

Chapter 5

The Task—Who Am I?

This is obviously a big question.

Plato's *Apology* describes Socrates' famous dictum: "The unexamined life is not worth living." You may have heard this saying before.

Self-knowledge may be a painful thing for you. There may be disappointments or trauma in your past that crushed your core identity. Because things happened to you in a way that was contrary to your vision (i.e., reasonable expectations for safety and respect), your identity may have been so bruised by the violence done to it that looking into your identity now is a painful exercise. When you look into your identity, all you may see is the wounded child or the woman who was a victim of a sexual assault. You see yourself as someone who has survived trauma but has not overcome it. That traumatized person lives inside you and seems to represent the core of your identity in the sense that the wounded portion is the most easily identifiable part. We are naturally inclined to pay attention to our wounds. We have an interest in binding up wounds and making sure they are not so severe that they kill us. When you

are seriously wounded, that is all you can think about.

The bad thing about the wounds from trauma is that they never seem to heal. You relive the trauma over and over even though the event that created the trauma occurred years ago. Events and people who remind you of the traumatic event trigger your emotional responses, so that you respond unreasonably to situations in the present. Your involuntary flight-or-flight response causes you to react to events and people (including people you love) in an inappropriate or unkind way. Unprocessed trauma interferes with our ability to establish close interpersonal relationships because it impairs our ability to have a healthy relationship with ourselves.

If every time you look inside, you see a wounded child, you avoid having to look inside because that wounded child is you, and she appalls you. You remember the time before the trauma occurred and wish that you could return the child to that time. From thereon, you could proceed along a new timeline to now, so that instead when you look inside, the child you see (as yourself) will be happy and smiling. The child will have avoided the trauma and can now take full advantage of the opportunities she finds in her path in a way that is

entirely consistent with her natural inclinations and curiosities.

Here is where meditation can help a lot. Many times, the wounded child can experience healing if you can simply sit with her in acceptance in silence. The acceptance is this, that the alternative timeline that I described above is impossible. We all know the people in our lives who wish they only could return to that earlier time when everything was perfect, or at least preferable to the way things are now. Time machines are impossible so acceptance means that we cannot go back. We only have the present and must find something that will allow the wounded child to move forward.

Meditation helped me to sit in silence with my unresolved anger toward my ex-wife, Aricka. I am moving forward past this anger and am taking active, specific steps to rid anger toward her from my heart completely. I still must discipline my thoughts. This requires constant attention and mindfulness. It is easy for me to re-engage with that anger and feed it and cause it to grow. My friends know this about me and help keep me from going to dark places in my conversations. I now focus on saying and thinking positive things about Aricka even though it is difficult sometimes.

I mention meditation and that serves as a practice that can help process trauma. It is helping me tremendously with my anger at my ex-wife associated with the trauma of my divorce that I held onto for a long time. For more severe trauma, I would highly recommend that you read the chapter on Trauma and Psychedelics now (Chapter 11) to learn about some exciting new natural treatment modalities (therapies) that are being used to treat post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues. Psychedelic science is a hot topic right now in 2020 and Real Advisers intends to support research into psychedelics. We want to be involved directly with a clinic where our clients can take advantage of these healing PTSD therapies as well as therapies for mental health issues like addiction, depression, and anxiety, in a safe and legal environment. Because of the United States' antiquated and genuinely evil drug possession laws, our trauma clinic likely will be in Mexico. We are focusing on the Yucatan.

No matter what, meditation can be used to get in touch with the essential core of who you are as a person. I would recommend that if you have specific questions about meditation, go read Chapters 15 and 16 now so that you can begin to understand this key concept. The

sooner that you can begin developing a consistent meditation practice, the sooner you will be on the road to becoming wealthier in a way that is consistent with the principles of this book.

What I would encourage you to start looking for in yourself when asking the question, who am I? are your highest attributes, the most noble things about you, the things about you that you like the most.

Is there nothing about yourself that you like? If the answer is “no,” I can understand and relate to the feeling. I describe elsewhere in this book that in 2012 I thought my life was no longer worth living. I could find nothing in my life that I liked. I was divorcing, I was sad about my kids, I hated my job, and I wondered why I ever became an attorney. I was miserable, and that misery informed me that death was preferable to life. This was a lie, and I am so thankful that I did not succeed in my plans to kill myself. It would have wounded my kids and my parents in an extraordinary way, and I am ashamed that I got to a place where it seemed like my only option was suicide.

The pain of my existence was so great that I thought non-existence would alleviate that pain. It probably would have, but the undeniable fact is that my

suicide would have caused an extraordinary amount of additional, lifelong pain for my loved ones who survived me. My kids would have lived the rest of their lives with the knowledge that their dad hated himself so much that he thought his only solution was suicide. Every time they thought that it would make them sad. Describing it would make me cry except I am at a place now when I am optimistic about the future and I have so much to live for. My kids are the main people in my life I try to serve, and I would do anything for them. This is not an uncommon feeling among parents, but I have not always been able to connect with that feeling as strongly as I do now.

I wish that I had an easy answer for people who are suicidal. The intrusive ideations can be so tempting in that they entice you into believing that the pain can end, and the lie that everyone left behind will be better off. In fact, you start to think that they may be happier now that you are gone. They may be relieved that the problem Roland is gone and finally they can begin to live their lives in enjoyment, free of his presence. This is a lie.

The reason I know this is a lie has to do with a core belief underlying The Offer. This core belief is that

the universe, or God, created you. You didn't ask to be born, did you? Your existence must be said to be involuntary unless you remember in your past lives that something you did then somehow propelled you here. I am open to other understandings of identity and discussions about where we presently sit on the eternal timelines of our existence. For most of us, though, we identify with a notion that our identity began at a specific point in time, our birth. I don't want to be disrespectful to past-lives or reincarnation believing people. Don't get me wrong.

I've made an argument here that your existence proves that you have a purpose. Logically, this is known as an invalid tautology *unless* you accept the premise of an underlying benevolent universe that has specific awareness of your presence and included you in its design. With that in mind, think about your beliefs. I accept that everyone has their own belief system.

Maybe the arguments I am making here will be hardest for people who view the universe as mechanistic and absent of any special "awareness" or "consciousness". If you believe that the universe truly is a soulless system devoid of any intent, I recommend that you try psychedelics. A common experience among

people who take psychedelics is a new feeling of interconnectedness to the universe. That accurately describes my experience.

In 2012, when I first took psilocybin-containing mushrooms in my successful (but desperate) attempt to heal my depression and stop my suicidal ideations, I had the sense of what it was like to be David when he describes in the Psalms that the LORD delighted in him. What a magnificent feeling to have the sense that the universe is aware of you and looks at you as its perfect creation without defect. Your existence is its own justification and your calling is to enjoy life. With the calling of love, we are invited to a life of service as well, but service that ultimately will serve your own best interests.

I mentioned above that if you hate yourself or find the self that is inside you revolting, you will have a hard time answering the question, who am I? Self-acceptance is extremely important to the notion of rest, because in order to rest, you must be at peace. If you don't accept yourself, you will never be at peace, and this will interfere with your industriousness, a precursor (usually) for wealth accumulation.

We've heard the saying that you can't love

anybody else until you first love yourself. I hated myself in 2012 when I was suicidal. I was unlovable and incapable of giving much love to anyone, even my kids. Since then, I have had to accept many uncomfortable truths about myself. I also have had some wonderful experiences, and I have recognized how tremendously gifted I have been by my universe. And according to my belief system, for that internal consistency, I remember that “to whom much is given, much is required.” We are called to lives of service. I believe that the “much” required of me will come to fruition through Real Advisers and The Offer. I have had to let go of things in the past and move forward into this exciting new endeavor.

What psychedelics and meditation brought to me was the 17-year-old Roland that I left behind so long ago. I told him that there was too much risk, and he was insufficient to the task, of becoming a creative writer. I traumatized myself with that message, and while I helped myself by telling myself to go to law school (where I in fact learned a lot about how to write), it was still trauma. Reconnecting with that 17-year-old wannabe Kurt Vonnegut has made all the difference in my life since 2012.

Two Ayahuasca ceremonies in 2015 propelled me on a path of writing creatively and on a regular basis for the first time in my life. I was 44. This path led me to write my “T. H. Chalm” poetry that almost exclusively has been focused on the five poetry books of the Bible and the Gospel of Matthew. I also wrote *Les Club Des Hashischins: An Expressive Transliteration*, a chapbook length poem re-telling Theophile Gautier’s account of a cannabis club from the 1840s in Paris. I wanted to both glorify my God in my poetry but also glorify the part of his creation expressed in sacred healing plants. I didn’t know how that would ever help me, but I loved it since I finally was making things that possibly could rescue the lonely 10-year-old boy whose best friends were books. As I describe elsewhere in this book, that lonely boy was (and still is) me.

When I received *The Offer*, I realized instantaneously that it incorporated every area of interest in my life. I will continue to use my legal skills professionally as a working attorney representing corporate and securities law clients, but I also want to spend as much of my creative energy as possible helping QuetzalHiloco and Real Advisers develop the concepts I describe in *The Offer*.

In part, The Offer is a gamifiable lead generation and team building tool for Real Advisers. It is based on universal principles described in this book with which everyone (maybe) can identify. Remember, Real Advisers is a heart-centered financial advisory firm that seeks to help you get in touch with defining wealth and how to achieve it for yourself. To truly implement successful strategies for clients, though, Real Advisers is going to be up front about meditation and the use of psychedelics to heal trauma. In this book, I share with you accounts of how I am healing my own trauma. The hopeful thing for you about this is that my experiences are not unusual and can be replicated. I am not the ultimate guide for what I describe in this book, but I include references to those ultimate guides.

Much of this book is about overcoming personal trauma, whether from violence, abuse, death, or divorce, because everyone experiences trauma to some degree during their lives. Everyone can recognize the debilitating effects of trauma and traumatic experiences. While trauma is inevitable and unavoidable, what we do with the trauma that happens to us is what matters. I discuss trauma in The Offer because unprocessed trauma is a drag on wealth accumulation.

The Offer is the answer to The Task for Roland Wiederaenders. I intend to tell you who I think I am, what I think I want, and how I think I can best serve, in the chapters of this book. If I am off base in any of what I describe, I'm writing this in part as an open letter to some people who know me well and have for a long time, including my parents. I would appreciate their insights.

One final thought about the "Who am I?" question. I make this note in the following chapter, that sometimes it may be harder for you to think about your identity than it is for you to think about your wants. I wanted to let you know that you don't have to answer the questions of The Task in order. I answered my questions by starting with what I wanted right after my divorce. As a heterosexual man who had just lost the only sexual partner he ever had, what do you think I wanted when after 16 years I was no longer married?

My poetry started in earnest in 2014 when I wrote several love poems to a woman I highly admired (and still do), Sarah "Agent Red" Johnston. While she did not reciprocate my romantic feelings, she asked to use one of my poems, "One Word," in a dance and theatrical production named *Twist* that she staged in Austin. Red is a recognized artist and her encouragement and use of

one of my poems in this public way gave me motivation to keep writing. That Red thought so highly of my poetry made me believe that it had merit and that I should continue to write. As I describe elsewhere, I later changed the erotic themes of my poetry to Biblical, but without Red's encouragement in this way, I may never have continued writing creatively. I owe Red so much for her artistic inspiration and she has been a great friend to me.