Perspective

Thoughts on youth in a 21st century, African context.

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The thoughts and ideas in this book are dedicated to all young people. I hope that they shine a little light in your journey.

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# Prologue

The 21st-century young person has been dealt a bad hand. A generation that is paying the price of being born in the most unanticipated of times. Humanity has lived a sure, undisturbed life for many centuries, but that safety is now gone. The sail has always been smooth and non–monumental, until now. A time when nothing is constant; the world seems to have been caught up in a metamorphic conundrum. Trends are changing as fast as we can scroll down social media newsfeeds. Information is competing with light for speeds and politics has just come home from playing in the mud. Families are shaken and often broken, leaving society unstable. Religion is marred with the very sins that it seeks to atone for.

As the drama unfolds, a more precarious problem is developing in the shadows.

A generation is bleeding. Everywhere you turn to in our beautiful country are young people desperately attempting to find bearing, make sense of their condition and realize their dreams in an unforgiving sociocultural environment. And in all the travail for direction they are left on their own. Smart, hardworking, people are everywhere in this country surviving on bread crumbs that society rewards them with. You only have to scratch a little below the surface to realize that the problem is more serious than it is thought.

Beyond the gay and grand graduation ceremonies in our esteemed institutions of higher learning is the cruelty of the streets and the frustration of shut doors that scream ‘Sorry, we are not hiring’. Even worse is that when these young people demand for a little more, they are branded as whiners and complainers.

Perhaps the problem is much deeper, rooted in a generational transformation that the young person of has been unlucky to be caught up in.

Those who are concerned enough to attempt to help are suggesting solutions that just do not work very well in the 21st Century. It is not that parents, teachers and priests are unwilling to help this youthful generation; they just don’t understand it. They are seeing the world through the lens they developed when they themselves were younger and are therefore prescribing the models that brought them the success and positions that they have today. This logic simply does not work. It is no longer the same world, no longer the same rules. What is to be done with this generation?

Even though this same generation is yearning for identity in these changing times, there is a dire shortage of worthy role models who not only set an example of how to live but where to go. At times they turn to football and gambling hoping that they might forget the bitter reality for a moment. Or get drunk and high. Yet it is impossible to forget that one is lost. They may be high but they remain very sober to these uncertainties and challenges.

The promise of paradise on the other side of the classroom is often unmet. The tears and sweat shed for better grades and higher degrees usually go unrewarded. The young person is disappointed.

What if we are simply afraid of facing the fact that the system - all well-oiled for the past centuries- simply does not work so well anymore? The emperor is naked, yet we deny that we see anything of consequence. This generation has been labelled a jelly-like generation; the blue band kids with no spine who are easily influenced for lack morals and a sense of self-worth. They often described as lost, rebellious, ungrateful and lacking purpose.

Young people, however, more often than not adopt an indifferent attitude to the way they interact with the world. There seems to be a general surrender to the pre-programming of society and a lack of urgency in seeking the true essence of their lives. In the process, minds are numbed and reason frozen. Creativity and innovativeness - the basic hallmarks of educated people – are permanently suppressed.

There are those of them, however, who have seen further and better. Young people who have made the decision to steer their fate by realizing the essence of youth and being daring enough to shake the status quo, test their ultimate limits and allow their potential to bloom. Like the caterpillar that metamorphoses into a butterfly no longer held back in a cocoon, they are out there making the world a little brighter.

Let us consider a rather distant example. Malala Yousafzai was a teenage Pakistani girl when her story awed the globe and demonstrated what exactly a young person is capable of when the chips fall. She faced the warlords of the Taliban with a pen and an unparalleled courage, and has already won a Nobel Peace Prize at her young age. She is a fighter who continues to stand for the rights of other young girls across the globe. When she speaks, world leaders pay attention. What an extraordinary world we would have if our girls, and all young people, had a little of this courage.

Human history is a series of events building upon each other across generations. Where we are today is one such epoch that shall be recounted in centuries and, possibly, millennia to come. We may have the illusion that we are at the apex of achievement, but so did the hunter gatherers when they domesticated the first animals and crops about 10,000 years ago.

The point here is that one must analyze and understand the times. Where is the human race now? What are the prevailing ideas? What hasn’t changed – in us and outside us – since 10,000 or 70,000 years ago? The early agriculturists strife for land is still manifest today in the form of wars and real estate. There are still hints of that hunter gatherer DNA inside each of us. It is almost impossible to make foundational shifts in human life in one lifetime.

To succeed, therefore, see what ideas have been easing into this era and advance them, build them, duplicate them, turn them inside and out. To build a legacy, think of the ideas that are likely to shape the future and lay a foundation for them. That will be my quest for the next few pages of this book.

Thanks for joining me!

*“Good company in a journey makes the way seem shorter”* — Izaak Walton

# I Impact – Facing forward

*If at 40 begins the mid-life crisis, then the 20s must be the quarter-life crisis*

**The Staircase Theory**

There is a hierarchy of opportunities stacked upward in a stair-like fashion. Each stair a platform onto which the individual is given temporary landing space before they are launched onto the next. Opportunities in life are in this fashion; they come to teach you something, prepare you and introduce you onto a next, greater opportunity. You are either moving up the stairs, stuck onto one, or stumbling downward. This perspective introduces a new way of looking at life and the seasons that it comes with. They are neither a start nor an end.

The season you are in today is there to launch, prepare, schedule and catapult you to the next opportunity. Learning to take advantage of each stair is what keeps one grounded on the journey upward. Do not panic when it seems to be taking a bit longer than you wanted. And do not get too comfortable on one opportunity either. ‘This is just one stair among many’, the wise say. They understand that if they focus on the sideshows - the joy and the pain that comes with opportunity – for too long, they will not prepare well for the next opportunity.

There is a trap of the staircase which people too often get into and pay dearly for. That is the tendency to focus too hard on the whole staircase that they don’t have the time and mental space to execute on the single stair where they stand. As they contemplate the magnitude of the whole climb, they get discouraged by the multitude of stairs there is to climb. Lost in this confusion, they spend days and years drooling over what it would be like if they got to the top. They substitute thinking about getting to the top of the staircase with actually getting there. Other people begin to think of them as daring futurists with bold ideas of the future.

What they are, however, are people crashed by the heaviness of their dreams. In some sense, this approach is not without its benefits. It means that we understand how much work it takes to get to the top of the staircase. However, the brain freezes at the reality of the almost impossible challenge since they have simply not gotten around the means of the climb. The prey instinct causes them to run from the danger of the climb. This is how people become procrastinators. Others will in live in denial of their true ambitions to lessen the pain of the reality of the impossibility of having to work for them. In the end, both types of people are stuck.

There is a rule in science called the Pareto Principle. It works on an 80-20 premise: 80% of all results come from 20% of the effort put in.

Managing complexity

A key to getting ahead in the 21st century is learning to organize brains and teams. There is hardly place for one-man-showmanship whose main motivation is selfish ambition. An idea is a network, and this demands that those who dare to implement them also show a capacity for cooperation. Get comfortable with uncertainty. The world that we have inherited is very complex, and expecting to figure out the full story of your life at once is a futile attempt.

Life by its nature is multilayered, but the realities of this age add even more aspects of uncertainty. Yet one must never give up on the necessary quest of figuring out their way in the world. The 21st century requires the capacity to leverage other people’s time, talent and money in often complex ways in order to make impact. Avoid the idea that you will figure it all out by yourself and begin to embrace help. Massive impact is only possible when a dedicated team works really hard on solving a particular problem. Building effective teams and engaging in distributed cooperation is now a life skill. An idea is a network and its preconditions should be allowed to develop over time.

**Money**?

Money is a story. It is a story that we have chosen to tell ourselves and validate through collective belief. A narrow understanding of the concept of money drives people to slave and sweat in office cubicles doing work that does not fill their lives, just to be rewarded with some paycheck at the end of the month. Once one tastes the illusion of luxury that such slaving can afford you, they are hooked for life. Perhaps it is better to attain freedom with one’s money - start off with every bullet you have and build an existence out of your talent. That is possible by understanding the dynamics of the times and wisely capitalizing on the best ideas. Be smart. Be fueled. Remember, when computers came, money left pockets and safes and hid in bits. The rich make money by enabling the poor to enjoy the simple things that make their misery bearable. They understand that in order to achieve substantial success, three basic resources are needed: Time, insight and money. The poor man ignores the money factor from the equation to their own detriment.

**Education and politics**

The aim of the government is to rule her people, and it is in its best interests to do so with as little resistance as possible. Maintaining law and order is easiest if the people are asking no questions. That same government controls and funds the education system. What would then deter it from manipulating such an effective tool for shaping the mind in order to make people more governable? The character of a citizenry is forged in its classrooms. That is the boilerplate where the peoples are churned and processed. They can never rise above what they were programmed to become. They can either be decisive and willed or weak and flexible for the elite to bend at will. Unless those people look beyond the classroom and open some texts that the syllabus never suggested, they will remain under the invisible arm of the ruling class. Such people cannot be saved from their ignorance.

It is also imperative to keep consider carefully the people in whose hands the children are taught. Is the teacher committed to constant self -improvement? Why is it norm that those who were in the profession twenty years ago are still teaching the exact same class and exact same content, never taken a course or a diploma to refresh their knowledge, never read a book outside the old textbook? How can they influence the millennial and the Generation Z if their thinking is stalled in the past? These men and women have done well and worked hard, but they instruct for a past era, not the 21st Century.

There is therefore an urgent need for fundamental change of mindset in the teaching fraternity. We should have teachers who are not only passionate and mean well, but who also have the capacity to deliver to the 21st century child.

The child in the classroom today is being prepared for the world of 2050 and beyond. And how can that be done if the instructor is by default teaching the world as they experienced it in the 90s and 80s? Because that is what’s happening. Young people are taught from the perspective of the past. Content has become vestigial. In a Computer Science degree, and despite that being the most disruptive field in this century, the ‘past’ mindset is all too pervasive in teaching.

Africans seem to have adopted this fallacy that whatever happened in the past is education and what’s coming in the future is the West. Why wait for others to create the future, only so that we can teach it as history in our syllabuses. The education system probably needs to be paradigm shifted - a total change of direction. Teaching should be done from the perspective of the future. Otherwise, it will be difficult to trust the education system itself. Enlighten yourself.

Self-imposed rule and control are the price that society pays in return for civilization and consciousness. The law has its reason, for the human animal has a dark and vicious side. It is known that an unrestrained conscious being will be quick to invent its own destruction. Yet when the law tames even the excellent side of a man, then it has crossed boundaries and whoever fashioned it intended to rule them.

A superior life seeks not livelihood but impact, focuses not simply on going to school but learning, not only focuses on teaching but coaching too. This change of perspectives is absolutely necessary.

**A Generational Perspective**

Fathers have great influence over their children. What does the resurgence of the maleness conversation mean for our generation? Those in their twenties now are the generation of the next fathers. How do we fix the wounds of the past so that they are not passed to the next generation? A father-son relationship is the earliest form of catechism - it will stay with him for life.

*The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.*

*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. {Train…: or, catechize} {in…: Heb. in his way}*

*And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*

A parent is the first and earliest influence on the child. The relationship that is forged in the early years of upbringing will ultimately determine the kind of adult that the child becomes. It is true that most of the challenges that we encounter in modern society are parenting problems. People who were psychologically and emotionally wounded in their childhood are in turn hurting others in their desperation with psychological wounds. These people are friends, lovers, colleagues and even parents who pass on the pain of their childhood onto others - oftentimes unconsciously.

Young men in their early twenties are the immediate next fathers of our generation in the next 3 to five years. Those in the late twenties are new fathers, perhaps in their first or second child. So, if there be a problem with the generation, perhaps it’s not too late to fix it. Because there is a problem.

Our generation has grown up in the largest generational chasm of our society, and one that is clearly registered in our psyche, character and choices as young people.

It is helpful to note that three generations have existed since the independence era of the 1960s. Our grandparents were adults then, and some of them were the descendants of those who fought for independence. Those currently at the age of 80 and above were born in the 1930s and early 1940s. They are the parents to our parents, born starting the late 1950s to the early ‘70s. This generation consist of people at the prime of their careers and some nearing the retirement age. They are lawyers, doctors and teachers who began their careers in post-independence era. During this time, higher education was not very accessible and so only the very lucky got into college or university. This was the first locally educated generation, and most of their children are now in the twenty-year old age bracket. They are in universities and colleges, and others are launching their careers or reconciling the promise of an old system with the realities of a changing era.

The average age difference between this generation and their parents is thirty years. Meaning that for a person aged 25 today, their parent was at the same age in the early 1990s. Much has changed in between which makes these two generations strangers to each other.

While the parental bond between parent and child still remains, there is a significant ideological chasm between young people and their supposed mentors that is gnawing away at their possibilities.

60% of young people in Kenya today report feeling alienated from their parents even when they are materially cared for. This alienation presents in form of psychological and emotional distance between the parent and the child, where the two are contextually different in their experiences and developed mindsets.

Simply put, the world we live in today is different from the one that the previous generation of our parents grew up in. With the best of intentions for our wellbeing, they teach the present generation the information and ideas of their growing up and hope that they turn out better than they did. Whether in education, career or what it means to be a young person, the narrative they use is the same narrative they knew in their twenties. The same narrative they were taught by their parents before them. But the world has changed. A sustained misinformation, or a clash of information and time, results and the young person is at the greatest peril.

**Pause**

“How to double your productivity”, “Ten steps to add value to yourself”, “How to achieve more with limited time”, “Getting your mind to focus and achieve your goals”. We have all seen these topics on countless blogs. It seems like everyone with a keyboard is telling us how we can squeeze the last ounce of strength and intelligence out of ourselves in order to get more work done. You can make it, they say. You can beat last quarter’s sales, you can make that million dollars, and you can become the next CEO – only if you follow these rules; only if you are productive enough.

know what, those words sound synonymous with the Physics of machines. We have to ensure that these tools that we have created are performing at their optimum. Therefore, we push them – we oil them and grease them, and repair them on a regular basis. As long as we are getting maximum output from them, all is well. And if there is a chance that we can improve their output with as minimal resources as possible, the better. And what happens when they are old and worn out, invaluable and no longer repairable? We dispose them and acquire new ones. That is why it worries me when we use words like ‘improve productivity’ and ‘optimize performance’ on people.

Does it mean that we become unconcerned about the value that people bring to organizations? Not at all. However, in our profit-driven world, it is easy to blur the lines between machines and people and begin viewing our race through the same lens as our inanimate counterparts in the workplace. Business leaders need to be reminded, lest they forget, of the ‘human’ in human capital. We must treat people in organizations well, for the reason that they are human beings, with genuine concern and care, and not simply as a way to get them to work harder.

Incentives, rewards and compensations are good, but they should not be used as a way to blackmail employees into exploitation. Business leaders should more often lead with the heart than with the mind. If all we care about is profit, then we will lose the fundamental values that make us human.

Employees should also realize that no matter how committed to their work they may be, they are replaceable. This will help them prioritize the more important things in life like health, family and personal fulfillment. Do not forsake your personal goals for another person’s goals – get a little selfish and look out for yourself.

If we engage in activities that we are passionate about, and set clear, achievable goals while prioritizing what’s most important first, we will be successful and happy. And we will not have to study top ten lists of how to be more productive, since we will commit our very souls to the course that we believe in, and nothing can be impossible for us if we do that.

The idea is to have great, future-facing 21st Century businesses. If there already is, be part of it and build. If not, you are obliged to start them. You won’t have a great product with the first stroke. Build an MVP and test your market.

*"There are honest politicians. Only that they haven’t won the elections yet” –Ljupka Cvetanova*

The news headlines have of late been cluttered with stories of which government official stole what from which ministry. The figures quoted in the scandals have been surprising, and frightening too.

This, however, does not impress them in the least, because that’s a drama they have witnessed before. A political stunt to delude the masses that action is being taken against the culprits, when we know all too well that the “untouchables” will soon walk scot free. It reminds me of the Pig’s lament in George Cowell’s Animal Farm,” All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.”

Despite all this, we the voters still embrace the ‘mtu wetu’ mentality every five years when the politicians come asking for our votes. As long as it is ‘mtu wetu’ eating our money, there is no problem. Not until we rise above this mediocre thinking, corruption and fund embezzlement will remain rooted in our government. And I believe that if we vote wisely, we shall one day have a new crop of visionary leaders who shall purge our public offices of this curse and set this country on the course to Economic independence.

Kenyans do what they know best - extracting the last juices of humor from these stories, as they wait for the next one. However, not that they don’t care, lest those in power be beguiled. The people are waiting for some serious action to be taken, and anything less will attract resistance – it’s a just a matter of when.

Why not empower our companies and equip them to deliver safe products to Kenyans? Isn’t the country ready to be a self-sustaining economy. Yet, one still has to believe that the future is bright for the nation.

In the words of Theodore Roosevelt, “When they call the roll in the senate, the senators do not know whether to answer ‘present’ or ‘Not Guilty’ ", our elected leaders in the counties have also demonstrated the meaning of ‘devolved corruption’, as most county accounts have been milked dry. Elected leaderrs have been famed for planning numerous, cost inflated overseas “conferences” and county budgets have been thrown down the drain. While all the while Wanjiku continues to watch the drama and cry.

Will the corruption beast ever be slain? Definitely, Yes. One has to remain hopeful in the future of this country. Like Martin Luther Jr., It’s the dream. A dream that one day we will rise from this dark valley to the shining light of truth, integrity and love for our fellow countrymen. And that is the day all of Kenya’s children will sing with true meaning the magnificent words of our national anthem “Haki iwe ngao na mlinzi.”, because on that day, justice, truth and integrity will ring, from the mountaintops of Mt Kenya to the sprawling plains of Kano, from the Lake Basin of Kisumu to the Beaches at the coast.

That is a country worth living in.

*We have not inherited the world from our ancestors, we have bought it from our children – Barack Obama.*

**Risk**

The 21st-century is not the age of a laissez-faire lifestyle. We need to realize that the world has changed. The winners today are not the most educated ones, but rather the most informed. We need to stop believing the façade that our education system alone (developed centuries B.C) is enough prerequisite for greatness in this century. One needs to lose faith a little in university education so as to successfully face the challenges of the new millennium.

I feel for the young people whom society and the system have held prisoner with ideas that worked excellently in previous generations but which fail terribly in this century. Young people need to be awoken. Our generation is the most unfortunate one in history because we are presently facing unprecedented global circumstances, yet we have had no one to prepare us for the world that we have inherited. It is no secret that the global stage has changed drastically at the turn of the new millennium; the train has derailed since the old tracks no longer work. While our parents rode successfully on them, we, their children, have to somehow grow wings and fly because the age of trains are far gone. Some of us may prefer the train- it will be simple and convenient - but it will only go that far.

It is more worrisome that millennials are not reading books. Quite astounding. University students who are expected to be the guardians of society’s knowledge only read lecturers’ handouts and notes. We have to change that and stand up for our generation. This is our time.

If millennials are to take full advantage of the opportunities of this century, we have to adopt a new way of thinking other than what we have been taught.

*“The greatest risk in life is not taking any risks at all” – Mark Zuckerberg*

The 21st century is the most exciting time to be alive in. It is not a particularly perfect epoch; in fact, the perils of our time are far greater compared to those of years past. The history of man has been long, full of challenges and successes alike, and the last several thousand years have been leading to this very period of time that we are privileged to live in. A time when being alive alone is a great risk.

Today, the possibility of the total annihilation of the human race is more real than it has ever been. Nuclear arsenal and bio weaponry have given nations the ability to wipe out the entire world population in a matter of seconds. The only factor hindering such a scenario is the idea of mutually assured destruction – a world war of the 21st century would have no winners because all nations would be turned to ash and cities left as rumble. This is without considering what would happen if such weapons found their way into the hands of radical groups.

This world of perpetual danger and risk is the same one in which billionaires are being churned overnight at an unbelievably young age. Take for instance the Facebook founder and billionaire, Mark Zuckerberg, nicknamed ‘Zuckman’. At the young age of nineteen, he launched the social networking site from his dorm room at Harvard University. The site gained popularity quite fast within the campus and in other universities within the United States, finally opening its doors to the public a year later. The Facebook story is one of extraordinary achievement, and a young titan leading a team of more than a thousand employees to build the world’s largest online community, accumulating data worth billions of dollars as well as wealth that is the envy of small nations. This is a replica of what happened with Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, Tinder, Airbnb, Uber – all multi-billion dollar companies started by young, daring millennial entrepreneurs who dared to think different and follow their dreams even when the future didn’t look promising. Today, they rule the cyber world.

Having grown up receiving advice from my parents and other older people, as well as reading about the Zuckerberg pool of young people, I have come to realize the striking difference between my dad’s generation and our generation – the level of risk appetite. For some reason, people who grew up in the mid and late twentieth century have a deep sense of security. They value regular jobs very much because they give them financial security by entitling them to a paycheck every month. They bear many children to cover for the risks of some falling sick or not being successful enough in life. They are afraid of investing because they might lose their money.

However, this does not make them less ambitious people. It is simply the rules of their time that required them to adopt such a risk avoidance mind-set. To them, being responsible means playing it safe and never exposing oneself to risk. However:

The rules of the new millennium are set up such that anyone who avoids risk will live on the sidelines as the risk-takers run the show.

*The thing is, it never even occurred to me that someone might be us. We were just college kids. We didn't know anything about that. There were all these big technology companies with resources. I just assumed one of them would do it. But this idea was so clear to us -- that all people want to connect. So, we just kept moving forward, day by day. – Mark Zuckerberg*

**The Risk Narrative**

The elephant in the room is that while our generation needs to play by a new set of rules, we are being trained by people who have mastered the old ones. Therefore, we, in essence, lose the game before the whistle is blown. We take our kids to school hoping that they will gain an education to help them solve the millennial challenges, yet leave them in the hands of teachers who grew up in a different century, some of whom make no particular effort to refresh their knowledge and perspective of the modern world.

In our universities, the mark of a true professor is a white beard and grey hair - someone who has courted books but divorced the demands of the millennium. Hence, graduates leave the university to face a changing world with a twentieth century mentality of playing it safe. They dare not take risks and start companies. They would rather be caught up in what R. Kiyosaki in Rich Dad Poor Dad refers to as the “Rat race” all their lives than take advantage of technology and find innovative solutions to modern challenges. In the end, we are in a situation where the world holds a lot of potential for progress but there are is no one to utilize it because our minds have been conditioned to look for twentieth-century opportunities in the twenty-first century. That’s where society has it wrong.

The kind of risk that I discuss is not the reckless type where one gambles with life without thinking carefully of the future. It is taking calculated risks, bravely stepping away from comfort zones and pursuing our ambitions even when the odds are not entirely in our favor. It is Mark Zuckerberg who stated that “the greatest risk in life is not taking any risk at all”.

An important secret to achieving great progress in our age is having the temerity to “fail fast”. This is a common Silicon Valley ideology that emphasizes on risky innovations that give one the experience needed to make even greater innovations, regardless of whether the current projects fail. To quote Mark Zuckerberg again, his personal life mantra is to “move fast and break things”. That is the true 21st-century mindset. Do not sit around and wait for someone to employ you. Simply get up and innovate, find solutions to problems that people are facing. Even if you fail at first, learn the lesson that the failure has taught you, and then try again. And again, and again. Fail hard, fail fast, fail forward. That is the true spirit of a millennial. There are no jobs waiting for you. There are people waiting for you to create jobs for them. Remember, it is not too late to break the go to school - pass exams - get employed - get married - pay bills then retire cycle that society seeks to impose on us. This is not to say that employment is wrong. In fact, most times it is the best option to go for. The important point is, in the words of Dr Myles Munroe, do not miss your purpose while stuck on a job. Do not allow the fear of failure to keep you living under a rock, stuck with a boss who does not value you?

In the 21st century, those who play by the old rules will survive. However, those who adopt the new rules and take the necessary risks will thrive. I have had to ask myself this question severally: do I want to merely survive, or to thrive? To follow the status quo, or to set the standards? The answers to these questions always motivate me to take risks.

We live in the Information Age. This a time when information is the currency of value in the world. The internet has democratized access to information; today you have the world’s information at your fingertips in the form of a smartphone. With the click of a button, a screen opens up new worlds and connects you distant continents. Information is flying across the globe every microsecond at the speed of light. The world is connected than never before. Come to think of it, we are privileged to live in the most amazing times in the entire human history. We do not have to fight with bullets and bombs to prove military might, the battles of today are fought through intelligence. The more informed a country or person is, the more powerful they are. Someone stated that the battles of the 21st century are not fought with swords and spears but are fought in the mind. I have learnt the power and potential of the internet. I urge you, if you have not discovered the potential and importance of this amazing invention of man, make a decision to do so.

The comfort zone is the area of our lives where nothing goes wrong, and nothing progresses either. The one truth about the comfort one is that, sooner or later, it turns into a regret zone. When in the comfort zone, there is always that small voice at the back of the mind reminding us that we are meant for more than that. You may pause and think of the area of your life that you have let settle in the comfort zone. It may be because you are afraid of failure. You have never developed your public speaking skills for fear that people will laugh at you. Or you have always wanted to sing but never gathered the courage to go for a single audition or even sing to your friends. You always know the right answers but never raise your hand to try and instead let others do it.

The world would be a much better place if stupid people were not so confident in their ignorance and smart people so afraid of asserting their values. You have to gather the courage and try. You owe it to yourself. You have put yourself down for far too long, and now would be the right time to step out and step up to the challenge. Great things lie on the other side of fear.

When Barack Obama ran for U.S president for the first time in 2008, he was, as he late admitted in his victory speech, ‘never the likeliest candidate for the office’. However, through sheer passion and determination, he rallied a divided nation behind him and urged them to believe in his dream of bringing change to America. Some doubted him, and others wrote him off. Rally after rally, day by day, he shared vision with the American people, and when he won the Democratic Primaries, history begun being reshaped. A few months later, the son of a black man from Kisumu, Kenya, became the first president of America with an African-American descent. That is testimony enough that miracles do happen if we are willing to take the necessary risks.

**Small thoughts**

Malcom Gladwell’s ‘Outliers’ provides an insightful discussion of the nature of mastery and excellence. It is supposed that in order to become exceptionally good at something, one has to spend 10,000 hours of constant, deliberate on that particular task.

That is four hours of focused practice each day, for ten years. It’s a lot of time, to be honest.

The Bible says ‘See anyone who is skilled in his work? He will dine with Kings’ (the book of Proverbs, paraphrased).

There is need for one to be exceptional in what they do. When you are average, you are replaceable, but when you are excellent – a master – people will seek you.

The aim should be to become a master in your field.

The twenties are the time to develop talent, build skill and enhance capacity. Don’t focus on the paycheck – focus on gaining mastery. Make mistakes and learn. Focus on your 10,000 hours. By the time one hits their 30s, you will be well positioned to impact your field. Focus on mastery.

**Impressions**

The idea of personal branding has been explored considerably by a number of life coaches, although most of the explanations provided are not understandable to a non-expert. I first encountered this idea way back in 2013 while in form three from a newspaper article. At the time, as a student, the making of a personal brand was of little concern to me. Two years later, I encountered the same idea again, and it is then that I began thinking about it. Seven years on, I have come to understand what it really means to identify oneself as a brand, to grow it and maintain it, how to ‘sell’ oneself and the great dividends that it brings.

A branding perspective

Corporations spend millions of shillings each year in advertising and public relations in a bid to improve their brands. A study at Harvard Business School established that in 60 per cent of the fortune -500 companies in America, the fraction of total revenue channeled to brand building is at least 10% per cent higher than the actual cost of manufacturing the product. Why is this so? Can we learn something from business and apply it to our lives?

Before we delve further and possibly make matters a bit more complicated, it will be useful to point out that some people have made themselves into brands that we all so know well of. They are all around us; we celebrate them, follow them on social media and ultimately, we ‘buy’ them - because that is the ultimate goal of a brand. A brand has not achieved its purpose until a customer has paid money for it. Case in point the American queen of television talk shows – and the richest black woman in the world – Oprah Winfrey. She is the empress of media, and her own television network has become hugely successful. Through her talk shows, she has mentored and influenced millions of viewers all over the world. The name “Oprah Winfrey” conjures up one thought in mind – talks shows. And many more examples like our very own Lupita Nyong’o, Kobe Bryant the basketballer and C. Ronaldo in soccer.

Personal branding is not about commoditizing your worth, but rather creating you that is not only valuable to the world, but also consistent enough that when people see you, they see a ‘package’ that they can trust, and depend upon. You will not have achieved true greatness until what you do and who you are coalesce into one, and become highly predictable. At that point, people pay money just to have you. This is not just for the wannabe celebrities but for all those who hope to leave an indelible mark in our world.

The entire subject of personal branding is so broad, it would make books, even volumes, on its own. And it is as crucial as it is broad. It’s all in our psychology. It will suffice at this point to take a brief look into how our brains process ‘reality’ and ‘perception’ if we are to properly grasp the idea of a personal brand. According to psychologists, reality is quite subjective. This means that one person’s interpretation of an event or a situation varies from those of others around them.

That is where ‘perception’ comes in. By using our senses, and our minds that are highly prone to error and inaccurate approximations, we are constantly trying to make sense of all the data that we receive from the environment. Therefore, the mind is in essence just sitting around waiting to receive data (which comes in every second that we are conscious) and trying to reconstruct that data based on previous experience and acquired knowledge so as to make a judgment. This leads to the often debated conclusion that there is no absolute reality- everyone interprets the world uniquely.

Say, for example, there is a CEO, sitting in an office. Through the door walks a neatly dressed gentleman: suit, tie and all - spick and span. He politely greets the executive and is offend a chair.

What ‘perception’ of this man do you think that the CEO is going to form? Then next walks in another gentleman. He looks different, way different from the first. Dressed in a pair of rugged jeans, a t-shirt, hoodie and dreadlocks to top it up. And both have come in for a job interview. Considering that this is not a record label company, what would be the executive’s decision about the two? Well, this may be a too simplified case, so let’s look consider a few points before we go further.

a) Human beings are not rational by nature

This may seem like a not so nice sentiment to describe the human intellect but is a fact nevertheless. We all tend to rely on emotion in making decisions, even critical ones than we do rely on fact and logic. It is much easier to get a person to take a certain action by appealing to their emotions than it is by trying to make them see the logic of the action. We are largely emotion driven rather than logic-driven beings. In this case, ‘emotion’ is an umbrella term for any psychological process that does not involve logic and conscious, reasoned out decision making, such as love, fear, hate etc.

How do you decide whether you like someone the first time we meet them? Surely, we do not ask for a history of all the bad and good they have done in the past so as to make a judgment about them. On the contrary, it is the brightness of their smile, the fanciness of their clothes and the humor in their words that conjure certain emotions in us, causing us to either like or dislike them.

So have wayward people been approved and righteous men rejected. It all boils down to branding.

So often in life do we find ourselves in situations where the strength of our accomplishments and the achievements of our past does not matter - what matters is our presentation. That is why it is important to learn to dress appropriately and communicate decently. It is useless to put ourselves down by self-judgment. We often look at ourselves critically and enumerate the reasons why we think we cannot succeed at a given task. Well, good news for you. The people you are worried that will turn you down are not even looking at the facts. You only need to make them ‘feel’ something –pride, love, fear - and you will win them over. Are you able? to do that? Then you are on your way to becoming a brand.

There are people who lose their self-esteem and sense of self-worth as a result of very strict self-criticism and overthinking. What will they say if I wear this dress? Is my face good looking enough? Are my beeps showing as theirs? Well, those people are not even thinking about any of that stuff. Instead of killing yourself with self-pity, get that body you are so insecure about into that dress, walk straight into the office and greet everyone with a smile. Do whatever you do with confidence. Show them what you want them to see, not the insecurity that your mind is screaming at you. Before long, they will begin to see that and love it, because they have no option anyway. It’s all about how you make them feel. And how you feel about yourself too. Do it again and again until it becomes predictable. That way, you make yourself into a brand, an irresistible, valuable brand.

b) People are desperate to believe something. Anything.

Most of the time that we feel inadequate; it is because we think that people think the same about us. Or we are afraid that they know our shortcomings and those they are going to use them to put us down. Here is a shocker for you - they have no clue about you at all! They are just waiting for you to tell them the story that they should believe. Any story. About yourself. The day you realize that other people are as clueless as you are, you will be liberated.

It is a natural human instinct to feel insufficient and less qualified than other people. If you come to think of it, it is actually a good thing. It makes us strive to beat our insufficiencies, which is ultimately a crucial part of survival. The important thing is to ensure that this does not get in the way of our performance and abuse us to remain in our shells. Pause for a minute think of this: you have the power to define who you are, and people have no choice but to believe it. No one can change that. People are desperate for you to tell them the story of your life so that they can believe it. Make use of this power and become a brand- one that people will be willing to pay for.

c) People dislike uncertainty

Or otherwise put, people want, and crave consistency. Consistency sells more than affordability and convenience. In order to successfully brand yourself, people must trust you. Predictability is the cornerstone of all branding. If people are unsure of the nature of your next decision, how your mood will be tomorrow morning, or how yummy respond to them when they approach you, they will stay away from you and what you may offer them. Learn to give people a sense of security in knowing that they can trust you while also maintaining your air of subtle mystery.

Learn to sell yourself. Your skills and talents will mean nothing if you do not find the best opportunities and environment to put them to work.

**Impressions**

In his book titled Rich Dad, Poor Dad, Robert Kiyosaki tells of his encounter with a young journalist who was aspiring to become an author. She confided in Robert that after reading his books, she saw that it was clear she was a better writer than he is which he confirmed to be true. She then asked him why then his books sold more copies than hers did. ‘You are a best-selling author and I’m not’, she lamented,’ yet I am a much better author hand you!’ To which he replied,’ you are absolutely right. I am a best-selling author, but you are a best-writing author. The difference between us is that I know how to sell my talent, and you don’t. Remember, people do not simply buy what is quality; they buy what they are convinced to buy, what they believe, which makes them feel something. People buy brands.

A company that spends millions advertising its products but ends up manufacturing poor quality is doomed. The customer finding what was promised is not what was delivered will be frustrated and lead to a complete loss of trust. The strength of a brand is not just in the marketing but in its ability to deliver what was promised. In creating a personal brand, be careful not to fall in the trap of overpromising and underdelivering. There are circumstances where this strategy might work quite well, especially in politics. However, if you write a cherub for your character that you cannot cash, you will come off as a pretender. Personal branding should therefore not be an activity in isolation but must be done alongside personal development.

We will not delve into the broad topic of personal development at this point since the rest of this book is basically about that. It is, however, worth noting that personal development without personal branding will make very fine and talented people remain at the same position in life. Personal development will make a better person, personal branding will tell others of your value.

Remember, it is not excellent products that sell. It is brands that sell. People do not just buy quality, they but brands. Not all brands are of the best quality, but they are bough either way. There is a need to improve your quality before you put your brand out there. Refine your character, sharpen your skills. The aim should be to under-promise and over-deliver. Let your work and results speak louder than your brand. The contrary is called egotistic. As a young person, what do people think of the moment you walk into a room? Remember that it is your duty to write the narrative of your life. Make a deliberate effort to write it well.

Controversial as it may seem, looks do actually matter. Big time. People will judge you according to how you dress. To put it otherwise, you will be addressed according to the way you are dressed. This is one of the basic tenets of personal branding. You may think, well, that’s unfair, because what matters is who I am on the inside. People ought to judge me based on my character and intellect. Well, the bitter truth is that they will not, and they are not to blame. It all boils down to how our brains work. At the instant you meet someone for the first time, say at a job interview or a party, your brain has zero information about them. You have not yet heard their narrative; and therefore, your natural instincts are desperate to have something to believe about the person, in order to make sense of them. The brain then turns to our senses for help.

Remember, the senses send information to the brain, not as it is in reality, but as it is ‘perceived’ to be. How is this person dressed? Check. Do they seem friendly or hostile? In other words, is there a smile on their face? Check. Does he look rich? What brand of a suit is he in, how expensive is the jewelry they are wearing? Check. Oh, he/she has the same hairstyle as me; we must be alike in some ways. Wait, there’s that deep scar on his scalp. Maybe he is a thug; I need to be careful… All this processing in the first few seconds after meeting someone. After that, you get the feeling that you are familiar with the person when all you really have is the narrative, they wanted you to see. The person has successfully sold themselves to you. They are now a brand, and you, a convinced buyer.

That is why it is quite important to dress well and appropriately. Dress to pass a message the message you want people to have about you. It is part of your narrative, your brand. All that you do is ultimately shaping your brand, whether consciously or not.

**Thinking and learning**

The formal education system is one of the most notorious inventions of humanity. It is a system that takes in brilliant minds and systematically programs them by means of a curriculum to churn out human bots who neither have the enjoyment of passion or the pursuit of fulfilment. A system that only teaches them to submit to employers and only think about what is allowed. We are not trained to actualize our potential and to hone talent, but we are being made just enlightened enough to be employable.

Well, I have nothing against education. However, the system is broken. Take university education for instance. The first university was Plato’s academy, established in Greece in 56 B.C. At a time when men believed the earth was flat and the center of the universe, people prayed to Venus and died of plagues by the drones. This same system is used in our universities today, in an era when man has landed on the moon and explored the edges of the cosmos, sending information across the globe in the blink of an eye. The game has changed but the rules have remained the same. There are men who have gone through the same system and proceeded to change the world as we know it. But they had a different mentality. They went realized early on the loopholes in the system and went on to do something to avoid them. They took whatever they could from the system but never allowed it to imprison them with the vague promise of ‘freedom’. The real freedom lay in them discovering their latent abilities and developing them.

A good percentage of graduates today are working in careers that they did not train for, or which are not in line with their talents. Others trained in courses that do not reflect their talents and passions. In this part of the world, it seems, the chief determinant of a professional path is not passion and talent but the grade that a person scores in final exams. So, are we doomed by the system? No. We can make a choice to be in it, but not caged by it. Pursue your ambitions. In this chapter, we discuss how to beat the education system at its own game.

The key to this lesson is learning to think for yourself. That sounds unbelievably simple, but when looked at closely, we realize that many of us seldom think. I do not refer to the passive everyday presence of thought in the mind, but the deep, focused and critical thinking about issues that leads to the discovery of new ways of solving problems. In this intensive state of thought, we began to discover ourselves and unearth salient beliefs that had been buried deep in our subconscious which influence our decision making without our notice. It is a process akin to ploughing a piece of land prior to farming. A farmer has to employ the best ploughs there is to turn the soil and bring up the nutrients that had seeped their way deep into the soil. This kind of thinking is a conscious rumination on mental curd, in order to understand ourselves.

Most of us millennials are lazy thinkers. We are smart and talented, and we pass our examinations well, but we never think for ourselves. We have let the internet, and more so social media, to think for us. We wake up each day and adopt the result of other people’s thinking then try to adapt it to our lives. We binge-watch movies and television series, scroll down Instagram timelines, letting our minds absorb other peoples’ trends, fashion styles and ideologies. We lie to ourselves that that’s the way life should be. In the process, we have transferred to people we do not know the most valuable of our gifts, the ability to create and dictate the reality of our own lives. Hence, we live in an ‘artificial’ reality that’s hugely unauthentic, copy-pasting peoples’ opinions onto our lives.

One can only achieve greatness if they do the right thing consistently over a long period of time. You will never get there with one stroke, but with another, and another, and another, you will begin to create something so beautiful than you think is possible. We need to learn the habit of patience. To understand that one does not eat the fruit on the same day that they plant the tree. There is a process. The game of life is not finite but infinite. The goal should not be to just win but to stay in the game for as long and sustainably as is possible.

The best things in life are developed slowly, they need to be given time to grow roots and develop a solid foundation. The journey will be slow and painful, and only the most determined will be willing to hold it out to the end. Anyone one can begin it, but it is only those who have commitment who will be willing to trust the process, bearing the challenges, it brings and holding it out to the very last minute. It is neither the fastest nor the strongest that make it, it’s the most committed.

Success is really a measure of the level of your pain threshold. For how long are you able to withstand the necessary pain and discomfort as you work your way to your goal? Because most people give up as soon as the first disappointment comes by. If you have determined that your life is going to take a certain course, never give up on that. It is your stick - ability to a certain set of goals and principles that determine your ending.

To maintain your patience, you must learn to see the value of small steps. We may make huge leaps when we are feeling motivated, but what’s really heroic is the ability to make the small steps when we feel tired and about to give. There are days when we feel dry and forlorn inside, the fire that burnt when the idea was conceived seems to have vanished on these days. Do we simply stop and give up, and go on long for another idea that excites us?

The true measure of commitment is the decision to not listen to the voice of despair, but to look deep inside for the voice that always transcends all challenges; the indomitable hope of the human soul, and to draw on it to push us forward through the dull days. One small step at a time.

Oftentimes people suffer because of underestimating the difficulty of tasks they are involved in.

Life is complex and difficult. It is by no means easy. That is especially true in the 21st century, where information has proliferated and essentially become a form of currency.

**Information**

Today we live in a knowledge economy where information is a currency of exchange.

This century has been marked by increase in the amount of information that each person has to deal with on a daily basis. Right from personal lives, family, and career, there are just so many puzzles that we have to solve if we are to enrich our lives.

There is a lot to know and, apparently, there is not enough time to cover it all. Job interviews reveal just how much is demanded of the employee of the 21st century.

The most powerful nations today pride themselves not only in their powerful militaries but also in technologies which enable them to acquire intelligence – about their people, and their enemies alike. Today, data accomplishes what ammunition and fighter jets cannot.

Technology has brought the world’s information to our fingertips. Libraries that covered entire town squares are now in contained in our pockets; with the touch of a button or the swipe of a screen, we have the ability to open portals to distant worlds, read millions of books, meet our friends and solve complex calculations.

Knowing is not enough.

Perhaps worse than the knowledge burden facing us is the fact that the knowledge in itself is not enough.

Finding the right information and ingesting it is difficult in itself, but stopping there will be as good as if one had not started. The process of learning is only complete and effective if we apply the mind critically on this information, understand it and apply it well in our individual situations.

That is by no means an easy thing …

But you have a brain

We have been gifted with perhaps the most astonishingly intricate and wonderful fetes of creation in the entire universe. Your brain is a work of art, made so ingeniously as to know no limits; with sufficient mastery and use, your brain can enable you to achieve whatever ambitions you might have, to withstand and defeat any challenge that comes your way.

Then, why do we miss the potential of this wonderful gift?

One has to consciously master their brain and get it to do what they desire. Left on its own, the brain would prefer to lay tools down, stay idle and atrophies. It is resistant to pressure and always seeks to maximize pleasure.

That is why it is so hard to resist the temptation of some sugar and calorie rich food, to get out of bed on a cold morning or sit down to read a difficult subject. These are uncomfortable things to ask of your brain, and therefore it will resist.

When you set a goal for yourself, you have to convince your brain to come on board and help you get there. Yes, sometimes it will suggest that you stop working too hard and relax, but you must remind it that,’ I am not about to give up’. The journey to destiny is marked by many episodes of getting your mind to do your bidding, nudging it and sometimes pushing it towards the higher goal.

Learning to manage your mental capacity is a super power that will pay off richly with time. You are not your brain. It is a tool to help you understand a complex world and solve difficult puzzles. Use it. Impostor syndrome is when a person feels doubtful of their ability, in fear that they will be perceived as a cheat or incompetent.

I think it's better to focus more on being knowledgeable and 'enlightened' than to be 'educated' in the traditional sense.

The point is to make you educated enough to be employable but keep you unenlightened enough to be governable.

The first step in this is to develop a humility towards knowledge and an honest acknowledgement of your ignorance. Appreciate that you know little, or nothing, and then begin the journey of discovery.

Some people prefer to identify a subject of interest and read on it, gaining deep and focused expertise on one area. I however think it's wise to explore outside your field. If you are in engineering, know a good bit of history, art, literature et cetera.

It's useful not to ignore the importance of mentors and teachers. Their experience can prove more valuable than anything you will find in a book. All in all,

Stay hungry, stay foolish.

**Creation**

Maybe we can borrow some wisdom from Physics to help us gain insight into building a successful business.

First of all, a business is, in simple terms, a team of people working alongside machines and using defined processes to solve a problem at a profit. Therefore, a business is mainly centered on the people. We may have all the best machines and processes, but it is ultimately important to make the most of the human resource if a business is to be outstanding.

People are not easy to manage. Keeping a team of highly motivated, smart individuals is hard. It will call for a degree of social and emotional intelligence for people to trust you enough to want to follow you.

The point is to pull together the collective positive energy of your team and channel it towards fulfilling the vision.

Talking of energy, Physics tells us that it is neither created neither can it be destroyed. The universe has a fixed amount of energy, which can be transferred from one form and point to another. I believe the same apply to the ‘energy’ in a company.

Your staff have energy, that they spend doing many things. Attending to their families. Fulfilling their duties at work. Even following social media and keeping up with their friends.

Get to the office one day early in the morning, and just observe the beehive of activity happening there. A staff member is sharing some light chat with a colleague. Another is running papers in the printer. Someone is consulting with a senior. Sending mail. Making coffee. The activities are endless.

Now ask yourself, what percentage of these activities are actually contributing to the vision of the company? All this is energy being dissipated. Is it going towards driving the company forward? Is it pulling it back? Are we just stagnated at the same place we were before?

Energy is not static. It must produce an effect. Energy must do something, whether positive or negative.

Our country is currently in a situation where it needs a new type of corporation. A corporation with a definite vision and a drive to change things in a significant way.

It seems, as things are, the government through its various ministries is not well capable of solving the problems of our country. Persistent corruption and a general lack of seriousness on the part of our public servants is the cause of this.

We need a new breed of entrepreneur who is not just out to make profit alone but who is genuinely committed to solve the most important problems in the country such as sustainable energy, food production and poverty in general.

These are not easy endeavors. However, with the right insights, time and money they are doable. A well-defined and managed corporation is key.

Therefore, it would be useful to go back and re-evaluate your company on the basis of energy and you will be surprised at how much clarity it brings to issues. Leadership becomes easier since the leader can focus on encouraging those activities whose net potential energy is positive with regards to the direction the company is supposed to head to, and discourage all the others.

This paradigm is necessary in maximizing the productivity of all employees in the company.

That is a recipe for building a good economy and a great country.

Because we are African and Africa is our business.

# II Impulse – Facing Inward

**Why Care?**

*Purpose is that sense that we are part of something bigger than ourselves, that we are needed, that we have something better ahead to work for. Purpose is what creates true happiness – Mark Zuckerberg*

The human brain is one of the most magnificent creations in the universe. Despite substantial progress in neuroscience in past years, only about 20% of the potential of the human brain has so far been mapped. Endowed with billions of neurons and cells, it is second to no supercomputer made by man.

From the moment we are born, the brain begins receiving signals from the environment and forming conceptual models of the world around us. Everyone lives in their own subjective reality that is created by their unique brain activity in receiving information from the environment and interpreting it.

Nothing escapes the human mind, not even that which we do not remember consciously. Even the minute and mundane details of everyday life are buried somewhere deep inside your brain. The color of the shirt that you wore fifteen years ago on the twelfth day of March, the name of the stranger you met in a bus ten years ago, the number of artefacts you saw in a museum during a class visit four years ago, what you had for dinner ninety days ago – all this information is stored in your brain, and you do not even know it consciously! And that is just the tip of the iceberg.

The rather uncomfortable news is that any unhealthy information that you consume on a daily basis is also stored in your brain. The violence in movies, all the information on social media, and every single word you hear – it lies there in your subconscious, quietly but ultimately shaping the person that you become. That is why the Bible rightly says ‘*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he’*- the *heart* is metaphorical reference to the subconscious mind. It therefore does matter much what you are actively thinking about - it is the material in your memory that you are not even aware that it exists which is constantly defining you. That is what should be delt with first.

Are we, therefore, helpless beings under the massive potential of our powerful brains? In a more sinister perspective, are we slaves to our minds? The answer is yes, and no. Yes, because *you are what you think*. And no because *you can control your thoughts*. You can determine what your subconscious self ruminates over behind the scenes by actively choosing the material that you feed it with. That is why it is important to mind what you see and hear.

David in the Bible identified a problem, pitched a solution and delivered accordingly. Sometimes it is necessary to not trust the experts who purport to dictate the execution of your dream but in essence want to abort it. Saul tried to advise him, but the moment was not a test of expertise but courage and faith.

You need to realize when it is necessary to lose a little faith in that degree you worked so hard to attain because its ability to take you to your destiny is limited. Sometimes we miss out on destiny by holding too tightly to our academic past not realizing that academic credentials are a tool for serving our individual purposes in life. Degrees and diplomas are not meant to write your life’s duty on stone. They should be viewed as crucial additions to the innumerable vaults of potential and ability already deposited in the individual. There is this dangerous idea that a degree is something one does to occupy them in their early twenties before they venture out and get on with their lives. The narrative goes on that these brief three or four years of undergraduate studies draw the defining boundaries for one’s future endeavors. This is a dangerous myth. While past experiences and education are important in preparing one for future assignments, they should not make you remain tethered to one position all your life.

There will always be valid reasons to discredit you from launching into a new level. For David, it was his age and apparent lack of experience. Your past record will be quoted to prove that you are unfit for the challenge. Some seniors are especially good at playing this game when they sense that a young person is a threat to their selfish sense of power and competence. Whether you choose to listen to the critics and cynics or to trust your capacity for performance is your choice. The price you pay for doubting your capability and strength is the life that you could have lived if you didn’t. Otherwise, one gets caught up in a state of success paralysis - being at the verge of breakthrough but afraid of stepping into it because you are unaccustomed to the prospect of winning.

Have you ever been under the spell of your purpose so strongly that trying to escape just brings pain and intolerable discomfiture in every area of your life? That the reason why sometimes you need to go for what you believe to be necessary; not as an expression of authority, but as a response to destiny.

And while you are at it, train yourself in humility. Inasmuch as your capacity for accomplishment is unlimited, it is not always that you are right. There is power in detaching from your pride and letting external information influence your mindset. There are people that will be introduced into your life to mentor you and shape you. They have been where you want to be and your dream is their present reality. You can only stay away from such people at your own peril.

Do not let egotistic moral and ideological cocoons deceive you. The truth is that there are people whom you need in your life but whose personal and perhaps religious beliefs do not align with yours. Young people will often choose to stay away from such people in fear that they will influence them with their ‘bad’ ideals. For example, young Christian men and women will only look within their immediate congregations for guidance and mentorship. Whatever their pastor cannot advise on is not in their domain of necessary of knowledge. These people will reject opportunities for stimulating intellectual conversations and moments of learning because the individuals that initiate them are not from their faith or their church. Such attitudes extend to the choice of reading material and books. Young people want to read only topics that align with their ingrained belief systems and which confirm their perspectives in life. Serious philosophical writings which touch on sensitive issues about life are avoided because they can be ‘dangerous’ and destabilizing to one’s structures of belief. Why are young people so mentally and ideologically stiff at precisely the age that a human being is supposed to refine his or her belief systems by exploring diverse perspectives?

Structure is necessary for the human soul. Your belief systems define the world for you and they are the lens through which you give meaning to your existence. It would be impossible for you to be a well-functioning human being without the ideals, beliefs and convictions that you hold. In fact, they are so important that the human mind is wired to protect them. That is the reason why people suddenly become combative and defensive whenever you offer them new information that seems to discredit their beliefs. It is a psychological mechanism for survival and a necessary one at that.

You may wonder why it necessary to alter your beliefs and mental programs if they are so fundamental to your survival. The reason is that what you think and believe about yourself and the world can be – and is most often – wrong.

That is not because you are not intelligent enough but it is because as a human being you are naturally and irreparably irrational. Your mind is almost always removed from reality unless there is a deliberate effort made to see the world more objectively. Besides, the sources that you developed your beliefs from – most likely your parents and your friends – were either biased or wrong in relation to your own needs. These people are not bad but they usually want to train you to view the world the way that they do, and the way that they were trained to. In fact, sometimes your parents will pass onto their unsuspecting son or daughter the systems of thought and tools of interpreting the world that they used when they themselves were young. For a young person in their twenties and whose parents are in their fifties, they will be parented from a 1980 perspective because it was at that time when the parent was in their twenties too. There is nothing wrong with 1980 but there the world has changed a lot since then. Not only was there no Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, but the career and social realities of the 21st Century are also completely different from those of 1980. The university experiences, outcomes and expectations of this era are also very different. There is a generational difference between the young person and their parents that cannot be ignored. Therefore, despite how well-meaning parents may be, there is a mindset and skillset necessary for living an impactful life in the 21st Century that they are not passing onto their sons and daughters. Young people are thereby paying dearly for attempting to survive the career and social demands of the 21st Century by using a system of thinking that is twenty years late.

That is the reason why it is important to add to your ambition a commitment to reprogram your mind. This will not be a one-time miracle but a duty that you will fulfill for the rest of your life. The world is changing fast. Technology and globalization have created a new global standard predicated on change. Personal dynamism is therefore mandatory for thriving in the modern, 21st Century world. Not only must you continually identify and shed off limiting mental strongholds but also intent to develop effective ones. Do not let your pride keep you from re-learning how to think and see the world. Remember, a bad day for the ego is always a good day for the soul.

Inside-out Approach

Think of a youthful Kenyatta, Odinga Saitoti or Ngugi Thiong’o walking down the dusty streets of some colonial town in Kenya. What is in his mind? Does he have plans to reshape history? Or does he have a hunch that he will be read in history? What goes on in the minds of heroes to be?

Success is a garden. It is not a jungle. To rise from the depth of having nothing and achieve a goal requires focused action and careful tending. There should be a clear and founded mental frame with a strong determination but more importantly a clear sight of tomorrow. You cannot get there through thoughtless wandering or un

Individual net worth does not refer to financial assets alone. It is the totality of the person’s character, values and personality - the sum total of who they are. The type of person you become determines the profit you make in life. It is self-defeating to focus only on financial outcomes when these are predicated on the person that you are. Unless you despise smallness of mind and life passionately, and be keen to avoid rottenness of character and weakness of mind, you are far away from the place you want to be. Remember, whatever you do not change you allow.

We need to get to a point of thinking seriously about the future. Not simply wishing for better days or hoping for change. Will you deliberately and strategically think about the future and make concrete plans for years to come? Even if that plan won’t be followed to the letter, which is usually the case, at least you will have a plan to deviate from. And that is very important. It serves to give you a sense of direction and purpose. Jordan B. Peterson notes in his book ‘Maps of Meaning’ that human beings are aiming beings. You need something to aim for, a channel to focus your energy and attention to. Otherwise, you become overwhelmed by the weight of your own wandering thoughts. When you define your plan, you also by default define your areas of non-concern, thereby giving your life structure. Deciding the places and levels you want to be at automatically keeps you from being at the wrong places. It is impossible to understand what you want if you don’t decide what you don’t want.

Excellence is a lifestyle. It is a habit you form by which you consistently deliver excellent results despite the time and place you are at. You will sometimes fail, and more often that you may expect. But the failure will be the exception but not the norm. Create a structure and stability in your life that makes this the default. Plan excellence into your routine and you will reap success in at the end of the day. Be deliberate, agile and very smart in the way that you position yourself in life because where you stand determines the whether the sun shines or the rain falls above you.

Your natural ability given by the creator matters. The earlier you come to terms with that the better off you will be. It defines the extend of your possibilities and the reach of your limitations. Yet you may never come close to the edges of this potential in your lifetime simply because of its sheer immensity. Your life’s work should be to constantly reach for the higher echelons of your capacity and master your limitations.

Establish a habit of continuous consideration and do not be too proud. The world is more complex than you imagine; approach it with cautious confidence. Be inspired to change it, but if it happens that you cannot change the world for everyone, do not fail in changing the world for one person. Do not let the pomposity of ambition prevent you from seeing the simple ways in which you can impact your immediate environment. There are people near you whom you can help. Start there and enlarge your circle of influence as you go. In his book ’12 Rules for Life’ Jordan B Peterson gives the advice: ‘Before you think about changing the world, clean your room first’.

Do not just feed your mind with information; learn to use it to bring results in your life. Do not get caught up in ideological whimsies that only take you farther away from reality. Thinkers and dreamers do well but they often remain to dream and think as others take action and change things. You can only make impact by implementing ideas and not drooling over them. Remember, life is like a blank canvas and the final picture depends on what you paint on it.

**‘As a man thinketh…’**

Perhaps the most powerful law of our existence is that the quality of your life is the direct result of the quality of thoughts that you think. It is delusional to hope that you can rise above your own thoughts. In fact, you don’t get to choose the life that you want– you can only choose your thoughts, and your thoughts then determine the life you will live.

However, the miracle of our reality is that you can select the thoughts that you think. There is room to choose to ignore toxic and degenerative thoughts and focus on productive thoughts. Consciously tune your mindset. And mindset means just that - what you have set your mind on. The mind is the antenna that detects reality, interprets it and determines how you move through the world. Whatever your mind is attuned to will be your reality and you therefore mark out the extends of your domain of possibilities through the thoughts that you create. No wonder then that the Apostle Paul in the Bible requires believers to set their minds on things above and not on things below. You will always excel in the direction that your mind is set on. When you sustain a teachability mindset, possibility mindset, abundance mindset and opportunity mindset, your life becomes richer and worthwhile.

As you master the world and learn to think for yourself, you will realize that everything in society is predicated on rules of conduct. People will tell you that you can only do this but not that. You can only come this far. This is what we do and this is what we don’t. These rules are set by individuals and groups to serve their interests. But the truth is that not all of these are as well intentioned as they seem. It is in the inherent nature of rules and norms to suppress individual growth for the sake of the stability of group. This is not always desirable. Learning to critically consider norms and rules and separate limiting rules from freeing rules is critical in the 21st century where everyone thinks they should tell you what to think and how to act.

The key here is not to blindly follow dogma but to learn to exercise independence of thought; and always break the rules whenever necessary.

Life should be lived with a sense of urgency and objectivity. Never settle until you have actualized your full, God given potential. Learn to live deliberately. At times, it becomes easy, and even convenient, to slow down the tempo of your life and encounter your years in slow-motion and in a laissez-faire attitude. You will be tempted to settle for the default conditions of life and ride with the tides in blind optimism, hoping that they will take you to beautiful worlds yonder. Or you can take a hold of the reins and steer your life to the places you want to go. This will call for greater responsibility on your part but it is the most optimal path in the long term.

Remember:

*“Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who choose to accept what has been given them, instead of exploring the choices they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact, it is an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration, it is a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is nothing.”* - Muhammad Ali.

**The starting point**

People find meaning by taking responsibility for their life and destiny and consciously making necessary effort towards that direction. This involves a fair degree of self-sacrifice and pushing oneself through obstacles because it is not easy. Personal indulgences and pleasures will be sacrificed in the moment for the sake of desired results in the future. It may mean waking up early in the morning, before everyone else, and working on your talents. Or you may need to hit the gym and do so when every part of your body is telling you not to. The body is wired to do what’s convenient and simple but in the soul are vaults of willpower that when drawn can influence the wholesome direction of one’s life.

You need to learn to muster yourself and focus your mental energies in the direction that you want your life to head to. The sages had it right: no pain, no gain. However, at times other times it will not be your weaker self that keeps you from rising above limitations but the people around you who will try to discourage you from dreaming and to dissuade you from doing what you must to achieve those dreams. The world has enough negative people distributed uniformly so that there will always be one around you. Be wary of the people who are so crushed by their own bitterness that their main duty is to rub it off others. They are the naysayers and the cowardly ones; people so full of negativity that they can’t stand your energy and enthusiasm.

Do not listen to them and do not allow your mind to be poisoned by their pessimism. They will wear you down with complains, doubts and fear until you neglect those dreams that you so dearly hold within you. Their goal is to wax your energy cold and dim your light so that you suffer like them. Misery loves company. Be aware that there are great deposits inside of you and that you owe it to yourself and the world to exploit them to the very last ounce. In the words of Thomas Jefferson:

*“It is better to have dared mighty things, than to rank with those timid souls who neither suffer much nor enjoy much”*

Understand that although you did not choose the circumstances of your birth, you been given the time and chance to define the conditions of your life. When you realize this and believe it, there can only be one way to go for you – upward. The move from grass to grace is not easy but it is possible. You may have been born with nothing to hold onto but hope. Parents may not have any wealth to bequeath you but an education, self-respect and discipline.

When you are handed an opportunity to change your story, you take it with every fiber of your being. Because you started with absolute nothing and worked their way from poverty you understand the value of hard work. You may have not made it yet, but you are almost there. Therefore, learn to celebrate. It is working. The effort that you have been putting in, the sweat and the tears have pushed some boundaries and shifted some limitations. Guess what? Your name is already being mentioned in places that your feet are yet to step into.

Do not to give up yet. You have come far, and although the way ahead may be harder it is not a match for the vaults of ability and will inside of you. Why would you think of ending your life when the One who made you still sees potential in you, still loves you? In the face of despair, hope is all that you have; but soon you will have all that you dreamt of. Do not stop dreaming and aiming because you are closer to your dream than you have ever been.

**Intentionality**

It is often an option that human beings have: to dissolve into the mundane rhythm of an uneventful life and live with the false hope that all will be alright. Spending a lifetime at the parking lot, without ever trying anything new or exposing oneself to challenges that are necessary to spurt personal growth and maturity. In that state, a person usually lets the society to dictate the course of his life, and the system to be the jury that passes judgement as to what they can and cannot do. The manacles of dogma and chains of the fear of the unknown eventually measure and cut out for them their little piece of life, as they drowsily spent their days meeting deadlines and paying bills, before their days eventually expire and go away as unnoticed as when they arrived. Sadly, as that pile of earth descends on their final six-foot deep resting place, the chants of ‘we are dust, to dust we shall return’ accurately but miserably sum up the life they have lived.

A life of always choosing to play it safe, a life of false security and unwillingness to face risks. Self-reassuring sentiments such as “No one has done ever it”, “I will do that when I’m older, married, or richer” are common with the people who choose to cower instead of facing and taking necessary risks. These are just masks to hide the fact that they are afraid to try. Fear of failure can cuff a human being and hold them prisoner in the cells of self-pity. This has been the story of many millennials. This is worrying because the 21st-century is the wrong time to take the tranquilizing drug of non-commitment. It is an age so full of opportunity that anyone from any part of the world has the full capacity to transform the world if they have the right ideas. It is a time of change and challenge alike. A century like no other whereby information is the currency of trade. In the past, a person had to own lands and slaves in order to be influential and successful. In the 21st century, you only need to know the right things and know them pretty well and that will make you the most powerful person on the planet. The age of horses and baronets is far gone, and the cyber age is here. While it is true that people are born into different backgrounds and degrees of fortune, making excuses for failing to utilize the opportunities of the moment to change one’ s life will not help.

There is nothing to gain by staying in the shadows, therefore we better risk the necessary for what we hope to achieve. Some circumstances may be out of our control, but there sure are those that we can control. Make a step to shape the future whenever you can. There is no glory in living below the radar for an entire lifetime. In fact, conformity will cost dearly. It is sad that years of mental conditioning by people who themselves have cowered to life have misinformed us about our potential. We have been trained on what we can and cannot do. As children, we aimed for the skies and dreamt of the stars: a child’s imagination knows no limitations. The problem is that as we grow up, we are told to be ‘realistic’, which means to trim down our dreams to the size of society’s norm. This preprogramming of our minds eventually sets embargos on the reach of our aspirations. Well, now you have a choice. You can either accept what people have told you that you can and cannot do and live a safe, ‘normal’ life, or you can discredit all their predictions and reach for your true potential.

“*And he gave each one coins according to his ability…”* – the gospel of Luke.

Each one of us is endowed with unique abilities that if put to use have the potential to bring untold dividends in our lives. The creator has enabled us in diverse ways so that no one has an excuse for staying poor all their life. This is quite a liberating idea if you come to think of it. The knowledge that there is one thing that you can do exceptionally well simply because it is hardwired into you. Everyone is born with talent(s). All there is to do is to discover it, then develop it.

The process of discovering talent is like a treasure hunter who discovers diamonds buried deep in the ground. The discovery alone is not the end, but the beginning of the journey to riches. Diamonds are normally contained in other sedimentary rock. In fact, for every one tone of rock debris quarried, only several hundred milligrams of diamonds exist. Much more work has to be put in separating the diamonds from the rock and dirt. In the same way, there is no doubt that enormous potential lies within each one of us.

Prior to discovering your talent, it is as good as non-existent. Even though you may unconsciously perform well in the area of that talent, you may not take the initiative to improve it, since you are unaware of it in the first place. Discovery of our latent talents must be a life-long endeavor. Following the discovery of talent is a deliberate effort to nurture it and give it an opportunity to grow. In that way, your talent will bear fruit and ultimately change your life.

*See a man skilled in his work? He will dine with kings.* – The Book of Proverbs.

This idea comes off as very simple and straightforward, but the fact that very many people live and die without ever having discovered and used their talents is worrying. One thing is true- people want to excel. They want to use whatever abilities they have to make their lives better. External factors often play a part in stopping them from actualizing this desire. There are three major hindrances to talent: Poor parenting, the education system and fear.

To remain stable and grounded in life, you will need advice and guidance to give you clarity and steer you through the complexity of life. Having solid wisdom handed to you protects you from the trap of becoming dogmatic. Always take every advice with a grain of salt. The important thing is to consider each piece of advice critically and find what works for you.

For someone in need of in-depth insight as opposed to quick-fix hacks, books are by far the best friends. It takes years of research and experience to author a book that you can read in a few days and change your life. Finding good books is one thing, *actually*reading them is another. There are many self-help books out there; choose one that resonates with your situation and read it. You will be grateful that you did.

A book will not answer all life’s questions because there is more to life than the logical. Be humble enough to seek answers to questions that transcend your cognitive echelons. Talk to a religious mentor and read a religious book. It is not advice that the soul needs at times, but a sense of completeness and purpose from a higher being. There is a genius in you that can be awakened if you are connected to something greater than yourself.

You can benefit more from listening to a wise person for an hour than from a thousand years of study. That is why it is important to embrace mentorship. Find people who have been where hope to go, who have walked the journey you are on and who are willing to share their lessons. However, remember that not every advice from old people should be taken because fools also grow old.

Technology has empowered us to meet and interact virtually with people across the globe. Some of those you meet on social media or other platforms are accomplished people from whom you can learn a lot. YouTube videos, Quora posts, tweets all can be invaluable sources of insight. Take some time each day and engage online with people you resonate with because there can be gems of insight hidden within the chaos of the internet.

**Commitment**

People are full of excitement and high expectations when they start off on a grand project, but, with time, when the challenges come and the tides rise, they are swallowed up in a wave of disillusionment and discouragement that results to procrastination which leads to aborted projects rusting off in folders and browser bookmarks.

I can bet that you have either unfinished blog post on WordPress, an abandoned project, a half-written book, a phone call yet to be made, or something that you keep procrastinating on daily. You are waiting for ‘motivation’ and ‘inspiration’ to come so that you can do the difficult stuff. Unfortunately, these are ephemeral and are not reliable sources of progress.

What is the need of starting something in the first place if we are never going to complete it? Why the hoping from one ‘grand’ idea to the next, but never focusing on one until it matures? Beginnings will always be fueled by feelings of motivation and the excitement of creating something new; but it takes more than a feeling - it takes *discipline* and raw *determination* - to pull off great results in the midst of discouraging situations. Decide not to start working on anything new for the next 30 days and instead focus on those important, yet incomplete ideas you once were excited about. You will feel better about yourself, more in control of your life, and also get the excitement of actually finishingsomething. You deserve that.

**Gifts**

A child’s first teacher is its parent. Right from birth, the child begins observing what the parents are doing as its mind, like a sponge in water, sucks it all in. As the child grows, the environment from which it learns expands, and with the passing of years, the child slowly but surely forms a personal world view- a conceptual understanding of the world and how things are. The parent still remains an important authority in this process.

A wise parent sets the child on a path to self-discovery and equips him/her with them necessary skills and attitudes to dare to exploit the potential. There is no greater gift to a child than that of a parent with this understanding. Many dreams are choked in early childhood at the hands of poor parenting. The parent may have the right intentions but end up making mistakes whose consequences will stay with the child for a lifetime.

Parents ought to instill in the child a sense of confidence in him/her. That self-belief alone is vital to enable the child to face the risks and hurdles in life. The child learns that failure can’t and shouldn’t define them and that it is simply a part of the journey. A human being who sees failure as a friend rather than a foe has already won half the battle. The process of discovering talent involves risks that the child must be prepared to face. It is one failure after another that eventually leads to success. It is the parent’s duty to see to it that this is done.

While the previous two are external, this is internal, and can only be bred, and fought, by the individual. Fear more often than not manifests as self-doubt. It is a notion we have about ourselves that is neither founded nor true. Very strict self-criticism or low self-esteem contribute to this feeling of insufficiency. The fact is, whether you believe you can, or you believe you cannot, you are right either way - and no one can do anything about it. You have to be always alive to the fact that there are immense abilities hidden deep within you. Remind yourself that every time you face challenges that seem to throw you off course. Be bold. It does not mean that you will never feel afraid, for how can we show courage if fear is non-existent? True courage is staying grounded even when we are afraid. There is a commonly held myth about talent. If you ask most people to name a list of talents, such names as music, sport and leadership will pop up. That is a very narrow understanding of talent and could make us fail to realize and exploit other talents.

A talent is a natural endowment that gives you an edge in a given area. In his best-selling book Gifted Hands, American neuro-surgeon Dr Ben Carson tells of what truly made him a master of the scalpel. Aside from his obvious brilliance, he discovered that he has a gift for eye-hand coordination, which comes in handy when performing delicate surgeries that require precision to the fraction of a millimeter. By developing his eye-hand coordination, Dr Carson has become has an icon in his field. He spends hours each day sharpening this talent each day at a pool table. Some of the truest talents are often those that you cannot put a name on. You simply know that you can accomplish a certain task very well without appearing to try hard, but you just don’t have a name for that ability. That right there is a talent that can be maximized upon. Get to work on it, sharpen it and it shall pay.

There is also another issue. What if, say, you have trained to become a lawyer since you are good at building coherent arguments, but you are also gifted at writing? Well, be a lawyer during the day and write stories the rest of the time. Attend to our day job from 8 to five p.m., then work on your talent thereafter.

**Living right**

I have realized that I have the sole responsibility and make the last decision of how my life will turn out. And I do not mean that one should be cocky and refuse to take any advice from people who seek to offer it. Take in all the advice that you possibly can, however, remember that you make the final choice, and whatever you decide upon you will stand to reap the rewards or suffer the consequences that follow. A person that lives his life according to what society tells him and, in the process, fails to pursue his personal convictions will have his own self to blame if his life turns out to be miserable.

That applies even to our parents. Yes, they want the best for us, and yes, they will point us in the direction that they are convinced will lead us to a good ending. But sometimes what worked for them in years past may not work for you in the 21st Century, where the rules have changed greatly. That has been a lesson I have learnt, that: You hold the last decision in how your life will turn out. Do not let dogma hinder you from pursuing your personal dreams and ambitions. In other words, do not listen to people, and not literally.

No one articulated this idea better than the late Apple boss Steve Jobs, in his 2005 commencement speech to the graduates of Stanford University. I read that speech a while ago and its magnificent words have stuck on my mind like glue. Whenever I am about to give up my ambitions because of the belief system that society seeks to impose on me whether deliberately or subconsciously, I remember Job’s words on that day:

*Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma — which is living with the results of other people’s thinking. Don’t let the noise of others’ opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.*

As we journey through life, seasons come when we feel like we are trekking through a desert. Times when nothing seems to be giving in despite our constant knocks. We are left asking ourselves why things are happening the way they are. We may be tempted to blame it on ourselves or on other people. It’s simply a time with no results, our efforts notwithstanding. If you live life without actually expecting it to be perfect, you will seldom be disappointed.

That does not imply walking around in negativity or always smelling for trouble. But there is a level of maturity you get to and you acquire a kind of inner peace in knowing that time and again, life will be hard and seemingly unfair. It does not matter how good you are or how smart and talented you may be, the world will somehow find a way to disappoint you.

Anyone can enjoy the victories in life, but the real and tough test of men and women is how they handle the bitter sections of it. How you handle failure and defeat? Does it break you and leave you sprawled on the ground, without the will to get up and soldier on? It is only those who have the will to stand, dust themselves up and face life again with a smile who eventually make a meaningful impact in the world. It’s not just the swift and the fastest who finish the race, but those who are able to bear it out to the very end. Do not rank among the spineless individuals who run away after the first scare. As long as you have determined in your heart to do a certain thing, and you are absolutely sure that it is what you want, then there is no obstacle big enough to stop you. The question is not whether you will fail or not – it is whether you are willing to learn from your failures instead of letting them break you. Be soft and cool on the outside but hard and unbreakable on the inside. The power of the human soul is immense, draw on it to take you through the dark times.

The way you conduct yourself while in the valleys of life will determine how long you are going to last on the mountain tops. Use your time in the valley to prepare yourself for the climb. Be careful not to fall into the temptation of channeling the frustrations that the valley brings into habits and behaviors that will ruin you. Sometimes people will give up and turn to drunks and sexual indulgencies for solace, instead of taking the opportunity to work on themselves and polish their skills. The best time to develop yourself is the time when you are not in a position of influence and not so many people are looking because then you can make mistakes and not be accountable to very many people. Take advantage of that opportunity.

# III Transcendence – Facing upward

*Every philosophical inquisition, every curiosity, all search into wisdom, brings us full circle to one timeless truth: be a just human being, do no harm to others and Love your God.*

**Reality**

In the tranquil stillness of a garden, or the deep silence of a desolate place; the wind still and the sky clear; I feel myself; I sense my soul as if it were a close friend, and the throbbing of my heart in my chest; The rhythm of life, the seed of existence. Then my mind opens a gate to a place of wonder. I exist. I am here; someone, an entity, a person. In an instant, I am like a spectator upon my own existence. I see the young man pushing his way through the business of the world; day in, day out, he does not tire, he never gets enough. Hoping the next day will be better than the last. Unaware of his mortality, he thinks he will live forever. Who thinks of the end when the prime of youth just peaked? Then I understand that this is the fate of all humans. Trapped in their own existence. Working. Drinking. Laughing. Crying. Falling in love. Forgetting. Beings seemingly lost in a cosmic game of chess in which they are the pawns. One leaves today, never to return. Others cry for him. They forget. Life continues.

Everyone has their day planned for them. But, while they can, they live. They work, make profit. They work some more, earn some more. Some fall in love with the things, the money. And lose their souls. Do not love possessions. It’s a trap. While we are here, we live. We do good. We love, and help others. Has a soul shone brighter because of you? Has a day been better for someone because you lend a hand? Then you have lived. You have lived well. It is the little things. They matter.

Be grateful. Having it all? Be grateful. Lacking anything? Let gratitude not leave your heart. Peace. It cannot be bought. You create it. Through good thoughts. The right people. Give peace and it comes back to you. Do not be conceited. Pride precedes a fall. To go high you must first go low. Trust. Believe. Say a prayer. It works. And what sets man apart from beast? It’s the brain. Use it. Growth is a process. Educate your mind, feed your soul. Do not settle. That is our lot as human beings. We have to live. So, while you are here, Vivere Memento!

The Inner Questioning

Does our existence have any significance against this unfathomable grandeur of nature? Why are we really here? In fact, what is reality?

Our minds wrestle and tussle with these questions. The incessant questioning of our souls gnaws and nibs on the concrete wall of reality, thirsting for meaning.

Meaning. That ever elusive word. What is the essence of it all? Why is there something, and not nothing at all? Why do we exist?

And since we already are here – what are we to do?

And despite all of the uncertainty, the human soul holds onto the dual anchor of faith and hope. Yes. We may not know the meaning of this reality, and we may not have all the answers; ek, we may not even know what comes after our fleeting lives, but we are sure that we are supposed to be here now; and we trust that the silent compass in our souls will lead us to our rightful destiny.

That is the genius of human nature.

We may be small and insignificant, yet we dare to reach for the stars.

The antidote for chaos

All that there is, by means of nature, is chaos.

We feel it in the heaviness of emotion. We see it in the reality of catastrophe. We live in it. Disorder is the perfect order of our lives.

Total surrender to life is the defense against uncertainty. In it you reach a point of no resistance; you lend yourself to the pain that births relief, the chaos that brings order and the death from whence cometh life.

Being alive, means flowing with reality. Falling in sync with the heartbeat of the universe.

So that when it rises you rise with it, and when it falls you likewise fall with it. Like a paper boat on the high seas. You do not resist nor desist. You just let go.

Because that is the tragedy of our existence.

Yet, maybe, if you really listen keenly, in the noise of chaos and the eeriness of the universe, the shaking of the leaf and the turn of the galaxies; even in the cry of the child and the booming of thunder; in the trickle of a tear and the fall of a cyclone – in all of the universes, somewhere, you will feel the hush of His voice and the tenderness of His love.

Nietzsche put it well: There are two ways to live your life; as if nothing is a miracle or as if everything is a miracle.

Change is the greatest constant of life. I have changed. By youthful naivety and unbowed ambition, I have evolved to the person I am today.

Yet you are still a work in progress.

Learn to be a good student of the school of life. It trains one through fire. If you submit yourself to it you come out a dazzling version of your former self.

Onward we journey on the trails of this galactic epic, making memories and rewriting history.

**Love**

Love is made possible by the imperfection of human nature. It is because each one is flawed that each one should receive love. It is not possible to love a perfect human being. Then what would be the reason for love? Love, by its nature, is garment for nakedness and balm for brokenness. Your being broken makes you deserving of love, not undeserving of it. And when imperfect people love each other, there the universe finds its strangest, perfect magic.

Love is when someone sees your darkness and doesn’t run away. They shine their light for you, hold your hand and walk you right of it.

They say that the heart wants what it wants. But as far as the wants of the heart go, it is without a doubt that we are living in very strange times. When in the twenties, hormones are really boiling hot as young men and women prepare to settle down in marriage. The dating game is taken a notch higher, each one looking for a suitable mate to settle down with. It’s not always about settling down, however. A good number are just in it for the fun and thrill of the game. Others want the sex. More often than not, these goals mismatch leading to broken hearts.

Dating is quite the buzz among twenty-somethings. People want to fall in love and fulfil their childhood dreams of meeting their angel knight in shining armor who stoops down to save a damsel in distress. Furthermore, movies and soap operas have fed our romantic fantasies the more. (Bollywood movies are particularly exaggerative in this regard).

It is cool to be seeing someone, and strange not to. Most people bend to the pressure and get into relationships for the wrong reasons and unprepared. Tales of love stories that ended bitterly with homicides or suicides are common. The dreams of a happily ever after come crashing down and take a precious life with them.

Unmeditated romantic involvement and sexual indulgence can cause one to miss their destiny. There is nothing more destructive than sex when misused, and yet most young people seem to have whetted their appetites. When all is said, it remains a fact that poor handling of romantic relations is a sin before God. It is He who made human beings to love- but He designed the institution of marriage for the expression of romantic love. Any other ideology is man’s invention and it is sin. Remember, God made man simple but he has made himself complicated.

Inside every man and woman is a strong desire to be loved and appreciated, and to give love too. The attraction we experience towards the opposite sex may, however, be lust, infatuation or true love. Our minds are particularly poor at differentiating between the three, and there lies a big pitfall.

In the 21st-century, morals have particularly been redefined, and the once-clear lines between what is right, what is wrong and what is permissible have been blurred. Everything seems okay, as long as it makes the individual feel ‘good’. A culture of self-centeredness and self-seeking attitudes has deeply permeated the 21stcentury society. A ‘me-first’ mentality that has covered people- especially young people- like a menacing dark cloud. It is a time when the concern is for me, myself and I –selfishness that is costing us dearly. People making decisions only based on the benefits it will bring them, and giving no thought to the feelings of other people. That’s why society has become shamelessly corrupt and impunity has poisoned our political circles. People chasing their own desires even if it leaves a mess behind them. A truly man-eat-man society.

It is this ‘me-first’ mentality that has affected our social fabric and sense of morality. The logic is that, as long as it ‘feels’ good for me at the moment, it does not matter what effect it may have in the future- I want it now. Or when I am done with this relationship, I just walk away- the other partner can sort themselves. Other people’s feelings do not matter to me as long as I have my way. This has resulted in valuing things over people and putting a price tag on stuff that’s priceless. This is the malady that ails our relationships, and not until we deal with this sense of selfishness, we will continue to chase love but it will remain just a fantasy. A ‘we’ mentality is urgently needed.

The media and popular culture have played a big role in teaching and promoting these self-centered ideologies. Even popular songs that are meant to be love songs often deny the very essence of love- unconditional and selfless.

There is one more reason why relationship is failing, which I term the ATM complex – a ‘get-it-now’ mentality. Most young people want things now, and if not now then they must have them right now. Just like an automated teller machine where one presses a button and cash is dispensed instantaneously, they seem to want to apply the same to relationships.

This kind of thinking is attributable to the kind of 21st century world that we live in, where technology and scientific breakthroughs have made almost every service instant. Want a cab? No problem. Just launch an app and book one. Need food? Easy. Order it online and it will be delivered to your doorstep in no time. Would like to watch a movie? Easy peasy. You do not have to go to the theatres; just stream it online, and internet speeds are insanely fast. Information is being sent around the globe in seconds. Anything that one needs, just tap a button or a swipe a screen and you get instantly. With dating sites, it has never been easier to hook up without having to practice the nuances of social life. We have severely lost our patience.

The problem is that some things cannot be got instantly. Love does not come in an instant, it is groomed with time and grows slowly. A successful marriage is not built in a day, a month or even a year. Wealth is grown slowly and consistently, yet most people dream of getting rich fast and quick. These things cannot be hurried. They take time. Yet we want them at the san of a finger, and that is where we fail.

**Purpose**

Why are we really here? What is the essence? Without doubt, success has a sizeable claim to the answer to that question. But, feeling good - that’s what we are here for. And don’t hurt people while at it.

Few things in life are useful. Most of what we encounter are just noises. Endeavor to sift through the noise and find the real value beneath. The universe will let you lose your way before you can find your way. It’s only the lost who appreciate direction.

When life wants you to fulfill duty, it first throws you into the rough waters. You will be taken from the straight road to an unmarked wilderness. From the comfort of the ship to the turbulence of the sea. Whenever you make up your mind to mean something, to be useful, you enter into the first stage which is the stage of chaos. In this season, whatever was working for you and keeping you comfortable immediately. A decision to change your life is a decision to make face chaos. The order that you have been basking in metamorphoses into disorder. Remember that the natural order of the universe is disorder, and you are seeking to alter that state, and reality will give you the test of chaos. The stable family life is shaken when the successful lawyer decides to chase his dreams and run for public office. The stable monthly paycheck will not arrive after you quit your dream job to build your dream. Chaos, discomfort and uncertainty will test you before you cross to the place of your calling. Many avoid it. The uncertainty is too much. After all, they have a family that depends on them and an image to maintain. It is not bad to not want to endure the pain of this uncertainty. The excuses you will make are sensible and by any means right. One will have their comfort to keep. But the price you pay for hesitating is the life you could have lived.

Understanding pain is key to being a good human being.

**Faith**

So, the other time I was in the company of friends with a taste for philosophy. Just in the company of people who might care enough to wonder about life. And the topic of religion was brought up.It is handled without pomp. Just honest, curious colleagues letting their thoughts out, their words whispering aloud and bouncing around in the air, meeting and cuddling with those of their likeminded friends, and eventually producing nice thought-babies.

So, I imagine such moments and get goosebumps – the soft, wishful sort of goosebumps because such situations mean so much to me. I think people who care about these things are rare. Who care about meaning and life and the meaning of life. And gods and dreams and death. Not caring with an aim to prove anything, but caring just because they have a brain to use.

So, the conversation went as follows:

Friend 1: Are you religious?

Me: I believe that there are …err… ‘realities’ which I do not perceive, which by my mind I cannot understand, and which life? are out there (or perhaps in here?) and which actively influence my destiny as a person.

Friend 2: I see. But are you a religious person? Do you believe in God?

Me: Well, I do believe in what I don’t see.

Friend 1: In God?

Me: I know that the scope of what I perceive is as real as the things that I don’t see. There is a metaphysical, super-cosmic reality which influences my being and my destiny. I may not understand it, nor explain it, but I cannot deny it. This realm can either work for or against my existence as a human being. Yet my thoughts, decisions and actions also influence its course.

Friend 2: You arguments are vague.

Me: Well, I believe in what I don’t see. I do not know if that makes me religious, or mad.

Friend 1: Mad men believe in what they see, but it is usually not real. You believe in what you don’t see, but that which you don’t see is real. You are not mad – you are a believer.

**Programming**

Television is a disease of the modern age. Technology’s curse for mankind. Science gives us avenues to advance human condition and help people, but man almost always finds ways to misappropriate it. TV is our most ingenious experiment of that kind so far.

It is corporate propaganda packaged in a colorful box and delivered right into our rooms. Before our eyes. At the center of the family. It is an evil propaganda medium. You think there are ‘programs’ on TV? You are right; the mind captors program our minds constantly, taking 3-minute breaks every now and then to feed the consumerism demons. Turning an entire human generation into robotic purchasing objects. They are not supposed to think. Think about what they really need. Why should they when adverts have pushed consumeristic desires down their skulls? Who is thinking at the mall? Who? They are all robots running on programs fed by the TV. Mechanically walking between the shelves of endless enticing nothings all pushed on them by the evil corporates. We have killed the human race and the zombies are among us.

Get yourself from the sofa where you keep sucking from this seed of evil and go do something that actually helps mankind. Be human. Again. They won’t stop pushing their programs onto your mind. It is called capitalism baby. Deny them your attention.

Seriously. Sometimes you have to drop that all-series façade and get out there and have some fun. Yes, there are crazy deadlines to meet, goals to reach and serious matters to attend to. But first, you need to do a simple yet important thing – attend to yourself. We live in a crazy fast-paced world. Everything and everyone seem to be a hurry. It’s as if we all left late. Students are overwhelmed by assignments, parents are very busy with the kids, and CEOs are busy running the corporate octopus, mangers trying to make their financial books to balance. Everyone’s cup is filled to the brim.

The little remaining time we have left is spent gazing at screens and scrolling down social media feeds. We are constantly plugged into our little pleasure points- our smartphones, laptops, and television sets, following people we have never met and liking posts to please our friends or posting pictures for the adrenaline rush. We are on WhatsApp viewing statuses while we sink deeper into self-worry thinking how miserable our lives must be compared to the glamorous ones we see on Instagram. We are busy doing nothing much in these artificial prisons. And that’s or definition of fun.

Well, why not try something different. Switch off the gadgets, go out of the house and have some real fun- and hike, an afternoon at the beach, a stroll on the grass? We often underestimate how taking our lives a little less series and make our years more worthwhile. I have personally been a victim of this. Growing up, I caught the perfectionist bug, and it did bite real hard. My life was defined on the lines of ‘perfect’ grades, ‘perfect’ behavior, ‘perfect’ everything. Anything short of perfect was, according to me, a catastrophe. Little did I know that I was missing on the essence of life itself?

I love history. If there is one thing, I have learnt from it, it is the sheer magnitude of the human story. Man has been around for axons and axons of time. We who are alive today are not the first ones to be here. Many have gone before us and many more will come after we are gone. Before you were born, the cosmos was running fine and well, and it will not blow up after you have left. We are just threads in the large fabric that is human history. Therefore, taking a little break and actually enjoying life will definitely not hurt. To put it more blatantly, the pleat does not spin on your shoulders- so take a break. A story is told of aerating man, who, on his deathbed, was asked what he cherishes most about the life he had lived. With a tired look in his dimming eyes, he said that those moments he spent with family and friends, doing nothing more than enjoying life is the ones that lingered on his memory with his greatest joy. In those final minutes when the life is leaving us and the embers of our soul are flickering into darkness, the wealth, fame, and accolades will matter less.

Most young people do not need a lecture on how to have fun. To many of them, YOLO (you only live once) is their life’s slogan and always stay true to it. Intoxicated by life itself, they know just where t fish for fun. And they always find it. Lots of it. Campus life is particularly outstanding in this regard. What’s saddening though is that we have somehow crossed the thin line between fun and irresponsibility. All things must be done in moderation, remember. Choices have consequences.

Social media - It does not allow us to see the depth of people’s character, feel their true emotions and understand their deepest desires. Instead, we have to work with the instant flash of a camera on a smiling face, a sparkling dress or a crisp suit and a supple background of green. We only show the highlights and carefully hide away the ugly details. Yet that is what life is all about – the rough edges, the stupid moments and the awkwardness that defines us.

Is this social media culture a bane to our humanity? How much is our inner self bleeding from the pressure of the one-sided lie of internet perfectionism? When we are fed with the semi-deified captions of celebrities which are not only impractical but also sadly deceiving. Are we breeding a social, psychological and moral cancer?

It is useful to have in mind that what we share on social media are not meant to the ‘us’ that we are. Those profiles are simply images that we carefully package and sale to the world. Those who approve of them online then pay us with likes and follows. (Justin Rostein, the Facebook engineer who in 2007 came up with the idea of the ‘Like’ button, claims that it has become ‘too successful’ and therefore a major threat to psychological well-being. He famously uninstalled the app from his own phone).

Social media is a beautifully manicured garden with landmines buried beneath. We must tread its flowery lanes with extreme caution.

**Curiosity**

The way that children ask questions is most charming.

They are inquisitive, not because of ideas that have been planted in them by a book, or because they want to pass an exam, or to please; they are nature expressing its desire to know the world; flawlessly and refreshingly like fresh water flowing from a stream.

They remind us of what we were when we were younger, before the world had withered our childlike curiosity and the world got us caught up in a miserable rigidity of the mind. We were unafraid of asking questions then. The world was new and grand and awesome to us. Knowing no limitations to our knowledge, we aimed for the skies. We felt we could know as much as we wanted.

Yet that did not last very long.

Experiences, some painful and some regrettable, taught us to suppress our inner questioning voice. The education system first influenced us to only ask the questions that our teachers wanted to hear. Remember that day in class when a student requested to ask a question, went ahead to pronounce the wonderings of their secret imaginations, which neither the teacher nor the textbook and the system itself had any answers to? The student was snubbed, told to sit back down and stick to the ‘syllabus’.

That way, formal education taught people to only think what they are told to think and ask what they are expected to ask. Or not to think and ask at all.

Watching my small nephew and niece grow up, I am struck just at the raw force of a child’s curiosity. I listen to their every word, hear their every conversation and observe them at playtime. They remind me that a human being is naturally wired to be curious. The brain is the sensor for the universe; its antennae are always raised up to capture the rhythms of reality.

*“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existence.” – Albert Einstein*

Like Jonah running away from God, everything you do to hide is a disaster, and the fish you wish will digest you, sealifts you to your calling. Human beings have a sinister design for their destiny and whatever events lead to that are most astonishing.

**People**

Our conscious role in choosing the kind of people that we become goes only that far, and the greatest influence to our character, and ultimately our destinies, is the kind of people that we choose to keep around us. The associations that we involve ourselves with tend to rub off attitudes, thoughts and habits onto us, and the more time we spent around certain kinds of people, the more we become like them. It is an unwritten law of human associations that we sooner or later take after the company that we choose to keep.

To find a person who is serious about their destiny, look for the person who is very selective when it comes to forming friendships. These people understand that one needs to qualify to become their friends. By applying a given set of standards that they have determined will propel them to their desired destiny, they vet the people they meet before they can allow them a space in their inner circle. Only those who are found to be going in the right direction and possessing the required attitudes and ideals are given a pass of friendship. Furthermore, they are constantly auditing their inner circles so as to identify anyone who might be poisoning their internal ecosystem and uproot them if found. It is not surprising that this caliber of people often has very few friends – but they care the least about that – because they understand only too well that the road to destiny is narrow and the journey cannot be made by crowds hanging around them. This is not pride, it is wisdom.

There are five types of people: The tellers, the takers, the anchors, the pillars and the conformers.

The Tellers

This group of people always have news to tell, the problem is that they tell for the sake of talking. They won’t tell you of anything of consequence though; they always have the latest gossip in town, and they like telling you about other people. Stay away from tellers, for whoever tells you about other people will definitely tell other people about you.

The Takers

There are people who always seem to need something from you but will never have something to offer in return. They are lazy individuals who according to them, it is their right to be helped but they will never be in a position to help. They will suck you dry until you drop dead and then dump you and go on to greener pastures. Stay away from them.

The Anchors.

These people will hold you stable when the storms blow hard on you, but they never show it off. They are there, silently keeping you afloat and helping you out whenever you need them. They will sacrifice everything to keep you afloat, and when the worst comes to the worst and you sink, they will go down with you. Some of them are angels in disguise, and they are called parents. These people are rare to find, so if you find any, keep them close.

The Pillars

They are similar to the anchors but different in that they will always demand credit for helping you. Everyone has to know that it is them that kept you safe and pulled you out of that problem. They will keep you standing, but to do so they have to be towering above you, and in case they fall, they will come tumbling on you. If you have them in your life, keep them close but keep your eyes open.

The conformers

There are people who can dissolve into any environment and you will not be able to find them. Conformers can walk into any room and immediately get swallowed up in the atmosphere. No one will notice when they come in and neither will their absence be felt. They have a problem with standing out. They never complain about anything and neither do they complement anyone. They have an extraordinary ability to be okay with whatever is offered. They don’t fight. They are averted to rejections.

Like caterpillars, they camouflage into whatever environment they are in. They believe they have no voice of their own, and even if they do, no one cares to listen to them. Like sheep, they always follow from behind. They are just faces in the crowd. They are not bad people, and neither do they do much good. And when they eventually leave the world, no one notices it. They added little of value to the world if any, and they took nothing out of it. The world owes them nothing. Therefore, they leave as quietly as they came.

The shakers.

If you have been in the eye of a whirlwind, you may understand what type of people these are.

They know they are here for a reason, and they know that reason well.

They know no obstacles; they either find a way around the mountain or die trying.

They know the value of their time and understand that time is limited.

They are the people we celebrate.

When they are gone, the world must take notice, and appreciate that a game-changer has rested.

Keep around you people who inspire you to be more than you ever thought you could be. You have a choice to make when it comes to the friends you keep: Friendships do not just happen – they are made. Have in your circle people who fan the fire inside of you and not those who drain your energy and passion with their negativity. Before you can demand that type of friends, you have to be that type of person yourself. Do not be a taker – be someone people can depend upon and learn from. Be the kind of a friend you would want to have, and the right kind of people will gravitate towards you. And never be afraid to be different in life. At times, if you want to be exceptionally successful, you will have to embrace solitude, because it is never crowded at the top.

When you stand aside and keenly observe the reality around you, you can have an amazing and enlightening experience.

You begin to realize that life is a marvelous gift.

That the things that are not us are many and unfathomable.

You will be caught in awe at the grand scale of reality.

And that realization humbles us. We come to understand that we are but insignificant bits of a vast, vast universe.

Yet, small as we are, we have the ability and intelligence to map and make sense of this expanse of space. Our small brains can feel and grasp the wonder hidden in millions of light years of galactic expanse.

We are here. We are a part of this humongous celestial miracle.

The stars hold onto their posts for millions upon millions of years. Yet our light shines for just but a breath, and then we are gone.

Dear me,

I will begin by expressing my optimism that you are okay. With all that is happening around the world, it is easy to get bogged down by worry, focusing on the dark side and finding it hard to see the beauty in the world. I will tell you what I always have: It is going to be alright.

So, you are older now. Time flies so fast, right? The years just glide by without warning and if you are not careful, the ticking of the clock will overtake the rhythms of your life and leave you wishing you had done it different. Slowly the responsibilities come as you begin to leave the enclaves of your guardians. You begin to see life as it really is, and not the rosy bed you imagined when you were younger. Day in, day out, the storms and the showers hit you, and sometimes they leave you sinking in the murky waters of life.

But you always fight back. You keep on fighting, because that is what you have always been – a fighter, a warrior and a winner. Can you remember all the battles that you have been through in the past? The blows you have had to endure from life, hard knocks that left you bleeding and broken? What about those moments when you felt you can no longer move on, that giving up was the only way out? Night after night, alone and broken, when you soaked your pillows in tears and your eyes grew sore from crying?

You felt left alone, like the world was all up against you.

You have been through the toughest battles and you have walked on the darkest paths. Yet, despite all of it, you refused to say ‘I give up ‘. No, those words were never a part of your vocabulary. Even in the times when you had every reason to throw in the towel, you gathered your courage, straightened your beaten back and faced the giant right in the eye, and told him, ‘I will defeat you!”. You have always believed that courage is not the absence of fear, but the ability to keep on fighting despite the fear.

Look at how far you have come! You may not have arrived where you wanted to be yet. However, you have come this far. This is my way of saying ‘You have done well!’. Yes – You. have. done. Well. I am very proud of you, and you deserve a pat on the back.

There is still a long way to go ahead of you. There are more mountains to climb and dreams to fulfill.

This is the time. Dust yourself up, stand strong and look ahead. All you have ever dreamed of is right on the horizon. You have to go there and get it because you deserve it. Do not listen to the voice telling you that it is impossible. Even the word itself says that ‘I’m possible’.

So, arise, my dear friend, arise. This is your time to shine. Fly high and glitter with the stars. That is where you belong.

I hope that all your dreams come true.

Yours sincerely,

Your Self.

**Pain**

Life is hard.

Bitter moments come to try us, to test our strength and patience.

The midst of a storm is tough and rough. All you can see when you look around are walls.

It is as if you cannot breathe under the pressure of all that has befallen you. And it is difficult to imagine a better ending at these moments. The sun looks dimmer and the days are gloomy.

There is no glory in ignorance when knowledge is within reach

you don't qualify for favor, favor qualifies you

if u think you can do it Without God it isn’t big enough. your goals should scare you

The rot within (on character)

Value the people in your life. Hug them tightly. Enjoy every moment you spend with them, because you never know which one will be the last.

Thinkers, philosophers, priests and monks have tried to unravel the mystery of life. There are hard questions for which answers are not available. Thinking about life itself often leaves one with better questions and less answers.

Yet one enduring truth about life is this: It is like a river born on a slope, that before it pours into an ocean thousands of miles away, meanders through hills, foams over rocks, falls down steep cliffs and flows across open plains. Its life is not a single throb, but a series of changing scenes that when combined push it to its final destination.

Change is the unwavering constant of life. Transition is the DNA of growth.

Just when you think that you have reached level ground, life presents you with another stair to step up to. And we have no option but to agree, fall in sync with the throb of life whose engine is change. Resistance to change makes one irrelevant and unneeded; and nature is not nice to such an individual.

A child’s birth into the world is perhaps the first and most fundamental transition. Someone that was not, at least physically, steps into reality and starts on a journey of transitions.

Starting to school, teenage, adulthood, starting a career, a family, old age - all these are stages at which we have to transition.

Yet change is not a bad thing. It presents us with opportunities to do something different things in a better way.

To be wise is to give yourself to the changing tides of life; like a paper boat in the sea, to let go and fall in sync with the chords of the universe; to not resist change and transition, but to embrace and maximize on it.

Life can be messy and difficult. We often get stuck in our attempts to negotiate it. At times it feels like our wits have reached their limits, and there is nothing left to do.

I believe that it is at those times that we have to turn to wiser, more experienced people and sources for guidance. In fact, we should seek advice when things are okay so that the chances of getting stuck are minimized in the first place.

We are living in interesting times. The 21st Century is full of opportunity and risk, and I believe that we need a unique set of skills to be able to navigate it successfully. This book is for the young person who feels that this is the time to rise up and make an impact in the world. The one who is not ready to let the society define what is possible and what is not: because we have been created by God with unique and powerful abilities that we must use to transcend the limitations imposed on us by society. This book will help you understand how to take advantage of this century. Change begins with you, understanding who you are and being bold enough to take necessary risks. Not only that, it will briefly talk about matters of the heart and why relationships are failing. An attempt has been made to pack as much insight into the fewest pages possible, making this book fun and readable in a short time.

*I am Victor Makau, a fourth-year student of computer science at Maseno University. I love to make software, to read and think about the future. I am passionate about the story of the millennials, the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century and how to tackle them, and the pursuit of excellence in all matters of life. I also believe that not everyone is born into success, but anyone can be a success if they so choose and put in the necessary work with the right attitude.*