

3P MENTALITY
ESSAY 2: “Purpose”
The Case for Personal Philosophy

P is for Purpose

Purpose is the second P in the 3P Mentality, whose essay order reflects its significance. Hence, purpose is found through passion. Passion galvanizes an individual to study existence, from which they naturally start to question what all of it means, specifically everything’s purpose.

Think like a Philosopher

It starts with a level of inquiry that extends beyond *how* we exist, just as our bodies are made of cells, and cells of atoms, instead delving into *why*. What does it *really* mean to exist? What is the Purpose of life? Are there limits to our knowledge? This natural inclination for meaning lays the groundwork for developing a personal philosophy, a set of possible answers to these questions. I don’t say answers directly because in philosophy, there is no absolute truth but theories that help us make sense of the unknown. That being, a personal philosophy cannot map out a specific life trajectory but point us in a general direction, a guiding purpose. Purpose is a firm conviction about one’s fundamental role in life.

The Fall of the Philosopher

The philosopher is Purpose personified—someone who studies the fundamental nature of the universe, not believing everything they consume. What stops people from deep thought, however, is absorbance: the readily intake of ideas without skepticism. Absorbance is driven by cognitive ease, the mind’s default path of least effort and resistance. It’s the tendency to accept an idea because it avoids the discomfort of questioning internalized information. More often than not, these ideas constitute the zeitgeist, which is not guaranteed to be rational. Take Hustle Culture, for instance, the conviction to be relentlessly productive to reach success is readily absorbed by the working class, believing they must assume this cultural role to fit the status quo. This heuristic fulfills a human need for security, the comfort of having one’s Purpose laid out for them, not questioning whether it’s the right one.

The Dangers of Absorbance

The truth, however? The cultural Purpose does not equate to your Purpose. Although societal expectations aren’t necessarily harmful, following them by default creates a dependency on other’s thinking that may not always be logical. Dependency is readily absorbing a person, group, or culture’s values and beliefs without carefully evaluating their legitimacy. If these systems are faulty—take the previous discussion of Hustle Culture, for example—they can limit self-expression and autonomy by attaching external rewards to individual worth. When everybody is chasing the same thing, nobody is stopping to reflect on what fulfillment means for them, not society. Nobody is discovering *their* purpose through a process of reflection.

The Art of Independence

Reflection is an engagement with deep thinking, where one explores fundamental questions by getting to first principles and connecting them across systems. When one reflects, particularly about their role in situations, they participate in an ongoing development of their personal philosophy. Each reflection period strengthens the backbone of convictions that begin to make sense of an overall life purpose, an individualist lifestyle, the antithesis to dependence. Independence is trailing a path in life unique to one's personal philosophy, filtering external ideas through a system of logic and reasoning. It is a critical and unshakeable quality that allows one to see systems through a simplistic yet clarifying lens, deriving a nuanced perspective of the world around them.

Philosophy is the practice of the world's greatest thinkers, from Aristotle to Aurelius to Nietzsche. It founds the schools of thought we study today—fields of logic, theorems and thought experiments, thought-provoking literature—all of which derived from the same practice of careful reflection yet individually offer a unique perspective on their respective topics. As a result, Purpose fuels independence, the generation of thoughtful convictions separate from those of the surrounding culture, allowing one to think critically and find direction.