

behaviors. We can start by becoming aware of our vulnerabilities. Suppose you're planning to buy a cutting-edge cell phone (the one with the three-megapixel, 8× zoom digital camera), or even a daily \$4 cup of gourmet coffee. You might begin by questioning that habit. How did it begin? Second, ask yourself what amount of pleasure you will be getting out of it. Is the pleasure as much as you thought you would get? Could you cut back a little and better spend the remaining money on something else? With everything you do, in fact, you should train yourself to question your repeated behaviors. In the case of the cell phone, could you take a step back from the cutting edge, reduce your outlay, and use some of the money for something else? And as for the coffee—rather than asking which blend of coffee you will have today, ask yourself whether you should even be having that habitual cup of expensive coffee at all.\*

We should also pay particular attention to the first decision we make in what is going to be a long stream of decisions (about clothing, food, etc.). When we face such a decision, it might seem to us that this is just one decision, without large consequences; but in fact the power of the first decision can have such a long-lasting effect that it will percolate into our future decisions for years to come. Given this effect, the first decision is crucial, and we should give it an appropriate amount of attention.

Socrates said that the unexamined life is not worth living. Perhaps it's time to inventory the imprints and anchors in our own life. Even if they once were completely reasonable, are they still reasonable? Once the old choices are reconsidered,

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\*I am not claiming that spending money on a wonderful cup of coffee every day, or even a few times a day, is necessarily a bad decision—I am saying only that we should question our decisions.