

A Personal Journey to Philosophy

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Foreword

A *personal* journey to philosophy – the hardest subject I have ever faced to & fought against. A collection of quotes from different resources, e.g., philosophical books, websites, forums, and Facebook philosophical pages, etc., and some *personal* (again) thoughts about them.

Basic Terminologies

- **philosophy** [n] **1.** [uncountable] the study of the nature & meaning of the universe & of human life; **natural philosophy** is an old term for the study of the physical world, which developed into the natural sciences; **2.** [countable] a particular set or system of beliefs resulting from the search for knowledge about life & the universe; **3.** [countable] a set of beliefs or an attitude to life that guides somebody's behavior.

Chapter 1

Jordan B. Peterson. *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*

1.1 Introduction

“*12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos* is a 2018 **self-help book** by the Canadian clinical¹ psychologist² **Jordan Peterson**. It provides life advice through essays in abstract ethical³ principles, psychology, mythology⁴, religion⁵, & personal anecdotes⁶.”[...] “The book is written in a more accessible style than his previous academic book, **Maps of Meaning: The Architecture of Belief** (1999). A sequel, **Beyond Order: 12 More Rules for Life**, was published in Mar 2021.

1.1.1 Overview

Background. “Peterson’s interest in writing the book grew out of a personal hobby of answering questions posted on **Quora**; 1 such question being

Question 1.1. “What are the most valuable things everyone should know?”,

to which his answer comprised 42 rules. The early vision & promotion of the book aimed to include all rules, with the title “42”. Peterson stated that it “isn’t only written for other people. It’s warning to me.” – **Wikipedia/12 Rules for Life/overview/background**

12 Rules. “The book is divided into chapters with each title representing 1 of the following 12 specific rules for life as explained through an essay.

1. “Stand up straight with your shoulders back.”
2. “Treat yourself like you are someone you are responsible for helping.”
3. “Make friends with people who want the best for you.”
4. “Compare yourself to who you were yesterday, not to who someone else is today.”
5. “Do not let your children do anything that makes you dislike them.”
6. “Set your house in perfect order before you criticize the world.”
7. “Pursue what is meaningful (not what is expedient⁷).”
8. “Tell the truth – or, at least, don’t lie.”

¹**clinical** [a] [only before noun] connected with the examination & treatment of patients & their illnesses.

²**psychologist** [n] a scientist who studies psychology.

³**ethical** [a] **1.** connected with beliefs & principles about what is right & wrong; **2.** morally correct or acceptable.

⁴**mythology** [n] [uncountable, countable] **1.** ancient myths in general; the ancient myths of a particular culture, society, etc.; **2. mythology (of something)** ideas that many people think are true but are in fact false.

⁵**religion** [n] **1.** [uncountable] the belief in the existence of a god or gods, & the activities that are connected with the worship of them; **2.** [countable] 1 of the systems of belief that are based on the belief in the existence of a particular god or gods.

⁶**anecdote** [n] [countable, uncountable] **1. anecdote (about somebody/something)** a short, interesting or funny story about a real person or event; **2.** a personal account of an event, especially one that is considered as possibly not true or accurate.

⁷**expedient** [n] an action that is useful or necessary for a particular purpose, but not always fair or right.

9. “Assume that the person you are listening to might know something you don’t.”
10. “Be precise in your speech.”
11. “Do not bother children when they are skate-boarding.”
12. “Pet a cat when you encounter⁸ one on the street.” – [Wikipedia/12 Rules for Life/overview/content](#)

Content. “The book’s central idea is that “suffering is built into the structure of **being**” & although it can be unbearable⁹, people have a choice either to withdraw¹⁰, which is a “suicidal¹¹ gesture¹²”, or to face & transcend¹³ it. Living in a world of chaos & order, everyone has “darkness” that can “turn them into the monsters they’re capable of being” to satisfy their dark impulses¹⁴ in the right situations. Scientific experiments like the **Invisible Gorilla Test** show that perception¹⁵ is adjusted to aims, & it is better to seek **meaning** rather than happiness. Peterson notes:

“It’s all very well to think the meaning of life is happiness, but what happens when you’re unhappy? Happiness is a great side effect. When it comes, accept it gratefully¹⁶. But it’s fleeting¹⁷ & unpredictable¹⁸. It’s not something to aim at – because it’s not an aim. & if happiness is the purpose of life, what happens when you’re unhappy? Then you’re a failure.”

The book advances the idea that people are born with an instinct¹⁹ for ethics & meaning, & should take responsibility²⁰ to search for meaning above their own interests (Rule 7, “Pursue what is meaningful, not what is expedient”). Such thinking is reflected both in contemporary²¹ stories e.g. **Pinocchio**, **The Lion King**, & **Harry Potter**, & in ancient stories from the **Bible**. To “stand up straight with your shoulders back” (Rule 1) is to “accept the terrible responsibility of life”, to make self-sacrifice²², because the individual must rise above victimization²³ & “conduct his or her life in a manner that requires the rejection²⁴ of immediate gratification²⁵, of natural & perverse²⁶ desires alike.” The comparison to **neurological**²⁷ structures

⁸**encounter** [v] **1. encounter something** to experience something, especially something unpleasant or difficult, while you are trying to do something else, SYNONYM: **run into something**; **2. encounter something/somebody** to discover or experience something, or meet somebody, especially something/somebody new, unusual or unexpected, SYNONYM: **come across somebody/something**; [n] a meeting, especially one that is sudden or unexpected.

⁹**unbearable** [a] too painful, annoying or unpleasant to deal with or accept, SYNONYM: **intolerable**, OPPOSITE: **bearable**.

¹⁰**withdraw** [v] **1.** [transitive, intransitive] (used especially about armed forces) to make people leave a place; to leave a place; **2.** [intransitive] **withdraw (to something)** to leave a room; to go away from other people; **3.** [transitive] to move something back, out or away from something; **4.** [transitive] to take money out of a bank account or financial institution; **5.** [intransitive] to stop taking part in something; **6.** [intransitive] to stop wanting to speak to, or be with, other people; **7.** [transitive] to no longer provide or offer something; to no longer make something available; **8.** [transitive] **withdraw something** to say that you no longer agree with what you said before.

¹¹**suicidal** [a] (of people) very unhappy or depressed & feeling that they want to kill themselves; (of behavior) showing this.

¹²**gesture** [n] **1.** [countable, uncountable] **gesture (of something)** something that you do or say to show a particular feeling or intention; **2.** [countable, uncountable] a movement that you make with your hands, your head or your face to show a particular meaning.

¹³**transcend** [v] **transcend something** to be or go beyond the usual limits of something.

¹⁵**perception** [n] **1.** [uncountable, countable] an idea, a belief or an image you have as a result of how you see or understand something; **2.** [uncountable] the way you notice things or the ability to notice things with the senses; in biology, **perception** refers to the processes in the nervous system by which a living thing becomes aware of events & things outside itself; **3.** [uncountable] the ability to understand the true nature of something, SYNONYM: **insight**.

¹⁶**grateful** [a] **1.** feeling or showing thanks because somebody has done something kind for you or has done as you asked; **2.** used to make a request, especially in a letter or in a formal situation.

¹⁷**fleeting** [a] [usually before noun] lasting only a short time, SYNONYM: **brief**.

¹⁸**unpredictable** [a] that cannot be predicted because it changes a lot or depends on too many different things, OPPOSITE: **predictable**.

²⁰**responsibility** [n] **1.** [uncountable, countable] a duty to deal with or take care of somebody/something, so that you may be blamed if something goes wrong; **2.** [uncountable] **responsibility (for something)** blame for something bad that has happened; **3.** [countable, uncountable] a moral duty to behave well with regard to somebody/something.

²¹**contemporary** [a] **1.** belonging to the present time, SYNONYM: **modern**; **2.** (especially of people & society) belonging to the same time as somebody/something else; [n] a person or thing living or existing at the same time as somebody/something else, especially somebody who is about the same age as somebody else.

²²**self-sacrifice** [n] [uncountable] (*approving*) the act of not allowing yourself to have or do something in order to help other people.

²³**victimize** [v] [often passive] **victimize somebody** to make somebody suffer unfairly because you do not like them, their opinions or something that they have done.

²⁴**rejection** [n] [uncountable, countable] **1.** the act of refusing to accept or consider something; **2.** the act of refusing to accept somebody for a job or position; **3.** the decision not to use, sell, publish, etc. something because its quality is not good enough; **4. rejection (of something)** an occasion when somebody’s body does not accept a new organ after a transplant operation, by producing substances that attack the organ; **5.** the act of failing to give a person or an animal enough care or affection.

²⁵**gratification** [n] [uncountable, countable] (*formal*) the state of feeling pleasure when something goes well for you or when your desires are satisfied; something that gives you pleasure, SYNONYM: **satisfaction**.

²⁶**perverse** [a] showing a deliberate & determined desire to behave in a way that most people think is wrong, unacceptable or unreasonable.

²⁷**neurological** [a] relating to nerves or to the science of neurology.

& behavior of **lobsters** is used as a natural example to the formation²⁸ of **social hierarchies**²⁹.

The other parts of the work explore & criticize the state of young men; the upbringing³⁰ that ignores **sex differences** between boys & girls (criticism of **over-protection** & **tabula rasa** model in **social sciences**); male-female **interpersonal relationships**; **school shootings**; religion & moral **nihilism**³¹; **relativism**³²; & lack of respect for the values that built **Western society**.

In the last chapter, Peterson outlines the ways in which one can cope with the most tragic³³ events, events that are often out of one's control. In it, he describes his own personal struggle upon discovering that his daughter, Mikhaila, had a rare bone disease. The chapter is a meditation³⁴ on how to maintain³⁵ a watchful³⁶ eye on, and cherish³⁷, life's small redeemable³⁸ qualities (i.e., "pet a cat when you encounter one"). It also outlines a practical way to deal with hardship³⁹: to shorten one's temporal⁴⁰ scope of responsibility (e.g., focusing on the next minute rather than the next 3 months).

Canadian psychiatrist and psychoanalyst **Norman Doidge** wrote Peterson, 2018's foreword." – **Wikipedia/12 Rules for Life/overview/content**

⁴¹ ⁴²

"The most influential public intellectual⁴³ in the Western world right now." – New York Times

"Rules? More rules? Really? Isn't life complicated⁴⁴ enough, restricting enough, without abstract rules that don't take our unique, individual situations into account? & given that our brains are plastic, & all develop differently based on our life experiences, why even expect that a few rules might be helpful to us all?" – Peterson, 2018, Foreword

²⁸**formation** [n] **1.** [uncountable] the action of forming something; the process of being formed; **2.** [countable] a thing that has been formed, especially in a particular place or in a particular way; **3.** [countable, uncountable] a particular arrangement or pattern of people or things.

²⁹**hierarchy** [n] **1.** [countable, uncountable] a system, especially in a society or an organization, in which people are organized into different levels of importance from highest to lowest; **2.** [countable] a system that ideas or beliefs can be arranged into.

³⁰**upbringing** [n] [singular, uncountable] the way in which a child is cared for & taught how to behave while it is growing up.

³¹**nihilism** [n] [uncountable] (*philosophy*) the belief that life has no meaning or purpose & that religious & moral principles have no value.

³²**relativism** [n] [uncountable] the belief that truth is not always & generally valid, but can be judged only in relation to other things, e.g. your personal situation.

³³**tragic** [a] **1.** making you feel very sad, usually because somebody has died or suffered a lot; **2.** [usually before noun] connected with tragedy (= the style of literature).

³⁴**meditation** [n] **1.** [uncountable] the practice of thinking deeply, usually in silence, especially for religious reasons or in order to make your mind calm; **2.** [countable, usually plural] **meditation (on something)** serious thoughts on a particular subject that somebody writes down or speaks.

³⁵**maintain** [v] **1. maintain something** to cause or enable a condition or situation to continue, SYNONYM: **preserve**; **2. maintain something** to keep something at the same level or rate; **3.** to state strongly that something is true, even when some other people may not believe it; **4. maintain somebody/something** to support somebody/something over a long period of time by providing money, paying for food, etc.; **5. maintain something** to keep a building, machine, etc. in good condition by checking or repairing it regularly; **6. maintain a record** to write something down as a record & keep adding the most recent information, SYNONYM: **keep**.

³⁶**watchful** [a] paying attention to what is happening in case of danger, accidents, etc.

³⁷**cherish** [v] (*formal*) **1. cherish somebody/something** to love somebody/something very much & want to protect them or it; **2. cherish something** to keep an idea, a hope or a pleasant feeling in your mind for a long time.

³⁸**redeemable** [a] **redeemable (against something)** that can be exchanged for money or goods.

³⁹**hardship** [n] [uncountable, countable] a situation that is difficult & unpleasant because you do not have enough money, food, clothes, etc.

⁴⁰**temporal** [a] **1.** connected with or limited by time; **2.** connected with the real physical world, not spiritual matters; **3.** (*anatomy*) near the temples at the side of the head.

⁴¹**antidote** [n] **1. antidote (to something)** a substance that controls the effects of a poison or disease; **2. antidote (to something)** anything that takes away the effects of something unpleasant.

⁴²**chaos** [n] [uncountable] a state of complete confusion & lack of order; in physics, **chaos** is the property of a complex system whose behavior is so unpredictable that it appears random, especially because small changes in conditions can have very large effects; **chaos theory** is the branch of mathematics that deals with these complex systems.

⁴³**intellectual** [a] [usually before noun] connected with or using a person's ability to think in a logical way & understand things, SYNONYM: **mental**; [n] a person who is well educated & enjoys activities in which they have to think seriously about things.

⁴⁴**complicated** [a] **1.** made of many different things or parts that are connected; difficult to understand, SYNONYM: **complex**, OPPOSITE: **uncomplicated**; **2.** (of a medical condition) involving complications, OPPOSITE: **uncomplicated**.

Chapter 2

Miscellaneous

2.1 Young, Dumb, & Broke

Watch & listen [Youtube/Khalid/Young Dumb & Broke](#).

2.2 Existential Crisis

2.3 Meaning of Life?

2.4 Art of Balancing in Life?

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