

1-MINUTE

ONENESS

**Understanding Reality
and Becoming Blessed**

Inspired by Spinoza's Philosophy

Isaac Hadjyan

1-Minute Oneness

Understanding Reality and Becoming Blessed

Inspired by Spinoza's Philosophy

Isaac Hadjyan

Contents

In the Beginning There Was a Homeless Woman *Minute 1 · Page 4*

On God Five Steps to Oneness. What Shall We Call It? The Nature of God. *Minutes 2–38 · Page 8*

On Belief Five Beliefs to Blessedness. Five Common Misbeliefs. *Minutes 39–54 · Page 50*

On Truth Five Rungs of Knowing. Five Enemies of Truth. *Minutes 55–69 · Page 70*

On Man Five Things We Are. Five Steps to Freedom. *Minutes 70–90 · Page 89*

On Blessedness Five Actions for Blessedness. Accept, Enjoy, Create, Lead, Gain and Give. Five Enemies of Blessedness. *Minutes 91–125 · Page 114*

Closing And This Is the Blessedness *Page 156*

The Book in Five Minutes *Page 157*

Notes, Thanks, and the Author *Page 161*

This book has five chapters. Each chapter has parts, and each part is made of one-minute readings: 125 of them, five times five times five. The ideas build on one another. One pattern runs through the whole book: most parts offer five practical steps.

In the Beginning

The Reconciliation of God and Nature

God of the Homeless Woman

What This Book Is, and Where It Comes From

Five Words, Before We Begin

MINUTE 1

GOD OF THE HOMELESS WOMAN

As I parked at Starbucks, a homeless woman approached me, sobbing. The city had confiscated her blankets. She had fought with the agent, and the agent had told her to drop dead, that she was a waste of her father's seed. With tears in her eyes, she said she wished she were dead.

I had no money to give her, nothing tangible to offer. So I offered a perspective instead.

"How could anyone call you a waste, when the very reality of God is the cause of your existence? Look around. The birds above, the trees, the whole rhythm of nature. Everything that exists shares one thing: it simply is, fulfilling its nature. Be certain that you, too, are part of this great unity. You belong to an infinite God."

I am certain my words did not change her life much. But she was no longer crying.

I only hoped to remind her, and myself, that every individual is part of a greater whole, and that in knowing this we can find calm in the moment.

That was the day I realized the power of philosophy. When there was nothing else to give, an idea was the only thing left to offer. And that idea had the power to lift a person, if only for a minute.

#YOUMUSTEXIST

BEFORE WE BEGIN

WHAT THIS BOOK IS, AND WHERE IT COMES FROM

This book begins with questions. What is reality, and can it be understood at all? Why have a God, or even be concerned about one? If there is a God, does it see us, or hear us? What should we believe, and how do we know what is true? What are we, and are we free? And how do we live well inside all of it?

Chapter 1 is occupied with reality itself, and you will soon see why the word God is used there. Once reality is understood to an acceptable extent, the book turns to what helps us play according to its rules: belief, truth, our own nature, and, at the end, blessedness. Each page is a one-minute read. Some of it is philosophy, some is science, and some is one man's testimony; a page in *On Truth* says which is which, so you can check my work. Read them in order the first time, all the way through. After that, open the book anywhere.

The book is inspired by Baruch Spinoza, the seventeenth-century lens grinder of Amsterdam who showed that God can be understood by reason alone. But it does not explain him chapter by chapter. Spinoza was a true philosopher. I am a practical man: a husband and father, with family ties I keep and hundreds of families to care for through my business. My teacher had none of those. He never married, had no children, and was expelled from his own community. That is why the chapter on Belief, a subject he never gave a part of its own, is where my structure most plainly separates from his.

One warning. If you are not yet ready to question everything and to think and live independently, do not overturn your life on the strength of any book. Secure your footing and your friendships first. Then stay with the idea until oneness is as clear as daylight in your heart.

BEFORE WE BEGIN

FIVE WORDS, BEFORE WE BEGIN

Existence. When I say existence, I do not mean only life. Existence means to be, whether as a force, a particle, an idea, or a body. A stone exists, though it does not live. A mathematical truth exists, though it has no body. Existence is wider than life. It is all that is.

Nature. When I say nature, I do not mean only forests and rivers. I mean the nature of reality itself: the forces that shape matter, motion, and thought.

Man. Needless to say, mankind: the emotional and capably rational species that lives by imagination.

God. When I say God, I do not mean something that is called upon, bargained with, or feared. I wish I could simply say YHWH, the name the early Hebrews used, which I read as "I Am": the one that Moses met as "I Am That I Am" (Exodus 3:14), known to us first and foremost by its nature to exist.

Blessedness. Happiness is a moment: it arrives with good news and leaves with the next phone call. Serenity is a state, the way prosperity is a state: a standing condition, not an event. When people say they want to be happy in life, a state is what they are asking for, and blessedness is that state: a settled joy in being alive that holds its happy moments inside it and does not depend on the day going right.

On God

“Whatsoever is, is in God, and without God nothing can be, or be conceived.”

Spinoza, Ethics I, Proposition 15

PART ONE: FIVE STEPS TO ONENESS

5 steps, 2 closer looks

PART TWO: WHAT SHALL WE CALL IT?

6 minutes

PART THREE: THE NATURE OF GOD

5 steps, 16 closer looks

Part One: Five Steps to Oneness

The Five Steps to Oneness

1. All Are Part of One
2. All Rest on One
3. All Are Sustained by One
4. All Get Matter From One
5. All Get Thoughts From One

A closer look: All Are Unique, but not Separate

A closer look: There is No Void

The One is the Source of All Things

MINUTE 2

THE FIVE STEPS TO ONENESS

The distance between you and the Beloved is removed when you stand free of mask and clothes. And when even that self dissolves, you find there was never a distance at all.

That is what these five steps are for. Not to prove God to you; you cannot prove to someone that they are not apart from what they were never apart from. Only to remove what is in the way, one layer at a time.

Each step is something you already know, and each is good on its own. Some are intuitive knowledge, the kind you cannot deny without using it. Some are knowledge we have courtesy of experiment and the discoveries of physics. Some are arguments that connect the two. They are all the same point, seen from different steps of realization, and a truth needs only one solid point to stand on. Each step gives you that same one, from an angle you might appreciate more than the others.

Along the way there are two closer looks, small landings where we catch our breath and look around.

At the top, you will see Oneness. Take them slowly. One minute each.

#FIVESTEPS

● ○ ○ ○ ○ STEP 1 OF 5 · MINUTE 3

ALL ARE PART OF ONE

Each of us knows, without being taught, that we are parts within existence. We are not the whole of it. We did not create ourselves, or others, or the laws surrounding us. We are assembled from many parts, shaped by a process that came before us and continues without us.

The common denominator of everything that exists is existence. No one is the whole of it. We are parts of it.

No one adds to existence from nothing. We only transform what already is. Our strength, our understanding, our very thoughts are not self-made. They rise out of a greater whole.

The same forces that shape the human mind shape the beast, the earth, and the stars. The same laws that move your body move the oceans, the winds, and the atoms.

Individuality is real. But it is not separation. The sum of all the parts is still one.

We are all of one nature.

#ONEBODY

●●○○○ STEP 2 OF 5 · MINUTE 4

ALL REST ON ONE

Nothing stands on its own.

Everything that exists, exists either in itself or in something else. A wave exists in the ocean. A leaf exists in the tree. A thought exists in a mind.

Now ask: what does the ocean rest on? What does the mind rest on?

Every object, every force, every particle we have ever observed sits within one great structure. Nothing stands outside the fabric of existence. And that fabric is not an empty stage where things happen to appear. It is the underlying ground of the universe, the foundation from which all things emerge and in which all things persist.

Follow anything down far enough, and you arrive at the same floor.

We rest on one thing. We exist in something else. We are contained in one space.

#ONECONTAINER

●●●○○ STEP 3 OF 5 · MINUTE 5

ALL ARE SUSTAINED BY ONE

We were not made once and then left alone. Creation did not occur for a week and then stop. Existence is an ongoing effort.

Every particle is not only born from the fabric of existence, it is held by it, this moment and every moment. Nothing moves, nothing persists, nothing transforms without the uninterrupted presence of the whole. A stone costs nothing to keep, and yet even the stone is held: its atoms stay atoms only because forces act on them this instant, and the next, and never switch off. A body, a star, a mind must be paid for on top of that, in energy that never stops flowing through them. Either way, nothing is ever on its own for a moment.

Existence is not a finished creation. It is not a past event. It is an ongoing act.

The universe does not grant being once and then withdraw. It upholds all things, continuously.

This is why I say the One does not sleep. It is awake in every atom, alive in every motion, present in every breath you take.

Existence is not something that was done. It is something that is being done, right now, through you.

#SUSTAINED

●●●●○ STEP 4 OF 5 · MINUTE 6

ALL GET MATTER FROM ONE

To be a body, a thing needs matter, and there is one matter supplier in the universe. The material that makes us is common to everything that is made; it all comes from the same fabric store.

Nothing in our body is new.

The calcium in our bones was cooked inside a star. The water in our blood has been ocean, cloud, river, and rain a thousand times over. The carbon in our cells has passed through soil and leaf and animal before it ever became us.

We borrowed all of it. And one day we will give it all back. This is not a forgivable loan. Nature reclaims and recycles its matter as things wear out, end their forms, and need transformation.

Matter shifts, energy transforms, stars form and collapse, but the underlying substance of reality never runs out and never ceases. Science tracks the transformations: matter becomes energy, energy becomes matter, and the books are kept with great precision. That an eternal substance underlies the transformations is philosophy's claim, and this book's.

Whatever the name, the lesson is the same. You are not made of your own material. You are made of the One's material, on loan, in a shape that has never existed before and will never exist again.

#BORROWEDBODY

●●●●● STEP 5 OF 5 · MINUTE 7

ALL GET THOUGHTS FROM ONE

Where did your reason come from?

We did not invent logic. We did not decide that two and two make four, or that a cause comes before its effect. We found these things, the way we found gravity, already there, already true.

The order in your mind is the same order that moves the planets. When you understand how a river carves a canyon, your thought is following a path that the water followed first. When a mathematician discovers a proof, she is not building something; she is uncovering a structure that was always in the fabric of things. The structure that contains information exists. Our thoughts are information being read. If matter did not carry information, no mind would have evolved.

Every particle behaves according to principles that it contains. Existence follows proportion, pattern, and necessity. Call it intelligence or call it order; either way it is not a visitor in the universe. It was here before us, woven in.

Your mind is a place where the One thinks about itself.

#FOUNDRASON

MINUTE 8 · A CLOSER LOOK

All Are Unique, but not Separate

Everything that exists is both unique and inseparable from the whole.

A person, an animal, a tree, a stone: each is distinct in form, yet each sits inside the same reality that binds all things together.

Look anywhere and you find variation: no two snowflakes, no two fingerprints, no two minds. Every person, every form, unfolds when nature finds an opportunity that has not yet been expressed. Difference is what makes motion and becoming possible; a world of identical things would have nowhere to go.

From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinite things in infinite ways.

You were not stamped from a mold. You are one of the infinite ways the One expresses itself, necessary, unrepeatable, and still made of the same cloth as everything else.

Unique is not the opposite of one. It is what oneness looks like up close.

#YOUAREUNIQUE

MINUTE 9 · A CLOSER LOOK

There is No Void

Some imagine the universe as things floating in nothing.

But look closer. There is no true void. Even what we call empty space is thick with fields and energy. Physics has shown that a vacuum is not nothing; it hums. And when Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow argued, in *The Grand Design*, that a universe could arise "from nothing," their nothing was already full of laws and fields. That is not nothing. That is something. Physics stops there. Calling that something the one thing is the step this book takes.

If the One were absent from a place, that place would have no power to exist. And what has no power to exist is not a place at all.

The universe is one continuous body, just as its name suggests: uni-verse, one turning. There are no gaps in it. No wall between here and there, between you and the star.

Either substance is present, with power and matter, or there is nothing at all. And since existence is continuous, reality is whole.

So what is this one thing? Turn the page.

#NOVOID

MINUTE 10 · THE TOP OF THE STAIRS. WELCOME TO ONENESS.

THE ONE IS THE SOURCE OF ALL THINGS

Now put the pieces together.

We are part of one thing. We rest on one thing. We are sustained by one thing. We get our matter from one thing. We get our thoughts from one thing. And there is no gap anywhere in it.

So what is this one thing?

It is that which everything comes from, and which comes from nothing but itself. It needs no cause, because there is nothing outside it to cause it. It needs no beginning, because time itself happens inside it. Even a universe "from nothing" rests on it.

It is eternal, not because it lasts a long time, but because it is not the kind of thing that starts or stops. It is infinite, not because it is very large, but because there is nothing beyond it to limit it. One nature exists, extends, and sustains, and all that are in existence are parts of that One.

You already knew every step before you read it. Now you are more aware. You are no longer looking at life from the driver's seat. You are looking at it from above, all the way around.

The One is the source of all things.

#THEONE

Part Two: What Shall We Call It?

Call It Being, God, Nature, Or...

When I Say God

All Know of God

If There is Another God, Let It Appear

Existence is as Godly as God Can Get

One God, Many Paths

MINUTE 11

CALL IT BEING, GOD, NATURE, OR...

Schopenhauer once dismissed this view. He said that calling Nature "God" is just a polite way of being an atheist. But he assumed the question was whether God exists. Oneness removes that question. We do not seek one god or many gods. We do not count, because all there is, is just One.

Ask the believer and the atheist. Both agree that we did not make ourselves, that we all share one nature, and that we are parts of a greater nature. The argument was never about what is real. It was about what to call it.

So I do not ask you to agree on a word. I remove enough dust so we can see the One. Why keep the word God, then? Because the word keeps us honest about ourselves. We are conditioned and caused, assembled and subject to error. Only one thing is eternal, and it is not us. A mind that keeps this in view endeavors to be godly rather than to play god.

And because the word fits. That which extends you, sustains you, and transforms your being is a higher being by any honest measure. Would you withhold the name only because it cannot answer your will? "Nature" describes it. "God" honors it.

The believer and the atheist are standing in the same river, arguing about what to call the water.

FROM THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES

God is one. There is one substance, and every thing is a way it can exist.

#ONERIVER

MINUTE 12

WHEN I SAY GOD

The God we know, rather than merely believe in, is seeable with the intellect and known by intuition, but never fully understood, only seen.

The God that neither the scientist nor the chief of any religion can deny.

The God that belongs to every human and every being.

The God that does not reside in a shape or in a heaven, that is everywhere and in everything.

The God that has no preferences and does not discriminate among its creatures.

The God that has always existed and always will, that has no competitor and nothing like it.

The God that cannot be assigned emotions or feelings.

The God that needs no sacrifice and no prayer; that does not fail, does not need its houses defended, and does not need glorification.

This God is not exclusive to me, and it was not made by me. Your own intellect will find it the most certain and the truest God there is.

FROM THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES

God is eternal. Universes may begin and end. The substance beneath them does not start or stop, because time happens inside it.

#THEGODIKNOW

MINUTE 13

ALL KNOW OF GOD

No one is the cause of themselves, and everyone knows it.

Every person is aware of their birth, their growth, and their death, processes they did not choose, design, or start. We watch the laws of nature shape us, carry us, and one day dissolve us.

So everyone recognizes that we exist inside something greater than ourselves.

When people deny God, they are usually rejecting a picture: a judge, a king, a being with a mission and a temper. They reject a constructed image, not the ground they are standing on.

Even those who call themselves godless accept the laws of reality, the necessity of existence, the continuity of cause and effect. They do not deny that all things unfold by nature. They simply refuse to call that nature God.

There are no people outside God. There are only people who have misnamed, neglected, or looked past what is eternal and ever-present. An atheist says no God exists; I say no one exists without God. We can keep arguing about the word.

To exist is already to be inside God.

#NOATHEISTSEXIST

MINUTE 14

IF THERE IS ANOTHER GOD, LET IT APPEAR

If there is a God other than the nature that fills every place, moves every particle, and governs every law, then let it show itself.

Let it appear clearly and undeniably, to every generation and every being.

Let it appear not through secrecy, fear, or a chosen messenger, but in the same open way the sun shines and the rain falls.

Until then, what is present everywhere, what gives form to every particle, what sustains all life and all thought, that body and that nature is known to me as my eternal and infinite God.

For that which exists everywhere, sustains everything, and changes through nothing but itself, is God enough.

I seek no other.

FROM THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES

God is infinite, and therefore complete. Nothing outside it limits it and nothing outside it causes it, because there is no outside; and nothing that can be is missing from it. That is what perfect means: not flawless by our standards, but whole.

#ORGANICGOD

MINUTE 15

EXISTENCE IS AS GODLY AS GOD CAN GET

I am not saying that nature is a deity. I am saying something simpler and more direct.

Existence is godly. It is unified, self-sufficient, and all there is.

Once this is clear, oneness becomes unavoidable. If nothing exists outside existence, what more are we looking for? Who are we waiting to fall in love with? Some figure outside reality? But even our imagination is part of the same system. There is no outside.

Lower your guard. Allow yourself to love life as it unfolds. Love existence as it stands. Love yourself as you are.

Through this, you love the being from which all things arise and are sustained, the infinite fulfiller we call God.

This is not faith, and it is not fantasy. It is recognition.

The moment you stop resisting what is, you discover you were held by oneness from the beginning.

FROM THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES

God is. Existence is God's nature, and nothing besides that nature causes existence.

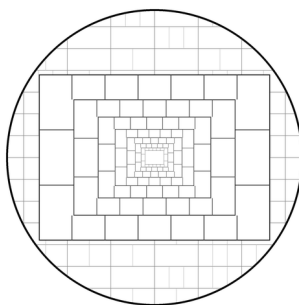
#RECOGNITION

MINUTE 16

ONE GOD, MANY PATHS

If a thing is infinite, the ways to it cannot be counted.

If God is infinite existence, there must be endless ways to express, experience, and understand it. Spinoza used a picture from geometry, infinite rectangles contained in a single circle, to show that one thing can hold endless things without ceasing to be one. I borrow the picture as an illustration: the unity of existence does not exclude variety; it produces it.



A vast mountain has many trails. Some climb through science, some through philosophy, some through faith, some through direct experience. No single tradition, no single book, no single practice can hold what is limitless.

To confine God to one religion is to mistake a drop for the ocean.

God has no religion. God has a nature. And the existence of even the smallest particle is already enough to reveal it.

Which leaves the questions everyone asks about God. Five of them, next.

#MANYPATHS

Part Three: The Nature of God

Five questions everyone asks about God. The thirteen attributes answer them.

1. Does God Want Anything?

God Has No Plans. God Has Plays. · God Leaves Nothing Undone · Only God is Free · The Perfect Imperfect

2. Does God See Us?

Infinite Eyes, but God Does not See · God Lives Only in the Present · We Are God's Experiences · Nature Naturing, Nature Natured

3. Does God Care?

God's Intelligence is Visible in the Nursing Mother · God's Lack of Favor is Visible in the Death of a Nursing Mother · Death Doesn't Contradict Existence · Why Life Consumes Life · Evolution Suits God

4. Does God Ever Step Outside Nature?

Monotheism Split What Was One

5. Can Such a God Be Loved?

They Who Love Life, Love God · The Calm of Belonging

The Thirteen Attributes of God

● ○ ○ ○ ○ QUESTION 1 OF 5 · MINUTE 17

DOES GOD WANT ANYTHING?

God has a nature, not a will.

If God is eternal, then existence is God's nature, not God's decision. Think it through. If God needed to want something in order to exist, then existence would depend on that wanting, and anything that depends on a choice is neither necessary nor eternal. Conditional things are brought about by outside causes. God has no outside.

Some insist that God acts by free will, as they believe men do. That is a projection. It takes our own struggle with choices and uncertainty and hangs it on the eternal.

Fire does not decide to give heat and light; it gives them because that is its nature. So God's nature gives forth existence, matter, and mind, not by choice but by necessity.

To say God chooses is to say God's nature could have been otherwise, which contradicts eternity, unity, and necessity, the very things that make God God. To make God dependent on decisions is to reduce God, not to praise God.

God does not decide to be. God simply is.

FROM THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES

God acts by its own nature, not by will. No plans, no decisions, no miracles. Existence unfolds by its own laws, at its own pace.

#PRIMARYCAUSE

MINUTE 18 · A CLOSER LOOK

God Has No Plans. God Has Plays.

Many doctrines insist that God must have an end goal. If God has intellect, they argue, God must have a reason for creating the earth. Notice that they rarely explain the reason for the rest of the cosmos. Just the earth. At most, the solar system.

I think this belittles God. It binds the infinite to the rules of human need. Only finite, needy, imperfect beings need reasons. God is already complete, and everything that exists, exists in the light of that completeness.

There is a deeper reason. If God acted for a purpose, that purpose would stand above God, and God would no longer be first. The eternal cannot be pulled forward by a goal, the way we are. The universe is not a plan that was drawn up. It is the inevitable outcome of an eternal nature that cannot help but express itself.

Look at how nature actually behaves. Gravity operates by law, not by purpose. The electromagnetic force does not act for a goal; it functions in a set way as long as its properties hold. Things act, first and foremost, according to their primary function.

We are not here to be saved from ourselves as if we were born evil. We need rescue, yes, but from our own confusion.

God does not have plans. God has functions, playing out in infinite ways.

A universe of necessity, not of purpose.

#GODHASFUNCTIONS

MINUTE 19 · A CLOSER LOOK

God Leaves Nothing Undone

This is an old argument, and it is worth a minute.

The medieval and religious philosophers say that God can do anything that is not a contradiction. God holds this power in reserve, they say, and uses it only when God wills. Whatever God has not made, God could have made, and simply chose not to.

The philosophy of oneness says something that sounds similar and is the opposite. God does not hold back. God never negates its own power. Whatever is in God's power to be, comes to be. And the reason a trillion imaginable shapes of human do not walk the earth is not that God declined to make them. It is that they were never possible. They can be imagined, but they cannot be conceived within the order of reality, like a square circle.

Look at what each view does to God. The first gives you a magician, holding a bag of unused powers and choosing which trick to perform. The second gives you nature: a God so complete that everything it can do, it is doing, right now.

The magician's God is smaller than it looks. A power never used is a power that might as well not exist. And to say God could have made a different world is to say God's nature could have been otherwise, which takes away God's necessity in order to flatter God's freedom.

What exists is what could exist. Nothing is missing. God leaves nothing undone.

#TIRELESSGOD

MINUTE 20 · A CLOSER LOOK

Only God is Free

Many believe freedom means the power to do anything you can imagine. So they expect God, or the universe, to reverse its own laws on request, like a magician.

But God's nature follows only the truth of its own being. God does not wish. God does not decide. God simply is.

Some will say such a God is less free than a human who makes choices. I answer: true freedom is acting solely from your own nature, with nothing outside you forcing your hand. By that measure, only God is free. Only God exists by necessity, without deviation, and without another body to limit it.

Everything else, matter, thought, life, acts according to its nature but under the influence of forces beyond its control. We take pride in our choices. Yet our energy, our desires, our confusions all unfold under the influence of genes, brain, society, and cosmic forces we never chose.

Having options does not make us free. We will return to this in the chapter On Man, because there is a way to become freer.

FROM THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES

God is free. Only God acts from its own nature alone, with nothing outside to push it. Everything else is moved, and grows freer only by understanding.

#FREEGOD

MINUTE 21 · A CLOSER LOOK

The Perfect Imperfect

God does not contain every imaginable thing at once, and God has not done a "flawless job" by our standards. God is complete: whatever can exist within its being, does exist.

God is never responsible for what does not exist. What has not come to be simply did not belong to the order of reality. Nothing is missing.

Yet some find fault with God, judging by final purposes rather than by primary laws. They impose their moral expectations on existence, as if reality had to follow ideals created by the accident of self-awareness.

Were God to act on their demands, existence itself would not exist.

Perfection is not meeting expectations. Perfection is being complete in itself, without contradiction or deficiency.

To wish God were other than it is, is like wishing your spouse were shorter or taller. It is neither relevant to reality nor the way a lover should act.

#FIXTHEEXPECTATIONS

●●○○○ QUESTION 2 OF 5 · MINUTE 22

DOES GOD SEE US?

God conceives. God does not perceive.

Perception implies limitation. To perceive is to observe something outside yourself, to register it, to learn from it.

But God has no outside. There is nothing beyond God to perceive.

God does not see, hear, or feel as living beings do, because God is not a spectator of the universe. God is the structure of it. God does not react to the world; the world is God's thought and God's motion, unfolding.

A mind perceives when it meets something beyond itself. God, being infinite, meets nothing beyond itself. So God conceives: existence pours out as the natural expression of its being.

This is also why God's intellect, as the source, is not like ours. We reason in steps. The source knows all things at once, as necessary expressions of its own nature.

#THECONCEIVER

MINUTE 23 · A CLOSER LOOK

Infinite Eyes, but God Does not See

God contains infinite eyes but does not see, infinite ears but does not hear, infinite matter but no body.

It is not a lack for God not to see, as if God were a security system monitoring mankind. God has no eyes, yet every eye sees by God and through God.

It is not a limitation for God not to hear. God has no ears, yet every sound exists within God's power.

God does not exist as a thing among things, yet nothing exists without God.

Praise God or curse God; God remains eternal, unshaken, and unchanged. A poor God, you might say, with no throne and no ears. But a rich universe.

#POORGODRICHUNIVERSE

MINUTE 24 · A CLOSER LOOK

God Lives Only in the Present

To remember requires stored information. The simple being of God has no memory beyond what is written in the body of nature.

Duration belongs to assembled things: bodies that persist until a greater force disrupts them or they wear out. God is not assembled. God is simple, unified, and eternal. Past and future are irrelevant to it, because God does not travel through time. Time happens inside God. So "the present" here is not a moment that passes; it is the eternal in which every moment happens, and the only place we ever meet it.

If I may borrow a human word, God "rejoices" in existence, in being itself, in the present moment.

And so should we. Or better: we should accommodate God in its function, by being fully present in existence, as existence is.

FROM THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES

God is now. God is not in time; time is in God. For us, that means now.

#PRESENTGOD

MINUTE 25 · A CLOSER LOOK

We Are God's Experiences

We exist in God. We are sustained and conditioned by God. We think by the power of God. So it follows: we are God's experiences. And the question "what are we to God?" hides a trick in its smallest word. There is no "to." We are not God's projects, and not God's toys. We are God itself, extending and existing through us.

The bodiless power of God, which has no eyes to see or ears to hear, is present as every body, in every degree of perfection, in every possible form. God does not observe from a distance. Experience happens in God, through the things God becomes.

Say the next part carefully; it is the strongest sentence in this book. God does not need us: need is a lack, and the complete lacks nothing. But neither does God exist without us. God is not a being beside the world, holding expressions like possessions. God is the existing of the world, as a fire is nothing apart from its burning. Take away every expression, every stone, star, and mind, and nothing called God remains.

The universe, in its motion and transformation, is God existing. Each moment and each form is complete for its kind and its time.

You may ask: how is a stone worthy of divine nature? How can suffering be God's experience?

To answer, let go of God as a judge who measures things by results. God is the primary force of existence, a force that simply is. God does not govern outcomes. God extends its reality by doing one thing: being real.

FROM THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES

God expresses. We know two of its expressions: matter and mind. Two faces of one nature, not two worlds.

#GODLYEXPERIENCE

MINUTE 26 · A CLOSER LOOK

Nature Naturing, Nature Natured

If we are God itself, why am I not eternal? Why do I age, worry, and forget my keys?

Spinoza answered with two Latin phrases worth learning. *Natura naturans*: nature naturing, nature as the active source, the power that produces. *Natura naturata*: nature natured, everything that power has produced, from galaxies to grandmothers. Not two things. One reality, seen from two sides.

As the source, God is simple, eternal, unassembled, and without moods. As the produced, God is every assembled and temporary thing: the star that burns out, the man who gets tired, the child who cries.

The ocean is one; the waves are many. A wave is not a visitor in the ocean. It is the ocean, doing waves. But no one mistakes the ocean for the shape of one wave. The wave rises and falls. The ocean does not.

So hold both sentences, because both are true. You are God: a real expression of the one substance, made of nothing else. And God is not like you: the source does not tire, does not worry, does not keep score. Nearly every error about God comes from dropping one of these sentences. Drop the first, and God becomes a stranger above the clouds. Drop the second, and God becomes a large, moody man. On Belief will call the second mistake a misbelief, and now you can see why.

The same answer explains our mistakes. God in our form holds only part of the picture, and a part mistaken for the whole is what we call an error. A mistake is never God being wrong. It is God, seen through a keyhole. Understanding does not erase the error; it completes it.

The wave is the ocean. The ocean is not the wave.

#WAVEANDOCEAN

●●●○○ QUESTION 3 OF 5 · MINUTE 27

DOES GOD CARE?

All evil is in God.

The eternal being did not come into existence by a decision. It exists eternally. All things extend through the One and exist within the One, because nothing exists besides the One.

This means the pain, the disease, the earthquake, the cruelty: none of it is outside God. There is no outside.

When we understand the universe as God existing in the present moment, we stop searching for a hidden design, a divine will, or a final purpose. Existence unfolds because it must, not because it was chosen. Things emerge by possibility and endure by necessity.

As the source, nature naturing, God does not weigh outcomes. It does not calculate morality. It unfolds.

To accept this is to accept God. And acceptance does not remove responsibility. It clarifies it.

The same God that contains what we call evil also contains understanding, reason, and the capacity for order and peace. In our form, God is able to understand suffering and to care about it. Evil is not outside God. Neither is wisdom, and neither is kindness. Our task is not to deny reality, but to understand it and act within it.

#EVILANDWISDOM

MINUTE 28 · A CLOSER LOOK

God's Intelligence is Visible in the Nursing Mother

The intelligence of existence is not an abstraction. It is woven into the simplest and deepest functions of life.

A mother's milk is not just food. It changes composition as the infant grows. It adjusts to the child's needs, passes on immunity, and delivers much of what is required, when it is required. Not everything; nature is not a guarantee. But more than any formula devised.

This is not chance, and it is not deliberate design. It is necessity, refined over ages by the laws of existence. Life emerges where it can sustain itself, and nature's law finds the way.

Nature does not waste, hesitate, or forget. It unfolds with an efficiency that looks, from where we stand, exactly like intelligence.

#ATHINKINGGOD

MINUTE 29 · A CLOSER LOOK

God's Lack of Favor is Visible in the Death of a Nursing Mother

If God were a being of will, favor, and intervention, the death of a young mother would be a contradiction. She gives life, she nourishes, she sustains. Surely such a God would spare her.

But God is not a provider of external mercy. God is not selectively kind.

Existence follows laws, not preferences. Nature naturing does not shield or favor. It unfolds by necessity, without regard for what is precious to us.

The same order that fills a mother's breast with milk will also let her die while her child still needs her. What we call tragedy is not a flaw in reality. It is a reflection of its nature. That does not make the loss smaller. It makes it no one's punishment.

Mercy, purpose, and preservation do not come down from above. They come from God in our form. The ideas of mercy, justice, and kindness are God's ideas too, thought in a human mind and lived through human experience. That is how God's mercy enters the world: through us.

FROM THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES

God is impartial. Nature does not favor. Mercy enters the world through God in our form.

#OURMERCY

MINUTE 30 · A CLOSER LOOK

Death Doesn't Contradict Existence

Viruses, bacteria, predators, and prey all emerge from the same process of existence. Everything that exists carries within it the power to exist. Nothing stands outside this truth.

Remember, existence is wider than life. Life is a mode of existence, an assembly of many parts. As the source, God is simple and unassembled. Everything we meet, including ourselves, is complex, made of components, and subject to change.

Death is not the end of existence. It is the dissolution of an assembled form. The primary matter and energy do not cease. Only the shape through which existence expressed itself for a while comes apart.

Nature does not waste. It recycles, integrates, and reshapes. Even what looks destructive is one form of existence passing into another.

Some of these processes are painful to our kind. And it is within our nature and intellect, also extensions of God, to build laws and standards that minimize suffering. Our ability to think, organize, and care is one of the endless ways existence unfolds.

FROM THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES

God conserves. Nothing comes from nothing, and nothing goes to nothing. Everything only transforms.

#TRANSFORMATION

MINUTE 31 · A CLOSER LOOK

Why Life Consumes Life

There is one supply of matter. Every living thing is built from it, and no living thing can build itself from nothing. Plants take theirs from air, water, soil, and light. Everything that cannot do that must take it from what has already been built, and that means other life.

That is the whole reason. Not strength. Not rank. Not a verdict on the weak. A lion eats a lamb for the same reason a tree drinks last year's leaves: there is only one fabric store, and everything shops there.

Look at the arrows and you will not find a top. The lion is eaten by the vulture, the vulture by the worm, the worm by the bird, and all of them by the bacteria that turn them back into soil that becomes grass that becomes lamb. Nothing consumes without being consumed. It is not a ladder. It is a wheel.

Is it cruel? Cruelty needs a will that could have chosen otherwise. Nature has no will. The same impartial order that fills the mother's breast fills the lion's jaw, and it favors neither.

Here is where our kind enters. We are the part of the wheel best able to feel the lamb's side of it, and that feeling is also nature, arriving through us. So we make laws, we ease suffering where we can, and we eat with some reverence. We do not stand outside the wheel. We are the part of it that noticed.

#ONESUPPLY

MINUTE 32 · A CLOSER LOOK

Evolution Suits God

Far from disproving God, evolution fits this picture of God.

If life depended on a premeditated will, God would be an architect assembling fixed forms. But evolution shows that life is not static or pre-planned. It emerges, adapts, and refines itself according to the laws of existence, with no one standing outside to direct it.

That is exactly what we should expect from a God that does not command but enables, does not impose but allows, does not dictate but unfolds.

Evolution is not separate from God. It is God's nature at work, the process by which existence sustains, extends, and remakes itself. It is full of dead ends and trade-offs, because it is not aiming at anything. That is exactly what a God without plans would produce.

Evolution does not contradict God. It reveals God's nature.

FROM THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES

God unfolds. Nature keeps producing what has not been before. Variation is not an accident, and every thing, and every person, is unique.

#ALLNATURALGOD

●●●●○ QUESTION 4 OF 5 · MINUTE 33

DOES GOD EVER STEP OUTSIDE NATURE?

Miracles would contradict the unity of God.

A God that is one with existence does not break the laws that sustain it. A miracle, as a suspension of nature, would mean the order of reality is by will and not God's own nature. But a truly unified God does not break from its own truth. It simply is.

If the universe runs by one eternal nature, every event, from the birth of a galaxy to the beating of your heart, follows the same necessity. Miracles require a dualistic God, standing outside nature and stepping in. But God and existence are one. There is no outside force to intervene.

This is not my invention. This is the only God we actually know: the substance of reality, the origin of being. The real miracle is not a suspension of natural law. It is that nature is governed by order at all.

If someone cannot find majesty in oceans and mountains, in galaxies and atoms, and only looks for God when reality malfunctions, the deficiency is not in the universe. They are seeking a God who bends to their wishes, not truth.

This is also what becomes of prayer. A petition asks God to step outside nature for your case, and no case has ever been granted. Yet prayer was never wasted, because it was never changing God. It changes the one who prays: gratitude teaches the eye to see what it already holds, and a want named aloud is a discovery talk held with yourself. God as the source does not hear prayers. God in the one who prays does.

FROM THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES

God is everywhere. There is no void. Even empty space is full of fields and energy. Nothing exists where God is not.

#GODISNORMAL

MINUTE 34 · A CLOSER LOOK

Monotheism Split What Was One

When monotheism rose, it did not end dualism. It reshaped it.

To defend one eternal God, many introduced a division: God as immaterial, nature as material. This served religion well. It let them assign will and desire to the divine while placing the faults of nature on mankind. Human sin, they said, provokes God to use nature as a whip.

Over centuries, God became pure spirit, matter became lowly, and things were judged not by their reality but by their distance from holiness. God and nature were pulled apart.

In doing so, they abandoned what is immediate and evident in favor of complex illusions. They walked past the simple reality in front of them and clung to ideas born of imagination.

Total oneness rejects the split. God is not apart from matter. Matter and thought are two faces of the same eternal substance. Neither is sacred and neither is mundane. Both are God.

To understand God, study existence. The primary laws of the cosmos are not separate from the divine. They are our direct window into it.

#GODEXISTSNATURALLY

CAN SUCH A GOD BE LOVED?

Why love a God that does not love you back?

Here is the objection that stops most people. If God has no eyes, no ears, and no favorites, God cannot love you back. My teacher's first answer sounds severe: the one who loves God cannot want God's love in return, for that would make God a person, with moods and favorites. He was right. Wait for a warm glance from the sky and you will wait forever.

But follow him one step further. Strip the moods out of love and two things remain: to understand a thing, and to say yes to it. In his last pages Spinoza writes that God loves itself with an infinite intellectual love. He does not mean the universe has feelings. He means that existence says yes to existing: reality understanding and affirming its own reality, eternally.

Now ask where that understanding happens. Not behind the stars. Here. A mind is a place where the One thinks. So God loving itself means this: existence becoming conscious of its own reality, understanding it, and delighting in it, through us. When you grasp what you are part of and feel the joy of it, there is no distance to cross. It is God loving itself at the spot called you.

This is why he called knowing your union with the whole of nature the highest good, and why this love is never unreturned: it never leaves the family. The love with which the mind loves God, he says plainly, is part of the love with which God loves itself. God loves you back. It simply has no other hands than yours.

FROM THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES

God is knowable. Not all of God, but the part we can see, which is reality itself, can be understood, and what is understood can be loved.

#LOVEDBACK

MINUTE 36 · A CLOSER LOOK

They Who Love Life, Love God

A person who finds satisfaction in their hour and their day, who feels at peace with existence, grows strong in spirit and clear in mind. From that harmony they come to love existence, and in loving existence, they love God.

Likewise, one who understands that all things unfold by necessity, and accepts those laws with wisdom, finds their suffering lessened, their resilience deepened, and their love of life increased.

Some clergy, in their war against materialism, treat the pleasures of the world as traps. This comes from the dualist mind: God against matter, spirit against flesh. At best, their goal is to discipline the mind. My only quarrel is when they romanticize suffering, make self-denial a virtue, or dismiss the richness of human life, art, music, science, sport, and commerce, as lesser paths.

To love life is to be in union with existence. To be in union with existence is to love God.

#LOVEGOD #LOVELIFE

MINUTE 37 · A CLOSER LOOK

The Calm of Belonging

This union is not only an idea. It does real work.

When you know you are part of the One, you stop fighting your place in the universe. You accept the storm, the loss, and the limits, not because you are weak, but because you understand them. From that acceptance comes calm.

This is obedience, but not to a commander. It is obedience to the order of things, the way a sailor obeys the wind. He does not argue with it. He learns it, and then he uses it to get home.

Nothing in you needs to be condemned. Nothing needs to be destroyed. You are not at war with yourself, with God, or with a devil. You only need to understand your nature and grow it to its fullest.

The old philosophers had a word for this: acquiescentia, the deep contentment that comes from understanding.

#CALMINTHEONE

MINUTE 38 · THE TOP OF THE STAIRS

THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

None of these were revealed on a mountain, and the list is mine, not Spinoza's; his word "attribute" means something narrower. Each of the thirteen is either visible in nature to anyone who looks, or follows from what is visible by the arguments of this chapter. Together they bring unity between us and existence.

1. God is. Existence is God's nature, and nothing besides that nature causes existence.
2. God is one. There is one substance, and every thing is a way it can exist. "One" and "many" are how we count things inside God, not God.
3. God is everywhere. There is no void. Even empty space is full of fields and energy. Nothing exists where God is not.
4. God is eternal. Universes may begin and end. The substance beneath them does not start or stop, because time happens inside it.
5. God is infinite, and therefore complete. Nothing outside it limits it and nothing outside it causes it, because there is no outside; and nothing that can be is missing from it. That is what perfect means: not flawless by our standards, but whole.
6. God expresses. We know two of its expressions: matter and mind. The universe has a body we can touch and an order we can understand. They are two faces of one nature, not two worlds.
7. God conserves. Nothing comes from nothing, and nothing goes to nothing. Everything only transforms.
8. God acts by its own nature, not by will. No plans, no decisions, no miracles. Existence unfolds by its own laws, at its own pace.
9. God is impartial. The same law that fills a mother's breast with milk will let her die while her child still needs her. Nature

does not favor. Mercy enters the world through God in our form.

10. God unfolds. Nature keeps producing what has not been before. Variation is not an accident, and every thing, and every person, is unique.

11. God is free. Only God acts from its own nature alone, with nothing outside to push it. Everything else is moved, and grows freer only by understanding.

12. God is knowable. Not all of God, but the part we can see, which is reality itself, can be understood, and what is understood can be loved.

13. God is now. God is not in time; time is in God. For us, that means now.

#THIRTEEN

On Belief

“We are moved by the image of a thing to come as much as by a thing before our eyes.”

after Spinoza, Ethics III, Proposition 18

The Bus From the Wall

The Power of Belief

Two Modes of Belief

PART ONE: FIVE BELIEFS TO BLESSEDNESS

5 steps, 1 closer look

PART TWO: FIVE COMMON MISBELIEFS

5 steps

THE CLOSE

2 minutes

MINUTE 39

THE BUS FROM THE WALL

When I was thirteen, just after my bar mitzvah, I was certain that I must dedicate my life to the study of Torah and the service of holy things. So I left Tehran for Israel, a country whose culture I knew nothing of, and for a school that knew nothing of my home. Belief held me there, far from my mother's cooking and the warmth of my family.

The next year, a few blocks from that school, a bus exploded: Egged bus number 2, the line coming back from the Western Wall. The man who blew it up believed that martyrdom was the highest virtue. The people on it believed that prayer at the Wall was of the highest value. Belief had carried every one of us to within a few blocks of one another.

Years later, when it was time for a family and for earning bread, I believed I must and could succeed as my father had. I never hesitated to take an opportunity head-on, because I believed the problems in front of me could be solved.

And when the beliefs I was raised on crumbled, I learned their value the way a fish learns the value of water: by being out of it. It is beliefs that shape our lives. That much I knew at thirteen. Most of us never chose them; they were delivered, by parents, teachers, priests, screens, and fear. The question that took me twenty more years is the one this chapter asks: what shapes our beliefs? Who, or what, is doing the shaping? Five beliefs worth building, and five worth declining, are how I answer it.

#WHATSHAPESBELIEF

MINUTE 40

THE POWER OF BELIEF

Does believing something make it true? No. But it can change what we do.

A seed does not grow because we believe in it. Yet believing it can grow may move us to plant it, water it, and give it light. This is the power of belief: it turns possibility into participation.

What we believe can open a door, or convince us there is no door at all. It can give us the courage to begin, or reasons to remain where we are.

But the strength of a conviction is not proof of its truth. We can be certain and still be mistaken.

So we need two things: enough belief to move forward, and enough humility to be corrected. Changing our minds is not betraying ourselves. It is choosing truth over attachment.

We are not outside existence, waiting for it to answer our wishes. We are part of it, and our actions are among the ways change happens.

Let belief give us courage, not blindness. Believe enough to act. Stay open enough to learn.

But which beliefs? There are two kinds, and telling them apart is the next minute.

#BELIEVEENOUGHTOACT

MINUTE 41

TWO MODES OF BELIEF

There are two kinds of belief, and this chapter depends on telling them apart.

The first kind is belief about what is. "The earth is round." These are claims about reality, and reality gets the last word. When the evidence says otherwise, the belief must change, no matter how much we love it. These are fact-based beliefs. Notice that even "the earth is round" is, for most people, only hearsay; they have never examined the proofs. It becomes knowledge when they understand why, by the necessities of natural law, it could not be otherwise.

The second kind is belief about what could be. "I can grow this seed." These point at a future that does not exist yet, so they cannot be proven in advance. They are not claims. They are commitments. These are courage-based beliefs.

Confuse the two and you get disaster. Treat a commitment as a fact and you become a fanatic. Treat a fact as a commitment and you become a fool, arguing with reality.

Keep them apart, and you get something rare: a mind that submits to truth and still reaches for greatness.

The five beliefs we accept in this chapter are a mixture: some are claims about what is, and some are commitments about what can be. You will see which is which. The five we decline are broken claims about what is.

One warning before the lists. You cannot decline a belief by deciding to. A belief does not leave when you push it; it leaves when a clearer idea arrives, the way a shadow leaves when a light is turned on.

#TWOKINDS

Part One: Five Beliefs to Blessedness

1. That We Can Change Things
2. That We Are Unique and Valuable
3. That Good Happens
4. That Reality Can Be Understood
5. That I Could Be Wrong

A closer look: Better Predictions, Better Decisions

● ○ ○ ○ ○ BELIEF 1 OF 5 · MINUTE 42

THAT WE CAN CHANGE THINGS

We have said the universe has no plan. God has no goals, and man has no free will. So why should a human bother to believe anything, or try for anything?

Because that is our function: to do, to create, to continue. Belief is how the function starts.

Your mind does not merely observe your life. It shapes it. Every event you meet is filtered through what you expect, and what you expect decides how you interpret it, how you respond, and what you do next. Psychologists call it the self-fulfilling prophecy. If you believe you can, your decisions, your effort, even your posture line up behind the belief. The mind does not wait for proof. It creates the conditions for it.

Be careful with the lesson. Belief does not change the laws of nature. Gravity does not care what you think. But belief changes what you do inside those laws, and what you do changes what happens.

Little that is great was ever achieved by someone who did not first believe it was possible. Hope, faith, and belief are not illusions. They are the fuel of resilience, and they are not outside nature. They are nature, working through you.

To believe is to become a cause. To act on belief is to bring a new truth into being.

#BELIEVETOCREATE

●●○○○ BELIEF 2 OF 5 · MINUTE 43

THAT WE ARE UNIQUE AND VALUABLE

Here is a belief you can hold without a shred of vanity.

You are unique. Not as a compliment, as a fact. Nature does not repeat itself. No two snowflakes, no two fingerprints, no two minds. You are the only time the One has ever taken this exact shape, and it will never take it again.

Now follow the logic. If nothing exists except by necessity, then you exist by necessity. The universe did not make you as an afterthought or an accident. You are an expression of the same order that lights the stars, and you had to happen, exactly as you are.

That is where your value comes from. Not from your bank account, your title, your followers, or anyone's approval. Those can be taken. This cannot. The homeless woman in the parking lot had it in full. So does the child who has done nothing yet. So do you, on your worst day.

Most people spend their lives trying to earn a value they already possess. Stop earning it. Start spending it.

You are a necessary, unrepeatable way of being. Believe it, and then go be it.

#YOUAREVALUE

THAT GOOD HAPPENS

Nature has no favorites. We established that. So is it foolish to expect good things?

No. It is the most reasonable expectation there is.

Consider the evidence. The same impartial order that lets a mother die has also produced every mother who lived. It filled her breast with milk made for her child. It built eyes out of light-sensitive cells, a mind out of chemistry, and music out of air. Over billions of years, this order has been generous enough to produce you, reading this.

Good happens. Not because anyone is sending it. Because the laws that made everything good you have ever known are still running, and they do not stop.

The person who expects good keeps looking for it, and so keeps finding it. The person who expects nothing stops looking, and so proves himself right. Both are living in the same universe. Only one of them is still looking. Hope is not a test of realism; a hopeful man can miss a danger and a discouraged one can see it clearly. But looking is the only way anything good is ever found.

Believe that good happens. Then keep your eyes open, because most of it arrives without an announcement.

#GOODHAPPENS

●●●●○ BELIEF 4 OF 5 · MINUTE 45

THAT REALITY CAN BE UNDERSTOOD

There is one belief underneath every other useful belief, and it is so basic that most people never notice they hold it.

The belief that the world makes sense.

That effects have causes. That the same cause in the same conditions gives the same result. That a problem you do not understand today is understandable, and that if you keep looking, you will find the mechanism behind it.

Every scientist runs on this belief. So does every builder, every doctor, every parent who ever figured out why the baby was crying. Without it, effort is pointless, because there would be nothing to figure out. With it, every difficulty becomes a puzzle rather than a curse.

And it is not blind faith. It is the most tested belief in human history. Every time we have looked hard enough, the world has turned out to have an order we could find. Not everything is understood. But nothing yet has proved un-understandable.

This is the belief that turns a problem into a puzzle. Believe that reality can be understood, and you will spend your life learning.

#ITMAKESENSE

●●●●● BELIEF 5 OF 5 · MINUTE 46

THAT I COULD BE WRONG

This is the belief that protects the other four.

Every belief you hold was formed by a limited creature, with two eyes, one lifetime, and a brain built for surviving the savanna, not for seeing the whole of reality. Your beliefs were shaped by where you were born, who raised you, what hurt you, and what you needed to be true. Some of them are right. Some are not. And from the inside, they all feel exactly the same.

The person who cannot be wrong cannot learn. The person who knows he can be wrong holds every belief with an open hand, ready to keep it or release it depending on what reality shows.

This applies to your beliefs about money, about people, and above all about God. If your picture of God was inherited, it deserves the same second look as everything else you inherited. If it survives, it is stronger for it. If it does not, you have lost nothing but a picture.

Socrates, on trial for his life, told the court about a politician everyone called wise. He was wiser than that man in one small thing only, he said: he did not think he knew what he did not know. That is the whole of it, and it applies to this book too.

Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It is remembering that you are a part, and no part sees the whole.

#OPENHAND

MINUTE 47 · A CLOSER LOOK

Better Predictions, Better Decisions

Here is how belief actually reaches your hands.

The brain does not decide only on the present. It decides by forecasting. Before you act, it runs a forecast of what will happen if you do and what will happen if you don't, and it chooses the forecast it likes. One influential account in neuroscience describes the whole organ this way: a prediction machine, constantly guessing what comes next and correcting itself when it is wrong. It is a model, not the last word, but it is a useful one.

This changes what a decision is. A decision is an imagined outcome, chosen. So the quality of your decisions depends on the quality of your imagination of consequences, and that depends on what the forecaster has been fed.

Feed it fear, and every forecast ends badly, and you stay home.
Feed it hearsay, and it forecasts a world that does not exist.
Feed it a false picture of yourself, and it forecasts a future for someone who is not you.

Feed it truth about reality, truth about who you are, and a clear picture of what follows from what, and the forecasts improve, and better decisions come more easily at the moment of choice.

This is why understanding changes behavior more reliably than lecturing does. A lecture arrives at the moment of choice. Understanding arrives before it, where the choosing is done.

#PREDICTIONS

Part Two: Five Common Misbeliefs

1. That God is Like Us
2. That All Feelings Need a Response
3. That Gut Instincts, Hearsay, and Public Info Are Knowledge
4. That a Religion or a House of Worship is the Only Way to
God
5. That Your Belief is Cheap

● ○ ○ ○ ○ MISBELIEF 1 OF 5 · MINUTE 48

THAT GOD IS LIKE US

If a triangle could think, it would imagine God to be triangular.

We understand things not as they are, but as we are. So we imagine a God who gets emotional, joyous or sad, gets angry, keeps score, plays favorites, changes his mind, and needs to be thanked. Some people picture a God who speaks the same tongue, in the same accent, that they speak today. An anxious person pictures a meticulous God. A grieving person pictures a sorrowful one. God becomes whatever the believer needs or fears most.

Now look at the actual difference between us and God as the source.

We are compound. Assembled from parts, born, aging, dying, moved by hunger and fear, held together for a while and then dissolved. Everything about us, including our moods, comes from being a temporary arrangement of pieces.

God is simple. Not assembled, not born, not aging. Infinite, eternal, and unchanging in its nature. A being with no parts has no moods, because moods are what parts do when they shift.

Every human trait we hang on God is a trait of an assembled thing. As the source, God is the one thing that is not assembled. Strip the projections away, and what remains is not less than the God of the imagination. It is more.

Chapter 1 gave the two faces their names: nature naturing and nature natured. As the source, God is simple. As the produced, God is us. We are God. God is not like us.

#NOTLIKEUS

●●○○○ MISBELIEF 2 OF 5 · MINUTE 49

THAT ALL FEELINGS NEED A RESPONSE

A strong feeling feels like the truth. That is its trick. Your brain's first job is keeping your body alive. It runs a budget of energy, sleep, hunger, and threat, and produces feelings as reports on that budget. Tired can read as hopeless. Hungry can read as angry. Threatened can read as certain. The feeling is real. What it says about the world is sometimes about the world and sometimes about the budget, and you owe it to yourself to find out which.

Desire works the same way. It is the engine of life, and we honor it. But desire tells you what you want, not what is true or good for you.

And watch for the quietest feeling of all: laziness. It is among the biggest of the inclinations that press on our beliefs, because it can talk us into believing anything that requires less effort. It will not rain. The hard conversation can wait. When a belief arrives conveniently, check who sent it.

So when a feeling is loud, do not obey it. Do not answer the urge on reflex. Chew your feelings twice before you spit them out. Ask what the body is reporting, feed or rest or breathe as needed, then look at the question again with a balanced budget.

Feelings are weather. Truth is climate. Do not sell the farm because it rained.

#FEELINGSAREWEATHER

●●●○○ MISBELIEF 3 OF 5 · MINUTE 50

THAT GUT INSTINCTS, HEARSAY, AND PUBLIC INFO ARE KNOWLEDGE

Three things pretend to be knowledge, and none of them is.

The gut feeling. It is fast, and it feels wise. It is also the instinct that tells everyone the sun goes around the earth, because that is exactly what it looks like. A gut feeling is a first guess from an old brain. Useful for starting an inquiry, useless for finishing one.

Hearsay. Someone said. Everyone knows. My uncle heard. Truth cannot be borrowed. What passes from mouth to mouth is bent a little each time, until it is shaped like whatever the last mouth wanted.

Public chatter. The most dangerous of the three, because it comes with numbers. A million people repeating a thing does not make it true; it makes it loud. Trending is not the same as verified, and outrage is not the same as evidence.

The next chapter, On Truth, gives you the tools.

#NOTKNOWLEDGE

●●●●○ MISBELIEF 4 OF 5 · MINUTE 51

THAT A RELIGION OR A HOUSE OF WORSHIP IS THE ONLY WAY TO GOD

God is not hiding in the sky, nor locked in a text, nor behind an altar, available on certain days through certain people. God is the ground of being, already before you, within you, and around you. To search for God is to search for air while breathing.

Religions and their houses are not the enemy. At their best they are a path up the mountain, marked by those who went before. I have walked one myself and I am grateful for it. But a path is not the mountain, and a path that claims to be the only path has stopped pointing at God and started pointing at itself.

It is easier to appease an unseen God than to stand up for a cause, which is why religion so often shelters laziness. Most worship runs on fear of punishment or love of the divine. Love is the better fuel, but a feeling must never be the only cause of an action. Bring your mind to your worship, not only your heart. The first offerings in the Bible were not made from fear, but by people who looked at the world, reasoned that something made it, and responded.

The infinite has infinite ways in. Find God in your intuition, everywhere and anywhere. Then bring what you found to the temple, if you like. It will be more welcome than what you carried in.

#EVERYWHERE

●●●●● MISBELIEF 5 OF 5 · MINUTE 52

THAT YOUR BELIEF IS CHEAP

Your belief is not cheap. It is the most powerful thing you own, and most people hand it out to anyone who asks.

Here is the rule that clears the rest of the house.

If a claim cannot be substantiated by any method of truth, not intuition, not argument, not experiment, not even a reliable witness, it does not deserve your belief. It may deserve curiosity, or a story. Not the word "true."

This one rule removes a great deal. Curses and charms. A rumor that went viral before anyone checked it. A statistic with no source behind it. A campaign promise with no plan behind it. A headline written to be shared, not to be true.

Notice what it does not remove. Not wonder, because nature supplies more of it than any fantasy. Not God, because the One is the most substantiated thing there is: you are standing in it. Not hope, because hope is a commitment, not a claim.

Love the natural, not the supernatural. There is no metaphysics, only physics we have not understood yet. Nature is already supernatural. What more must it do to satisfy us?

To crave what is beyond reality while ignoring what is inside it is to miss the miracle of existence. Believe in the God that makes all things, not the one our imagination made.

Then what is faith for? A bird, next.

#CHECKABLE

The Close

A Bird Needs Legs and Wings

The Ten, in One Minute

MINUTE 53

A BIRD NEEDS LEGS AND WINGS

Faith is our wings, the power that lifts us. Reason is the feet the bird must stand on.

A bird with wings and no feet can soar, but it can never land, never rest, never build a nest. A bird with feet and no wings can walk, but it will never see the world from above. It needs both, and in the right order: it stands before it flies, and it flies in order to land somewhere better.

Reason is the greatest of human tools. It lets us plan, adapt, innovate, and get along. It finds causes, understands them, and makes choices that fit reality. It is the ground.

Faith, the good kind, the second kind of belief, is the lift. It carries us across the gap between what is and what could be.

A bird was given wings to soar and feet to walk. A mind was given imagination to soar and reason to think. Neglect reason, and you never land at your destination.

#USEYOURWINGS

MINUTE 54

THE TEN, IN ONE MINUTE

Accept these:

1. We can change things. Belief is a cause; what you believe shapes what you do.
2. We are unique and valuable. Your value was never earned, so it cannot be taken.
3. Good happens. The laws that made every good thing you know are still running.
4. Reality can be understood. Every difficulty is a puzzle, not a curse.
5. I could be wrong. Hold every belief with an open hand, especially the inherited ones.

Decline these:

1. That God is like us. We are assembled and moody. God is simple and eternal.
2. That all feelings need a response. Feelings are weather reports from the body.
3. That gut feelings, hearsay, and chatter are knowledge. If it cannot be checked, you only heard it.
4. That one religion or one building is the only way. The infinite has infinite ways in.
5. That your belief is cheap. Give it only to what can be checked. Love the natural. It is supernatural enough.

#TENINONE

On Truth

“Even as light displays both itself and darkness, so is truth a standard both of itself and of falsity.”

Spinoza, Ethics II, Proposition 43, scholium

*The Lesson I Learned From My Wife
What is Truth?*

PART ONE: FIVE RUNGS OF KNOWING

5 steps

PART TWO: FIVE ENEMIES OF TRUTH

5 steps

THE CLOSE

2 minutes

MINUTE 55

THE LESSON I LEARNED FROM MY WIFE

The toughest conversations are usually the ones that most need to happen. In my youth I avoided them. I covered my eyes to errors in the spirit of forgiveness, and praised more often than the work deserved. If an employee drifted away, I respected the distance and waited for them to wake up and jump back in, or to succeed in finding another job. I called it patience. It was comfort.

My wife taught me otherwise, and not by lecturing. She taught me by hearing every concern I brought her, without flinching, until I understood that it is all right to talk about the things that matter: to tell your partner exactly where you stand, what you see, and what bothers you, and to hear the same in return.

The discovery talk, the conversation where two people find out each other's reality, is not only good advice for a marriage. It is how executives should run a company, how a salesperson should meet a customer, and how every plan should begin. It is how a journey becomes intentional and improves its chance of arrival.

"You are here" is the first thing we look for on a map. Nothing else on the map is useful until we find it. That is what truth is for: not winning an argument, but locating yourself honestly in the chain of things, in a marriage, in a market, in the universe. This chapter is about finding that dot: five rungs of knowing to climb, and five enemies that keep us from looking.

#YOUAREHERE

MINUTE 56

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Truth is the most accurate description of reality.

The main attribute of a true idea is that it must agree with that of which it is the idea. A true idea cannot contradict itself, and it cannot contradict the thing it describes. Truth is not relative. It is not "my truth" or "your truth." It is an idea that corresponds to the actual nature of things.

Some say humans are below the capacity to reach truth with reason. To them I say: we must cross the ocean with the tools we have. The reason that makes warm clothes for a body without fur and tools for a hand without claws, the reason that understands mathematics, can understand truth and connect with the source of all. Those who diminish human reason usually want a patent on truth, with themselves as the patent holders.

Once understood, truth is self-evident. A true idea is like light: it reveals itself and needs no outside validation. Be careful with that sentence. It describes an idea adequately understood, all the way down, not the feeling that something is obvious. The feeling is cheap; the ladder in the next pages is how you tell them apart. Falsehood is not the opposite of truth; it is the absence of understanding.

Truth is not imposed on us. It is discovered through reason and intuition. It stands on its own.

So how do you know? Five rungs, starting at the bottom.

#TRUTHISLIGHT

Part One: Five Rungs of Knowing

From the weakest way of knowing to the strongest. Most people never climb past the second rung.

1. Hearsay
2. Experience
3. Argument
4. Experiment
5. Intuition

How This Book Knows What It Claims

HEARSAY

Someone said. Everyone knows. My uncle heard.

This is the bottom of the ladder, and it is where most beliefs live: traditions, rumors, the convictions of others, passed from mouth to mouth for so long that nobody remembers who checked. Truth cannot be borrowed. What travels between people is bent a little at each handoff, colored by the teller's needs, and stripped of whatever verification it once had.

It includes the loud kind we met in Chapter 2, where a million voices make a thing loud, not true.

None of this makes hearsay useless. It is how you learn that a road is closed or a restaurant is good. It is a tip. The error is treating a tip as a verdict.

The test is always the same. Can this be checked? By whom? How? If there is no way to check it, you do not know it. You have only heard it.

One caution. A checked report from someone who did the work is not hearsay; it is their experiment, handed to you, and it can beat your own impression. The question is never who said it. It is whether it can be checked.

Take hearsay as a place to start looking. Never as a place to stop.

#NOHEARSAYLIFE

●●○○○ RUNG 2 OF 5 · MINUTE 58

EXPERIENCE

"I saw it with my own eyes." This is the rung people trust most, and it deserves more suspicion than it gets.

Your own experience usually beats rumor, because at least you can question the source. But it is a sample of one. You saw what happened to you, in your conditions, once. The man who was cheated by one merchant knows that merchant. He does not know merchants.

And the eyes are not cameras. Perception is built by the brain from fragments and expectation; two honest people can watch the same event and swear to different colors. Worse, memory is not a recording. Each time you recall an event, the brain rebuilds it, and it can rebuild it a little differently, shaded by how you feel today. The story you are sure of has been edited many times, by you, without your consent.

So experience is real evidence, and weak evidence. Use it. Then ask: how many times? Under what conditions? Would someone else have seen the same? If the answer is once, mine, and I don't know, you are on the second rung. Keep climbing.

#CHILLWITHEXPERIENCES

ARGUMENT

Now the mind goes to work. Reason takes what you know and connects it, draws out what follows, and tests conclusions against each other.

This is a real step up. Logic can carry you from things you have seen to things you have not, and it can catch a contradiction before reality catches you. We have found one kind of matter, one space, one set of laws, and everything we have found acts on everything else. Two separate grounds of being would need two kinds of stuff that never touch; therefore there is one. No experience shows you that last step. Argument does.

But an argument is only as good as its starting points. Flawless logic built on a flawed definition arrives confidently at the wrong place, and the confidence is the danger, because the reasoning feels like proof. Most bad philosophy, and most bad business plans, are perfect chains hanging from a rotten hook.

So when someone reasons well, do not admire the chain. Go find the hook. Ask what the argument assumes, and whether that assumption came from the rungs below.

Argument connects. It does not, by itself, touch the world. For that you need the next rung.

#ARGUMENTISFORPHILOSOPHY

EXPERIMENT

Here the mind stops talking and asks reality a question.

The scientific method is the most reliable tool humans have ever built for knowing nature. It tests a claim against the world, confirms patterns, and corrects false assumptions. It is bounded, by our senses, our instruments, and the conditions we set, and it is honest enough to say so and to revise itself when a better test comes along. Few doctrines have ever done that. Science does it constantly.

Most of what this book says about nature stands on this rung; the page at the top of this ladder lists those claims, so you can check them.

You do not need a laboratory to use this rung. Every good decision is an experiment: a clear expectation, a real test, an honest look at what happened. The businessman who tracks results is doing science. The one who trusts his gut and never checks is on the second rung with a bigger office.

Experiment is reliable, but not absolute, and it is not for every question; no experiment tells you that something exists. For that there is one rung above it.

#EXPERIMENTISFORSCIENTISTS

●●●●● RUNG 5 OF 5 · MINUTE 61

INTUITION

The top of the ladder, and I owe you a warning before you stand on it.

Intuition here does not mean a gut feeling, a hunch, or "it feels right to me." Gut feelings still tell everyone that the sun goes around the earth. Feelings are the second rung dressed up as the fifth.

Intuition is the simplest truths, adequately and clearly understood. It is seeing a necessity directly, grasping that a thing could not be otherwise. When you understand why two and two make four, you do not need to count again. You know it adequately. "Something exists." "A thing cannot both be and not be at once." "I think, therefore I am." These need no experiment because there is nothing to test.

The test is simple. A true intuition survives every attempt to deny it, because the attempt uses it. Try to doubt that something exists: your doubt exists. A feeling that something must be true has no such protection.

So use the rungs for what each is for, not as a ranking that lets a hunch overrule a measurement. Intuition for the foundation. Experiment for the world. Argument to connect them. Experience as evidence, weighed. Hearsay as a tip, never a verdict. The ladder is my own arrangement, built on Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge, not copied from them.

#SIMPLETRUTHS

MINUTE 62 · THE TOP OF THE LADDER

HOW THIS BOOK KNOWS WHAT IT CLAIMS

Let me show you my tools, so you can check my work.

That something exists, and that we are parts of it, sustained by it: intuition. You cannot deny it without using it.

That there is one ground of being and not two: argument. Everything we have found shares one matter, one space, and one set of laws, and acts on everything else; two separate grounds would need two kinds of stuff that never touch. Whether other universes exist, with other natures, I cannot say. This book speaks of ours.

That matter is conserved, that life evolves, that the vacuum is not empty, that a mother's milk adapts to her child: experiment. These come from science, and if science revises them, I will revise with it.

That the One acts from its nature and not from a will: argument, built on the intuition that the eternal cannot depend on a choice.

That it is worthy of the name God: this is not knowledge at all. It is a naming, and a love. I claim only that it holds everything essential that the word ever meant.

Everything else in this book, the advice, the encouragement, the way to live, is the honest testimony of one man. Take it as experience, one rung above hearsay, test it in your own life, and keep what proves true.

#MYTOOLS

Part Two: Five Enemies of Truth

Not ignorance, which is only an empty space, but five things that pull us off the ladder.

1. Comfort
2. The Lie Told to Others
3. The Lie Told to Ourselves
4. Flattery
5. Shallowness

●○○○○ ENEMY 1 OF 5 · MINUTE 63

COMFORT

Reality is common. Truth is rare.

The brain is drawn to what is easy, comfortable, and unchallenging. We often decide what we want to be true first, then look for reasons to justify it, choosing the version of reality that spares us the most pain.

This is not a flaw. It is a survival instinct. Pain consumes energy, and the mind budgets its energy. It seeks the path of least resistance and avoids whatever disturbs its sense of self.

But this holds only until a person awakens to their own nature. Then something changes. They fall in love with the purity of truth, even in its bitterness. They stop seeking what is easy and start seeking what is real.

Schopenhauer said that truth is no harlot who throws herself at those who do not want her. She is a coy beauty, and even the one who gives up everything for her cannot be sure of her favor.

Reality is everywhere. Truth is rare. Only those willing to be uncomfortable can hold it.

#TRUTHISRARE

●●○○○ ENEMY 2 OF 5 · MINUTE 64

THE LIE TOLD TO OTHERS

Since God and reality are one, those who speak the truth are in oneness with God. Those who live in falsehood cut themselves off from it.

To lie is to live at a distance from reality, inside an illusion of your own making. You cannot leave existence; there is no outside. But you can stop looking at it.

Poor are those who cannot even live their own reality. They must always keep a story straight, rehearse a role, remember the details of a fiction they invented. Deception is exhausting. The moment we start playing a part, we risk forgetting our lines.

Be honest, and you live your reality. Live it, love it, and shape it.

#LIVEYOURREALITY

●●●○○ ENEMY 3 OF 5 · MINUTE 65

THE LIE TOLD TO OURSELVES

The easiest person to deceive is yourself, because the liar and the listener want the same thing.

Self-deception rarely sounds like a lie. It sounds like an explanation. We call avoidance patience. We call fear prudence. We call attachment principle. We accept the excuse not because we checked it, but because the truth would cost something: a change, an apology, a move.

The damage is the distance from reality that the last page described, but with no listener to catch it. Every accepted excuse weakens your grip on what is real and makes the next one easier.

Over time the map and the territory drift apart, and the decisions made on that map run aground on rocks that were never drawn. The lie told to others must at least be remembered. The lie told to yourself gets to write the diary.

This is why the Torah says: from a false matter, keep far (Exodus 23:7). Keep far: not only do not speak it. Do not live near it.

#KEEPPAR

●●●●○ ENEMY 4 OF 5 · MINUTE 66

FLATTERY

Better an honest insult than a hundred fake compliments.

Flattery is easy, but it hides flaws instead of fixing them. A false compliment feels good for a moment and keeps us blind for a year. Honest criticism, however uncomfortable, reveals reality, and reality is the only thing we can build on. An insult that carries no truth is only noise; the ones worth keeping are the ones that hurt because they are right.

How truth makes us feel is beside the point. What matters is whether we are willing to face it.

That said, remember the power of encouragement. Truth builds clarity, but belief builds strength. The people who depend on us need more than honesty. They need confidence, support, and a picture of what is possible.

Truth must be paired with the wisdom to lift.

#HONESTANDKIND

●●●●● ENEMY 5 OF 5 · MINUTE 67

SHALLOWNESS

Truth is not handed to you. It is buried under assumptions, illusions, and distractions.

Like gold beneath the ground, it waits for those willing to dig. Most stay on the surface, satisfied with appearances, unwilling or afraid to question, to challenge, to go deeper.

But for those who dig, who examine, reflect, and push past the obvious, truth emerges, clear and undeniable.

Truth is not given. It is discovered. Remove enough dirt, and you will find it.

#DIGDEEP

The Close

The Biggest Truth
The Ten, in One Minute

MINUTE 68

THE BIGGEST TRUTH

The most undeniable truth is that something exists. Doubting it? The doubt itself is proof that you exist. That much no one can deny.

That this something rests on what is eternal is a further step, the argument Chapter 1 made: nothing comes from nothing, and what has no outside has no beginning.

This is not an abstract theory. It is the simplest recognition the mind can make. We know we are caused. We know we are part of a greater whole. We know nothing stands alone. A wave does not exist apart from the ocean. A leaf does not exist apart from the tree.

To see existence as one interconnected whole is not merely a deeper understanding. It is the highest understanding. And to be in oneness with it is the highest good.

And oneness is not a fog in which everything looks the same. The more you understand particular things, a cell, a customer, a child, the more you understand the One, because the One is only ever met in its particulars.

This does not require faith. It requires clarity. When we let go of the illusion of separation and see ourselves as expressions of the same eternal reality, we find freedom, peace, and truth.

The biggest truth is that something eternal exists. The highest good is oneness with it.

#HIGHESTGOOD

MINUTE 69

THE TEN, IN ONE MINUTE

The five rungs of knowing:

1. Hearsay. A tip, never a verdict.
2. Experience. Real evidence, weak evidence. A sample of one, edited by memory.
3. Argument. Do not admire the chain; go find the hook.
4. Experiment. Ask reality the question, and let it answer.
5. Intuition. What cannot be denied without being used.

The five enemies of truth:

1. Comfort. We decide what we want to be true, then look for reasons.
2. The lie told to others. It puts reality at a distance.
3. The lie told to ourselves. It deceives the teller twice.
4. Flattery. It hides flaws instead of fixing them.
5. Shallowness. Truth is buried. Dig.

#TENINONE

On Man

“Men believe themselves to be free, simply because they are conscious of their actions, and unconscious of the causes whereby those actions are determined.”

Spinoza, Ethics III, Proposition 2, scholium

The Crying Child

PART ONE: FIVE THINGS WE ARE

5 steps, 3 closer looks

PART TWO: FIVE STEPS TO FREEDOM

5 steps, 4 closer looks

THE CLOSE

3 minutes

MINUTE 70

THE CRYING CHILD

I once watched a small boy crying in a classroom. The assistant teacher stood over him.

"Stop crying," she said. "Are you a baby?" It did not work. The crying got worse, because a command adds fear, and fear was already the problem.

Then the main teacher walked in. She did not stand over him. She came down to his level, took the fear seriously instead of arguing with it, and offered him a bigger emotion: safety first, and then, within a minute, play. The crying ended on its own. An emotion can only be overcome by a stronger emotion. That is a law. The first teacher had used it backward, stacking fear on fear. The second used it right.

The difference is what each approach leaves behind. The command teaches a boy that sadness is dangerous. Meeting the fear teaches him that sadness has a cause, and that causes can be found, and met.

That classroom is this chapter. What is a human being? Not a fallen angel, not a machine, not the point of the story. A caused creature, moved by feelings older than its reasons, and able, unlike the stone and the star, to understand what moves it. The first five pages say what we are. The second five say how a caused creature becomes free. The answer is more than you think.

#THECRYINGCHILD

Part One: Five Things We Are

1. We Are Matter and Mind

2. We Are Assembled

3. We Are not Free

A closer look: There is No Book

4. We Are Aware, and It Hurts

5. We Desire

A closer look: Exist, Don't Just Survive

A closer look: Joy is the Sign

WE ARE MATTER AND MIND

Everything we can observe has two aspects. It has a physical structure, and it has an intelligible structure, a form that can be described, measured, and understood.

We are no exception. You have a body that can be weighed, and you have thoughts that can be true or false. These are not two substances glued together. They are two faces of one thing. A chemical in the blood and a mood are not two events, one causing the other; they are one event read in two languages. The order of your thoughts and the order of your body's changes are the same order.

The more complex a thing, the more apparent its organization, and the deeper the thought it expresses. A grain of sand has form. A living being, a mind, a civilization, express far greater levels of order and relation. Intelligence is not separate from matter, and it is not a by-product of it either. Wherever matter is arranged more intricately, thought is correspondingly richer, because they are the same arrangement seen from inside.

So do not assume your thought comes from a separate realm. And do not treat your body as lowly, as if matter were beneath meaning.

Without body, there is no presence. Without thought, there is no meaning. Together they are the fabric of existence, and together they are you. This is why you can reach the mind through the body. Sleep, a walk, and a meal are not tricks played on the soul. They are the same change, taken hold of from the side you can grip.

#TWOFACES

●●○○○ 2 OF 5 · MINUTE 72

WE ARE ASSEMBLED

God is simple. We are not.

We are assembled from parts: cells, organs, memories, habits, a language we did not invent, and a temperament we did not choose. We were put together over time by a process that came before us, and we are held together for a while, and then the parts go back to where they came from.

Even our moods come from being a temporary arrangement of pieces. Hunger is parts asking for fuel. Fear is parts preparing to run. Even awareness is a tool the arrangement built for survival, nature's way of keeping alive a creature with no claws, no fur, and a weak stomach. It is not a faculty of a soul standing outside nature.

Awareness works as long as the tools of the body work. When they wear out, awareness dissolves, as a wave returns to the ocean and is no longer distinct from it.

This is not a tragedy for the universe, though it may be one for a family. It is a fact, and a strangely freeing one. You are not a permanent thing that must be defended at all costs. You are a pattern the One is running for a while. And what a privilege, to be the part of the whole that gets to look.

#ASSEMBLED

WE ARE NOT FREE

Only God's nature is free, bound by nothing but itself. We are bound by nature. Every cause can be traced to a prior cause, and so on, without end.

Our will is shaped by our understanding, our energy, our upbringing, our mood, and the state of our brain. Every physical event leaves an impression on us, and the mind is built through experience, not delivered from outside it.

Every thought comes from something before it. Every action is conditioned by forces beyond it. Even the decision to move, what we desire and what we choose, often comes from causes outside our awareness.

The old picture had it otherwise. It made the human being a kingdom within a kingdom, a realm exempt from nature's laws, ruling the animal from a throne above it. Religion needed that picture, because reward, punishment, and the problem of evil all depend on a will that hangs from nothing. Look for the throne and you will not find it.

If we have freedom, it is the freedom of a prisoner in a vast and beautiful castle. We can walk from room to room, but never beyond the walls. We are always inside a nature, of mind and of body.

Most people hear this and feel a door close. Stay with me. The second half of this chapter is about how many rooms there are, and how few people have ever seen them.

#CAUSED

MINUTE 74 · A CLOSER LOOK

There is No Book

When people hear "not free," they hear fate: somebody, somewhere, wrote down what you will eat today, and you are only turning the pages.

Forget that picture. There is no book.

Flip a coin. Where it lands is settled the instant it leaves your finger, by the force of the flick, the air, and gravity. Nothing wrote the outcome in advance. The laws simply never let go of the coin. The hand that flipped it was under the same laws, and so was the mind that decided to flip.

That is what "conditioned" means. Everything acts from the condition it is in, and every condition came from an earlier one. Not a script. A chain.

And the first condition is the form itself. When God forms a particle, it works by the laws of that particle; when God forms a lion, by the make-up of a lion; when God forms a man, by what a man's make-up allows. Each form is a template with its own principles built in, the way water has rules that hydrogen and oxygen do not, and the One never works outside the template it is wearing.

Now the harder case. A man does harm. Was it written? No. He was a possibility that existence executed under his conditions: the wiring he was born with, the home he grew up in, the help he never got. But notice: the teacher who could have reached him at fifteen was in the conditions too. So was the book he might have read, the friend who might have called. The chain has many links, and understanding is one of them.

The whole condition is God. There is nothing outside it to write a fate, and nothing outside it to override one. There is only what is, and what it makes possible next.

#NOBOOK

WE ARE AWARE, AND IT HURTS

Awareness gives us the power to reflect, to choose, to understand ourselves. But the gift comes with a cost: we know we will end.

We see that we die a little each day. We see that nature runs without benevolence and without personal oversight. We see that the universe was not made for us, that we are not its purpose, and that it would continue without noticing if we were gone. And that knowledge hurts.

The animals are spared this. The stone is spared this. Only the aware part of the One carries it, and there is no putting it down.

The remedy for that pain is meaning.

We cannot escape mortality. But we can escape insignificance. By fulfilling our potential, by creating, building, and shaping what lasts beyond us, we take part in the infinite process of existence. God as the source does not speak, write laws, or invent morality. God in our form does. We are the part of nature that gives nature words. When we speak with clarity and in oneness with existence, we speak as God itself.

The burden of awareness is real. The remedy is to use it.

#THEBURDEN

WE DESIRE

Desire is not a flaw in existence. It is the force that pushes existence forward.

Every being, from the simplest particle to the most complex mind, is driven to persist, to grow, to seek strength. A tree stretches toward light. A river runs toward the sea. An animal hunts to live. Not by choice, but by necessity. This striving is the very essence of every thing, and human desire is no exception. It is nature, continued.

But the human mind desires beyond necessity. With imagination, we do not only seek to survive; we seek meaning, beauty, power, and purpose. We can want not just what sustains us, but what expands us.

Unexamined, desire becomes suffering. Blind and undirected, it leads to attachment, frustration, and a hunger no feast can satisfy. Chasing fulfillment without understanding its root is chasing a mirage.

The answer is not to kill desire. The traditions that tried it mostly drove it underground. The answer is to understand it, and to align it with truth: to want what is real, what is possible, and what brings harmony rather than turmoil. To know what is sustainable and reliable from what is temporary and damaging.

Desire with clarity. That is the whole art.

#DESIRE

MINUTE 77 · A CLOSER LOOK

Exist, Don't Just Survive

You could live an entire life as if you never existed. Or you could exist a short time as if you lived many lives.

Survival is enough for an animal. The seal on the beach is not troubled that every day is the same; its awareness seems to end where its needs end. Ours does not. A human must feel its existence as something tangible, must see evidence that it is here.

Watch a child draw on the wall. He is not making a mess. He is proving he exists, and the proof is now on the wall. Watch a grown man buy a car he cannot afford, or pick a fight he does not need. Often it is the same hunger, less well aimed.

The hunger does not go away, so the only question is what you feed it. Results, or noise. Something built, or something merely loud.

How much you exist is, within your conditions, up to you. There is an existence at nature's basic setting, born, fed, reproduced, buried, which every species already has. And there is an existence of outcomes, decided and led by you, in whatever measure your circumstances allow. Nature will make a you either way. You have a say in which one.

#EXISTMORE

MINUTE 78 · A CLOSER LOOK

Joy is the Sign

Every emotion we have can be reduced to three: desire, joy, and sadness. Desire is the striving itself. Joy is the feeling of your power increasing, of passing to a greater ability to exist and act. Sadness is the feeling of that power decreasing. Every other emotion, love, hate, hope, fear, pride, envy, is one of these three with a cause attached.

This gives you a compass. Whatever reliably brings the joy of growing power, learning, building, connecting, moving your body, finishing a hard thing, is increasing your ability to exist. Whatever reliably brings the sadness of shrinking is not.

Notice that this flips the usual order. We do not desire things because they are good; we call them good because we desire them. The compass corrects the error: the good is what truly adds to your power to live, judged by understanding, not by appetite.

The brain agrees. Its reward system cares less about what you have than about what is going better than expected. A raise feels good for a week and then becomes the new normal. A skill you are getting better at feels good every day, because the power grows. Neuroscience calls it reward prediction: the system responds to what goes better than expected, and the expected soon stops counting. Philosophy called it joy. A similar compass, three centuries apart.

Be careful with fake joy. Sugar, screens, and flattery light the same circuits without adding any real power, which is why they leave you hungrier. The test: after the joy passes, can you do more, or less?

Follow the joy that leaves you stronger. It is the One telling you that you are moving the right way.

#JOYISTHESIGN

Part Two: Five Steps to Freedom

1. Accept the Chain

A closer look: The Decision is Made Below

2. Notice the Mode

A closer look: Fight a Feeling with a Feeling

3. Understand the Cause

A closer look: Why a Bad Love Holds On

A closer look: Ask Why Five Times

4. Correct Without Hate

5. Love What Is

● ○ ○ ○ ○ STEP 1 OF 5 · MINUTE 79

ACCEPT THE CHAIN

We are not free. But we are not powerless.

Here is the mistake almost everyone makes when they hear "will is not free": they conclude that effort is pointless. If everything is caused, why try?

Because your trying is one of the causes.

Nature does not act around you. It acts through you. Your understanding, your belief, your decision, your effort are not spectators standing outside the chain of cause and effect. They are links in it. When you deliberate, the deliberation is real and it changes what happens next. When you believe you can, the belief is a force in the world.

A river is completely determined by gravity and terrain. It still carves the Grand Canyon.

You are not asked whether you will be a cause. You already are one. The only question is what kind. Will you be moved like a stone, by whatever hits you? Or will you be moved like a mind, by what you understand?

Determined is not the same as helpless. Your worth was settled back in On Belief, and is not in question here. What is in question is your effect on the world, and that comes only through what you do.

#YOUAREACAUSE

MINUTE 80 · A CLOSER LOOK

The Decision is Made Below

We imagine the will as a captain on the bridge, looking at the options and giving the order.

The brain does not work that way. In a famous experiment, people were asked to move a finger whenever they chose and to note the moment they decided. Their brains had begun preparing the movement a fraction of a second before they reported deciding. Scientists still argue about what exactly this proves, but the shape of the finding has held up: much of a decision is under way before awareness arrives.

So the will does not simply sit on top, steering. Much of it sits below. Awareness often arrives after the preparation has begun, especially for the small, quick choices; for the slow, deliberate ones, the picture is less clear.

This sounds like bad news. It is the best practical news in the book. It means that shouting at yourself in the moment is a poor tool, because much of the moment is already under way. You change decisions by changing the layer underneath, in advance: with understanding, with information, with practice, with a reward that fits who you are. Feed that layer differently today, and next week the preparation comes out different, before you even feel yourself choose.

That is why this book is a set of rules to memorize and not a set of orders to obey. Orders go to the captain. Rules go into the deck below, where the decisions are actually made.

#WILLBELOW

●●○○○ STEP 2 OF 5 · MINUTE 81

NOTICE THE MODE

Freedom is a dial, not a switch. There are two ways of being moved.

When something outside you moves you, fear, anger, a craving, another person's opinion, that is passion. You are being acted upon. When you move from your own understanding of yourself and the world, that is action. You are acting.

No one lives entirely in one or the other, but every day you can slide the dial.

The man who lashes out at an insult is moved from outside. The man who understands why it was thrown, and chooses his response, is moved from inside. Both are caused; one is freer.

Here is the first practical tool. A passion stops being a passion the moment we form a clear idea of it. The feeling may not leave; the sun still looks a hundred yards away after you learn it is ninety-three million miles off. But it stops giving orders. Brain studies point the same way: when people put a feeling into words, "I am afraid," "I am jealous," the brain's alarm response tends to drop and the thinking regions engage. Naming a feeling does not make it vanish. It moves it from something happening to you to something you are looking at. That is the dial turning.

Freedom is not doing whatever you can imagine. It is acting from an adequate understanding of your own nature, rather than from ignorance. The more you understand, the more of your life is action and the less is passion. And notice what "free" would mean: no fees, pay nothing, have it delivered. Freedom that costs learning is not free. It is earned. That is the whole path.

#FREEDOMISADIAL

MINUTE 82 · A CLOSER LOOK

Fight a Feeling with a Feeling

Here is a secret for governing yourself and others, and it comes straight from Spinoza, so it must be shared: an emotion cannot be restrained or removed except by a stronger, contrary emotion.

Not by reason alone. Reason can show you that the fear is foolish, and the fear will nod and stay exactly where it is. Anyone who has tried to talk themselves out of panic knows this. The brain's alarm system is older, faster, and louder than the part that reasons, and in a contest of volume it usually wins.

So do not argue with a feeling. Outcompete it.

Fear is beaten by a stronger love: the mother who runs into the fire. Anger is beaten by a stronger joy: the argument that dissolves when the baby laughs. Despair is beaten by a stronger hope: the one picture of the future that is vivid enough to pull you out of bed. This is why leaders lead with energy rather than with spreadsheets, and why a good friend at the right moment does more than a good argument.

Reason still matters. Its job is not to fight the feeling directly. Its job is to decide which stronger feeling to reach for, and to build it in advance, so it is there when you need it.

Know this, and you will stop being ashamed that logic did not save you. It was never supposed to. It was supposed to choose your weapon.

Which weapon? The next step is where you find it.

#FEELINGBEATSFEEELING

●●●○○ STEP 3 OF 5 · MINUTE 83

UNDERSTAND THE CAUSE

Knowledge is the rescue. If every choice comes from who we are and what we know, then the lever most within our reach is the second one. We can change what we know.

A person in pain rarely escapes it for long without understanding its cause and then acquiring the knowledge to remedy it. The same holds for every fear, confusion, and limit. What you do not understand controls you. What you understand, you can work with.

Awareness itself grows by one thing: attention. Most of life passes by a clouded attention, and what you do not attend to, you cannot understand. So the first act of freedom is to look.

This is why the mind is not meant to sit idle. It thrives when it is active, engaged, and creative. Nourish it with whatever strengthens its connection to reality: thinking, building, reading, asking, refining. God is always active and never idle. Keep the same company.

And it compounds. We actualize what we realize. What you comprehend deeply becomes the blueprint for how you act, because the brain builds its pathways from repeated understanding. A mind that sees clearly acts clearly.

To simplify what is complex, to educate what is ignorant, to release yourself from constraints you never noticed: this is the only true freedom there is.

#RESCUE

MINUTE 84 · A CLOSER LOOK

Why a Bad Love Holds On

Sometimes the thing that controls you is something you love: a grudge, a screen, a habit, a person, a comfort reached for too often. You know it is bad. Knowing is not the part of you that is holding on. Here is what is. Love, in the plainest definition, is joy tied to the idea of a cause. Once the mind ties the joy to the thing, the thing becomes precious, and every argument against it feels like an argument against joy itself.

The brain makes this worse in a specific way. It runs two separate systems, one for wanting and one for liking, and they can come apart. The wanting system fires at the cue, the sight of the bottle, the buzz of the phone, the hour of the day, and keeps firing long after the liking has faded. That is why a man can crave something that stopped giving him pleasure years ago. The love is no longer in the thing. It is in the loop: cue, craving, reach, relief, repeat.

So hold two facts at once. The joy was never in the thing; it was in you, and the thing only borrowed it. And the pull you feel now is mostly a habit of the cue, not proof that you still need it.

Understand those two facts and the bad love has loosened. The next page shows how to dig out the cause underneath it. And prevention beats every cure: never test yourself against a love you cannot resist.

#BADLOVE

MINUTE 85 · A CLOSER LOOK

Ask Why Five Times

In the factory, when a machine stops, the worst manager asks who. The best asks why, and then asks it again.

Toyota built a whole way of working on that habit. The famous example runs like this. A machine stopped. Why? The fuse blew from an overload. Why? The bearing was not getting enough oil. Why? The pump was not pumping enough. Why? Its shaft was worn. Why? There was no strainer, and metal scrap had gotten in. Five whys, and the cause is a missing strainer, not a bad worker or a bad machine. Fit the strainer, and the fuse stops blowing.

The mind works the same way, and so does a bad habit. I keep reaching for my phone. Why? I am restless. Why? The work on my desk is one I do not know how to start. Why? No one has ever shown me. Now there is something to do, and it is not "have more willpower." It is a question to ask someone by Friday.

Notice what the method refuses. It refuses to stop at a person. "He is lazy," "I am weak": those are not causes. They are places where someone stopped asking. Chapter 2 said every problem is a puzzle, not a curse. This is how you solve one: not by pushing on the surface, but by following the chain down to the link you can actually change.

Most causes sit three or four questions below the complaint. Almost no one digs that far. It takes one minute.

The first why finds the blame. The fifth finds the cause.

#FIVEWHYS

●●●●○ STEP 4 OF 5 · MINUTE 86

CORRECT WITHOUT HATE

If everyone acts by necessity, must we forgive everything? No. We must stop hating.

When you understand that a person acted from their nature, their fear, their history, their confusion, anger loses its fuel. You no longer need them to have been a monster who could have done otherwise. They were a mode of nature, moved by causes, like a storm. But we still build seawalls against storms. We still lock the door and remove a dangerous person from the room. Accountability is not revenge; it is protection and correction. A society that punishes to protect and teach acts from understanding. One that punishes to enjoy another's pain acts from passion.

The same applies to yourself. When you fail, understand the causes and change them. Do not spend a week hating a man who no longer exists. Repentance, in the sense of punishing yourself on a loop, is not a virtue; it is sadness added to a mistake, a second wound. Apologize, repair what you broke, learn the lesson, and close the file. The repair is owed to others. The loop is owed to no one.

And notice the hater: those who divide the world into the divine and the devilish hate most whatever they call unholy. The more superstition in the mind, the more hate in the heart. Hate is the one feeling whose whole content is the denial of oneness. It is separation, felt. Hold people accountable. Let go of the hatred. That is what a free mind does.

#NOHATRED

●●●●● STEP 5 OF 5 · MINUTE 87

LOVE WHAT IS

The highest good is whatever reliably equips us to live and brings the deepest, most lasting peace. It is the outlook that removes confusion and frees us from blind faith and unquestioned obedience.

That outlook is the adequate knowledge of God: to understand existence as it truly is, not as we wish it or fear it, but as it necessarily unfolds.

A tree draws nourishment from the ground; cut its roots and it withers. The mind is the same. Its source is truth, and its stability is alignment with what is. Understand God adequately and you see that nothing happens outside necessity and nothing is truly separate. You stop begging for intervention and fearing what is beyond your control. You act from clarity.

To understand existence adequately is to love it and become one with it: love of the whole, not approval of every event in it. True knowledge does not stand apart from its object; it joins it.

This is the top of the dial. Not the freedom to choose at random, but freedom from illusion, fear, and confusion. It brings a peace that is hard to shake, because it is harmony with reality. The mind recognizes God's nature in itself, eternal, free, unique, creative, and wants to embody it. That is the first degree of blessedness: reaching like God. The second is accepting our limits: bowing like a creature. Both are honest. Hold them together, and you are ready for the last chapter.

#HIGHESTGOOD

The Close

You Cannot Leave the Universe
The Part Death Cannot Reach
The Ten, in One Minute

MINUTE 88

YOU CANNOT LEAVE THE UNIVERSE

There is no exit.

As far as anyone has ever seen, matter and energy are not destroyed, only transformed. Even empty space is not empty. So consider the universe a sealed jar with no way out. We do not leave. We change from one form into another.

Some philosophers have held that the world of mind runs parallel to the world of matter, and that something of the mind, like matter, is eternal. Here I will be honest with you: this is my hope more than my knowledge. I cannot prove that anything of "me" continues, beyond my children and my ideas. I can only say that nothing of what made me is lost.

All that is within our power is to play the game well. That is my view of life.

#SEALEDJAR

MINUTE 89

THE PART DEATH CANNOT REACH

There are two kinds of forever, and most of our fear of death comes from confusing them.

The first kind is a clock that never stops: you, with your memories, going on and on. That one is not on offer. Memory is the body's work, and when the body ends, the diary closes. No one carries their photographs out.

The second kind is not long. It is not in time at all. Two plus three is five. It was not true yesterday and still true today; it has no "still." It never ticked. What you are, the particular way the One expresses itself as you, is a truth of that kind. It did not begin when you were born, and it will not be erased when you die. It was never the kind of thing that dates.

And every time you understand something truly, not remember it, understand it, you touch that second kind. Remembering is a tape; it wears, and it ends. Understanding is a window; what you see through it was there before you and stays after you. The more of your mind is window, the less of it death can reach.

So the arithmetic of a life is simple. The more you understand, the smaller the part that dies. That is not courage. It is a sum.

I do not know more than this, and I will not pretend to. But it is enough to take death out of the driver's seat, and to spend the drive at the window.

Death takes the tape. It cannot take the window.

#THEWINDOW

MINUTE 90

THE TEN, IN ONE MINUTE

What we are:

1. Matter and mind, two faces of one thing.
2. Assembled, temporary, and aware because it kept us alive.
3. Not free, inside the walls of a beautiful castle.
4. Aware that we will end, and able to answer with meaning.
5. Driven by desire, which is nature continued, and which needs direction.

How we become free:

1. Accept the chain. You are caused, and your effort is a cause.
2. Notice the mode. Freedom is a dial; know which mode you are in.
3. Understand the cause. Knowledge is the rescue.
4. Correct without hate. Storms get seawalls, not curses.
5. Love what is. The highest good is to understand God and love existence.

#TENINONE

On Blessedness

“Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself.”

Spinoza, Ethics V, Proposition 42

The Man on Sunset Boulevard

Punishment and Reward Are Here

Five Things to Do

PART ONE: ACCEPT

6 minutes

PART TWO: ENJOY

5 steps

PART THREE: CREATE

5 steps

PART FOUR: LEAD

5 steps

PART FIVE: GAIN AND GIVE

4 steps

PART SIX: FIVE ENEMIES OF BLESSEDNESS

5 enemies

THE CLOSE

2 minutes

MINUTE 91

THE MAN ON SUNSET BOULEVARD

Late in September of 2026 I was driving to a café on Sunset Boulevard, in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles, with my friend Daniel. In the middle of the street a man sat bowing to the asphalt, cars swerving around him. Daniel said what most of us would say: someone is waiting to collect insurance money. I made a U-turn anyway.

I stopped in my lane, held the traffic behind me, and asked him if he was all right. He said he had to die, to show people they must be sober. I asked him why he wanted to die. They had robbed him of his beliefs, he said.

Maybe they had. I told him: don't let them rob you of your life or your health too. Beliefs are easy to acquire. You will get stronger and better ones. Daniel was already on the phone with 911, and the police were on their way.

He asked me who I was to be speaking to him. I told him I was his brother, his planetmate. We are condemned to the same pains, prisoners of the same systems. But he deserved to experience something better than broken bones. His body needed more respect than that. He kept talking about not being sober, and I told him he could enjoy life. We just do it with limits.

A few minutes before the police arrived, he stood up and walked to the sidewalk.

I do not know what became of him. I know what I saw: a man with nothing left to believe had nothing left to do but sit down in the road. Belief is the road back to blessedness. This chapter is about the five things a believer does, and, at the end, the five things that steal them.

#PLANETMATE

MINUTE 92

PUNISHMENT AND REWARD ARE HERE

Everything in this book comes down to one practical question: how, then, should we live?

Every one of us intuitively seeks blessedness, whatever word we translate it into: joy, peace, reward, happiness. The mind is programmed to seek reward and avoid pain. And the most obvious rewards and punishments are not hidden. They are visible to us, every day.

The reward for understanding is the understanding. The punishment for confusion is the confusion. When you act from an adequate knowledge of God, you bring blessedness to yourself, right now, and you do not need to wait for a verdict after death.

Blessedness is not the reward of a good life. It is the good life. Punishment and reward are here.

What follows is what I have learned from living this philosophy as a father, a husband, and a businessman. These pages are not commandments. They are testimony. Test them in your own life, and keep what proves true.

#HEREANDNOW

MINUTE 93

FIVE THINGS TO DO

Blessedness is not a feeling you wait for. It is things you do, and the state you become.

Accept: Make peace with what is. Stop fighting reality, your nature, and your limits.

Enjoy: Love life as it happens, today, with what you have.

Create: Make what was not there before. This is how a piece of nature joins in nature's work.

Lead: Yourself first, then others, then the ones who will come after you.

Gain and give: Gain what is worth having, then return it to the whole you belong to.

Five actions. The first five parts of this chapter are those five; the sixth names the five enemies that steal them. A few pages end with a practice, the handful worth actually doing. Treat them as experiments, not promises, and do not let any of them stand in for the help of a doctor when a doctor is what you need. Do the five and you are not preparing for blessedness. You are in it, on the days it is in reach. "Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself." And the half people forget: it is not because we restrain our appetites that we are blessed. It is because we are blessed that we can restrain them. The joy of understanding is the strength.

#FIVEVERBS

Part One: Accept

Peace with what is. The first thing a blessed person does is stop fighting reality.

Accept the Treasures

Deny the Three Fs

Hear What They Say

Accept Who You Are

Accept the Give and Take

Accept and Prepare for the Storm

MINUTE 94

ACCEPT THE TREASURES

God is "happy" to exist. We should be too.

If you don't believe me, look into nature. Or look through a telescope. There is an artist at work, not out there but everywhere, who has never once skipped a beat.

And fear no death. We do not meet God when we die. We are always inside God. The worst that can happen is that you will no longer exist as a human being. Your matter will go on, your energy will go on, and you will return to the ocean you came from. And it is exactly because the human form does not go on that it is precious: understanding death is meant to free you to live, never to make a life seem small.

There are two sides to contemplate every day: our end, or our active life. A mind that rehearses its ending is running a threat simulation on a loop, and a brain under constant threat cannot think, plan, or enjoy anything. Take death out of the driver's seat, put it in the back, and get on with the drive.

The treasure of existence is already yours. You are holding it. Most people spend their lives looking for it in someone else's hands.

PRACTICE *once today, stop for ten seconds and notice that you exist. That is the treasure. It costs nothing and no one can take it.*

Now, the three things that try to steal it.

#THETREASURE

MINUTE 95

DENY THE THREE Fs

Three things will ruin the quality of your life if left unexamined: fear, feelings, and faith.

Fear is the most automatic thought in every creature that can think. Left alone, it makes every problem larger than it is and keeps you inside the walls of what you already know. Even a good deed done only to escape a punishment is fear driving.

Feelings are real, but they are reports, not verdicts. A feeling tells you something is happening in the body. It does not tell you what is true.

Faith, the blind kind, quiets the reason that could have saved you.

A word about hope, since it hides among the three. Hope and fear are twins: both are born of uncertainty, and you cannot have one without the other. Both are the same act, an anxious forecast of what might come, pointed in opposite directions. Hope as a commitment, the second kind of belief, is good; it moves you. Hope as a crutch, waiting for luck to save you, is fear wearing a nicer coat.

None of the three is evil. Each once kept your ancestors alive. But they are meant to be passengers, not drivers.

PRACTICE *before your next big decision, ask one question. Which F is driving? Then put reason back at the wheel and ask again.*

#THREEFS

MINUTE 96

HEAR WHAT THEY SAY

If someone insults your reality, that is on them. It does not diminish your actual reality. What you let it do to you is on you.

Remember the dial. The insult is an outside cause. Whether it moves you is decided by how much you understand: about the person, about yourself, and about how little the opinion of a stranger has to do with what is real.

Walpole said the world is a comedy to those who think and a tragedy to those who feel. Life, and your connection to life, is the most important thing you have. So when a stumble comes your way, minimize the damage. Do not let it steal your mood, or your smile.

And you can always win an argument. Either you realize you were a fool before, or you realize your opponent still is. Both are victories.

#STAYFREE

MINUTE 97

ACCEPT WHO YOU ARE

Don't be so arrogant that you think you are the best of nature.
Don't be so humble that you think you don't matter.

Balance is where humanity keeps failing. We either assume our species owns creation, or we deny that we have any role in its direction. The first produces tyrants. The second produces bystanders.

The truth sits between them. You are one wave among countless waves. And you are a real wave, and you move real water.

The cure for both arrogance and false humility is the same: contentment with oneself, born of reason. Not the self-esteem that comes from beating someone, which has to be won again tomorrow, but the quiet that comes from understanding your own real power and using it. The brain's reward system is easily hijacked by comparison; put a person next to someone richer and their satisfaction drops, though nothing about their life has changed. Reason takes the comparison out and asks only: am I doing what I am able to do?

We even borrow our wants. We desire a thing because someone like us desires it, and then call the wanting our own.

A sports car that tops out at eighty is broken; a family car that does eighty is fine. Good and bad are by comparison, and the only fair comparison is to your own machine, and even then it is a question about your capacities, not your worth.

#BALANCE

MINUTE 98

ACCEPT THE GIVE AND TAKE

Only one thing is perfect, and it is the whole. The rest of us are parts, and a part cannot have everything at once.

Every gain puts something else at risk. That is not a flaw in your planning. It is the shape of a finite life. You cannot have the beach house without the wind. You cannot have the office in the middle of the city without the traffic, not in the reality of 2026. You cannot have the business without the phone ringing on Sunday, or the children without the noise.

The same is true of the words we use for our lives. A marriage is not a marriage if it is not exclusive; take away the limit and you have taken away the thing. A friendship is not a friendship without the hours. A craft is not a craft without the years. Every good thing comes with a definition, and the definition has its price built in.

So find oneness with the definition of what you claim to be doing. If you call it a marriage, be married. If you call it a company, run it. Half-living a definition is the most common disunion there is, and no one is less blessed than the person who lives in disunion: the one who wants the house and resents the wind.

Perfection belongs to God. Ours is the give and take, accepted whole.

#GIVEANDTAKE

MINUTE 99

ACCEPT AND PREPARE FOR THE STORM

The most practical advice in all of philosophy is this: work out the right way of living in advance, fix it in memory as a set of clear maxims, and apply them to the situations you meet, so that when the emotion strikes, the rule is already there.

The neuroscience supports it. Under stress, the chemistry of the brain shifts in ways that impair the regions that reason and plan, while the older, faster systems that fight or run take over. In the moment you most need to think, you are least able to. So thinking has to be done beforehand.

My friend Ray Windsor likes to put the same idea in six words, an old maxim he lives by: proper prior planning prevents poor performance. He means it for business. It is just as true for the soul.

That is what this book is for. Every page is a rule small enough to memorize and clear enough to apply. "Feelings are weather." "Caused is not powerless." "Regret is a second wound." Read them when you are calm, so they are already in the room when you are not.

And commit to principles, not to feelings. A commitment to principles outlasts your discouragements. A commitment to a reward or a feeling lasts exactly until the next feeling arrives.

#RULESBEFORESTORM

Part Two: Enjoy

Love for life as it happens, today, with what you have.

1. Enjoying the Now and Finding the Why
2. Many Reasons to Enjoy Life
3. Limits Are a Gift
4. The Body is the Temple of Joy
5. Enjoy the Zoo

● ○ ○ ○ ○ ENJOY 1 OF 5 · MINUTE 100

ENJOYING THE NOW AND FINDING THE WHY

First, love life. Make an inner commitment that life, in itself, is complete. There are many reasons. Think of how rare it is to be a piece of the universe that gets to look at the universe.

Second, find your why. Everything else, books, knowledge, family, friends, sport, work, should be a means of connection to life, a reason to love it. The healthier those connections, and the more balanced they are, the happier you will be.

Notice the order. Most people try to find a why first and hope love of life will follow once the why is achieved. It does not work that way. For most people the love comes first, as a decision, and the why grows out of it.

Loving the now is not spending the future. Reason weighs a greater good tomorrow against a smaller one today, and chooses the greater whenever it comes. The now is where you love. It is not where you cash out.

Loving the now and finding the why is the how of happiness.

#NOWANDWHY

●●○○○ ENJOY 2 OF 5 · MINUTE 101

MANY REASONS TO ENJOY LIFE

Life gives you many reasons to love it. It is on you to find them.

Do not be "mono-happy." That is the disease that tells you that you need one specific thing in order to be happy. A person with one reason to love life is one loss away from having none. A person with ten reasons can survive almost anything.

Its cousin is the "unless." You should not be happy unless the deal closes, unless the number hits, unless the house is bigger. The "unless" always moves. Forget it. Live the now. The true good is equally available to everyone, and that is what makes it the true good.

And choose your loves carefully, because what you love is where your energy comes from, and where your energy comes from decides the quality of your days.

#MANYREASONS

●●●○○ ENJOY 3 OF 5 · MINUTE 102

LIMITS ARE A GIFT

If everything were available all the time, nothing would be special.

It is good that the day ends. It is good that you can put down the fork. It is good that the weekend is two days and not seven, that the season changes, that the people you love are not always in the room. A limit is what turns a thing into an occasion.

The old religions understood this, and it is the fairest thing to be said for their rules: a fast makes the meal a feast, and a day of rest makes the week a week. The dualists were wrong to call the body low, but they were right that a body without limits is a body without pleasure. Anything taken past its limit stops giving.

So do not resent your limits, in time, in strength, in years, the ones every life has. Deprivation is another matter, and no one should be told to be grateful for it. Limits are the frame that makes the picture. Remove them and you do not get more life. You get a blur.

#LIMITSAREAGIFT

●●●●○ ENJOY 4 OF 5 · MINUTE 103

THE BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF JOY

We said in Chapter 4 that matter and mind are two faces of one thing. Here is what that means at seven in the morning.

Your mood is not a message from your soul. It is largely a report from your body. Short sleep reads as hopelessness. Hunger reads as anger. A day without movement reads as heaviness of spirit. The brain keeps a budget of energy, and when the budget runs low, it does not tell you "budget low." It tells you that your life is going badly.

So before you interpret a dark mood as a truth about your marriage, your work, or your worth, check the budget. Sleep, food, water, movement, daylight. Many spiritual crises at midnight are solved by breakfast. A darkness that breakfast does not touch, week after week, is a different thing, and it deserves a doctor's help, not a philosophy book's.

Respect biology. You cannot will new nerves into existence, and no amount of philosophy replaces iron, sleep, or a missing vitamin. The clergy of the old dualism treated the body as a lower thing to be disciplined. Oneness says the body is the mind's other face, and you cannot have a clear mind on a neglected body any more than you can have a clear picture in a dirty mirror.

PRACTICE *tomorrow, protect three things before you protect anything else. Sleep, a walk, and a real meal. Then see what your problems look like.*

Then go play. Next page.

#FIRSTTEMPLE

●●●●● ENJOY 5 OF 5 · MINUTE 104

ENJOY THE ZOO

Imagine a cage full of playful monkeys. One sits alone at the side, looking sad. You would probably think that monkey is sick.

Now imagine the earth is the zoo, and you are in the cage of the rational animals. On the days you can choose, choose to be one of the playful ones.

Life does get sad. That is real, and this book has not pretended otherwise. But sadness is a season, not a home. Let us bounce back, and let us not add to the misery ourselves.

Spinoza put it plainly: cheerfulness cannot be excessive; it is always good. And nothing forbids our pleasure except a savage and sad superstition.

God is "happy" to exist. Be the monkey that noticed.

#BEPOSITIVE

Part Three: Create

The joy of making what was not there before.

1. Two Beliefs to Create
2. Why Create?
3. Live with Reality, Create with Vision
4. Cherish Your Void
5. The BREW Formula for Creators

TWO BELIEFS TO CREATE

Two beliefs are required to create greatness:

1. Things can be changed.
2. You can change them.

Therefore, never stop believing.

Chapter 2 made the case that belief is a cause. Here is the application: you must be a believer to be a deliverer.

Most problems have more than one solution, and the rest have one you have not found yet. If the door of opportunity is locked, keep knocking. Climb the wall. Try the next door. Ring the bell. Find a window. Or go look for a building with no doors. But refuse to give up on the first few tries.

Remember the chapter On Man: your belief is a cause. The moment you stop believing in yourself, you stop creating. And no one else will do it for you, because unless there is something to gain or lose, most people are too busy thinking about themselves to be your biggest supporter or your harshest critic. Their doubts do not define you. Their approval is not required.

PRACTICE *pick the one problem you have decided is unsolvable.
Write down three doors you have not tried. Knock on one this week.*

#KEEPPBELIEVING

WHY CREATE?

Is it not true that no two people, not even twins, have lived the same hour? That the personality of one person is different from every other? Of course it is.

So as a unique mode of existence, you have a unique way of being that no one else can fill. Nature does not repeat itself, and it did not repeat itself in you. Better to be small and original than big and a replica.

This is what I mean by "exist your reality." Understand your nature. Live your nature. What is clear and true to your intuition, what you know as your calling, is the primary goal. You do not need ten commitments to yourself. You need one: to have a good life. And a good life, you will find, requires being a good person.

Those who cannot create will only save, and those who can do neither will destroy. The sages said it long ago: idleness brings boredom, and boredom brings sin.

Why be great? Because you can. And because the version of you that could have been will not come around again.

#BECAUSEYOU CAN

LIVE WITH REALITY, CREATE WITH VISION

What is it with humans and imagination? When it comes to the plain facts of our lives, we detach from reality and see whatever is pleasant. But when it comes to envisioning the future, that same wild imagination suddenly turns timid. We see only the nearest opportunity and ignore how unlimited success can be.

Flip it.

Stay attached to absolute reality about where you are. Use the tools from On Truth on your own situation, without flinching. And then remove every mental limit on where you could go.

The journey to greatness begins with two feelings. Once you understand that you are a piece of nature that will one day dissolve, you feel the emptiness. That feeling is honest; do not run from it. Then, the first time you taste the joy of doing something truly well, of building what was not there before, you will have no choice. You will want to be great at whatever you do.

Emptiness pushes. Joy pulls. Between them, you move.

#ENVISION

CHERISH YOUR VOID

You cannot plant in a full garden. That is why the wise cherish their void.

Most people treat the empty feeling as a defect. Something is missing, so something is wrong, so fill it, quickly, with whatever is nearest: food, noise, a purchase, a screen. The garden is stuffed with weeds by nightfall, and nothing of value ever grows in it.

Look at the void differently. It is not a hole in you. It is the room in you. It is the only place where anything new can be planted, and the ache of it is the soil asking.

The man with no void rarely builds; why would he? Fullness can create too, out of play, love, and curiosity. But most great things were planted by someone who felt an emptiness and, instead of filling it, planted in it. The founder felt the void where the company was not yet. The parent felt the void where the child's strength was not yet. The writer felt the void where the book was not yet. Each of them left the space open long enough to grow something.

So when the emptiness comes, and it will, do not rush to fill it. Sit in it for a minute. Ask what wants to grow there. Then plant that, and only that, and keep the weeds out.

#CHERISHYOURVOID

●●●●● CREATE 5 OF 5 · MINUTE 109

THE BREW FORMULA FOR CREATORS

Believe: you can do it.

Realize: align with reality.

Encourage: get rid of fear.

Want it: if you don't really want it, you won't get it. Either want what you do, or do what you want.

B, R, E, W. Let's brew this.

A few things I have learned about the brewing. See problems for what they are, and opportunities for what they can be. We are prewired with fear, so we inflate problems with more stress than they deserve, and we shrink opportunities to the size of our comfort zone. Shrink the problem to its real size. Grow the opportunity to its possible size.

When life hands you manure, take it. It is fertilizer for your growth. Rumi is often quoted: the wound is the place where the light enters you. Nothing that happens to you has to be wasted. Nature recycles everything, and so can you, in your own time. And a well-traveled journey goes from complexity to simplicity to maturity, and the key to each step is understanding.

You can brew for yourself. The next part is brewing for others.

#BREW

Part Four: Lead

Yourself first, then others, then the ones who will come after you.

1. Your Leadership Matters
2. First Lead Yourself
3. Positivity is a Leader's Best Tool
4. Tell or Understand
5. Leading Children

● ○ ○ ○ ○ LEAD 1 OF 5 · MINUTE 110

YOUR LEADERSHIP MATTERS

Freedom is a right that runs parallel with life itself: to think without coercion and to choose among real options, and of course wisely. This is not the uncaused will we set aside in Chapter 4; it is the room a person needs for their causes to be their own. It must be defended against governments, and it must be defended against the traps and limits we set for ourselves.

We must lead our own destiny, or be ready to bear the pain of surrendering our reality to someone else.

A leader who collects followers has built a crowd. A leader who creates leaders has built a future.

What good is a leader who does not inspire, and does not make everyone around them better? It is a dictator's job to lead by fear, and a child's mind that leads for reward. True leaders lead by a commitment to being better, and they make that commitment contagious. Leadership creates two things: success, and future leaders. If you are producing only the first, you are not leading. You are managing.

#CREATELEADERS

●●○○○ LEAD 2 OF 5 · MINUTE 111

FIRST LEAD YOURSELF

Leadership is gaining adequate control over yourself, your biology, your psychology, and your emotions, while directing your passions. There is an army inside you. Align the troops. No one can lead others further than they have led themselves.

Remember the first of the three Fs: fear is automatic. That is why security is the most sought-after feeling, and why change is the thing people fight hardest. So if you have found the courage to change something bad, in yourself or in others, into something good, consider yourself a leader. Leadership is the willingness to go first through the door everyone else is afraid of.

And then execute. Ideas are free, and everyone has them. Those who master execution hold the most powerful tool there is, because they can turn the possible into the real. God does not deliberate. God acts. Follow your understanding with action, and be like God in that.

PRACTICE *pick one thing you have been telling others to do that you have not done yourself. Do it first. Then speak.*

#LEADYOURSELF

POSITIVITY IS A LEADER'S BEST TOOL

One way a leader takes control of any situation is by giving off positive energy: positive reinforcement, encouragement, humor, insight, a picture of a better future. That energy is magnetic. People move toward it, in business, in relationships, and in a family. You cannot lead people toward a future you seem to dread.

It works in hard moments too. Imagine a customer calls asking to return an order long past the return policy. A salesman reads him the policy. A leader uses the customer's need to create something new: "I understand what you need. If I can take this back, can we start that new project together?" Instead of rejecting the customer, you have opened a door. Many a "no" you are about to say is hiding a better "yes."

There is a harder version of this. Hatred is increased by hatred returned, and can be destroyed only by love. Hostility is contagious; we catch each other's states through the face and the voice before a single word registers. Meet anger with anger and you have doubled it. Meet it with steadiness and warmth and you have given it nothing to feed on. This is not softness, and it is not the only tool; some people must be kept at a distance, as the page on accountability said. But it is the only strategy I have seen end a feud.

#POSITIVEATTRACTS

●●●●○ LEAD 4 OF 5 · MINUTE 113

TELL OR UNDERSTAND

All are decent. The understandings are cruel.

Remember the crying child at the start of Chapter 4: one teacher commanded him, and the fear grew; the other came down to his level and met the fear.

The first teacher acts as if the will were free: if the will is free, you just tell people, and they do it. The second acts on the knowledge that the will is built out of causes, and goes looking for the cause.

This is the practical difference between the two beliefs, and it decides how you raise children, run a company, and treat yourself. Belief in free will tends to produce telling, judging, and canceling, and when the telling fails, the conclusion that the person is bad. Belief in a constructed will tends to produce understanding, changed conditions, changed rewards, and when that fails, the conclusion that the cause has not yet been found. Not everyone who holds the first belief behaves the first way. But the belief makes it easy.

Understanding is slower and it works. Telling is faster and it does not, which is why we keep having to do it again.

A person who believes in free will must repent. A person who believes in constructed will must construct.

#TELLORUNDERSTAND

●●●●● LEAD 5 OF 5 · MINUTE 114

LEADING CHILDREN

Children strive to be unique and free, like the God that constitutes them. Valuing and validating that nature removes the first conflict between parent and child. It also grows their capacity to lead. Children are the most certain remainder of our being, and our happiness is intertwined with theirs.

How to make children feel, and believe:

That their existence and their individuality are seen and valued.

That they are unique and necessary, so their value was never earned and can never be taken.

That belief is very powerful, so what they believe about themselves will shape what they do.

That feelings are weather, so a bad afternoon is not a verdict.

That reality can be understood, so every problem is a puzzle and every puzzle has more than one solution.

That who you become is more important than what you do, but what you do shapes who you become, so the daily actions are the whole game.

I do not need them to follow me. I need them to become leaders of their own lives.

#MYCHILDREN

Part Five: Gain and Give

What we owe to the whole we belong to.

1. Gain and Give Freedom
2. Nothing is More Useful to Man than Man
3. Gain and Give Peace
4. Be the Minority

●○○○ GAIN AND GIVE 1 OF 4 · MINUTE 115

GAIN AND GIVE FREEDOM

You cannot give what you do not have. Impure fuel does not give pure light. So gain it first, then give it.

Freedom is every being's right, as much as life itself. No one can exist as fully as they should while imprisoned, though many have lived nobly inside walls.

Freedom from a tyrant. Freedom from poverty. Freedom from ignorance. And freedom from the complexities of your own nature, which is the one prison you carry with you everywhere.

This follows from everything we have said. If every person is a necessary, unrepeatable expression of the One, then keeping a person from living their nature is not just cruel. It is a waste of something the universe will never make again.

And freedom is not only won inside. A person lives more freely under good laws, among people who keep their word, than alone in the woods. That is why the fight for freedom is also a fight for its conditions: peace, law, and bread.

Understand it. Fight for it. Spread it.

#SPREADFREEDOM

●●○○ GAIN AND GIVE 2 OF 4 · MINUTE 116

NOTHING IS MORE USEFUL TO MAN THAN MAN

Why should a person who understands oneness care about anyone else?

The answer is not sentimental. Nothing in nature is more useful to a human being than another human being who lives by reason. Two people who understand agree in nature, and together they form a body twice as strong as either alone. The wise person does not want to keep understanding to himself. He wants others to have it, because their having it makes him safer, richer, and freer.

This is a fact about the animal we are. Our brains are built for other brains; a face calms us, a voice steadies us, a hand on the shoulder lowers the whole body's alarm. Loneliness and isolation are linked to earlier death, with an effect in the studies about the size of smoking's. Solitary confinement is a punishment for a reason.

So leading and loving others is not charity. It is self-interest, correctly understood. Every leader you create, every child you raise into their own strength, every friend you help to see clearly, is another mind that agrees with yours in reason, and another pillar under the roof you both live beneath.

#USEFULTOMAN

●●●○ GAIN AND GIVE 3 OF 4 · MINUTE 117

GAIN AND GIVE PEACE

The Golden Rule has taught every people the same thing: treat your neighbor as you would want to be treated.

Some consider the whole universe and everything in it their neighborhood. Some consider only their countrymen. And some only love a neighbor who looks exactly like themselves.

Oneness makes the first group the only honest one. If we are all waves of the same ocean, the man across the border is made of the same water as your brother. When we want to take another person's rights, that is when the trouble starts, and it often starts with "my God told me to." The true God has told no one any such thing. The true God does not speak from above. It speaks only in our form, and what we say in its name is ours to answer for.

In my philosophy I have a Messiah too, and he does not come once. He appears in every generation and lives it. He is whoever brokers peace among the great powers, and whoever designs and builds the system that ends extreme poverty. He is also smaller than that. Think of Nuseir Yassin of Nas Daily, a young man with a phone, reaching billions with one-minute videos that argue for peace and love and open doors to prosperity. A messiah can be on social media. There are messiahs in every home, every city, and every country: the ones who bring freedom, peace, and prosperity to the people within their reach. Could the big one ever happen? I don't know. But we should not stop dreaming about it. Every real change was somebody's dream first.

#PEACE

BE THE MINORITY

In business there is the 80/20 rule: 80 percent of your sales come from 20 percent of your customers. Vilfredo Pareto noticed the shape first, in 1896, in who owned Italy's land; Joseph Juran carried it onto the factory floor as "the vital few and the trivial many."

The numbers are not sacred. It can be 90/10 or 70/30. The shape is what matters: most of the effect comes from a small part of the cause.

The same shape runs through a life. Most of your peace comes from a few decisions, and most people never make them.

The majority exist in fear, stress, the love of money, the love of fame, the chase for pleasure, and faith in superstition.

The minority exist in the quest for knowledge, a life of reason, and a life of virtue.

Both groups are part of the One, and the same person visits both in a single day; the dial from Chapter 4 turns hour by hour. But here is the part that matters: the minority is not a club. It has no gate and no fee. Anyone can walk in, on any morning, by deciding to understand rather than react.

Choose your group. Then hold the door for someone else.

#THEMINORITY

Part Six: Five Enemies of Blessedness

Not sorrow, which passes, but five habits the three Fs grow into when they are left at the wheel.

1. Intolerance
2. Jealousy
3. Self-Pity
4. Idleness
5. Hatred

● ○ ○ ○ ○ ENEMY 1 OF 5 · MINUTE 119

INTOLERANCE

Every thing acts by the necessity of its own nature. Spinoza said it of stones and of men. The person whose belief offends you was made by the same causes that made you, and so were the lenses you both see through. The clearer the lens, the better the driving.

Intolerance has two faces. The first is aimed at people: the demand that another wave be shaped like yours. It cannot be met, since no two waves are alike, and so the intolerant person is angry all day at the ocean for being an ocean.

The second is aimed at time: the demand that the reward come now. The feeling met now, the result achieved now. But the universe cannot fill a cup that has no room in it yet. We must become in order to receive, and becoming takes time. A steak is not grilled on both sides at once, and neither is a company. The person who wants pleasure this instant cannot plant a farm.

Both faces refuse the same thing: the natural process. Blessedness comes from understanding, and understanding is slow by nature. The intolerant person slams one door and never notices how many are open.

The impatient farmer digs up the seed to see whether it is growing, and kills it by checking. Intolerance does that to people, and to time.

#SAMEWATER

●●○○○ ENEMY 2 OF 5 · MINUTE 120

JEALOUSY

Spinoza defined envy as hatred, insofar as it makes a man pained by another's good fortune and pleased by another's misfortune. Jealousy is its cousin: love mixed with hate, and the fear of losing what you have to someone who has more.

Both rest on one belief: that the world is a pie. Your slice grows only when mine shrinks.

For a few things, that is true. There is one job, one house, one first place. For the things that make a life blessed, it is false. Understanding is not scarce. Peace is not scarce. Nothing is more useful to man than man, and another person's clarity makes yours easier, not harder. Two who understand form a body twice as strong.

The jealous person gets the accounting exactly backward. He is punished by another's good, which costs him nothing, and rewarded by another's loss, which gains him nothing. He has appointed himself to suffer on behalf of a scarcity that does not exist. The studies of social media say the same thing with numbers: the more time people spend looking up at other people's highlight reels, the more envy, anxiety, and loneliness they report, at every age and in every country measured.

The person of oneness does not compare their family, their children, their income, or their house with anyone's. They work to increase the common good, because the common good is the only kind that comes back.

There is a cure, and it is not to want less. It is to redefine what is good. Spinoza's test is simple: the true good is the one that everyone can have at once.

PRACTICE *the next time jealousy arrives, name one thing the person did to earn what they have. Then take one step of it yourself, this week.*

#NOTAPIE

●●●○○ ENEMY 3 OF 5 · MINUTE 121

SELF-PITY

Some grievances are real. Systems fail people, and pain is real; this book has never denied it.

Self-pity is not the pain. It is a story told about the pain: that reality is punishing you, that a curse has been laid. But nature's laws apply without discrimination, and follow from their causes with perfection. The One favors none. That is the ninth of the thirteen attributes, and the hardest to hold when you are the one in the rain. It is also the one that saves you. If nothing chose you for this, nothing is holding you in it.

The person of oneness knows a second thing: whatever nature has left open is on us. They take responsibility for what they can change and grow, and they stop blaming what was never theirs to change. The brain agrees. Replaying an injury and asking why runs on the same circuit the mind uses to idle on itself, and the studies show it blocks the very problem-solving that would end the injury. Pity for another moves the hand toward help. Pity for oneself moves nothing.

Salvation starts with responsibility, in the small picture and the large. Broker peace. Deliver what works. Build systems for mercy, justice, and the rights of persons. Good is easy to understand and hard to argue with; spread it. If nothing chose you for the pain, do not lie down under it. Get up and find the powers the universe has handed you directly.

"Why me" has no answer, because it is not a question. "What now" is a question. It has an answer on every page of this chapter.

PRACTICE *once today, catch yourself in a "why me." Do not argue with it. Replace it with "what now," and answer with one small act.*

#WHATNOW

●●●●○ ENEMY 4 OF 5 · MINUTE 122

IDLENESS

Every thing strives to persevere in its being. That striving is not a duty laid on us. It is what we are. A piece of nature that stops striving has not found rest. It has begun to come apart.

Idleness is not rest. Rest belongs to enjoyment; a rested body enjoys, and a tired one only endures. Idleness is rest that has forgotten why it started. The couch does not restore. It only postpones.

An idle mind is the one the three Fs like best. Fear fills an empty hour. Feelings, with nothing to do, become the whole weather. And faith, with no work to test it, hardens into superstition. Every enemy in this book grows in still water.

The science is blunt. In the trials, walking, running, lifting, and yoga treat depression about as well as therapy, and the harder the effort, the larger the effect. A body that does not move tells the mind that life is going badly, and the mind believes it.

The cure is not busyness. The majority are busy, and blessed by none of it. The cure is the third verb: create. Make something that was not there before, however small, and the striving inside you has somewhere to go. A piece of nature joins in nature's work, and that is where the joy is.

PRACTICE *before the day ends, make one thing: a meal, a repair, a paragraph, a plan. Then open one path for someone in your household or your company to make something too. A leader's job is to build the road others create on, and people stay where they are not idle.*

#MAKESOMETHING

●●●●● ENEMY 5 OF 5 · MINUTE 123

HATRED

Hatred is sadness with a face attached. That is Spinoza's definition: pain, with the idea of an outside cause. From it grows a family, envy, contempt, anger, revenge, with one trait in common: each wants another person to suffer.

Greed is hatred's quiet brother. Avarice, Spinoza says, is immoderate love of wealth, and love of a thing that can be taken breeds fear of losing it, and hatred of whoever might take it. The greedy man resents the competitor, the tax, the brother who asked for a loan. Greed is the pie that jealousy believes in, defended with both hands.

Watch what that desire does to the one who holds it. The brain cannot wish harm without rehearsing harm, and hostility is contagious. The hater lives all day in the state he wishes on his enemy.

Hatred is never good, and Spinoza is firm on this. It is increased by hatred returned, and destroyed only by love. The person who lives by reason answers hatred with generosity, not because he is soft, but because he refuses to be led by the thing he is answering. Storms still get seawalls. But the seawall is not angry at the sea.

Hatred undoes all five verbs at once. It cannot accept, being at war with what is. It cannot enjoy, since its food is another's pain. It creates nothing, leads only mobs, and has nothing left to give.

Hatred arrives caused, like every feeling. What feeds it is yours, and understanding, turn by turn, starves it.

PRACTICE *name one person you hate. Do not forgive them yet. Just find one cause that made them what they are. That is how hatred begins to end.*

#LOVEENDSHATE

The Close

*The Five, in One Minute
And This Is the Blessedness*

MINUTE 124

THE FIVE, IN ONE MINUTE

Accept. Fear no death, drive with reason, let insults belong to the insulter, take the give with the take, and prepare your rules before the storm.

Enjoy. Love life first and find the why second. Many reasons, no "unless," a rested body, and be the monkey that noticed.

Create. Things can change and you can change them. Stay with reality, envision without limit, and brew.

Lead. Yourself first. Create leaders, not followers. Meet anger with warmth. Raise children who need no one to follow.

Gain and give. Freedom for every being, the company of those who understand, a door held open, and peace as the only honest neighborliness.

My teacher named only two strengths: tenacity, to keep yourself by reason, and nobility, to help others by it. The five verbs are those two, opened out.

And the five enemies. Intolerance, jealousy, self-pity, idleness, hatred: five ways of standing apart from the whole, when the whole was the point.

Punishment and reward are here. So is blessedness.

#FIVEINONE

MINUTE 125

AND THIS IS THE BLESSEDNESS

We began in a parking lot, with a woman who had lost her blankets and had been told she was a waste. She was not a waste. She could not be. We found her God, the one being that includes all of us. We saw the tremendous power of belief, and of our perception of reality. We felt the coyness of truth, contemplated our nature and our lack of freedom, and at last reached our place of blessedness.

We did not promise a reward for living a good life. The good life is the reward itself. Accept, and you have peace. Enjoy, and you have love. Create within it, and you have joy. Lead within it, and you have strength. Gain from it and give to it, and you have belonged.

Lower your guard. Love existence as it stands. Love yourself as you are.

You must exist. You already do. Now exist well.

#YOUMUSTEXIST

The Book in Five Minutes

Summary of the Fives
The Thirteen, as One Verse
The Formulas
Five Words From Spinoza

SUMMARY OF THE FIVES

The five steps to the One. 1. We are part of one thing. 2. We rest on one thing. 3. We are sustained by one thing. 4. We get our matter from one thing. 5. We get our thoughts from one thing. Therefore the one thing is the source of all things, and it is worthy of the name God.

The five beliefs to accept. 1. We can change things. 2. We are unique and valuable. 3. Good happens. 4. Reality can be understood. 5. I could be wrong.

The five beliefs to decline. 1. That God is like us. 2. That all feelings need a response. 3. That gut instincts, hearsay, and public info are knowledge. 4. That one religion or one building is the only way. 5. That your belief is cheap.

The five rungs of knowing. 1. Hearsay. 2. Experience. 3. Argument. 4. Experiment. 5. Intuition.

The five enemies of truth. 1. Comfort. 2. The lie told to others. 3. The lie told to ourselves. 4. Flattery. 5. Shallowness.

The five things we are. 1. Matter and mind. 2. Assembled. 3. Not free. 4. Aware, and it hurts. 5. Driven by desire.

The five steps to freedom. 1. Accept the chain. 2. Notice the mode. 3. Understand the cause. 4. Correct without hate. 5. Love what is.

The five things to do. 1. Accept: peace with what is. 2. Enjoy: love for life as it happens. 3. Create: the joy of making. 4. Lead: yourself, others, and those who come after. 5. Gain and give: what we owe the whole.

The five enemies of blessedness. 1. Intolerance. 2. Jealousy. 3. Self-pity. 4. Idleness. 5. Hatred.

Five chapters. Five steps. Five beliefs. Five rungs. Five verbs. One thing.

THE THIRTEEN, AS ONE VERSE

The One, the One: 1. it is; 2. and it is one; 3. it is everywhere; 4. and it is eternal; 5. infinite and complete, with nothing outside it and nothing missing; 6. body and mind, two faces of a single nature; 7. keeping all that it holds, and losing nothing; 8. acting by its nature, and not by will; 9. favoring none; 10. unfolding, and never repeating; 11. free, as nothing else is free; 12. knowable to all who look; 13. and not in time, but the ground of every now.

THE FORMULAS

BREW, for getting anything done.

Believe: you can do it.

Realize: align with reality.

Encourage: get rid of fear.

Want it: either want what you do, or do what you want.

The two beliefs mandatory for greatness.

Things can be changed. You can change them.

The three Fs that ruin a life if left unexamined.

Fear. Feelings. Faith. Passengers, not drivers.

The six Ps, as Ray Windsor taught them to me.

Proper prior planning prevents poor performance.

The one commitment.

To have a good life, which requires being a good person. The rest is noise.

FIVE WORDS FROM SPINOZA

Deus sive Natura. "God, or Nature." Spinoza's three-word summary of everything in this book: the two names point at one thing. He also distinguished *Natura naturans*, nature as the active source, from *Natura naturata*, nature as the things it produces. God as the source is the first; God as you and I and the stars is the second. Minute 26 is the page on this: the wave is the ocean, and the ocean is not the wave.

Sub specie aeternitatis. "Under the aspect of eternity." To see a thing not as it looks to you today, in your fear or your hurry, but as it is in the whole order of nature, necessary and complete. This is the view from the top of the stairs. It is where calm comes from.

Conatus. The striving of every thing to persevere in its own being. The tree reaching for light, the river for the sea, you for a better life. Spinoza said this striving is the very essence of a thing. It is what I mean when I say desire is not evil. It is the engine.

Acquiescentia. Contentment, peace of mind. Spinoza used it two ways: *acquiescentia in se ipso*, the contentment with oneself that comes from understanding your own real power, and the deep rest that comes from understanding God. Neither has to be won again tomorrow. That is what makes them blessedness rather than pleasure.

Idea adaequata. An adequate idea: an idea that is complete, clear, and true, that shows a thing as it necessarily is rather than as it happens to strike you. To know God adequately is not to know everything about God. It is to know truly the part you can see. Every time this book says "understand," this is the kind of understanding it means.

Notes, Thanks, and the Author

Notes and Sources

Thanks

About the Author

The Back Cover

NOTES AND SOURCES

Spinoza. All references are to the Ethics, in the Elwes translation, unless noted; a few phrases follow Curley. A true idea must agree with its object: Part I, Axiom 6. Substance, attributes, infinity, eternity: I, Definitions 3 to 8 and Propositions 5, 12 to 15. Infinite things in infinite ways: I, P16. Omnipotence never held in reserve: I, P17, scholium, and I, P35. Rectangles in a circle: II, P8, scholium. Three kinds of knowledge: II, P40, scholium 2. Adequate ideas: II, Definition 4. If a triangle could think: Letter 56, to Hugo Boxel. An affect restrained only by a stronger affect: IV, P7. Nothing more useful to man than man: IV, P18, scholium, and P35. Hatred increased by hatred returned, and destroyed by love: III, P43; the free man repays hatred with love: IV, P46. Repentance not a virtue, with its practical qualification: IV, P54 and scholium. Contentment with oneself: IV, P52. The free man thinks of nothing less than death: IV, P67. A passion ceases when clearly understood: V, P3. Fixing maxims in advance: V, P10, scholium. Not wanting God's love in return: V, P19. The mind's love of God as part of God's love of itself: V, P36 and corollary. Blessedness not the reward of virtue but virtue itself: V, P42. "Union with God is the highest good": Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect, opening pages, paraphrased. Every thing acts by the necessity of its nature: I, P29 and P33. Envy defined: III, Definitions of the Affects, 23. Jealousy: III, P35, scholium. Hatred defined, and its family of envy, contempt, anger, and revenge: III, P13, scholium, and Definitions of the Affects 7, 20 to 23, 36 and 37. Hatred never good, and destroyed by love: IV, P45 and P46. Avarice: Definitions of the Affects 47; the goods that breed strife because they cannot be shared: IV, P37, scholium. The true good common to all: IV, P36. Cheerfulness always good: IV, P42; nothing forbids our pleasure but a savage and sad superstition: IV, P45, scholium. The striving to persevere in one's being: III, P6 and P7. *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*: I, P29, scholium. We call a thing good because we desire it: III, P9, scholium, and IV, Preface. The sun still looks near once its distance is known: II, P35, scholium. No separate faculty of will: II, P48 and P49. Good done only to avoid evil is done from fear: IV, P63. Imitation of the affects: III, P27 to P32. Tenacity and

nobility: III, P59, scholium. The order of ideas and the order of things are one order: II, P7. The mind is the idea of the body: II, P13. Neither body nor mind determines the other: III, P2. Because we enjoy blessedness we can restrain our appetites: V, P42. The more we understand particular things, the more we understand God: V, P24. A greater future good over a lesser present one: IV, P62 and P66. The free man lives more freely in a state than alone: IV, P73.

Scripture and philosophy. "I Am That I Am": Exodus 3:14; the reading of YHWH as "I Am" is an interpretation, not a settled translation. "From a false matter keep far": Exodus 23:7. Cain and Abel's offerings: Genesis 4:1 to 5; the motives I give them are my reading. The Golden Rule, in its many forms: Leviticus 19:18 among them. Socrates and the politician: Plato, *Apology*, 21b to d, Jowett translation. Omnipotence excludes contradictions: Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, question 25, article 3. The earth known round in antiquity: Aristotle, *On the Heavens* II.14. Schopenhauer on pantheism as a polite atheism: *Parerga and Paralipomena*, "A Few Words on Pantheism." Truth as a coy beauty: *The World as Will and Representation*, preface to the second edition, Haldane and Kemp translation, paraphrased. "The world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel": Horace Walpole, letter to Anne, Countess of Upper Ossory, 16 August 1776. The Rumi line about the wound and the light is a popular rendering I have not been able to trace to a specific poem or translator. Einstein's telegram on Spinoza's God: reply to Rabbi Herbert Goldstein, reported in the *New York Times*, 25 April 1929, paraphrased. The universe from nothing: Hawking and Mlodinow, *The Grand Design*, 2010.

Science. Each of these is a pointer to a study, not a proof of a philosophy; where the book draws an analogy, the analogy is mine. Affect labeling reduces amygdala response: Lieberman and colleagues, *Psychological Science* 18, 2007. Stress signaling impairs prefrontal function: Arnsten, *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 10, 2009. Loneliness and isolation associated with mortality: Holt-Lunstad and colleagues, *Perspectives on*

Psychological Science 10, 2015. Reward prediction and prediction error: Schultz, Dayan, and Montague, *Science* 275, 1997. Wanting and liking: Berridge and Robinson, *American Psychologist* 71, 2016. Readiness potentials and their interpretation: Schurger, Sitt, and Dehaene, *PNAS* 109, 2012; Maoz and colleagues, *eLife* 8, 2019. Milk composition responding to the infant: Riskin and colleagues, *Pediatric Research* 71, 2012; breast milk and vitamin D: CDC guidance. Energy conservation and the expanding universe: Sean Carroll, "Energy Is Not Conserved," 2010. Exercise as a treatment for depression: Noetel and colleagues, *BMJ* 384, 2024. Upward social comparison online and distress: "Looking Up Linked to Feeling Down," a meta-analysis of 54 samples, 2026. Rumination and the default-mode network: Zhou and colleagues, *NeuroImage* 206, 2020. Hostility and emotional contagion: Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson, *Emotional Contagion*, 1994. Pareto's observation: *Cours d'économie politique*, 1896; Juran's "vital few": *Quality Control Handbook*, 1951. The five whys: Taiichi Ohno, *Toyota Production System*, 1988. Check them, as the book asks you to check everything.

THANKS

To my wife and our five children, who taught me more than every book on the shelf, and who live patiently with a man who changed his belief system in the middle of life.

To the homeless woman in the parking lot, wherever she is. This book began with you.

To everyone who reads a page of this and passes it on.

Blessed are the believers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I did not start here.

In my twenties I started writing, and defending, the opposite of this book. Nature has laws, I argued, so there must be a lawmaker. God had to be more than nature, because nature has no judgment, no consciousness, no purpose, and a God without those is no God at all. I wrote that Spinoza was wrong to limit God to nature. I believed it, and I could argue it well.

Then I kept asking the questions, and found out how much I did not know. I did not understand Spinoza's philosophy for years. I found peace, and the reconciliation this book is about, ten years later, and thought it worth bringing to you.

My day job since the age of nineteen has been founding and running a company, working with a group of wonderful people to advance quality illumination for customers across our nation. I am a husband and a father of five. What I know, I learned from them and from the people I work with. This is my first book.

THE BACK COVER

ONENESS BRINGS BLESSEDNESS

Einstein, asked by a rabbi in 1929 whether he believed in God, cabled back that he believed in Spinoza's God, revealed in the orderly harmony of what exists, not in a God who concerns himself with the fates and actions of human beings.

Spinoza's God is simple and intuitive to understand, but what good does this understanding bring for anyone? We are certainly not aiming for a reward in the future, but today and now. In these one-minute readings, businessman and father Isaac Hadjyan walks you up five steps to the ultimate union, the One you are part of, rest on, and are sustained by, and shows why Spinoza called this the highest good.

Then, having reconciled with nature, we return to the basics of belief and truth, and then to the human form itself: what we are, why our will is not free, and how we hack the human mind based on these natural understandings. The last chapter is a practical guide, five things to do, on the road to lasting blessedness...

Belonging to one reality is already the case. Understanding that reality is the task. And playing to win according to its rules is the game...

Five chapters. Five steps. Five beliefs. Five rungs. Five things to do. One Reality!

Oneness Brings Blessedness. The Reconciliation of God and Nature.

Einstein, asked by a rabbi in 1929 whether he believed in God, cabled back that he believed in Spinoza's God: revealed in the orderly harmony of what exists, not in a God who concerns himself with the fates and actions of human beings.

Spinoza's God is simple and intuitive to understand, but what good does this understanding bring for anyone? We are certainly not aiming for a reward in the future, but today and now. In these one-minute readings, businessman and father Isaac Hadjyan walks you up five steps to the ultimate union, the One you are part of, rest on, and are sustained by, and shows why Spinoza called this the highest good.

Then, having reconciled with nature, we return to the basics of belief and truth, and then to the human form itself: what we are, why our will is not free, and how we hack the human mind based on these natural understandings. The last chapter is a practical guide, five things to do, on the road to lasting blessedness...

Belonging to one reality is already the case. Understanding that reality is the task. And playing to win according to its rules is the game...

*Five chapters. Five steps. Five beliefs. Five rungs.
Five things to do. One Reality!*



Isaac Hadjyan
1-Minute Oneness