

Daniel Jeffries - Transcript

Jim: [00:00:00](#) Well, hello everyone. It's Jim O'Shaughnessy with my colleague, Jamie Catherwood, for yet another Infinite Loop. And I must tell you this might actually be an infinite loop because I have my good friend, Dan Jeffries, the Director of Infinite Rabbit Hole, who got me on this journey way back when. Welcome, Dan.

Dan: [00:00:23](#) Thank you, sir. Thanks for having me on. Most appreciated.

Jim: [00:00:26](#) So, let's set this up. I'm farting around on Twitter, and up pops Rick and Morty explaining the universe, and so I'm reading it because, as you know, I'm a big fan of the Tao Te Ching, so I love all this stuff. I'm reading it, and I hadn't read Jed yet. I'm reading it and I'm like, "Holy shit. I could have written this," and so I start posting it everywhere. And then you and I got in touch and became friends, and had some great time in real life, but it's just like the universe obviously wanted us to meet, right?

Dan: [00:01:06](#) That's right. That's the way that it works. There are no real mistakes, even in mistakes.

Jim: [00:01:12](#) I think the other rabbit hole that I got sent down, again by you... I think you might be working for maya here, if truth be told.

Dan: [00:01:24](#) I'm definitely working for maya. We all are. You just didn't know it.

Jim: [00:01:30](#) You're higher up in the hierarchy than I am, though. I think you are definitely. It's like Robert Anton Wilson, I've read everything he's written now too, like 50 years ahead of his time, in my opinion.

Dan: [00:01:42](#) Super ahead of it.

Jim: [00:01:44](#) But he's got this thing, and I can't remember what he called it, his name is [inaudible 00:01:47], but it's like, "When you become aware of the cosmic awareness agency, they become aware of you."

Dan: [00:01:55](#) Yeah. He's got a lot of great pieces. His stuff has sort of fallen out of favor because he was a member of the '60s counterculture movement, but he was this brilliant self-employed intellectual before there was such a thing. Now, everybody can be an influencer or have a side hustle, and this fellow was doing it before anyone. He was talking about cybernetics and the internet, and this kind of stuff, before it

even existed. He also had cooler names for the stuff. He had a much better sense of humor I think than Jed did; a downer at times, quite frankly. I love him, but he's a downer, right? He's there to hit you over the head and shock you, and make you wake up in some way, or at least question existence, or question the things you've been told.

But I think Wilson did it with humor, and he had a bunch of things like chapel perilous, when you first start questioning everything and you're in that shocked state of, "What the heck is going on and what's real? And what do I care about? And what has real meaning?" He has just so many good metaphors for that stuff, and he's very funny. He's very funny. He explores it in a completely different way, and I think most folks today have lost him. He disappeared from literature for a while. I think he was very poor towards the end of his lifetime.

I remember the last post, being a friend had posted he was very sick, and was down in his medical bills, and a bunch of people came together, because they really loved his work [inaudible 00:03:35] and didn't know, and donated to his bills at the end, and he had this beautiful post about, "I didn't think anybody remembered this kind of thing, and I was really appreciative of the outpour and the support," so I thought that was really cool. But he has been left aside or forgotten in modern literature, and he's just a ripping fun read.

- Jim: [00:03:56](#) Totally agree. Love his stuff. Completely agree on him being funny as hell. I've read everything he's written because I'm an all-in guy, as you know.
- Dan: [00:04:06](#) Yes, you are.
- Jim: [00:04:09](#) And so just let's set the stage here. What we're talking about today is the idea of enlightenment. Can you be enlightened? Do you want to be enlightened? I was going back through my original Jed notes, and at one point I wrote, "Enlightenment sounds like it kind of sucks," and thus your second post is what spurred me to call you and say, "Please come on." Because your first post, which I love and which I've endlessly shared, Rick and Morty explaining the universe... By the way, I love the fact that we love the same things. Rick and Morty is genius.
- Dan: [00:04:56](#) Genius. Utter genius.
- Jim: [00:04:58](#) But also the fact that Monty Python is, too.

Dan: [00:05:01](#) Yeah.

Jim: [00:05:03](#) That was the other thing that immediately attracted me to you is I'm a huge Monty Python fan, and your opening line about... What was that about the hat?

Dan: [00:05:11](#) Yeah. "What about that hat?" He managed to embed the meaning of life in The Meaning of Life for 30 seconds before you forget it again. It's brilliant. It's totally brilliant.

Jim: [00:05:20](#) I love it. But so your second post, it talks about human adulthood. And just to set the stage, and then I want you to go and explain what led you to write this. Jed came around, it seems to me late, but he did come around, and started writing extensively about, "You know what? I was wrong. Enlightenment's a booby prize, man. Because there's just nothing there. What you want to be is you want to be awake and lucid in the dream state because that's where all the cool shit is anyway." He dubbed it "human adulthood." Now, and your post is great, but take us into what led you down the path to write part two of this? And let's discuss from there.

Dan: [00:06:15](#) Yeah. When I wrote, "Rick and Morty and the Meaning of Life," it was the beginning of a transformative period in my life, and I was trying to synthesize a lot of things in rapid fire about the existential dilemma, the nature of reality, what it means to question everything, what it means to take a lot of the statements of enlightenment and take them all the way, right? If you think about something like your mother, or you think about nothingness, if you think about what that really means, and going all the way down into total disillusion, it's really a mind-screw, and it's quite terrifying in terms of the implications of it, and there are some dark side to the stuff. By I wanted to synthesize it. I wanted to synthesize it in a funny way.

I think Jed has taken a correct approach in that he shatters a lot of sacred cows and he stays anonymous. There are hucksters on the Web who are pretending to be him, but it doesn't take much to read those forums and realize that it's not even close to the same personality and writing style, and you'd have to be an idiot to believe it. He really is an anonymous fellow, and I think it's because he's worried about you shatter too many sacred cows and people come looking for you. The universe becomes aware of you. But the greatest punishments in history, I think he says, was for heretics, the people basically giving an assault on the dominant belief structure of the time, and I think he's very much a heretic in the modern world, so he stays out of it. But I wanted to talk about and synthesize a lot of those ideas,

and put them in a funny humor format to prick a little bit of the balloon to wake folks up, and then just step out of it, and let people go explore it. And that happened, right?

You went down the rabbit hole, a lot of other folks went down the rabbit hole, and that's great, but a lot has really happened. There's been a lot of water under the bridge then. And I think I said this in the new piece that I hadn't really taken the hero's journey. I was on the verge of the hero's journey, right? I was questioning everything. I was figuring out, "How did I get here? Who am I? Why am I doing the things that I'm doing?" And not long after I wrote that piece, I shattered my entire world. I left a marriage. I started traveling with nothing but a single suitcase. For years, I was just trying to figure everything out and change jobs, did all kinds of crazy stuff, and then I came to a different understanding of things. And when I finally felt like I was there, I felt like it was time to follow up on the piece.

Just because it was one of my more popular pieces, I don't like doing follow-ups or sequels to things unless I have something really unique or additional to add to it; and in this case, I felt like the idea of enlightenment is literally just nothingness. It's a big pile of nothing. It's disconnecting from this beautiful state we call reality, this dream that we live in, whatever it is. Whatever metaphor you want to use for it... matrix, dream... it doesn't really matter. It's life itself. It's waking up to it's all impermanent, that you're going to be erased, that everything you ever do is going to be erased; that the most famous people, the most powerful people on earth, will all be erased. You go back to prehistory and everyone is nameless and faceless; and before that, it goes back even further. You look at the old records of great emperors and their stories are obviously mythological. They're stopping rivers and floods, and it's like clearly this has not happened if you spend five seconds thinking about it.

Over time we get erased, and that's a terrifying thought. But everyone seems to be searching for this thing, that they imagine it to be this stupid beatific smile on your face, and you're never worried about everything, and everything is awesome, and I think I came to the point that nothingness sucks. Like nothingness is nothing and the illusion exists for a reason. It's a big giant funhouse. It's a sandbox. It's a playbox. We want to embrace the time that we're here and use our illusion, and have fun with it, right? Nothingness is no sadness, no happiness, no pain, no death. No joy either though, right? It's like the nirvana concept of heaven is nothingness; there is no joy or pain. It's not, "I'm happy on a cloud somewhere forever." It's "I'm

nothing." Even the concept of nothingness does not exist because I'm not there to know that there's a concept of nothingness. There's just nothing.

And so for me I came back to, "I want to be Daniel Jeffries." I like being me. I think there's more possibility in life to just embrace it, and eat wonderful foods, and travel, and make love, and learn things, and better yourself, and screw yourself up, and just go on the adventure and the theme ride while you're here, and then let this form dissipate and come back or not as whatever else, but I might as well use my illusion while I'm here.

- Jim: [00:11:37](#) Yeah. Again, we are sometimes like crazy simpatico. At the beginning of the pandemic, you and I were texting back and forth and we both had pulled out the part of Jed where he's talking this California group of new age woo-woo types through the disillusion of our modern technological society, and it's scary as fuck. And both you and I at the same time, if you remember this-
- Dan: [00:12:17](#) Yeah.
- Jim: [00:12:17](#) ... we tested each other, referring to it, and we both simultaneously said, "This is not the time to put this up." Remember?
- Dan: [00:12:29](#) Yes, I do.
- Jim: [00:12:31](#) I think one of the things that I have come to is... I agree with you, by the way, about, "Hey..." The way I look at it, I reframe it, okay? I've been reading a lot about prehistory because of all the tools we now have, to be actually see what killed a person, what they ate, that kind of stuff. But the way I frame it, and I love this, it's like: the fact that we are here, that you and I and Jamie are present conscious and communicating, do you know what the cosmic odds against that are, right?
- Dan: [00:13:12](#) Yeah.
- Jim: [00:13:14](#) We won the cosmic lottery. And then the other thing I think about a lot is we are the end-state. And if you have children and grandchildren, it's even a different feeling, but we are the end-state of millions of years of success, right?
- Dan: [00:13:31](#) Yeah.

Jim: [00:13:33](#) We wouldn't be here if the genetic structures that created us didn't succeed, right?

Dan: [00:13:33](#) Yeah.

Jim: [00:13:40](#) And so when you reframe life that way, at least for me, it just become like, "Holy shit. What a great day."

And I love your idea also though about this whole what Jed calls the enlightenment circus, or the spiritual marketplace I think he calls it. I've come to look at that and just think, "You know, he's right. It's bullshit." It's all about, "serenity now!"

Dan: [00:14:19](#) Yeah. I think I said this in the thing, right? Actually, I finished a book recently that's with my editors, and I'll probably publish it in the next month or two called, "Mastering Depression and Living the Life You Were Meant to Live," and the second part is the really important part, living the life you were meant to live, and I just finished editing the last chapter. In the last chapter, I talk through a lot of getting through your shit, getting through the nonsense in your head, the programming that's been there. I think of myself as a program, a collection of belief systems that have been forced upon me over time, and I spent a lot of time debugging it and trying to figure out, "Where did this come from? What was the agenda? Why did this get into my head? Why do I think like this?" and I developed a lot of internal techniques.

I don't think there's no value in some of the things, the kind of new age movement or things talk about; it's just that it's become the only purpose, and they're missing one essential step. One is, "Just meditate and do mantras, and all this stuff, and you'll be fine," and the answer is, "Look, if you're in an unhappy marriage, or you've got a partner who's abusing you or whatever, no amount of breathing exercise is going to get you out of that. You've got to change in the physical world, too." Right? And so I believe that there's an internal change to debug yourself, and there are a number of steps you can take, right? You can learn to talk better to yourself.

For instance, I have what I call "the best friend technical," and I had a poisonous concept in my head. I know everybody knows me as a very joyous person, and I am, but I also had a poisonous voice in my head that would attack me from time to time, and you can't defend yourself, so I had to develop a new technique, and the technique was, "Would my best friend talk to me like this if I went to her for advice?" And so I started incorporating my best friend's voice slowly but surely into my mind like, "Hey,

this is not the way we talk about these things. No, you're going to get this right. It's cool," and eventually that voice transmogrified. It became my own voice, right?

I do believe there's value in changing yourself internally, but then you also have to change in the physical world. You have to do things in the real world, right? If you were meant to be a veterinarian, and that's what you really wanted to do when you were a kid, and nobody else had programmed you, and you went into corporate finance, it doesn't matter how much meditating you do, and how many books you read, and how many seminars you go to, and how much fire-walking nonsense you do: you're not going to be happy because you're doing the thing that you were not meant to do. And so I think change, and becoming an adult, it's making your own choices; but to make your own choices, you have to start observing your own programming, and your own program is your belief structures. I think we should veer down that path because you and I have both talked a ton about belief structures in the past, and very few people ever examine what it is that they believe, and how they came to be the construct that they currently are, and how they can change that construct.

Jim:

[00:17:18](#)

Yeah. I mean it's been something I've done a lot. I work with a lot of people, younger people, as a mentor on helping them with their career, with their life, whatever, because it's like your notion, it's one of the things I was meant to do, so I'm going to do it. And one of the first things that I noticed was the shields going up when you bring up belief structures, right? I've even gotten to the point where I don't try to call them belief structures anymore. I stole Brian [Rinelli's 00:17:55] term "human operating system," right? Because that implies that while human, we all have it, and it allows them to be on the other side of the glass, if you will, looking in on those beliefs.

What fascinates me is I don't think there's any conspiracy here, right? As far back as you go to study... I went looking for any single human society that didn't have a hierarchy and I couldn't find one, right? I thought, "This group of hunter-gatherers in the Amazon, they're not going to have a hierarchy." Fuck yeah they have a hierarchy. And the whole idea that you've mentioned earlier, that to be a heretic or an apostate is terrifying to many people because the worst that the early hunter-gatherers could do to somebody was to banish them because they're alone, they're obviously going to die soon because you need the group dynamic to help. I mean we are, as Wilson calls us, "domesticated primates," but we are a gregarious herd animal, and that's why solitary confinement is one of the worst

punishments you can give a human being. They start hallucinating in as little as four hours.

But one of the other things that I noticed is... I'm not religious, as you know, but I started looking back to religion, and what's so cool about it is it's all the same stuff.

- Dan: [00:19:43](#) It's essentially the same structure.
- Jim: [00:19:45](#) The Catholic Church was the most successful cult, in my opinion, because they got management right, they got the myths right, because they just took myths helter-skelter from anyone else. But I was thinking about a Christian prayer, the Gloria Patri; and when you listen to it, it's just, my God, these people were geniuses. They weaponized persuasion in a prayer that everybody memorized, and it goes, "For Thine away from you," so no agency for you, "For Thine," God "is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, as it was in the beginning," so past.
- Dan: [00:20:26](#) "Is now and ever will be."
- Jim: [00:20:28](#) "Is now and ever will be," right? In this one prayer they cover who's in charge, when he went in charge, at the beginning of time.
- Dan: [00:20:28](#) Forever.
- Jim: [00:20:36](#) He is now and forever. So, fuck you, humans. And then what do they do? They say, "We had a paradise and we left it by seeking knowledge." When you phrase it this way it's just like, "I can't believe people... "
- Dan: [00:20:55](#) Don't ask questions. Yeah. It's don't ask questions.
- Jim: [00:20:57](#) Yeah.
- Dan: [00:20:59](#) It's really like [inaudible 00:20:59] in Asia cultures that the nail that sticks up gets hammered down, and I think... I think religion is an easy one to look at when you start looking at belief structures, but I think it's much deeper than that. It's literally everything that we believe. And maybe the book that I read most recently that excited me about this thinking was called, Thinking in Bets, by Annie Duke.
- Jim: [00:21:26](#) Yeah. Annie's a good friend. She's a good friend.

Dan: [00:21:29](#) She's brilliant, but she's talking about really probability thinking, in this case, and she's thinking... She shows an example in a book, "If you see an illusion, you can't ever stop your brain from seeing illusion, but you can trigger a novel part of your brain that says, 'Okay, this is an illusion, and how can I deal with it?'" so she's thinking about it from making overly emotional decisions when you're gambling, it could be. When you're trading, for instance, it could be. But really, it can be making any type of decision in your life. And the thing that stood out to me in that book, she said, "Here's how we think we form beliefs: we hear something, we contemplate it, we think about it, we decide whether we want to integrate it, and then we choose to believe it," and she said, "Here's how we actually form beliefs: we hear something, we believe it automatically. Then later, if we're so inclined and have a desire, we go back and re-examine, and pick it apart, and maybe change our mind," but this is how we form all of our belief structures.

What I encourage people to do... There's never really been a healthy society on earth, as Jed said. We live in newsfeed. We live in a time where the very idea of questions, the very idea of freedom, the very idea of understanding is deleted from the very words that we can choose, the very concepts are deleted, and we're never encouraged to question anything. We're never encouraged to be critical thinkers. We're never encouraged to think about how we became the thing that we are, and we always... I remember M. Scott Peck saying as a kid that "the map is not the territory," but everyone has an internal map of reality that they mistake for reality all the time, all the time, and they never understand that that reality they're projecting outside is not real, and often doesn't accord with objective reality, or the things that are happening in their life, and I'll give you a perfect for example.

I shared this in a national contest, and I'm not ashamed to say it. But my partner and I were talking about this last night, how when you're a child you think, "Everyone is paying attention to me. Everyone is paying attention to me." Oh, my God. And then you realize later on as an adult nobody's paying attention to you, right?

Jim: [00:21:29](#) Right.

Dan: [00:23:46](#) And nobody is paying attention to anything but their own internal projection.

But I remember a story of there was a girl who made fun of me in grade school, right? She called me "chicken legs," and so for a

huge chunk of my life I thought my legs were ugly, right? As a direct consequence of this I didn't even wear pants at the beach until my 20s.

Jim: [00:24:05](#) Wow.

Dan: [00:24:05](#) As a direct consequence of this thing. And I remember that the whole school got back together on Facebook one year, one of the kids had brought us all back together, and I remember there was something about bringing this gal back in, and I'm like, "No way. Don't bring her back in. She was cruel to me. She hated me," and so the girl comes into the group and she's like, "Hey, wait a second. What happened? I don't remember any of this stuff," and she went on to tell me the story of her own life where she had been really abused as a child, and her life was hell at that time, and she was just lashing out at everyone. There was nothing in particular about me. There was nothing objectively true about my legs. They're not huge, but they're not tiny. They're not different. They're legs. They're just legs.

Jim: [00:24:52](#) Yeah.

Dan: [00:24:53](#) And she had grown up and faced a similar pattern with her own life, and then eventually had to leave that pattern, too. She was in a belief structure, acting from that belief structure, lashing out, reformed that same generational curse as an adult, and eventually had to leave with her child and raise her as a single mother.

I remember thinking, "My God. This one belief structure that went unedited, unquestioned in my life, for somebody as sophisticated as I am with my thinking, as someone who's as smart as I am," and I'm not even ashamed to say that, and not even in an arrogant way, "that here I am as blind as everyone else and seeing the same illusion as everyone else," and realizing how much just random chance, and the things that have been foisted upon us by a teacher that was unhappy, by someone who had never thought about anything in their entire life, foisted a belief system upon you, and how we continue to build this towering inferno of structures, until suddenly we can't tell left from right, we don't know up from down, we can't even see the horizon in front of us, and nobody ever fucking taught us to stop and reflect and ask questions and say, "How the hell did I get this way? Do I have to stay this way?"

And I'll tell you what I found in my book: we are not hardware. We are a combination of hardware, software and firmware. Much of us is software. We can change that software. Some of

us is firmware; it's harder to change, but it can change. And there's only a little bit of us that's truly hardware, but it has to start with you examining how you got to this point, if you ever want to make a real change in your life and do fun things, and do cool shit, and live an amazing existence.

- Jim: [00:26:43](#) Wow. Again, this is like having a conversation with myself because...
- Dan: [00:26:48](#) Always.
- Jim: [00:26:50](#) ... I completely agree. On the point of insight into that kind of stuff, T.S. Eliot is my favorite poet, and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," one stanza which I memorized... I decided I was going to memorize a bunch of songs, and that was none of them, but there's a stanza in there where he's going on and on and on, right? And then he interrupts himself with another character, and she looks at him and says, "That isn't what I meant at all. That isn't what I meant at all," and so Eliot does it brilliantly. I recommend the poem to anyone because it's all about what we're talking about. It's about an unexamined life that too late starts to get examined, and he realizes with a great sense of chagrin, "Fuck, man. It's almost over and I blew it."
- Dan: [00:26:50](#) "I should have had a sandwich and had fun."
- Jim: [00:27:49](#) "I fucking blew it," right?
- And so the other thing that I completely agree with you about is this idea that we're carrying... I use the phrase, "We're walking around with these quantum computers in our noggins, and there's no instruction manual, and so the only way that you can do that... I'm a huge fan of the scientific method. Experimentation, right? I also am very comfortable saying, "I don't know." I'm also very comfortable with the idea that I'm probably wrong about like everything, honestly. Because if you know anything about history, you go back 300 years, you examine the most intelligent people of that era: everything they believed is wrong.
- Dan: [00:28:42](#) Yeah.
- Jim: [00:28:42](#) But back to George Box, "All models are wrong. Some are useful."
- Dan: [00:28:47](#) Yes.

Jim: [00:28:47](#) And then you get Lichtenstein in there saying, "Don't look for meaning. Look for use." And so I'm training myself to be a probabilistic thinker, to never be prematurely certain about anything, and it really annoys some people. I really find that really interesting.

Dan: [00:29:07](#) Yeah.

Jim: [00:29:07](#) Do you find that, too? And why do you think people get annoyed?

Dan: [00:29:10](#) Because they're invested in the model. Jed talks about this. They're invested in the map in their head. They're invested in the identity and the power that comes from that identity, the illusion of certainty, right? It's like if I believe this, if I am a member of this tribe, this nation, this religion, this company, this group of popular people, this group of intellectuals, this group of regular salt-of-the-earth working-class people, whatever it is that you aspire to, there's great power in that because you feel certain in an uncertain world, right?

It's like when somebody takes a job and we just... A fellow who I really liked and wanted to hire at the company that I do work with, and his wife said, "Well, you've been a couple of startups. It's too uncertain. Take the big corporate job," and I thought, "Man, that's just the illusion of certainty," and like all folks will find out in time that when those... he's a rounding error, right?

Jim: [00:30:20](#) Right.

Dan: [00:30:21](#) And the company can cut you at any point just when they run into trouble, so there is no certainty, just the illusion of certainty. And I think people cling to that belief structure because we're taught everywhere in society... Again, nobody teaches you to question things in life. It's all about keeping you and reinforcing the belief structure. I remember being in China and seeing a bunch of kids standing rigidly in attention with their flags and singing patriotic songs: that's an indoctrination, that's to keep you thinking in a specific way. But it's not just like a gigantic totalitarian regime or whatever; it's everything, and it's not a conspiracy.

Jim: [00:31:02](#) Right.

Dan: [00:31:02](#) It's just that everyone... It's like Robert Anton Wilson says, "How can you get mad at a bunch of sleeping people?" If everyone is under the delusion that they're the only thing that really exists

or matters, and that what is in their head is real, and it's absolutely true if you believe, "I believe this. I'm Liberal. I'm Conservative. I'm this. And the other side is evil, and I know everything," then you're stuck. You can't actually see past your nose. You can't accord your belief with reality, and so everybody constructs themselves in this way, and then instructs anyone else. Is there any surprise that nobody can question? That nobody can think about the concept? It's very few folks... I count myself even lucky, and lucky to know you, that we at some point question even a fraction of it. Annie said, "If you get 10% or 20% better at thinking about objective reality versus the other folks in the room," that's her path to making \$4 million as a poker player because she's just 10% or 20% better at seeing beyond the scripts in her own brain, right?

Jim: [00:31:02](#) Yeah.

Dan: [00:32:13](#) The script that says, "Well, you're on a losing streak. Go get some more money," and having a heuristic in there that's like, "No, at six thousand bucks I'm done, and I'm going to have to talk to my group about why I decided to break that rule and get emotional about it," and knowing... Because the brain is always running that pattern, "You're on a losing streak. Get back in there," and so she developed methodologies. I think we all have to do this; otherwise, you essentially just end up being this pre-programmed automaton, in many ways.

I can predict most people's reactions to me, when I need them, based on their input/output, their simple input/output structure based on their belief structures. I can tell whether they've ever questioned or been critical thinkers or think about it, and I can tell you that the greatest dark personalities in history are simply manipulating that input/output. They're manipulating all of the folks who have an iron-clad belief no matter what. They will reject it, truncate new information, truncate anything that contradicts it, and actively fight it. They'll actively fight it. Not only that, they'll take pride in the idea that they remain ignorant and reject all additional evidence.

To me, there's no glory in being someone who constantly rejects new evidence and changes their mind. You see this on Twitter all the time, "Oh, two years ago you said this." You know what? I hope I've evolved in two years enough to change my fricken mind." I'm not here to defend every stupid word that has ever come out of my mouth as if it was absolute fact; but people believe that, and they think that way, and they have this personality that I think Jed says, and I echo in the article: people

stop growing at age 10 or 13; they're fully developed reinforcement learning structures, right?

Jim: [00:32:13](#) Yeah.

Dan: [00:34:09](#) Unlabeled data. They're unlabeled data, no manual. Figure out a goal, get fed, get laid, eat, survive, do something, socialize, and after 10 or 13 years old they stop growing. And they're generally that person, until the end of their life, unless there's an interrupt, unless there's something that says, "Hey, you better think about this. You better look at the concept that you've become." And if you're lucky, maybe you'll figure it out in 30 or 40 years, and you get to decide which life path you want to choose; and then when you get there, then life can become a real adventure and truly joyous.

And remember this: every pathway has pain. Okay? You cannot escape the pain. It's like when Jim Carey talks about his father who was funnier than Jim Carey, by his own definition, and then he said, "Well, he took this accounting job because he didn't want to take that risk. He didn't know how to make it happen, and it was safe." And then one year the firm closed, he loses his job, and they lose everything. There's all this pain in life, you're always going to face uncertainty, but some paths have more joy; and those paths, I'm [inaudible 00:35:28] convinced, through observation, repeated observation, that going toward deconstructing yourself, reconstructing yourself into something amazing, and then going down a path that's of your own passion and interest, you're still going to get the pain. People you love are still going to pass away, people are going to get sick, you're still going to die, but you're going to have more joy. You're going to have a great bottle of wine or amazing cold beer. You're going to touchdown in another country, or you're going to make love to someone you don't really want to make love to, right?

Jim: [00:35:58](#) Yeah.

Dan: [00:36:00](#) And that to me is the joy of life. That, to me, I'll take over enlightenment any day of the week, and I would not take going back to the walking dead zombie structure of never questioning everything, and having a pre-programmed insectan response to everything that happens around me.

Jim: [00:36:21](#) Again, literally I disagree with zero of what you said. I write threads a lot, and I did this long one called, "The Thinker and the Prover," which makes a lot of your points, and it simplifies it by saying: hey, you can think anything you want. You can

believe anything you want. But the minute you decide on that belief, the thinker turns off and the prover takes over. And guess what the prover does? It's proves everything that you believe to be true.

There's a couple of interesting items that I'd like to explore a little bit more. I say all the time we are deterministic thinkers living in a probabilistic world. Hilarity or tragedy often ensue. And so I have a buddy in the city who's a doctor, super successful entrepreneur investor. We just had him on. His handle on Twitter is Max Arbitrage. He always gives me really interesting things to contemplate, right? And so during the podcast, and then even more off the podcast, he's like, "Number one, Jim, will you fucking stop telling everyone to be a probabilistic thinker? You don't want them to be probabilistic thinkers." He goes, "Come on, man. You're the con. How about this elephant invading the game space? Do you want your [inaudible 00:37:48] to be probabilistic [inaudible 00:37:50]? No. Because if they're all living [inaudible 00:37:54] sphere and running to the woods because the probability of survival is much higher."

And then he does another really great thing, and I never thought of it this way, he says: the reason why people like us do well is very simple, and it has to do with the illusion of certainty. He says the vast majority... he puts it at 98%, I don't think it's that high, but I'm an optimist... he says 98% of the people in the world are short volatility. In other words, they will do anything to create this illusion of certainty in their life. And he goes, "And then there's the 2% of us, like you and me," he was talking about me and him, and I would put you in this camp too, "The 2% of us that are long volatility, and the idea being though: why do you think it's such a great asymmetric payoff pattern? I mean imagine if it was 50:50, Dan. If it was 50:50, there would be no Elon Musks. There would be no Bezos. There would be none of these people in the world because, if it was 50:50, markets are very efficient in that regard. If 50% want to be selling volatility and 50% want to be buying it: very boring life, my friend, because it just bumps along."

Something that I guess I've never understood is this illusion of certainty. I call my avatar "Manufactured Jim," right? Manufactured Jim ticks all the boxes that you were talking about, about the girl who made fun of your legs and things. I hate politics; I think that it's the new religion, unfortunately. I think that people who descend into dogma are literally brain dead because all they are doing is repeating a script.

Dan: [00:39:55](#) That someone else thought for them.

Jim: [00:39:58](#) Exactly. The one thing that does define me is I'm fiercely, as you know, fiercely anti-authoritarian, and I just fucking hate any busybody that wants to tell me what I'm going to do, and to the point where I would probably do the opposite. And I was thinking about that about a month ago, and what flashed into my mind? What flashed into my mind was me in third grade, and at that time they had a reading system, I think it was called SRA, and what it was... it was stupid. What it was was there were these little boxes of cards, and on each card was a story, and then you would read the story, and then you would write what the story was about, right? I got all the way through eighth grade and was done, and they said that my papers were all correct and everything, but here's what happened. It's a Catholic grade school, of course.

Dan: [00:41:03](#) No wonder we're so related.

Jim: [00:41:05](#) Yeah. And this vicious nun. Anyway, you know what they did to me, Dan? They didn't send me to the library to read more. What they did to me was they punished me. They forced me to sit at my desk when all the other kids were doing the SRA, making a Christmas tree like this, I'm showing, our listeners can't see it, but making a Christmas tree with my hand, looking straight ahead, and all that that did was made me fucking want to learn everything. I went home and I'm complaining to my father about this, and he's like, "Come here," and he walks me into the other room, he's a big book guy like me, and there's the Encyclopedia Britannica, the old one. I have it here. Anyway, he pulls out the first volume, and he sets it on the table, and he goes, "Knock yourself out, kid." So, I did it like to spite the nuns.

Dan: [00:42:14](#) The programming in maya worked on you too, right? It fostered the people who were thinking by giving you enough pain that you would go in the other direction.

Jim: [00:42:14](#) Exactly.

Dan: [00:42:14](#) The system was perfect.

Jim: [00:42:26](#) Exactly. Because I do think about that sometimes. I did a [salon 00:42:32], and we're dropping her podcast tomorrow, Anna... What's her last name, Jamie? [Gatt 00:42:38]

Jamie: [00:42:37](#) Gatt?

Jim: [00:42:38](#) Yeah. She's Hungarian. And another one of my prejudices is I think people from old Eastern Europe are just so cool, and one of the reasons that they're so cool is because they lived under tyranny, and so they relish freedom of thought much more than we in the West do because they were divided, right?

Dan: [00:43:03](#) Yeah.

Jim: [00:43:04](#) Anyway, and I was talking beforehand, and it was like this whole idea that you get scripted, but you don't know, using your terminology, you don't know if the software that you got, you don't know if that's going to comply or be like, "Hey, fuck you," right? One of the things that I did find though is like... I did this salon with them, and the woman who was running it, who I've had on the podcast, Bronwen who's a thinker out of South Africa, she decided she was going to label me a contrary, and so one of the first things I do is say, "Would it be contrarian of me to say I'm not a contrarian?" So, we had this epic battle over Twitter with me saying, "I'm not a contrarian." Most of the time, I'm doing what everyone else is doing, because that's the way to bet, right?

Dan: [00:44:08](#) Yeah.

Jim: [00:44:09](#) But it got me thinking that: do you think we can go too far the other way, right? Because I know you have. Just a couple of things, and then I want you to comment. I totally agree with the idea about pain. Trying to escape pain is an absolute fool's errand: it's not going to happen. It's not going to happen. And the more you understand that and take a stoic attitude about it, I think, at least in my case, it's worked out because it's in everybody's life. But the thing that I want to ask you is do you think that some of us who are meta programmers of our own minds, do you think sometimes we go too far and like, "I'm against it"?

Dan: [00:45:03](#) Yeah.

Jim: [00:45:03](#) Go for it.

Dan: [00:45:04](#) That's chapel perilous, right? In other words, you go so far down the rabbit hole, and we jokingly call me the Director of the Infinite Rabbit Hole at the beginning of this, right? You go so far down the rabbit hole that you don't really know what's real anymore, and that's a dangerous place to be, right? I still have this argument with folks now, and I have very clear understandings of it. Like people go, "Cool." Objective reality?

There is no objective reality. And like cool, you can go down that rabbit hole forever in your life, you can get down into nothingness and whatever, but it comes back to the old: before enlightenment there is a mountain, during enlightenment there is no mountain, after mountain and enlightenment there's a fucking mountain again.

Jim: [00:45:52](#) Right.

Dan: [00:45:52](#) It's like you might realize that the mountain is an illusion, and your life is an illusion, you're a construct, but you still live in a construct until you get deleted, right? And so it's beneficial to understand how the construct works. It's beneficial to understand the mountain. You may know, in the grand scheme of things, at the bottom level the mountain doesn't exist, and objective reality is not there, it's all nothingness, blah-blah-blah, but that doesn't get you anywhere.

Jim: [00:46:17](#) Right.

Dan: [00:46:18](#) You're still here. And so my thinking is this is where the probabilistic thinking is. There's a thing in cryptocurrency and cryptography protocols now called the zero-knowledge proof, and in that zero-knowledge proof you can prove that somebody has the key to something without them actually showing you the key. In modern-day programming you have to show your key, how you got in the door, and so there's a chance it could be picked-off in transit, and there are many attacks done this way.

But in this new zero-knowledge base, you simply prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that you have a key, and the example they use is Ali Baba's cave. It's a circular cave, there's a door at the back of it, Alice and Bob, and Alice says, "Prove to me you have the key. Come out on the left," so Bob comes out on the left. They go, "Great. Bob's got the key." Well, not so fast. Bob could have just been lucky. He could have been on the left side of the door that was locked and not have the key. So, you tell Bob to go back there, and she randomly tells him to come out on either side again and again, and after a certain period of time you can assume that Bob has the key, right? And so there are things that we can build good working rules, and I think Peter Brant talks about that, he says, "I have strong opinions weekly held," right?

Jim: [00:46:18](#) Yeah.

Dan: [00:47:32](#) He's open to changing his mind. People are always like, "Oh, you said it was bullish yesterday, you jerk," and he was like, "Yeah. But the chart, and now it's not," right? My thinking is you've got to have strong opinions weekly held, really be willing to change, but you can't take it too far. And I always say you can make an argument that gravity doesn't exist; but if you go up to a 100-storey window and you jump out, you're going to lose.

Jim: [00:47:59](#) Gravity, one. You, zero.

Dan: [00:48:01](#) Yeah. You zero. And it's got a perfect record, so it's pretty helpful for you to assume gravity exists, and there's lots more things, right? I use the famous story, and I think I actually got this one from Wilson where he says the young monk comes to the old monk, and had been taking philosophy classes, and his student says, "I'm so depressed. What do I do?" and the old monk says, "Well, what's the problem?" and he said, "Well, I learned that nothing is real. It doesn't really matter which side an argument you take. You could equally prove everything and it's all the same," and he's like, "That's very interesting, my son. Could you, for instance, prove that your nose doesn't exist?" and so the kid says, "Of course. First of all..." so then the monk just punches him in the nose and says, "What hurts?" Your nose exists.

Yeah, you can go all the way down the Jed rabbit hole, all the way down the Buddha rabbit hole, all the way down to nothingness, and say that some [inaudible 00:49:00] nothing exists, that we're all transient, all death [inaudible 00:49:03] by the wind, but there are some heuristics, and my sense is you want to continue to accord yourself with objective reality. After you go too far, come back. Come back off the cliff because there's only a couple of routes at the end of that game, right? At the end of the enlightenment game there's only monk in a cave or disappear from the earth, right? It's no coincidence when you see the folks that he talks to or interviews, they're all living on a farm somewhere knitting merrily. She's not doing any interview. She has one interview, the rest of her life with no human interaction, and that's okay. You're going to have the minimum viable pain because you've deleted most of the construct, and eventually you die, and that's it.

And that life I think maybe it has an appeal, but for me I think there are a lot of other more into pathways in this gigantic maya simulation playground reality [inaudible 00:50:10]. There are much more interesting pathways, and to me I would just rather go down this. So, come back off the ledge; come back off of exploring it.

Like you have to go all the way down the rabbit hole to destroy all the initial programming, but it's beneficial to build back up a construct of your own creation, a personality of your own creation, an understanding of your own creation where you've effectively looked at everything, tossed the garbage out of your head, gone up into your attic, and said, "Man, how the hell did this get in here? This came from my childhood nun. This came from my mom who was a hypochondriac. Oh, this came from that bully in high school. This came from my first job where they told me I was family, but they fired me anyway." Get it all out of there, and then go back and decide how you want to arrange the world, right? Where do you want to put the chair? Do you want to let some light in? Let some light in. The sun is beautiful. Take a trip. Put a plant up. Get a poster. Frame it. But reorganize your mind into something.

I think life is beautiful. Really, I think there's so many beautiful pathways, and you're right. First of all, we don't have to worry about everyone waking up with all the...

Jim: [00:51:34](#)

No.

Dan: [00:51:36](#)

Don't worry about that. You can encourage anyone you want to be a probabilistic thinker; it's not going to happen. The concept of probabilistic thinking is deleted from Newsweek anyway, so it doesn't make any... It's generally concealed from the concept. You can shout this to the heavens, and feel the people are listening, are the few people who have a radio receiver pre-tuned to hear it anyway, so it doesn't matter.

Jim: [00:51:57](#)

Right.

Dan: [00:51:58](#)

So, I'm all in on probabilistic thinking. I don't think it's 98%, depending on the day, and some days I think it's 99.5%, but other days I think it's probably 90%, right? So, we're good there.

Jim: [00:52:14](#)

When you're feeling very, very optimistic. I think you make obviously some great points, as far as I'm concerned. I found one way that was helpful, in terms of venturing back out of the rabbit hole, is this idea of consensus or what I call ground state reality, right? Consensus reality, in my opinion, which is probably wrong, is ideas and scripts and traditions and things that the majority of human beings alive on the planet collectively, 51% or greater believe, right? Some of those beliefs are very strong, like gravity, because you keep testing it and you keep... The win keeps going to gravity, so I'm going to do that.

But I'm rereading actually, The Beginning of Infinity, right now and he makes the point that quantum basically says that Newton was wrong about gravity. It doesn't exert a kind of force that people now in consensus reality believe it does, but I'm laughing when I'm reading it because I'm like, "Well, yeah. Theoretically you're right. But if I go out of that 100-storey window I know that my last thought is going to be, "Shit. It fucking works."

Dan: [00:53:37](#) If you're building a quantum computer then you're functioning below the state where gravity exerts its force, then it's useful there. But in Dan Jeffries' meat space, gravity is still very much a primal force. Taking a walk out a high window has been known to result in dismemberment and death, so definitely don't do it.

Jim: [00:53:59](#) There's a great movie called, The Gentleman, with... I can't remember who starred in it. Matthew McConaughey or [inaudible 00:54:09]. Anyway, they're gangsters and they go to kill somebody, and they push them off the ledge, and they said... They get down to his mangled body, and people are there, "You killed him! You killed him!" and the assassin looks at her and goes, "Nah. Gravity killed him."

Dan: [00:54:27](#) Gravity killed him. Yeah.

Jim: [00:54:30](#) But the other thing that I find really interesting: it's not like these are really new thoughts. You read Will and Ariel Durant, History of Civilization. You read Plato. You read Alexander Pope, for God's sakes. There's been a lot of people who... When you start down this path it's a little bit like, "Am I in a turing test here," right? And I like that metaphor. Because I was having a conversation with a young guy, and he's like heavily into this right now, and I'm like, "Aaron," and he's like... I said, "Well, start with the brain in the vat idea, and then tell me... " and he comes back to me and he's like, "What?" and I go, "You don't know what the brain in the vat experiment?" and he's like, "No." And so I sent it to him, and he comes back to me a day later like, "You are such a fucker. I hate you."

Dan: [00:55:40](#) Yeah.

Jim: [00:55:43](#) But then I was like, "But Aaron, listen, man. Would you change one thing? Okay. If the skies part and the operators of the simulation look in and go, 'Okay, guys. You are right. It is a simulation, but we're just going to close it up again,' are you going to literally change anything that you do? Are you going to change anything... " By the way, this is for people who thought

about it a lot, right? For people who are sound asleep, and God knows if that wakes him up, if the simulators come in.

Dan: [00:56:16](#)

Yeah.

Jim: [00:56:17](#)

I make a bunch of jokes about this, right? It's like, "Come on. These guys are just... Now they're just playing with us."

Dan: [00:56:23](#)

Yeah.

Jim: [00:56:24](#)

But I think that your advice in terms of, "Go as far as you want to the bottom of that rabbit hole, but come back," I totally agree with because I see a lot of people that I talk to get caught at that existential angst, right?

Dan: [00:56:43](#)

Yeah.

Jim: [00:56:44](#)

And I'm like, "Dude, you just go a little beyond that and there's this incredible blank canvass. And guess what? You get to paint on it. You get to make that your life." Why do you think that's so hard for people to get that next step?

Dan: [00:57:04](#)

Because it's terrifying. First of all, I needed that chaos to change my own [inaudible 00:57:10] in my life, and to come back and live the life that I wanted to live. I needed to get out of an unhappy marriage, and start traveling, and take risks, quit my job, reinvent myself, deconstruct my programming, find a partner that I'm truly in love with who's a perfect match for me, and lifts me up every day, and makes the coffee every day... well, I love to make coffee every day. I needed that. I needed that construct. I needed that fire set to my existence. But I think that fire set to your existence is terrifying, it's confusing, and humans are a belief system. We're reinforcement. We take this from AI. We're a reinforcement learning, self-directed belief structure system. We form a map about reality, and we form our own goal, and we move in that direction, and we're a free agent within that.

Jim: [00:58:08](#)

Yeah.

Dan: [00:58:08](#)

And the problem is when you detonate that. Our programming breaks down. You don't really know what to do. You make terrible decisions. Maybe you get [inaudible 00:58:21] problem where you walk off a ledge, or you go crazy, or you do something really dangerous. There's all kinds of things when our programming breaks down, and it puts us in a state where we're not comfortable there. I think then sometimes the way that you

survive that is now by drawing you identity from that chaos. You draw your identity from the deconstruction and from... you know, everything around you was a lie and an illusion and whatever, and you start forming your identity there because then it allows you to sit down. You escape the prison, and that was a huge ton of work. You were tunneling-out for a decade behind the [inaudible 00:59:08] at Shawshank, right?

Jim: [00:59:10](#) Right.

Dan: [00:59:10](#) And then you get out there and you're like, "Oh, my God," you climb through the shit, and you just sit down. You're looking for a port in that story. I think the process of destruction can be destructive, you may not come back from it, right? But there's not a guarantee at the end of this. Jed is always down on the new age marketplace because it's always like, "Hey, you can destroy of everything, and figure out the nature of reality without destroying anything, you just stay where you're at," and that's not true. It's a highly destructive process to reconstruct something. It's terrifying. And sometimes it destroys you and you don't come back, right?

Jim: [00:59:44](#) Yeah.

Dan: [00:59:46](#) I think about people sometimes they don't see a homeless person on the street, they don't see a real person, and they don't realize that this is a person who stepped off of a dark side of reality. How many times, if you've ever seen documentaries, they sat down and actually talked to the person there, and seen them as a person, you realize they walked off a reality where their significant other and their children died in a wreck, and they lost their job at the same time, and you don't come back from certain things. But I think sometimes when you question yourself, you tear down your beliefs or whatever, sometimes you don't come back from it, and maybe the only way to do it is to draw your identity from that thing. But my thinking is if you can survive the storm like Odysseus, Odysseus really is a metaphor for all the chapel perilous dangers in life, right? The lotus eaters or drugs and substance abuse, right?

Jim: [01:00:42](#) Yeah.

Dan: [01:00:43](#) It's like he may hang out there for a few years and then he's like, "Jesus, man. We made it back in a decade. [inaudible 01:00:48] out of here," and half the people stay, and he keeps losing half the people along the way, right?

Jim: [01:00:52](#) Right.

Dan: [01:00:53](#) It's the silence, right? That he plugs his ears, ties them up, and so nobody else can hear on the ship the sirens, but he gets to hear this amazing sound, this song that's so mesmerizing that it draws people to their death. He gets to hear it by telling everyone, "No matter what I do, do not fucking untie me."

Jim: [01:01:11](#) Right.

Dan: [01:01:11](#) And each stage you can survive this thing: build yourself a construct, come back to chapel perilous, but there's no guarantee. There's no guarantee. It is dangerous, which is why most people don't do it, and why most people get stuck. But I think, the beauty is coming back from that, right?

Jim: [01:01:11](#) Yeah.

Dan: [01:01:32](#) The beauty is surviving that journey, getting to hear the song of the sirens, but not tearing through your ropes and jumping over the... and then crashing on the rocks.

Jim: [01:01:47](#) I mentioned Eliot earlier, and he alludes to the sirens in that same poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," where he says, "I have heard the mermaid singing each to each. I do not think they will sing to me," and immediately Odysseus comes up in your mind because of how clever he was to tie himself to the mast and fill his crew's ears with wax so they couldn't hear it.

The other thing that I notice a lot in a lot of people is fear, and Jed talks about this. Fear seems to me to be one of our overriding apps, so to speak, and it's why I talked earlier about we're the result of millions of years of success, right? Well, if you put a different spin on it, we're also the descendants of the biggest cowards, right? Because they saw the bush rustling and they're like, "I'm out," and they took off. And so I'm fascinated by fear because once... And you know, as you know, I'm a huge sci-fi fan, and Dune, and Hari Seldon, and the psychohistory, and all that kind of stuff; but if you keep burrowing down, sometimes with peoples' ideas a lot, what you do find is fear, right?

Dan: [01:01:47](#) Uh-huh (affirmative).

Jim: [01:03:28](#) At the heart of it. And I think that's when you were talking about some people not coming back. I think even that notion terrifies people, and that that notion is enough to, "Yeah, these

guys are fucking crazy. I love listening to their podcast, but that's not for me." Is that just built-in to the human OS and you've got to find a way around it? Or what do you think?

Dan: [01:03:57](#) Yeah. I think Jed goes all the way to say that we're fear-based creatures. I think he says, "Fear is the fire under the ass of the community," and you don't get skyscrapers or art or society or culture or an amazing plate of pasta in Italy without fear. It's the driver and it's one of the primary impulses within the system, right?

Jim: [01:03:57](#) Uh-huh (affirmative).

Dan: [01:04:23](#) In joy and pleasure. My dad always used to say you're either going away from pain or towards pleasure, right?

Jim: [01:04:23](#) Right.

Dan: [01:04:30](#) You're doing these two types of things. And so it's a very simple reinforcement learning construct for people, but I do think that you can be a hero by dealing with fear a little bit longer. I talk about going towards the path of fear in the last chapter of my book, that fear is really the guiding light. The things that you're really afraid of... I don't mean robbing a liquor store, if that's what your friend told you to do.

Jim: [01:04:30](#) Yeah.

Dan: [01:04:58](#) But the things that you're really afraid of in your darkest hours: confronting your significant other, being assertive about something, and it can be anything. People think it's always these skydiving or this huge kind of fear; that could be it, but it could be something as simple as when somebody gives you incorrect change you freeze up, and being assertive about it. It could be asking for something that you're unhappy about in your relationship, and talking about it directly without pressure, and be passive aggressive or aggressive with the person, and just say, "Hey, I really like this. I really appreciate this." Taking that trip you always wanted to take, all the way to the bigger things. It could be small things all the way up to these big things. I think it is terrifying.

And when I was writing the book and I was working with my writing partner, a lot of the times I would start in on a chapter like, "Okay, cool," and I'm tearing everything up. You get the people out of your life who don't work for you anymore. Change your friends. Change your career. Change your... It seems like,

"Whoa. You can't say this like it's nothing. You didn't even work your way up to it." So, a lot of times within this book, because I'm writing it for a larger audience, and I want to get them from phase zero to phase one, and I'm like, "Cool. If you want to take some time to be a little bit selfish, and think about your existence, and how did I get there, carve out half a weekend or a weekend. Send the kids away, say no to another after school activity. Have someone else take the kids," and people, "Whoa. This is crazy." But I want to get people just to the beginning of that phase, and then I had to walk it back from the more extreme "bum-ba-ba-bum" [inaudible 01:06:43] the universe, right?

At the end, I end it really with a more significant calmer venture; and I'm very clear that if you were supposed to be the veterinarian and you decided to do something else, no amount of staying in place, and swimming in place, and treading water is going to fix that. You're going to have to start going to night school. You're going to have to cut out TV and things. If you're in a relationship where the person is always putting you down, eventually you're going to have to let go of that person and have the strength to clear the field in order to plant new crops, right? And these things are terrifying, and I don't think most people are wired. We're wired for that security, we're wired to go away from pain, we're wired not to question easily; and ironically, that programming works a lot of the time, but I think it gets us to a low-level survival mode and it never truly brings out the joy in existence, and joy is different than pleasure.

Joy is both pleasure and pain, but it's the joy of overcoming and doing something consistent over time. Go Google kung fu master in an old age, and go watch an 80-year-old kung fu master, and [inaudible 01:08:04] someone who's been doing it every day for 60 years, the discipline of that. You can see the joy in their movement. You can see the fluidity of the person who moves like they're 20 in their 80s because they dedicated themselves. Do you think that that was easy? Was that the same thing as having a drink or lounging? Not that we don't need these things. We need to unwind, and have pleasure our life, and check out... But the joy of going towards something that you're passionate about, the joy of doing something consistently over time.

People say, "Well, how did you become a writer?" Young writers come to me, "How did you become an author?" I said, "Well, I sacrificed a lot of shit. I made time." Nobody ever showed up and said, "Hey, Dan Jeffries. Here's the life of your dreams, all the experience that you need, and all the tools and the money

to do it. Here you go." It's like you have to make the opportunity. You have to cut things out.

When I went to go start writing, became serious about writing after a decade of screwing around with it, I told my wife I was going to go on the weekends to this artist's coworking facility and write in the mornings on Saturday and Sunday; she cried. She wept, actually, because she realized that it was going to be more turning away from her, and it was the beginning of my awakening into the life that... the first flickers of awakening into existence. She was not wrong, and eventually our marriage had disappeared, but it wasn't because of that. It's just that I had to sacrifice certain things along the way. I had to sacrifice tier-three friends, you know?

Jim: [01:09:34](#)

Yeah.

Dan: [01:09:34](#)

The people you know for squash and one game of walking around the neighborhood. I had to sacrifice TV shows, and things like that, in order to do that, and the joy that it brought is infinite.

Jim: [01:09:50](#)

Yeah. It's the whole Campbell, "The treasure you seek is in the cave you fear to enter," right?

Dan: [01:09:56](#)

That's right.

Jim: [01:09:56](#)

And then you've got to take that.

The other thing that I've noticed a lot that is interesting is even when you think about this stuff a ton, and even when you read broadly and go down those rabbit holes and everything, you do sometimes default to your what I would call base-level personality; and by that I mean you think that other people think like you do, and they don't.

Dan: [01:10:32](#)

No.

Jim: [01:10:34](#)

And so when I started in asset management, I just naturally believed that everyone would want the highest alpha screening strategies in the world because that's what I liked. It didn't take me long to be disabused of that idea.

Dan: [01:10:51](#)

No. They want a 10% return and a 2% draw down.

Jim: [01:10:54](#)

Exactly.

Dan: [01:10:54](#) Not an 80% return and a 40% draw down.

Jim: [01:10:58](#) Exactly. Sometimes I'll even laugh when I'm reading something, or anything, and I'll have an initial reaction. I do remind myself that like... I have a friend who's heavily into statistics and everything, and he was joking, he asked me what I thought about something, and I'm like, "Well, I think..." and he started laughing and he goes, "You would wreck any sample I'd put you in." I said, "Well, all of the fun of life is in the tails, right?"

Dan: [01:10:58](#) Yeah.

Jim: [01:11:31](#) It's not in the middle. But that is not a welcome thought for 90... back to our gang, 98% of humanity. And so you really have to learn how to... If you want to engage, which I do absolutely, you've got to learn how to even temper yourself with your book, right?

Dan: [01:11:55](#) Yeah.

Jim: [01:11:55](#) "And then you're going to do this and this and this and this," and then you [inaudible 01:11:59] go, "Whoa, Dan. Okay."

Dan: [01:12:02](#) Yeah. You can't tell me when to drop everything and go do whatever. Like, "Become the person you want to be now." That's why Tony Robbins, I'm sorry I'm not a fan. His stuff is always like this sort of fire-walking, and things like that. It's a parlor trick, and I'm sorry. He's very popular. He's made a lot more money than me as a writer, God bless him, but selling placates to the tourists in the spiritual marketplace to me has no appeal. I'm not writing for that person. I'm writing for a person who really wants to change their existence, and I'm writing for the person who wants to become the equivalent of Tony Robbins in terms of success in and honestly.

Jim: [01:12:46](#) Yeah.

Dan: [01:12:46](#) I'm not saying he's a dishonest fellow, but just saying that he's selling politics. He's not selling a real way to change the construct. He's not selling a way to do what we really were meant to do in life.

Jim: [01:13:01](#) I completely agree in terms of I have always believed that external motivation is temporary. If you really want to change, the only one who's going to change you is you. And you can help them with this book, I can help them with threads I write or talks I give or whatever. But if that person doesn't want to

change, is not internally motivated, you can compel them, you can force them. If they work for you, you can boss them round, but that's not going to change them. It might change them in a negative way.

- Dan: [01:13:41](#) Yeah. But they hate you.
- Jim: [01:13:42](#) Yeah. I realized really I was lucky. I was really lucky because I think I was as young as 40 when I finally understood I can't change another human being; they need to change themselves. When you have that realization, it changes the way you do a lot of things, right? When I was younger I was a proselytizer and it was like I threw bombs everything, right?
- Dan: [01:14:11](#) Yeah.
- Jim: [01:14:11](#) And the factor investing was brand new. Academics had been doing a lot with it. But academics, right?
- Dan: [01:14:18](#) Yeah.
- Jim: [01:14:19](#) In the real world people like, "What the hell's a factor?" And so I would go to all the conferences and really blow shit up. And I had one where this woman was sitting next to me and she's like, [inaudible 01:14:32]. She's saying, "You're telling me that I add no value?" and I simply answered, "Yeah. That's what I'm telling you," and I realized boy-
- Dan: [01:14:40](#) You weren't popular at parties at that point.
- Jim: [01:14:43](#) Oh, man. What an asshole, right?
- Dan: [01:14:46](#) Yeah.
- Jim: [01:14:46](#) What an asshole. I must say it put me on the map.
- Dan: [01:14:56](#) You were trying to wake all the sleeping people; but in the end, I think you realized that you write... and I think Jed said it's boring to talk to someone who's enlightened because they all have the same message because it's not something original. It's something that's programmed into the system that you figure out, that everybody else who's every figured out in the entire [inaudible 01:15:18] of self-reflective folks, right? And then they said, "You can't lead the horse to water. The horse will come to the water. And then when they come to the water, you can talk to them, and you can write to that person, but you can't force

them to wake up; and in fact, it's detrimental to your health and your ability to survive in the matrix to do so.

Jim: [01:15:39](#) No shit. Whenever I talk about this stuff, I always use the disclaimer, and I think you do too, "I am not enlightened. I'm just a human being in here with all of you. I'm not enlightened. Let me repeat that: I am not enlightened." But then I saw you one time, you did something very clever, you said, "We're just in a different part of the matrix." I like that. Right?

Dan: [01:15:39](#) Yeah.

Jim: [01:16:05](#) Because we're all the same neighborhood. We're on a different cul de sac. But yeah.

I hope your book is... because I've seen parts of it, as you know.

Dan: [01:16:22](#) It evolved a bit since then, but it's [inaudible 01:16:25].

Jim: [01:16:25](#) Well, I want to see it. Please send me a copy because I like version one. But you also do seem to understand, I know you understand, that it's out there in the universe now. And my kind of gamble on this stuff is: if it helps one person, winner. You've won.

Dan: [01:16:47](#) Yeah. If one people, or a few people, or a small group of people. I'd like it to be more than one. Let's be honest.

Jim: [01:16:57](#) Right.

Dan: [01:16:59](#) But I don't need to be 20 million.

Jim: [01:16:59](#) Right.

Dan: [01:17:01](#) A couple million would be great. But a couple million. Let's just get there, like awaken people, like an army of awake. But look, I'm writing for folks who, if they finally get a self-help book... ironically, I don't like self-help books, having read some of them, and I feel like they're parlor tricks just like new age, having written one myself... I really wrote one to say, "How do you deconstruct yourself?" and if there's any message in there.

You know what? Nobody ever slows down long enough to ask the question, "Who am I? How did I get this way? Is this beneficial to think this way anymore, or to be this way, or to keep going down this path? Is it beneficial to try to get what I want from other people through bullying, or being passive

aggressive, or thinking everything is against me, or is there a better way to get what I want? Is there a way to learn how to be assertive," even though you're never taught it, but it's a skill where you can say, "You know what? I'd really appreciate if you'd put the sponge back in the holster," instead of being like, "You know what you never do? Put the sponge back in the holster. And then you know what else? Back in 1976, remember when you left me standing in the rain?" Nobody ever stops long enough to deconstruct this level of sick pattern and realize that like, "Hey, you know what? A real relationship, a real sense of self, a real sense of pride, a real sense of joy in what you're doing is really possible." It's just rare. And I wish it was less rare, but you can have a beautiful life.

You can have a life that makes you proud to wake up every day; and not a false sense of pride, but one where you're legitimately like, "Man, if other folks had a camera on me they'd be jealous," and not because it's perfect, not because everything is always hunky dory, not because you're never breaking down in tears or you're never sad, or people don't disappoint you, or you don't disappoint yourself, but because the vast majority of the time you've deconstructed a lot of that negativity, and you've built up a life that you really want for yourself; so that you've got a partner that, if you like board games, she or he they like board games too and not, "Why are you playing board games? I hate these things. And board games are evil." But you surround yourself with folks that are like yourself, and you surround yourself with an existence that is just beautiful to behold.

- Jim: [01:19:43](#) You know what? You've just book-ended it. We ask everyone on the podcast a final question, which is we're going to wave a wand, we're going to change the programming of the matrix, think of me as the architect, and you get to suggest two things. You can't kill anybody, you can't put anyone in a re-education camp, but you can make them all of a sudden have this idea as if they thought it up, and they change, and they do this thing. So, you've got two. I give you two things that if you could put a spell on the world, and then after that the world wakes up, they've got these two things, what have you got for me? What two things are you going to make [crosstalk 01:20:40]?
- Dan: [01:20:40](#) I could delete programming?
- Jim: [01:20:41](#) Sure.
- Dan: [01:20:41](#) I could change the nature of reality?
- Jim: [01:20:43](#) Yes, you can. You can't kill anybody.

Dan: [01:20:47](#) Yeah. I'd delete the very concept of coercion. You and me are both fierce anti-authoritarians. I think there are authoritarians of every stripe. Everybody tends to think it's the other political side, but there are authoritarians on either side, on all sides.

Jim: [01:21:00](#) Sure. Yeah.

Dan: [01:21:01](#) And extremists are people to me who are the most small-minded people on the planet; and when they come to power, bad things always happen. It doesn't matter whether they're there in accordance with whatever your political beliefs are from this side. They're going to create death and destruction everywhere. I would delete the very concept of extremism.

Jim: [01:21:20](#) Wow. Okay.

Dan: [01:21:21](#) And I would delete the very concept of coercion, and I believe that those two things would never allow these folks to come to power at all.

Jim: [01:21:21](#) That's incredible.

Dan: [01:21:29](#) That's what I would do.

Jim: [01:21:32](#) I love it. You're the first one who deleted. That's awesome. Because you're so right. It's like the power of deletion is sometimes much stronger than the power of adding something.

Man, listen, this has been awesome, as I knew it would be.

Dan: [01:21:51](#) That's awesome.