

3P MENTALITY

ESSAY 3: “Plan”

The Case for Metacognition

P is for Plan

Plan is the third and final P in the 3P Mentality, whose essay order reflects its significance. Although purpose is necessary to craft plans—hence its placement as the 2nd P—plans are still valuable in their own right, as they carry out purpose. Think of purpose as the ultimate goal or *telos*, as Aristotle would say, and plans as the *scopos* to achieve it. Thus, passion inspires purpose, purpose directs plans, and plans bring purpose to life. It’s important to note, however, passion’s prevailing role as the mentality’s foundation, as the benefits of this thinking is dependent on one’s desire to do it, ultimately enabling us to craft masterful plans.

Plan like a Metacognitionist

The key to masterful planning is applying metacognition, thinking about thinking, to identify the workflow strategies that are most effective for them. Metacognition allows one to step back and see a system for all its parts, which helps them understand how their own biases and emotions cloud their ability to assess themselves objectively. The essay “PLAN 2: MSDEP” in “Future Lens” delves into a specific application of metacognition I developed to help students design improvement plans based on self-evaluated data called the “Metacognitive Student Data Evaluation Process” (MSDEP for short). I encourage you to check it out—it’s something I plan to further research and refine it into a formal procedure in the future. However, it’s the principle behind the MSDEP, Plan, that inspired its development. Plan is the specific framework whose execution fulfills one’s purpose.

The Fall of the Metacognitionist

The Metacognitionist is Plan personified—someone who separates facts from feelings thinks objectively, and collects self-evaluated data to design their workflow. What stops people, however, from metacognitive thinking, is a predisposition for simplicity and specificity. In other words, the brain is lazy; without a clear path, it will not follow it, choosing instant gratification as a shortcut to pleasure over long-term, deliberate work.

Instant gratification fuels the false expectation that transformation is overnight, a behavior that has contributed to the rise of glow-up culture. Glow up culture is a mindset that glorifies instant reinvention, evident in the familiar phrases, “24 hour results,” “Abs in 2 weeks,” and “All-nighters.” These trends reflect the rise of idealism in an age of rampant consumerism, dopamine overload, and technological distraction.

The Dangers of Idealism

Idealism is the practice of pursuing perfection, but it is often accompanied by crushed expectations when short-term, ill-conceived plans fall apart. When failure occurs, we are scared to try again for fear of making the same mistakes. We procrastinate to ease their perfectionist minds, quelling the irrational voice that mistakes are “all or nothing.” The truth, however? Failure is what allows us to grow. When one dares to fail, they can filter mistakes as simple data to improve their process.

The Art of Objectivity

The filter is a practice of metacognition through which information *known* to be true is separated from the rest. Moreover, data can be the degree to which one *knows* it to be factual. For example, one can store the idea that the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell with 70% certainty while acknowledging that other possibilities can exist. The same applies to feelings: a person recognizes that while they feel anxious, the anxiety itself is often irrational and should not be taken at face-value.

This practice is undoubtedly an application of metacognition, whereby recognizing how much one *knows* a subject is an act of ‘thinking about thinking.’ Ultimately it enables one to design their workflow processes according to their unique cognitive needs, defining the Plan in the 3P Mentality, whose implementation reinforces an individual’s objectivity. Objectivity is the quality of being purely fact-based, having a clear line of sight regarding how much one knows, or rather, what specifically they don’t know.

This concept can be applied to practically all facets of learning and reaching a goal: coding a website, winning a tennis match, scoring a 1500 on the SAT. It’s a raw but rewarding process of trial, error, and oftentimes, many failures. Still, if mistakes were recorded objectively as data, with the causes and respective effects, improvement is inevitable. As a result, the Plan, in its iterative cognitive evaluations and curated improvements, fuels objectivity, by being evidence-based and persistent.