs about political systems

The Selfish Gene by Richard Dawkins - changed how I thought about animal behavior and what living things do

Republic, Lost by Lawrence Lessig - strongly influenced my beliefs about US government

Manufacturing Consent by Herman & Chomsky - made me rethink my view of the media and news

[reply](#)

colordrops 1 day ago [-]

Yes! "Godel, Escher, Bach" and "The Mind's I" completely broke down the rigid models I had for how I perceive objects around me and my place in the world.

[reply](#)

austenallred 1 day ago [-]

Great list. Stealing the ones I haven't read.

[reply](#)

autarch 1 day ago [-]

I will warn you that reading Neuropath left me feeling depressed for a couple weeks. It's a great book, but the conclusions it might lead you to may not make you happy.

[reply](#)

alphapapa 1 day ago [-]

What kind of conclusions do you mean?

[reply](#)

xtiansimon 1 day ago [-]

Hmm. Not to repeat, I think I must dig deep into the archives...

Korzybski, Alfred. Science and Sanity. Institute of GS, 1958. [1]

The Institute of General Semantics has a current website [2], is on Facebook, and has several articles on Wikipedia.org [3].

One of the mind-bending premises (Wikipedia.org):

"Non-Aristotelianism: While Aristotle wrote a true definition gives the essence of the thing defined ..., general semantics denies the existence of such an 'essence'. [...] In general semantics, it is always possible to give a description of empirical facts, but such descriptions remain just that—descriptions—which necessarily leave out many aspects of the objective, microscopic, and submicroscopic events they describe. According to general semantics, language, natural or otherwise ... can be used to describe the taste of an orange, but one cannot give the taste of the orange using language alone."

[1]: [https://books.google.com/books/about/Science\\_and\\_Sanity.html?](https://books.google.com/books/about/Science_and_Sanity.html?) [2]:

<http://www.generalsemantics.org/> [3]:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institute\\_of\\_General\\_Semantics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institute_of_General_Semantics)

[reply](#)

taurath 1 day ago [-]

That seems really interesting from reading the abstract - I wonder if its possible that by training non-verbality it could become easier to think on the various levels without confusing them?

[reply](#)

maxprogram 1 day ago [-]

Poor Charlie's Almanac -- can't beat Charlie Munger when it comes to explaining how the world works.

Fooled by Randomness, Black Swan, Antifragile -- Nassim Taleb reviles lots of new ways to think, first in finance, then everything in later books.

The Origin of Wealth -- Similar to Antifragile with a lot of mental models packed in on many different subjects: economics, business, biology, ...

The Design of Everyday Things -- the bible of design. Read it to know why everyday frustrations with tech are probably not your fault. His book Emotional Design is a good



compliment.

The Essential Drucker -- "essential" reading for anyone in management or scaling a startup.

History, and why the world is the way it is today:

Sapiens, Yuval Noah Harari

Guns, Germs, and Steel, Jared Diamond

The Birth of Plenty, William Bernstein

They Made America, Harold Evans -- fantastic history book with each chapter telling the detailed story of a businessperson or inventor in U.S. history

[reply](#)

thedevil 1 day ago [-]

This list is close to mine.

I would also add:

- Influence: the Psychology of persuasion
- Selfish Gene
- Emotional Design
- Antifragile
- How To Fail At Everything And Still Win Big

[reply](#)

schlagetown 1 day ago [-]

Mindstorms, by Seymour Papert - for understanding the relationship of learning and technology; a smart, humanist, empathetic approach to education [See also: The Children's Machine; Deschooling Society]

Clock of the Long Now, by Stewart Brand - for the concepts of deep time and the long now; appreciating a sense of how we experience time and our place in history [See also: Time and the Art of Living]

Flatland, by Edwin A. Abbott - creative parable that's very helpful for conceptualizing abstract concepts of topology and higher dimensions

Thinking in Systems, A Primer, by Donella Meadows - great introduction to systems thinking, which is a useful lens for appreciating the complexity of all sorts of complex phenomena

A Pattern Language, by Christopher Alexander - great work of urban design, useful framework for looking at design systems and how pieces fit together on different scales [See also: Death and Life of Great American Cities]

Oulipo - A Primer of Potential Literature - nice introduction to the Oulipo and ideas of constraint as creative / poetic device [See also: Exercises in Style; Eunoia]

Impro, by Keith Johnstone - great primer on improvisation, really made me appreciate its impacts beyond just the theater, for example the importance of status in social relations

The Power Broker, by Robert Caro - unbeatably rich and compelling look at how power and politics actually work, for better (power gets things done) and for worse (power blinds and corrupts)

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, by Annie Dillard - beautiful, meticulously observed study of the natural world close at hand; made me appreciate the power of looking deeply and persistently

Le Ton beau de Marot, by Douglas Hofstadter - remarkable exploration of language and translation, in all its magic and complexity...both deeply personal and deeply researched, a must-read for lovers of language

The Library at Night, by Alberto Manguel - turned me on to the various lenses through which we can conceive of and appreciate libraries; their vast power and potential

Moby Dick, by Herman Melville - for really hammering home the grand, powerful potential of great literature and well-wrought language [ See also: Don Quixote; Infinite Jest]

[reply](#)

andrewb1 1 day ago [-]

Poor Charlie's Almanack. It's a compilation of talks and essays from Charlie Munger, Warren Buffet's business partner. This book has single-handedly changed my invest strategies and mindset. Instead of trying to buy low and sell high, Berkshire Hathaway holds a large cash position, until they find something they consider to be a sure bet, take a large stake and hold. I now have the quote "Be right and hold tight" written at my work table.

[reply](#)

MarkMc 1 day ago [-]

Poor Charlie's Almanack is a fine book, but as it's just a collection of speeches and short stories the content is somewhat unstructured. I prefer "Seeking Wisdom from Darwin To Munger" by Peter Bevelin: <https://www.amazon.com/Seeking-Wisdom-Darwin-Munger-3rd/dp/1...>

[reply](#)

supershobu 1 day ago [-]

This is one of the most powerful books I have read.

[reply](#)

nitrogen 1 day ago [-]

The *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* fanfic by Eliezer Yudkowsky provides an interesting introduction to some ways of thinking that may be new or surprising.

*Schild's Ladder* by Greg Egan is interesting for considering models of reality (also his other books).

[reply](#)

i\_dont\_know\_ 1 day ago [-]

Two that I almost never see on these kinds of lists, but really think they should get more acknowledgement:

"Crucial Conversations" - breaks down how to have what might otherwise be an uncomfortable conversation about anything. I really think everyone should read it.

"The Enchiridion" - A stoic guide, boiled down, short, and very very relatable even in the modern age.

[reply](#)

jventura 1 day ago [-]

No More Mr. Nice Guy by Robert Glover. Raised as a peaceful kid whose introversion taught me to try to control my world and keep things to myself, I am now more aware of how much healthier it is to set boundaries and just let the world run its own course. Immensely happier!

[reply](#)

phugoid 1 day ago [-]

I'm bracing for a serious downvote... I have to admit that Anthony Robbins had a big influence on my thinking, particularly with "Awaken the Giant Within." The message was - you can control how you feel.

Nearly twenty years later, I can see the limitations of his ideas - the danger of creating an arbitrary belief system for yourself and the selfishness of simply deciding what you want and rigging everything in your existence to get it. I also came to believe it's OK to not be happy all the time. But I will always respect Robbins' direct explanations of human motivation and how it can be nudged.

That and 'Single Variable Calculus; Early Transcendentals'; the universe is about change and math can model nearly all of it.

[reply](#)

jeffersonheard 1 day ago [-]

Getting More - Stuart Diamond. I still think this is the best book on the art of negotiation.

Getting Things Done - David Allen. If you have adult ADHD like me, and you haven't read this, it's the first system that's really worked for productivity for me.

Man's Search for Meaning - Victor Frankl.

Living Buddha, Living Christ - Thich Nhat Hanh.

Cosmos - Carl Sagan.

The Left Hand of Darkness - Ursula K. LeGuin.

The One who Walks Away from Omelas - U.K. LeGuin.

Wild Seed - Octavia Butler.

The Heike Monogatari - (tr. Helen Craig McCullough) "The sound of the Gion Shojia temple bells echoes the impermanence of all things; the color of the sala flowers reveals the truth that to flourish is to fall. The proud do not endure, like a passing dream on a night in spring; the mighty fall at last, to be no more than dust before the wind." If you need a comparison, this is the Japanese historical equivalent of Game of Thrones combined with a bit of MacBeth. The rise and fall of two shogunate families, and an analysis of the tragic flaws of character that brought their fall about.

Les Miserables - Victor Hugo.

Small Gods - Terry Pratchett.

Heart of Darkness - Joseph Conrad.

The Guide - R. K. Narayan.

Evidence - Mary Oliver.

All of Us - The Collected Poetry of Raymond Carver.

Silence - Shusaku Endo.

The Great Gatsby - F Scott Fitzgerald.

The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle - Murakami Haruki. This and the next four are odd choices, perhaps, since it's a surrealist book, but IMO books that force your imagination to work hard do as much for creativity and fresh ideas as any of the more popular methods.

The Well-Built City (The Physiognomy / Memoranda / The Beyond) Jeffery Ford - Surrealist novellas best described as about the protagonist living and achieving agency within the constructs, dreams, and nightmares of a "Great Man's" mind.

Snow Crash - Neal Stephenson.

Gravity's Rainbow - Thomas Pynchon.

Dhalgren - Samuel L. "Chip" Delany.

[reply](#)

camwiese 1 day ago [-]

Nice to see Heart of Darkness on here. In what way did it shape your mental model of the world?

[reply](#)

dangle 1 day ago [-]

Great list, thank you. Dhalgren is incredible. Glad to see it.

[reply](#)

mmmpop 1 day ago [-]

I'm in the middle of the biography of Robert Moses, "The Power Broker" by Robert Caro and just finished re-reading "A Portrait of Dorian Gray" by Oscar Wilde. As a fairly successful yuppie that came from Not A Whole Lot, it's really knocked me down a few pegs and made me realize that being a pompous ass about my exercised social mobility isn't all that special.

[reply](#)

dave\_sullivan 1 day ago [-]

> "A Portrait of Dorian Gray" by Oscar Wilde

Don't you mean "The Picture of Dorian Gray"? (Google it, it's Picture but everyone says Portrait for some reason)

[reply](#)

unfunco 1 day ago [-]

I've known people to confuse the title with a portrait of the artist as a young man, by Joyce.

[reply](#)

mmmpop 14 hours ago [-]

Whoops I did mean that!

[reply](#)

tinsilver 1 day ago [-]

The Republic - Plato - why societies form the way they do

Either/Or - Kierkegaard - as a father of Existentialism his views on society helped put things in perspective for me

It's All About Time - John Furey - surprised I don't see this mentioned more - how people organise their thinking based on a time-based motivational model

<https://www.amazon.com/Its-All-About-Time-Companies>

[reply](#)

tinsilver 23 hours ago [-]

On the topic of mental models, others have mentioned Feynman - but here's a discussion on why he was such an unusually effective scientist partly because of his use of less common mental models <http://jamesclear.com/feynman-mental-models>

[reply](#)

dwaltrip 1 day ago [-]

"Godel Escher Bach" and "I am a strange loop".

I only made it half way through GEB, however the latter is a bit easier to get through.

For me, these books marked the beginning of a lifelong journey of "self" contemplation and intellectual/philosophical exploration.

[reply](#)

patrickdavey 1 day ago [-]

I might have to "Godel Escher Bach" again after reading these comments. I found it incredibly dense and hard to read..

My own pick for a book that made me think differently is "crucial conversations".

[reply](#)

dwaltrip 1 day ago [-]

I might try out "I am a strange loop". It's more approachable.

[reply](#)

observation 1 day ago [-]

One book more than any other: The Book of the New Sun by Gene Wolfe.

Why?

Darwin opens up the door of Deep Time when he explained his discovery. An appreciation of the immensity of time happens to be linked to explanations of how and why things are. Wolfe also deals with Deep Time but in the context of society.

What Gene Wolfe does is he creates books where you need to read between the lines, you need to create hypotheses to understand what's going on. I won't describe it further because it may lose some of the import, it's probably the most important fiction book written in the 20th century.

What I'd like is a photograph of Peter Thiel's library, I'm fascinated by the range of ideas, the meta-ideas he explores. Maybe @sama can smuggle in a camera or we could hijack a roomba.

[reply](#)

chris\_st 1 day ago [-]

This is an amazing set of books (it's four volumes). Possibly, what I appreciate about it most is that he *doesn't* describe anything, like so many other SF authors do. You just have to figure it out ("read between the lines" is a good way to describe it).

The other astounding thing is how *incredibly bad* all the rest of Wolfe's work is. Really, it's night and day.

[reply](#)

stinkytaco 1 day ago [-]

You would probably enjoy Anathem by Neal Stephenson. It's also about deep time.

[reply](#)

maaaats 1 day ago [-]

From AI to Zombies by Yudkowsky. Interesting framework and thoughts about knowledge, perception and how we deal with biases.

Can be downloaded for free/pay what you want here <https://intelligence.org/rationality-ai-zombies/>

[reply](#)

TheAceOfHearts 1 day ago [-]

A few weeks back I read "The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion". It was very insightful. I enjoyed it so much that I ended up immediately recommending it to many of my friends.

The author does a good job at getting the main points through. He ends each chapter with a summary of the discussed points, and at the end of the book he sums em all up again.

Not a book, but I've been consuming many Jordan Peterson videos on YouTube. He has presented me with many new arguments and ideas which I hadn't previously considered.

[reply](#)

travmatt 1 day ago [-]

If you liked the righteous mind you'd similarly enjoy "The Dictators Handbook" by Bruce Burna De Mesquita - he explores how rulers looking to maintain power are all driven by similar incentives, and similarly provided a clear framework for analyzing political or business strategy.

[reply](#)

TheAceOfHearts 1 day ago [-]

Thank you for the suggestion, the premise sounds really interesting. I've just added it to my queue.

[reply](#)

afarrell 1 day ago [-]

This CGPGrey video is a decent summary of parts of it:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rStL7niR7gs>

[reply](#)

scottlocklin 1 day ago [-]

"Money: whence it came from and where it went" by John Kenneth Galbraith -title is self explanatory.

"Darwinian fairytales" by David Stove -the antidote to Selfish Gene; funnier too.

"Prediction, Learning and Games" by Cesa-Bianchi and Lugosi -the right way to think about sequential machine learning -a toss up with "Conformal Prediction" by Shafer, Gammerman and Vovk

"Decline and Fall of the Roman empire" and "Italy and her invaders" (by Thomas Hodgkin) have had huge impacts on my understanding of civilization. Couldn't help but; it took years to read them all.

Recently "The Attention Merchants" by Tim Wu -how advertising has screwed up humanity since snake oil merchants, and how we're on the cusp of another revolution in this field.

I actually strongly disliked Hofstadter's book.

[reply](#)

spookyuser 1 day ago [-]

What is a Mental Model? I've heard this word tossed around so much recently and I still don't feel like I understand what it means.

[reply](#)

outlace 1 day ago [-]

Humans (and probably anything else) don't have access to the complete set of raw data that makes up our environment. We have imperfect data streams coming from our sense organs and from that we build a model of reality, which may have varying levels of accuracy for different people (e.g. we could say a schizophrenic has a disturbed model of reality). The idea being that reading a lot books, traveling, or in general exposing oneself to as much varied data as possible will improve the accuracy of your model of reality.

[reply](#)

ismail 1 day ago [-]

Have been reading and researching for my postgrad and in some cases "Perspective" & "Mental models" are used interchangeably.

However i like to think of it in this way:

Perspective: The point of view from which something is looked at

Mental Model: A mechanism or thought pattern to make sense of something or understand something about some situation

You can never break out of your perspective of looking at the world. So a mental model is always confined within a specific perspective.

Example:

Supply&Demand is a model that helps you understand pricing in markets. The point of view/perspective is that of an economics/economist perspective. You could just as easily look at the same situation from a different perspective such as sociology or even psychology.

In other words, mental models are like a short cut to look at situations, solve problems and understand the world from different perspectives.

[reply](#)

spookyuser 1 day ago [-]

Very interesting, thank you.

[reply](#)

farnsworth 1 day ago [-]

You could say that humans understand the world by building a "model" of it in our minds. When we are trying to decide how to act, we can simulate a situation by running it through the model. For example, you might have a model of your boss that helps you predict how they will react if you give them bad news. And you might have a mental model of your country that you can use to predict what will happen if it goes to war or goes broke. Every time you learn something, you can use it to adjust your mental model. It's like a simulation of the world inside your mind. Pretty cool, actually.

People can end up with very different mental models of the same objects because they trained them with different data (ie, had different experiences growing up) or because other mental models impacted the interpretation of the data, and the development of those different mental models.

[reply](#)

CGamesPlay 1 day ago [-]

It refers to a person's perception of the outside world and how well the person is able to predict the future and understand the causes of events. Sort of like how a machine learning "model" is the mechanism by which a program understands it's inputs.

[reply](#)

invalidOrTaken 1 day ago [-]

*Complexity: The Emerging Science At The Edge of Order And Chaos* was a good read. I strongly recommend reading *Jurassic Park* at the same time, as the two were both influenced by the recognition of complexity as a "thing" in the late 80's/early 90's. The two are really about the same thing, but JP tells it through dinosaurs.

While I have the floor, I've mused lately that *Jurassic Park* is like the perfect scary morality tale for young researchers. You hear cautions about endogeneity and omitted variable biases, simultaneity...but the worst that will happen if you mess these up is your paper is wrong. Crichton described a world where lack of scientific discipline led to *getting eaten by dinosaurs*.

[reply](#)

colechristensen 1 day ago [-]

You'd like Chaos by James Gleick

[reply](#)

majewsky 1 day ago [-]

"The Design of Everyday Things" by Donald Norman describes mental models that I apply all the time when designing products or processes.

[reply](#)

brudgers 1 day ago [-]

*Critique of Pure Reason*

*Philosophical Investigations*

*The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*

*Foucault's Pendulum*

*Snopes == The Hamlet, The Town, The Mansion.*

*A River Runs Through It*

*Programming Erlang: Software for a Concurrent World*

*A Pattern Language*

*The Analects*

*Bhagavad Gita*

*Apology*

*The Republic*

*Touch the Earth*

*The Pity of War: Explaining World War I*

*The Civil War: A Narrative*

[reply](#)

etplayer 1 day ago [-]

>Foucault's Pendulum

What's this about?

>Critique of Pure Reason

What did you find particular challenging to your worldview? As a side note, you may be interested in *Critique of Pure Tolerance* which has an essay by Robert Wolff and Marcuse. Have you seen *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*?

[reply](#)

brudgers 1 day ago [-]

I didn't mean to imply that any of them challenged my world view. Only that each shaped my mental models.

*Foucault's Pendulum* is about semiotics on one level and cretins, fools, morons, and lunatics on another.

*Critique of Pure Reason* put radical philosophical skepticism (and hence empiricism) in perspective. I find the model of the human mind useful in some situations.

Thank you for the recommendation. My philosophy reading days are mostly in the past or perhaps future. Currently, my reading interests seem to be elsewhere.

[reply](#)

etplayer 1 day ago [-]

Of course, of course, I forgot the actual question the post was about as I got far down into the thread. Thanks for your descriptions, I'll be checking out FP.

[reply](#)

lolive 1 day ago [-]

Foucault's pendulum is Dan Brown power 1 billion. A super story about the secrets of history. I never managed to read it (it IS dense). But as a audiobook, it was superb.

[reply](#)

selimthegrim 1 day ago [-]

I read it during a particularly horrendous stretch of my first stint in grad school, mostly in my car outside the DMV in Goleta. A very effective set and setting for finishing it.

[reply](#)

luckyt 1 day ago [-]

Our Marvelous Native Tongue by Robert Claiborne. This book tells the history of the English language, from its Indo-European roots to the Anglo-Saxon period to Shakespeare until the modern language it is today. It's the book that initially got me interested in language and linguistics, and now 10 years later I'm doing a master's in Computational Linguistics / NLP.

[reply](#)

marcsoft 1 day ago [-]

Almost all books by Harry Browne. Specifically "How I found freedom in an unfree world".

[reply](#)

NumberCruncher 15 hours ago [-]

Could you recommend something non investment related from him? How I found freedom is one of the books I re-read every year.

[reply](#)

BrandiATMuhkuh 1 day ago [-]

hitchhiker guide to the galaxy: it taught me how small the earth is. And therefore we should use the limited time we have wisely. Also, Don't Panic.

[reply](#)

ozim 1 day ago [-]

I would say not even earth but life, everything and universe is insignificant but it does not matter. So does using your time wisely does not matter, just try to have fun (in a nice way) and don't panic. I am reading it again this week.

[reply](#)

bengkoang 1 day ago [-]

40 hours a week - tim ferris, this book, even though its dated and not applicable in my life, there's a chapter that really boost my confidence about what is the worse things that could happens, it really help me experimented with new stuff, break out my conservative mind, realize its ok to be weird and have made me perceive a different views on problems.

[reply](#)

omnibrain 1 day ago [-]

Fiction: Peter Watts - Blindsight Nonfiction: Gödel Escher Bach CS: David West - Object Thinking

[reply](#)

whalesalad 1 day ago [-]

Influence by Robert Cialdini. Models by Mark Manson. Eloquent Ruby by Russ Olsen.

[reply](#)

mck- 1 day ago [-]

[1] Balthasar Gracian, "The Art of Worldly Wisdom"

Timeless classic, 300 short maxims containing sage advice, written in beautiful prose. One of those books you can read just a few pages whenever you feel like. Currently re-reading it for the third time since I first read it 10 years ago. Still updates my mental model.

[2] James Allen, "As a man Thinketh"

At 21 pages, by far the most impactful piece of work on an impact-to-effort ratio. Very simple, yet very true. Changed my mental model completely, also 10 years ago, and also a book I'm re-reading for the third time.

[3] Nassim Taleb, "Black Swan"

A much more modern business book on the now-mainstream concept of "Black Swan" events. But the true value of this book goes beyond the concept – it changed my view of statistics, knowledge, empirical scepticism, philosophy, cognitive biases, societal dynamics, and sure, made me quit investment banking.



[4] Brian Greene, "Fabric of the Cosmos"

Mind-blowing primer on physics, all the way from Newtonian physics, to General Relativity, to Quantum Mechanics, to String Theory (and beyond). Concepts explained without a single equation.

[5] Douglas Hofstadter, "Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid"

What a unique masterpiece. Covers a wide range fascinating concepts through the three geniuses in Math, Art, and Music. Most mind-blowing is his meta-writing style, using short fictional dialogue interludes (sprinkled with easter eggs) to convey each concept in very subtle manner. The joy when you see it.

[1] <http://www.sacred-texts.com/eso/aww/index.htm>

[2] [https://wahiduddin.net/thinketh/as\\_a\\_man\\_thinketh.pdf](https://wahiduddin.net/thinketh/as_a_man_thinketh.pdf)

[3] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Black\\_Swan\\_\(Taleb\\_book\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Black_Swan_(Taleb_book))

[4] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Fabric\\_of\\_the\\_Cosmos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Fabric_of_the_Cosmos)

[5] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B6del,\\_Escher,\\_Bach](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B6del,_Escher,_Bach)

UPDATE: format

[reply](#)

surak 1 day ago [-]

Asimov's The Foundation Trilogy was the best sci-fi I've read. Then there are a lot of other types, e.g Porter mgmt theories.

[reply](#)

demircancelebi 1 day ago [-]

I really liked Asimov's short story Profession when I read it a few years ago. Here is a link: <https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=9568027>

[reply](#)

jamestimmins 1 day ago [-]

Agreed. The dynamics between general and emperor in determining the safety of Foundation from the Empire at the end of book 2 part 1 is something I think about often.

[reply](#)

mikesabat 1 day ago [-]

I'm on a streak of reading Neuromarketing/behavioral economic type books. 1. Predictably irrational is particularly good. Especially the first half. 2. The Confidence Game explains the steps of how con trick people to fool themselves. 3. Buyology is very focused on purchases/retail. 4. Brainfluence. I'm halfway through it. Mostly bite-sized chapters and it's similar to Buyology, but I prefer this book.

[reply](#)

mrmyers 1 day ago [-]

Modeling the world generally (as in, why mathematics works and can apply to the real world):

=Bertrand Russell=

- \* An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth
- \* A Theory of Knowledge
- \* Logic and Knowledge

=W.V. Quine=

- \* Word and Object
- \* Mathematical Logic

=Norbert Wiener=

- \* Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine

=Smullyan=

- \* Diagonalization and Self Reference

Squishy Human Things:

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Thomas Kuhn      | - The Structure of Scientific Revolutions |
| Norbert Wiener   | - The Human Use of Human-Beings           |
| Bertrand Russell | - A History of Western Philosophy         |
| Karl Popper      | - The Open Society and Its Enemies        |

Daniel Dennet - Consciousness Explained  
 E. Abbot Abbot - Flatland

[reply](#)

ellius 1 day ago [-]

- The Prize
- The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich
- The Lean Startup
- Poke the Box
- The Elements of Computing Systems
- The Death of Common Sense
- Up the Organization
- The Personal MBA
- The Wisdom of No-Escape
- The Adapted Mind
- Brain Rules
- Getting Things Done
- On Writing
- Steal Like An Artist
- George Orwell: A Collection of Essays

And these are technically not books, but Glenn Greenwald's "Speech to the Massachusetts ACLU" and the Christopher Hitchens speech criticizing the proposed Canadian hate speech law.

[reply](#)

ambletron 1 day ago [-]

The Urantia Book[1]

There's a peculiar richness, depth, and inventiveness to it that has kept me coming back to it on occasion for over 20 years of intermittent reading. I haven't come across another book quite like it. Of the few people who have heard about it, most bounce right off after skimming it, very understandably so.

But taken as a human project it's really quite an extraordinary piece of work. Having written short fiction and most of a novel before, I feel like I have a sense of the hard work it takes to master the craft of writing, and I have a lot of respect when I see not just good writing but writing that innovates, keeps pushing. The Urantia Book is like a fractal in its simplicity vs the narrative spun out from the seed ideas. The mental model is to merge both a science mindset and spirituality.

Recommend the iPhone app of it (is free, and has a quotes collection included).

[1] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Urantia\\_Book](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Urantia_Book)

[reply](#)

stinkytaco 1 day ago [-]

Just a few that haven't been mentioned, because I cross over with several others:

*How to Cook Everything* by Mark Bitman. Not so much my mental model, but it's the only book I could ever say "changed my life".

*Implementation* - (<https://www.amazon.com/Implementation-Expectations-Washingto...>)

This is a great discussion of how best intention in government go awry once they are implemented. It explores how each step makes sense, but something always seems to go wrong.

*The Day the Universe Changed* (slightly cheating since this was the companion to the TV show, but stands as an excellent book) - How certain innovations changed the way the world works and the way we see ourselves.

[reply](#)

pbhjpbj 1 day ago [-]

The synoptic gospels and NT, but to choose one book from the NT, ...

*The Epistle of James* - as it has some strong counterpoints to other parts of the NT particularly the contrast of Pauline notions of grace with charity/works.

*Emperor's New Mind*, Penrose - probably my biggest take away from it was to consider how human perception works alongside, and co-mingles with, physics.

*Web of Life*, Capra - considering holistic nature of life, one's connection to the World at large; emergent patterns, complex structure birthing from simplicity (goes well with what I recall of Gleick's *Chaos*).

*Zen and the Art ...* - what is value, what is valuable to me, whither/whence/wherefore value; how should I relate to my children (long before i had any) and how to challenge them philosophically.

*Republic*, Plato - the first book that really set me thinking about the structure of society, about inequalities. And of course about stepping out of The Cave.

Koran & Hadith (partial readings, ie whole sections; couple of major hadith only) - [redacted]; but greater understanding of Islam and of religion in general; taught me to watchfully avoid being tainted by the labels people give themselves and look instead to their actions.

*Mein Kampf* (partial reading) - ideas have intrinsic moral value, that we should judge ideas on their merits and not by who has them; we should be careful about tarring people by simple association.

*Art of War* - preparedness, looking to supply lines, avoiding conflicts, not entering "battles" you know you'll lose (which I'd take as 'learn nothing from').

*Christianarchy* - what it means to be a Christian, who is and isn't "in".

*Agrarian Justice*, Paine - what is my place politically and economically in the world, whence do I derive the 'rights' to own what I do, whether such ownership is good.

Worth noting here that the ideas and impressions I got are unlikely to be what you will get, we react to books based on who we are, our frame of mind, moods, etc.. Most of these books I read as a late teenager, that at least in part boosts their impact. The impact is not necessarily the purpose of the book, quite the opposite in some cases.

[reply](#)

ma91c1an 1 day ago [-]

Jorge Luis Borges, *Selected Non-Fictions*, 1999.

I first encountered Borges as a 15 year old student in high school. I am now 56. The book was *ficciones*. It changed my life.

Borges read everything. What made him the genius that he was, is that he remembered everything that he read, and he was consequently able to make droll observations across cultures and epochs.

[reply](#)

johnsimer 1 day ago [-]

Innovator's dilemma & Innovator's solution- why big companies almost always get beaten by startups and how to overcome this

10x Rule by Grant Cardone - you must take 10x more action than you think to get success

Awaken the Giant Within - you can motivate yourself to do anything via the "Pain Pleasure Principle"

Bold: How to go big, make wealth, and change the world - some strategies from Musk, Bezos, Diamandis/Singularity U

The Art of Profitability - Coca-cola from a 2-Liter costs \$.02/oz , Coca-cola from a restaurant costs \$.20/oz

my full list here: <https://goo.gl/9SD8b6>

[reply](#)

andrei\_says\_ 1 day ago [-]

I am That by Nisargdatta Maharaj. Shifted my perception of who/what I am.

Not a book but Marshall Rosenberg's many lectures, audiobooks and workshops on nonviolent communication. I am now able to set boundaries in a peaceful way, and see myself and everyone, no matter what their actions, through eyes of effortless compassion.

[reply](#)

Toine 1 day ago [-]

By far :

Things hidden since the foundation of the world - René Girard

[https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/337517.Things\\_Hidden\\_Sin...](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/337517.Things_Hidden_Sin...)

[reply](#)

KirinDave 1 day ago [-]

Predictably Irrational is essentially required reading for anyone who is making decisions for a product.

The Information by James Gleick. Remember, Africa has had long range, distributed, fault tolerant wireless communication networks since before Europe had reliable clocks.

Euclid's Window by Mlodonow. The entire arc of history in a sweeping curve towards, ultimately, machine learning.

Reading Doc Smith's lensmen series (particularly the chronologically first 2) helped me recognize how very much pop science culture shapes perception. A futurist in the 20s thinking about interstellar travel has delightfully different ideas. Wrong ideas, but hey.

Peter Hamilton's sci-fi, particularly the 6 Commonwealth Books: they're so different and so surprising and very happy to present a glowing and baleful view of capitalism in an expansionist universe.

Everyone in the west should be required to read Ways of Seeing by Berger.

[reply](#)

beefman 1 day ago [-]

- Economics / sociology -

A Farewell to Alms <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0691141282/>

Cartesian Economics <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1616407395/>

The 10,000 Year Explosion <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0465020429/>

The Righteous Mind <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0307455777/>

Mindstorms <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0465046746/>

- Philosophy -

Tao Te Ching <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0060812451/>

Meditations <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1545565678/>

- Autobiography -

Surely You're Joking, Mr Feynman <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0393316041/>

Recollections of Eugene Wigner <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0738208868/>

- Fiction -

Fahrenheit 451 <https://www.amazon.com/dp/030747531X/>

Dune <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0441172717/>

[reply](#)

\_pmf\_ 1 day ago [-]

> Dune

Do you mind explaining what's great about Dune (I have not read it yet, so maybe without major spoilers ...)?

[reply](#)

beefman 1 day ago [-]

It's a Messiah story set in the far future. I included it here because it had an impact on the way I understand history (I prefer to leave that a bit cryptic).

As a work of fiction I'd call it good but not great. But at the moment I can't think of a work of fiction I'd call great, so I'm probably not the best critic on that point.

Everybody seemed to hate the 1984 film adaptation by David Lynch but I think it's pretty good. The Syfy miniseries got much better reviews but I thought it

was only so-so. The film doesn't really spoil the book, which is kinda cool, but may be easier to follow and more fun to watch after having read it. Last but not least, I really enjoyed the recent documentary Jodorowsky's Dune...

[reply](#)

DonHopkins 1 day ago [-]

Stanislaw Lem, Golem XIV.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golem\\_XIV](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golem_XIV)

<http://english.lem.pl/works/apocryphs/golem-xiv>

„Golem XIV” is one of Lem's most far-fetched intellectual adventures: for the purpose of this book Lem constructs the character of a supercomputer of the future that infinitely overshadows human intelligence. Golem, whose history we follow from its birth until his inexplicable departure from the human world, not only mercilessly criticizes humanity, claims of our culture and delusions about allegedly refining mechanisms of evolution, but also creates a breathtaking vision of further development of artificial intelligence – beyond our cosmos and cognition available within its limits.

<http://english.lem.pl/works/apocryphs/golem-xiv/67-lems-opin...>

"Mine is also the thesis regarding the relationship between genetic code and various species in which individuals serve only as code's amplifiers - however Golem's opinion is somewhat exaggerated. This concept - that Richard Dawkins called "the selfishness of genes" - I published three years before him."

<http://english.lem.pl/works/apocryphs/golem-xiv/69-a-look-in...>

Instructions (for persons participating for the first time in conversations with GOLEM)

1. Remember that GOLEM is not a human being: it has neither personality nor character in any sense intuitively comprehensible to us. It may behave as if it has both, but that is the result of its intentions (disposition), which are largely unknown to us.

[...]

[reply](#)

rkunnamp 1 day ago [-]

Courage : The joy of living dangerously - by Rajneesh - for giving that extra push to take risks and live on edge.

It is a highly opinionated work, with full of questionable arguments and logic. And, I am not sure whether it resulted in good or bad, but certainly, it has made an influence.

[reply](#)

michaelmcmillan 1 day ago [-]

On Having No Head by Douglas Harding had a profound effect on my introspection. It simply points out who you really are from your subjective.

It bypasses the religious mumbo jumbo that so often gets bundled in guides to spirituality by using scientific experiments. Highly recommended!

[reply](#)

wizzerking 1 day ago [-]

The Moon is a Harsh Mistress Robert A. Heinlein The Foundation Series Isaac Asimov Both books provide macro economic examples, and sound philosophy such as "There aint no such thing as a free lunch", and enlightened self interest

[reply](#)

xtiansimon 1 day ago [-]

Wolfram, Stephen. A New Kind of Science. Wolfram Media, 2002. [1]

Wikipedia: "The thesis of A New Kind of Science (NKS) is twofold: the nature of computation must be explored experimentally, and the results of these experiments have great relevance to understanding the physical world. [...] [Wolfram] argues an entirely new method is needed to do so because traditional mathematics fails to meaningfully describe complex systems, and there is an upper limit to complexity in all systems."

[1]: <https://www.wolframscience.com/nks/>

[reply](#)

robotresearcher 1 day ago [-]

Caveat lector. This book inspired some juicy reviews:

A Rare Blend of Monster Raving Egomania and Utter Batshit Insanity by Cosma Shalizi 21 October 2005

A Thirty-five Year Old Kind of Science by Juergen Schmidhuber, based on a letter to Intl. Journal of High-Energy Physics, vol 43:5, June 2003.

looked up at [http://shell.cas.usf.edu/~wclark/ANKOS\\_reviews.html](http://shell.cas.usf.edu/~wclark/ANKOS_reviews.html)

[reply](#)

callesgg 1 day ago [-]

<https://www.amazon.com/Art-Reading-Minds-Henrik-Fexeus/dp/91...>

Learned how to read peoples emotions more reliably.

[reply](#)

franze 1 day ago [-]

Thinking in Systems: A Primer

<https://www.amazon.com/Thinking-Systems-Donella-H-Meadows/dp...>

[reply](#)

BeetleB 1 day ago [-]

Bargaining for Advantage : Negotiation Strategies for Reasonable People

The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion

Lies my teacher told me : everything your American history textbook got wrong

Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion

Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life

Thinking, Fast and Slow

[reply](#)

Tepix 1 day ago [-]

I recently finished "The Singularity Is Near" (2005) by Ray Kurzweil. I'm surprised it hasn't been mentioned yet.

Super optimistic author and indeed a great book to think about after reading it.

[reply](#)

Hyperbolic 1 day ago [-]

The Ender's Series - For the essence of xenophobia and subjective realities.

[reply](#)

holri 1 day ago [-]

Essais - Michel de Montaigne [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel\\_de\\_Montaigne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne)

[reply](#)

apo 1 day ago [-]

Start with No

<https://www.amazon.com/Start-Negotiating-Tools-that-Pros/dp/...>

Contradicts conventional wisdom about negotiation goals and tactics. Very actionable advice about using interrogative led questions and avoiding the pitfalls of making assumptions during negotiations.

[reply](#)

ssivark 1 day ago [-]

Among my recent reads:

1. Finite and infinite games, by James Carse

2. Antifragile, by Nassim Taleb (IMHO the book rambles on a little too much; some of his hour long YouTube talks convey the ideas almost as well)

3. Obedience to authority, by Stanley Milgram

[reply](#)

kyoob 1 day ago [-]

Finite and Infinite Games blew my mind. I re-read it every couple of years and it recalibrates me every time.

[reply](#)

ibigb 1 day ago [-]

Theosophy: An Introduction to the Supersensible Knowledge of the World and the Destination of Man, <http://www.rsarchive.org/Books/GA009/>

The First and Last Freedom, J Krishnamurti <http://www.jkrishnamurti.com/krishnamurti-teachings/view-tex...>

[reply](#)

jesperlang 1 day ago [-]

not going to repeat what's already been said so I will just add one:

The Act of Creation by Arthur Koestler about human creativity. This was a heavy read but mind-bending like no other, literally had to put it down every now and then to contemplate/write/sketch what I just read. Fascinating!

[https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/30676.The\\_Act\\_of\\_Creatio...](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/30676.The_Act_of_Creatio...)

[reply](#)

fillskills 1 day ago [-]

On Intelligence - taught me how our brains work

Sapiens - How the world works

Biographies of Steve Jobs and Einstein - Taught me that even geniuses dont work in a vacuum

Lean Startup and essays from PG - taught me how to start a business

[reply](#)

galfarragem 1 day ago [-]

I would add also:

The prince -- Machiavelli (to loose ingenuity)

The little prince -- Saint-Exupéry (to recover some ingenuity)

[reply](#)

kilian 1 day ago [-]

The Dance of Gods novels by Mayer Allan Brenner, free download here:

<http://www.mayerbrenner.com/download/> They are like a Discworld where magic and programming are basically the same, of sorts, with a large, sprawling world with overlapping storylines. It's a great read and I came away with many interesting lines of thought whilst reading a very fun story.

[reply](#)

edpichler 1 day ago [-]

- The Lean Startup, by Eric Rives

- The Long Tail, by Chris Anderson

- The Blue Ocean Strategy, by W. Chan Kim

- On the shortness of life, by Seneca

- 1984, by George Orwell

[reply](#)

shadowtree 1 day ago [-]

The Wealth and Poverty of Nations - David S. Landes

Agree or disagree with his findings, but it was the first book I read as a teenager that tried to connect seemingly disparate things into a single narrative - culture, technology, luck.

Jared Diamond had a similar, but more simple premise.

I still think of certain passages of Landes' book to this day. The impact of clockworking, the start of the modern tech industry. The impact of protocol and bureaucracy, especially the Spanish one.

[reply](#)

adammcnamara 1 day ago [-]

Food Rules by Michael Pollan - for understanding food and nutrition

Sapiens - for understanding what it means to be human

The Lessons of History by Will and Ariel Durant - for understanding groups of humans (civilization)

The Most Important Thing: Uncommon Sense for the Thoughtful Investor by Howard Marks - for understanding investing

Seeking Wisdom: From Darwin To Munger by Peter Bevelin - for understanding mental models in general

[reply](#)

xutopia 1 day ago [-]

The Demon Haunted World by Carl Sagan. I come from a very religious background and it helped shape my way of thinking around superstitious thoughts of all kinds.

[reply](#)

hirundo 1 day ago [-]

The Origins of Order by Stuart Kauffman - Reality is autocatalytic of life.

Atlas Shrugged by Ayn Rand - civilization as a struggle of producers vs. looters; selfishness &gt; altruism; the love of money is the root of mostly good.

A New Kind of Science by Stephen Wolfram - Simple rules can yield arbitrarily complex behavior. Therefore reality is inherently computational from the lowest levels.

[reply](#)

yodsanklai 1 day ago [-]

1984. A very powerful book. It really made a strong impression on me and definitely changed my views on politics, propaganda, governments and so on.

Capitalism and freedom. Helped me to understand capitalism and American right-wing ideology.

The grapes of wrath. Actually, I haven't read the book, only watched the movie. It puts into perspective what we see happening with refugees in Europe.

[reply](#)

lolive 1 day ago [-]

The book is a must-read. Did you read Propaganda (by Edward Bernays) after that?

[reply](#)

camwiese 1 day ago [-]

This is a great suggestion. Thanks!

[reply](#)

alyx 1 day ago [-]

Bernardo Kastrup - Why Materialism Is Baloney

Has a lot of impact on current AI theory.

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/20543665-why-materialism...>[reply](#)

jrs235 1 day ago [-]

Outliers - the 20 or so page epilogue at the end titled "A Jamaican Story" had been the best writing I've read thus far that struck a chord and helped me understand "white privilege".

[reply](#)

kelukelugames 1 day ago [-]

The first is the Millionaire Next Door. Gave me a better idea of how to manage my finances and what kind of spending habits to look for in a partner. If you are a tightwad then don't marry a spendthrift. Vice versa. [<http://amzn.to/2vAmbW8>]

The second is On Writing Well. This book changed my view regarding how to write and how important it is to write well. As an engineer I regret how much I avoided writing in school.



Now I play catchup after realizing lawyers and others with client facing jobs write much better emails. [<http://amzn.to/2vTXu2Z>]

And here are three other books that would be recommended by few on HN.

The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing. I used to hate going home until I realized the clutter of stuff made me miserable. [<http://amzn.to/2wwvS5h>]

Why Men Love Bitches. 100% serious. This book is over the top but I stopped being a doormat in relationships and looked for partners with more self confidence. [<http://amzn.to/2wwcYeZ>]

The Low Down on Going Down. Yes the title is cheesy, but again I am 100% serious. I think a lot of us have unhealthy expectations due to Internet porn and this book sets the right attitude for the physical component in a relationship. [<http://amzn.to/2vTSY41>]

And companion book: [<http://amzn.to/2wwSpyY>]

[reply](#)

subsubsub 1 day ago [-]

Here are all of the books, without the affiliate links:

- The Millionaire Next Door [<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1589795474>]
- On Writing Well [<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0090RVGW0>]
- The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up [<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1607747308>]
- Why Men Love Bitches [<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1580627560>]
- The Low Down on Going Down [<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00CMX939C>]
- Blow Him Away [<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004WSV866>]

[reply](#)

kelukelugames 1 day ago [-]

I haven't seen anything about posting affiliate links on HN, but thank you for giving people another option.

[reply](#)

grok2 1 day ago [-]

The one book that has reconfigured some aspects of how I deal with people and has helped me in day-to-day life is "Yes!: 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be Persuasive" (<http://a.co/0QoTla6>).

[reply](#)

subsubsub 1 day ago [-]

Non-affiliate link:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1416576142>

[reply](#)

grok2 1 day ago [-]

The shared link wasn't intended to be an affiliate link -- just something I got from the share link on the product page -- I was logged into Amazon at that time, but the account I was logged in to isn't signed up as an Amazon affiliate. The original URL that I saw was long, which is why I chose to go with the shorter link provided me.

[reply](#)

saturnian 1 day ago [-]

Rational Meaning: A New Foundation for the Definition of Words

[https://books.google.com/books/about/Rational\\_Meaning.html?i...](https://books.google.com/books/about/Rational_Meaning.html?i...)

[reply](#)

thefuzz 1 day ago [-]

Most books by Robert Anton Wilson

[reply](#)

1001101 1 day ago [-]

Our Mathematical Universe - Max Tegmark

Being and Nothingness - Sartre

Chaos - Gleik

Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman! - Feynman

[reply](#)

RockyMcNuts 1 day ago [-]

The Emperor's New Mind, by Roger Penrose

The Tao of Physics, by Fritjof Capra

Dancing Wu Li Masters, by Gary Zukav

The Naked Ape, by Desmond Morris

The Road to Serfdom, by Friedrich Hayek

The Worldly Philosophers, by Robert Heilbroner

The Story of Philosophy, by Will Durant

Grammatical Man, by Jeremy Campbell

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, by Robert M. Pirsig

Flow, by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

[reply](#)

maaaats 1 day ago [-]

Not aimed at only you, but a trend in posts like these: When it's no particular order and you don't comment on what a book is or why you recommend it, I feel the list becomes kinda useless. And when a post is upvoted much that contains a lot of elements, I don't know which book gained those votes.

[reply](#)

polarix 1 day ago [-]

One value of an unordered unannotated book list is in reinforcing books you've already read, and providing a little extra push towards the action potential on the ones you haven't.

[reply](#)

mck- 1 day ago [-]

Also known as Collaborative Filtering in recommender systems:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collaborative\\_filtering](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collaborative_filtering)

[reply](#)

RockyMcNuts 1 day ago [-]

Well Pirsig's Zen and the other ones related to eastern religions and science, are around the idea that there is no locus of reality or meaning, the reality is how everything interrelates. It's kind of like word2vec, the context of other words and real-world situations in which each word is used tells you everything about what it means. Take away a particle's charge and mass and the other numbers we associate with it, and is it still a particle? Those numbers describe how it interacts and all we can really say about it is how it interacts. Plato was off the mark when he talked about the ideal form of different objects. There is no ideal form of a chair, except that chairness is an abstract idea about how things (asses and furniture) interact.

Then I think that Grammatical Man and Penrose are around the nature of information, and what can be communicated and understood. And I sort of think that question is at the top of the tree of abstraction about what we think about. Then comes computer science and math which are about any symbolic systems or formal systems that can be computed and reasoned about. Then most everything else is applying those systems to various problems.

Then I think The Naked Ape and Hayek and Flow are around the notion that humans are their own thing. They are tribal and hierarchical and territorial and violent and not nearly as self-aware or even aware of our surroundings as we think we are. You get a lot more mileage out of just observing what they do than about listening to the rationalizations of why they say did it, things like God and blood and soil, i.e. superstitions and us-and-them-ing arbitrary physical features of a pack of mongrels

and arbitrary lines on maps. Invitation to Sociology by Berger was another big one on those lines.

And the Heilbroner and Durant are basically inventories of major mental models that people have come up with in philosophy and economics.

[reply](#)

andy\_ppp 1 day ago [-]

I'm really enjoying Open Andre Agassi's autobiography. It's beautifully written and makes me think about what it really means to want something. You can definitely get very far hating what you do.

[reply](#)

sirspacey 1 day ago [-]

The Diffusion of Innovation, by Dr. Everett Rodgers. He discovered the concept of the Early Adopter in the 1950s. I would trade all the startup advice on the internet for that one book.

[reply](#)

nur0n 1 day ago [-]

How to Design Programs. It helped make explicit the very concept of mental models.

[reply](#)

Exuma 1 day ago [-]

<https://www.amazon.com/Six-Pillars-Self-Esteem-Nathaniel-Bra...>

Hands down

[reply](#)

andrei\_says\_ 1 day ago [-]

What's the gist of the premise? 370 pages for a list of six items seems a bit inflated (forgive my judgment but am a slow reader and love efficiency)

[reply](#)

Exuma 18 hours ago [-]

All I can say is... I stopped reading self-help books 10 years ago because they all bored me to tears. I HATE fluff. I hate repeated ideas and concepts, I hate long intros... I usually will stop reading books 30% in because it's like "I get it".

This book, however, is written by a guy who basically died at 87 and studied self-esteem since he was very young. So basically he's studied the same topic for 60 years, and his ability to convey certain concepts is absolutely profound. He truly understands the concepts down to the core. And it's such a hard thing to explain when you get past the 'surface level', but he repeatedly does over and over throughout the whole book. I probably have over 100 passages highlighted on my Kindle, of particular sentences or paragraphs where I put the book down and was like..... DAMN.

I've referred the book to 2-3 people and they all were blown away. It's a book in a league of it's own. I heard of the book from my friend who mentioned it's his #1 self help book out of his favorite 10, and I can definitely see why.

Basically it just comes down to how well he can talk about such an abstract topic in many different ways, without repeating himself, and eventually one of those ways will 'click' for you.

I find it's also affecting me day to day, in a positive way, which is something books like this have never really done in the past. I tend to like/absorb the info but I don't vibe with the author or their knowledge on the subject enough to commit to whatever exercises they say to do, etc.

[reply](#)

andrei\_says\_ 11 hours ago [-]

Thank you. I'll definitely check it out.

[reply](#)

SpinningCode 1 day ago [-]

Psychology of Self-esteem by the same author is brilliant

<https://www.amazon.com/Psychology-Self-Esteem-Revolutionary-...>

[reply](#)

subsubsub 1 day ago [-]

Without affiliate ref code: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0030II1Y6>

[reply](#)

kabdib 1 day ago [-]

\_The Innovator's Dilemma\_ made me start thinking critically about the kinds of projects large organizations attempt, and why they often fail. It's kind of a depressing book, actually  
...

[reply](#)

camwiese 1 day ago [-]

Not sure if you follow Ben Thompson (Stratechery / Exponent.fm) but he bases a lot of his business analysis around this book. If you liked TID then I highly recommend Ben's writings.

[reply](#)

r0brodz 1 day ago [-]

<https://gitopanisadasitis.github.io/>

[reply](#)

kornakiewicz 1 day ago [-]

Yesterday I was reviewing answers in this thread. Some might be applicable:

<https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=14477851>

[reply](#)

decasteve 1 day ago [-]

Marshall McLuhan's "Gutenberg Galaxy" and "Understanding Media". Buckminster Fuller's "Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth" (and other books and essays of his).

[reply](#)

sunwicked1 1 day ago [-]

1)Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind by Yuval Noah Harari

2)The design of everyday things 3) "Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman!" In no particular order.

[reply](#)

lolive 1 day ago [-]

Beyond Good and Evil, by Nietzsche.

A short history of nearly everything, by Bill Bryson.

[reply](#)

lolive 1 day ago [-]

Oh, and Siddartha, by Hermann Hesse,

[reply](#)

lolive 1 day ago [-]

Oh, and Flowers for Algernon, by Daniel Keyes.

[reply](#)

lolive 1 day ago [-]

Oh, and Cyrano de Bergerac, by Edmond Rostand.

[reply](#)

emurs 1 day ago [-]

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen R. Covey- Particularly for Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood chapter

[reply](#)

almost\_usual 1 day ago [-]

The Intelligent Investor - Benjamin Graham

A Guide to the Good Life - William B. Irvine

[reply](#)

Ronsenshi 1 day ago [-]

Blindsight (Peter Watts) - read it some time in university and it has completely changed how I think about things. Figuratively speaking turned my mind inside out.

[reply](#)

asddddd 1 day ago [-]

The Divided Self (R. D. Laing). Bit dense at times, and perhaps not relevant to many on HN, but a truly fascinating examination of the edges of sanity.

[reply](#)

ignacio\_gcaa 1 day ago [-]

This cognitive science/cognitive linguistics books were a hinge point for me:

George Lakoff:

- Philosophy In The Flesh <http://amzn.to/2xFTKU7>

- The Political Mind <http://amzn.to/2vU9rF1>

Gilles Fauconnier, Mark Turner:

- The Way We Think <http://amzn.to/2xFv4ep>

Benjamin K. Bergen:

- Louder Than Words <http://amzn.to/2wwsMhv>

[reply](#)

subsubsub 1 day ago [-]

All the books, without the affiliate links:

- Philosophy In The Flesh [<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B001FSJAWK>]

- The Political Mind [<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0017T0B2U>]

- The Way We Think [<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00AAL62RO>]

- Louder Than Words [<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00918JOBI>]

[reply](#)

buddapalm 1 day ago [-]

Meditations - Marcus Aurelius <https://q.co/kgs/PkoSGf>

[reply](#)

jaco8 1 day ago [-]

Poor no more - Robert Chester Ruark A Coffin Full of Dreams - Frisco Hitt Oblomov - Ivan Goncharov The Man Without Qualities - Robert Musil

[reply](#)

palerdot 1 day ago [-]

The Slight Edge by Jeff Olson

Thinking fast and slow by Daniel Kahneman

[reply](#)

preordained 1 day ago [-]

Life:

The Disappearance of the Universe

Programming:

Effective Java - straight forward pragmatism

Learn You a Haskell for Great Good - took me down the rabbit hole of Haskell, which is just a natural mindbender

[reply](#)

torbjorn 1 day ago [-]

Infinite Jest by David Foster Wallace

Antifragile by Nassim Taleb

[reply](#)

outlace 1 day ago [-]

- The Beginning of Infinity by David Deutsch

- Sapiens by Yuval Noah Harari

- Our Mathematical Universe by Max Tegmark

- Statistical Rethinking by Richard McElreath

[reply](#)

thedeep\_mind 1 day ago [-]

Ego is the Enemy by Ryan Holiday. The book tells you all there is to know about ego and will change the way you see yourself.

[reply](#)

germainemalcolm 1 day ago [-]

Dao De Jing - Lao Tzu

A Thousand Plateaus - Gilles Deleuze + Felix Guattari

[reply](#)

sdfin 1 day ago [-]

'I Am That' by Nisargadatta Maharaj

'The First and Last Freedom' by J. Krishnamurti: Mainly because of what he says regarding Free Will. Later I read 'Free Will' by Sam Harris, and I think Sam explains the same idea in more detail. Citing 'The First and Last Freedom': "Thought is nothing else but reaction; thought is not creative."

'The Grapes of Wrath' by John Steinbeck

'The Little Prince' by A.S. Exupery: when I was a child it made me reflect about society.

[reply](#)

psadri 1 day ago [-]

Antifragile - way to think about situations in terms of upside/downside exposure

[reply](#)

anishcharith 1 day ago [-]

HC Verma concepts of physics

[reply](#)

selimthegrim 1 day ago [-]

Haha is this for JEE?

[reply](#)

sguav 1 day ago [-]

The Go-Getter by Peter B. Kyne and Bach's Jonathan Livingston Seagull

[reply](#)

wolco 1 day ago [-]

The Sugar Barons: Family, Corruption, Empire, and War in the West Indies

[reply](#)

diedyesterday 11 hours ago [-]

Reading a book by a human mind works pretty much like training a neural network. You get tuned and change in a way that you might not see even if you don't remember.

[reply](#)

wittedhaddock 1 day ago [-]

The Story of Philosophy by Will Durant

^ This book more than any other

[reply](#)

batshitinsane 1 day ago [-]

Ego, Hunger and Agression by Fritz Perls.

[reply](#)

yotamoron 1 day ago [-]

'Deschooling society' by Ivan Illich.

[reply](#)

andrei\_says\_ 1 day ago [-]

Could you elaborate on the concepts and effect they had on you?

[reply](#)

tomohawk 1 day ago [-]

Paul's Letter to the Galatians

[reply](#)

orthoganol 1 day ago [-]

An anthropology textbook in college called "Culture as given, Culture as choice" - basically the good parts of Sapiens minus the preachy, questionable aspects.

Another college textbook, "Global Capitalism: Its Fall and Rise in the Twentieth Century", I think is the best book you can read if you want to understand our capitalistic societies today.

"Incognito" was great for exploring models from cognitive neuroscience, in same vein as Hofstadter works.

French Enlightenment thinkers - esp. Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, who are not only awesome but in my opinion articulate the core of what's actually worth defending in Western civilization, not to mention are formative of actually good political views.

German idealism, really starting with Kant to lay groundwork, and working up through Hegel, has hands down been the most wild and impactful philosophical journey I've taken. I don't recommend it unless you have some formal background or unusually strong appetite for philosophical reasoning, or (not including Kant) you'll probably just dismiss it or simply not be able to meet the exorbitant time demands required to reach a satisfying level of understanding.

Writers like Borges, Calvino, theater of the absurd - just plain, intellectually stimulating fun.

Disclaimer, I like contemporary 'critical theory' tinkers too, because they make you think outside the box.

[reply](#)

ringaroundthetx 1 day ago [-]

The Bible of Options Strategies

[reply](#)

dmux 1 day ago [-]

Object Thinking by David West

[reply](#)

QAPereo 1 day ago [-]

Trying to avoid repeats...

M.T.W Gravitation

The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy

[reply](#)

SomeStupidPoint 1 day ago [-]

I think I may be stupid, in that I can only really get details of a model I already sort of understand from most books -- I need it pretty short'n'sweet to get a major model revision.

That being said, two *papers* that have radically changed my mental model are:

Einstein's 1905 paper -- I'd never actually thought about what a *clock* or *time* was before, or what it meant for two events to happen "at the same time".

[http://hermes.ffn.ub.es/luisnavarro/nuevo\\_maletin/Einstein\\_1...](http://hermes.ffn.ub.es/luisnavarro/nuevo_maletin/Einstein_1...)

A 2007 summary of MS's approach to (topological) quantum computers significantly changed my model of how physics worked -- likely because I hadn't gotten particularly far in physics before, but also because topological effects seem like they'd be more prevalent than I had initially conceived of (and we might need to rewrite physics to include topological features more explicitly).

<https://arxiv.org/abs/0707.1889>

[reply](#)

phatak-dev 1 day ago [-]

Millennium series by Tejaswi

[reply](#)

ntemposd 1 day ago [-]

The mom Test

[reply](#)

bo1024 1 day ago [-]

The Black Swan. By far.

[reply](#)

marcuswestin 1 day ago [-]

- Deep Work

- Sapiens

[reply](#)

k\_\_ 1 day ago [-]

Blindsight

[reply](#)

mrdependable 1 day ago [-]

Candide

[reply](#)

arc\_of\_descent 1 day ago [-]

Mind is a myth - UG Krishnamurti

Godel, Escher, Bach - Douglas Hofstadter

Unweaving the rainbow - Richard Dawkins

[reply](#)

carapace 1 day ago [-]

Early on I got into a box of my dad's old NLP books (not Natural Language Processing, the other NLP.)

"Structure of Magic" vols I and II, "Frogs into Princes", "Trance-formations", and a couple of others.

NLP grew out of the application of Chomsky's Transformational Grammar to recordings of very effective psychological therapists. (Virginia Satir, Fritz Perls, and Milton Erickson.) By the way, this is the same Transformational Grammar that leads to the Chomsky Hierarchy of languages. Neat, eh?

Anyhow, the NLP people rapidly developed a powerful model of subjective reality and replicable results in therapeutic settings (e.g. the "Five-minute Phobia Cure" algorithm, among many others.) The capability to reprogram belief structures engenders a change of self-definition even if you don't use it.

"Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid"

"System design from provably correct constructs : the beginnings of true software engineering" about Dr. M. Hamilton's Higher Order Software.

Everything by Robert Anton Wilson. (That's not a title, I mean everything he wrote.)

[reply](#)

RodericDay 1 day ago [-]



Ludwig Wittgenstein: Duty of Genius was a great ride, as well as a fantastic introduction to powerful ideas about communication and non-scientific disciplines' wish to imitate science.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X makes a brilliant case for angry speech, making the mainstream portrayal of figures like Gandhi and MLK Jr. seem like straight-up whitewashed propaganda.

Delusions of Gender is a fierce analysis of the nature/nurture discussion that rears its head over and over, explaining various mistakes people when interpreting results, both at the research level and at the journalistic level.

Marx's Inferno reinvents Marx in a super clever way.

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