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# Putting all the Cards on the Table (2003)

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Revision 2014-08-24  
Revision History  
24 August 2014 shlomif  
Convert to DocBook 5/XML.

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## Introduction

This essay aims to present a summary of a snapshot as of 2013 of my personal philosophy and ideology, titled “Rindolfism” [<http://www.shlomifish.org/me/rindolf/#rindolfism>], which is dynamic and subject to change.

I am really tired of having truly intellectual people like me “speak in riddles” and be somewhat dishonest, so I'd like to put all the cards I have now on the table. There will likely be more into the future, and moreover, honesty is a process and a person should strive to become more honest as time goes by.

## My biggest mistake - playing the “The Invisible”

For a long time now, I wanted to achieve greatness: be extremely famous, have my stories be read, have my web-site be visited countless of times, and become a household name, and also earn a lot of money in the process (to allow me to travel, be able to afford going out, etc.). However, having read in several places that “The Invisible Hacker is the most powerful” (a hacker is a talented worker that bends the rules, and for what “hacker” means, see “How to become a hacker” [<http://catb.org/~esr/faqs/hacker-howto.html>] and Paul Graham’s The word “Hacker” [<http://www.paulgraham.com/gba.html>]), I decided to play it “The Invisible”. So I remained a relatively unknown software developer based in Tel Aviv, Israel, who studied Electrical Engineering in the Technion, who was constantly looking for jobs, and who found a lot of joy in working on his personal web site [<http://www.shlomifish.org/>], various pieces of open source software, and has been doing a lot of one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communications on the Internet. I was happy, but constantly had periods of hypomanias.

I gradually felt that I was controlling everything behind the scenes, and finding trends right before they became mainstream, and having slowly gain popularity by word of mouth, and influencing people, but I kinda hated it. Some people can be quiet and benevolent value producers doing ordinary things. But not me - I want to be very good, not play “The Invisible”. I am not a follower of trends - I set trends. And I want to be recognised for the truly great accomplishments that I have accomplished, am still accomplishing, and am planning on continuing to accomplish.

Note that this is not about being what Americans call “a winner” and win 1st place at some silly competition of who has the highest grade average or the highest television rating ever. I don't care about that too much, but I do care about being acknowledged. My stories are not perfect, but it is their imperfection and sometimes sloppiness that makes them perfect.

## The Technion and the American concept of “Loser” and “Winner”

The Technion in Haifa, Israel [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technion\\_%E2%80%93\\_Israel\\_Institute\\_of\\_Technology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technion_%E2%80%93_Israel_Institute_of_Technology)], where I studied for my Bachelor of Science degree, is overall a fine institute to study in, but it has several problems. One problem is that it is “90% work / 10% play” instead of say “70% work / 30% play”, because there’s a strong discipline to study and only that. But an even graver problem is the fact that the faculty prefer the scores of their tests to be an approximate normal distribution [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normal\\_distribution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normal_distribution)] (or Gaussian) which makes many people who studied hard frustrated at their low grades. A better strategy would be to give a solid workload during the semester, and then to have a **relatively** easy test, so people who studied hard during the semester will easily pass with a high score, while the slackers will still fail.

It seems like there's a similar problem with MIT (the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massachusetts\\_Institute\\_of\\_Technology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massachusetts_Institute_of_Technology)], but whereas in MIT they have a major problem with suicides of people who had straight A's in high school and became C average students in MIT., I have yet to hear of a Technion student who committed suicide because of low grades. Why? Because Israelis don't have the obsession which Americans have, about not being a "loser". Technion students know best to realise that their low grades are not their own fault, but rather the fault of the institution's general policy.

I received some flak due to this. One Technion professor (who graduated from MIT) once asked me why my grade average was relatively low. I told him I had better things to do with my time, and did not want to invest the much extra time in getting perfect scores, and that I never took a course or a test again if I got a passing grade (no matter how low). I spent many hours during my Technion years, working on my Internet web site, and on open source software, interacting with my fellow students, browsing the web for information and knowledge, etc.. All these later on provided fodder for my works of fiction, humour and philosophy. So I knew that I was right in trying to enhance my general skill-set instead of just my grades.

Some Americans may think I'm a "loser" for finishing with an average grade of only 84.6% (which still made me a cum-laude student), instead of one in the high 90s, and not being able to persist in the same job for a long time since. But I'm not competing like an Olympic athlete at some track race on life. Life is meant to be enjoyed - it is not a silly race.

## Silver Linings Playbook

A good friend recommended me to watch the film *Silver Linings Playbook* [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver\\_Linings\\_Playbook](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver_Linings_Playbook)], and told me it sported a man who had Bipolar disorder (or "Manic Depressive disorder") [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bipolar\\_disorder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bipolar_disorder)], which is something I have been suffering from as well. I watched the film and found it imperfect: slow starting, irresponsible, and a little depressing at times. But it was a great film, with some great acting, many jokes and many awkward and funny situations, and many details I could relate to. So it was perfect simply because it was imperfect. Films that are too perfect are too boring.

Anyway, the theme of the film was that you can be happy and content even if it appears you are a "loser". Despite the fact that I am still living with my parents at 35, that I've never been in a relationship with a girl (and I am a straight guy), that I had a hard time keeping a job as a programmer, and it's been a while since I've gone out of Israel, I am not a loser, and neither probably are you.

That put aside, I still want fame, recognition, money, and becoming a household name. It's just what I want and what I think I can do. That's part of who I am, and part of what I think I can do.

## Jennifer Lawrence

And *Silver Linings Playbook* brings us to Ms. Jennifer Lawrence [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jennifer\\_Lawrence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jennifer_Lawrence)], who played a lead role there and won many awards including the Academy Award for best actress (a.k.a the Oscars) at the young (for an Academy Award winner) age of twenty-two (22). I was quick to dismiss her due to previously playing in the dystopian *The Hunger Games* (I dislike dystopian stuff) but I loved her on *Silver Linings Playbook*. Although attractive, Ms. Lawrence is certainly not the most beautiful woman I ever saw, and I'm sure she has some personality quirks (like we all do), but thanks to playing her card rights, she is now a much coveted **Alpha Female**, who can have the rest of her life (and I wish her a very happy and long life) go in a direction she chooses.

## The Importance of Human Networking

While being an Objectivist, I am going to make a surprise statement: Ayn Rand's books *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* have a tragic ending. Yes, in *The Fountainhead*, unlike in my parody and modernisation

of it which I called “The One With The Fountainhead” [<http://www.shlomifish.org/humour/TOWTF/>], World War II is not prevented, and the characters each end up unhappy. On the other hand, in my parody, Dominique Francon becomes the president of the United States, Roark is her husband and father of her children and decides to pursue a career in palaeontology (having reached saturation as an architect), Toohey starts a new career as an excellent saxophone player, and Gail Wynand transforms his newspaper empire into something more benevolent.

Furthermore, it is clear from the Fountainhead that like Howard Roark, Ayn Rand expected fortune and success to come to her at the time without her doing anything about it. In *Atlas Shrugged*, on the other hand, all the characters, including the protagonist - Dagny Taggart [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Atlas\\_Shrugged\\_characters#Dagny\\_Taggart](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Atlas_Shrugged_characters#Dagny_Taggart)], and the antagonist - John Galt [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Galt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Galt)], are constantly travelling and networking. Like it should be. This is probably because Rand realised, shortly after the publication of *The Fountainhead* that “Reality to be commanded, must be obeyed” [<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20120402080644AAD8FGb>] and that the gods help those that help themselves [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God\\_helps\\_those\\_who\\_help\\_themselves](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_helps_those_who_help_themselves)] and that she should work on publicising herself and her works rather than hope for them to become successful by themselves. Today you can do the same using mostly (but preferably not exclusively) Internet means.

And that was also a problem of mine - that I have not networked enough, which I've decided to avoid now.

## David and Goliath

The Hebrew bible [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew\\_Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Bible)] tells the myth of David and Goliath [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_and\\_Goliath](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_and_Goliath)], and how a mighty battle was won in favour of the Israelite people [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israelites>] (the predecessor to the Jewish people), thanks to a young boy called David, and his ingenuity. This battle supposedly took place in the ancient near east at the first or second millennium B.C.E. when technology was still primitive. I will paraphrase it here.

The Israelites and their enemy and tormentor, the Philistines [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philistines>] schedule a large battle. The Philistines have far superior equipment with armours made out of iron, which the Israelites don't have. Goliath, a tall Philistine giant covered in heavy iron armour, with a shield bearer, who carried a big and heavy iron shield to protect him, steps forward and asks for an Israelite man worthy enough to fight him and determine the fate of the battle. Note that in the ancient Near East, the verdicts of battles were commonly determined in such a way. The Israelites fear they will lose the battle.

Out of nowhere, a young Israelite boy, whom hardly anyone knew about, steps forward with a sling [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sling\\_%28weapon%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sling_%28weapon%29)] and a few pebbles. Goliath thinks this is ridiculous and ridicules him. However, the boy quickly puts a pebble in his sling, and after rotating the sling to achieve a very large velocity (not unusual with slings), hurls it with great accuracy into Goliath's face. (Also not unusual, because shepherds in the Near East effectively used slings to kill lions and other predators to their flock). Goliath's face was uncovered to allow him to see so the pebble could hit his forehead. Even if Goliath's shield bearer wanted, he could not have lifted the huge shield in time, and Goliath was completely unagile in his suit and armour. The pebble smashes Goliath's brain, and he falls to the ground dead. The Israelites have won the battle.

The Boy's name was David.

Why do I think it's important here? Because David was a hacker (see Paul Graham's essay “The Word ‘Hacker’” [<http://www.paulgraham.com/gba.html>] for a definition of the terms). He knew the rules, and played by them, but knew how to bend them, in order to earn his victory. If David had fought Goliath using a spear or a sword, he would have lost, but using the sling was a useful workaround.

There were many other hackers since, and there are a lot of them today even if some of them think that “hackers” only mean no good-nick and malevolent computer intruders. Hackers come in all shapes and

sizes - and, while a lot of them are male, many of them (including Ayn Rand and Jennifer Lawrence) were or are female.

And here's the thing: this is what an action hero is all about: he makes his own rules, or he even breaks them, and does not accept his fate. This is whereas a tragic hero is bound by many invisible rules, and accepts his fate, which is, almost certainly going to be death.

And in real life, you should also aim to be a hacker or an action hero, or the many phrases this phenomenon used to be called.

Was David an Israelite and Goliath a Philistine? Did the battle actually happen in its form? What really happened to David next? That is hard to know, because in a true open source [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open\\_source](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_source)] fashion, the peoples of the Near East gladly borrowed legends and memes from other people and improved them, or adapted them to their whims. This is similar to how we now create fan fiction by the droves. (Only now it's in much greater speed and capacity.) Moreover, in a way, the tale of David and Goliath is obscured by the mentality of the times, and its context within the larger Biblical epic.

## The Machines That Can Give You Questions

Back when Pablo Picasso [[http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Pablo\\_Picasso](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Pablo_Picasso)] was asked for commenting about computers, he said "But they are useless. They can only give you answers." and in a sense he was right, because most computers at his time were used for one-off (and time-consuming) calculations and simulations. But there was another use of computers that was still in its infancy then and unknown: computer networking. But as technology improved, it became more and more powerful and pervasive.

The 1986 film *Jumpin' Jack Flash* [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jumpin%27\\_Jack\\_Flash\\_%28film%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jumpin%27_Jack_Flash_%28film%29)] starring Whoopi Goldberg (which I highly enjoyed and can recommend) exemplified the power of early computer communications, though they were still in their infancy. The early popular Internet around the late 90s, with the so-called "Web 1.0" [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web\\_1.0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_1.0)] was a hodgepodge of static web sites (often at GeoCities), lots of useless or incomplete information, search engines that were still not very good, and naturally, lots of fan pages of Buffy [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffy\\_the\\_Vampire\\_Slayer\\_%28TV\\_series%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffy_the_Vampire_Slayer_%28TV_series%29)], Sarah Michelle Gellar [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah\\_Michelle\\_Gellar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah_Michelle_Gellar)] (whom I can retrospectively tell was the Jennifer Lawrence of the time), and other contemporary trends such as Harry Potter [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Potter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter)] or the *Friends* Television series [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friends>]

If you wanted an interactive many-to-many discussion, you had to use Usenet, or mailing lists, or Internet Relay Chat (IRC), or Slashdot, or whatever.

That has changed significantly, with the fact that the browser scripting language JavaScript [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/JavaScript>] matured, wikis [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>] (= world-editable sites, such as the Wikipedia), web forums and blogs became popular, and search engines (most notably Google Web Search [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google\\_Search](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Search)]) became better. Later on, we've seen the rise of web-based social networks such as Facebook, Twitter or Google Plus, which provide a more integrated experience.

That does not mean that all the old Internet mediums are dying - mailing lists, IRC, and even some Web 1.0 sites (including my own) are still alive and kicking, and people now are increasingly using Jabber/XMPP/GTalk/GChat [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/XMPP>].

Anyway, because computer networking allows humans to communicate with other humans, they can provide you with questions. Lots and lots of questions. So I think Pablo Picasso would have loved the Internet (and other means of online communications such as SMSes, phone calls, mobile phone calls, etc.) of 2013.

## Chuck Norris

Which brings us to Chuck Norris [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck\\_Norris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck_Norris)], a U.S. martial artist, who reportedly lost only one fight - to Bruce Lee - from the time he became a professional fighter, until now when he is old, has a malfunctioning left leg, and can be defeated relatively easily by some of the most competent of his younger peers. However, I am sure this is not the only battle that Chuck Norris has lost. This is because we all had many disappointments in our lives: things that didn't work like we wanted to; people we liked or even loved that hated us, moved out of our reach, or died; and finally - opinions we held or proclaimed that turned out to be mistaken. Chuck Norris had those too. These lost battles are part of who we are as human beings and a natural part of life on Earth.

That put aside, Chuck Norris recently lost a much bigger battle than the one with Bruce Lee, because the seemingly silly and popular Internet meme, the Chuck Norris facts [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck\\_Norris\\_facts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck_Norris_facts)] (and other memes that they span) have become a much bigger and better fighting machine than he has ever have been. Only it is not a physical war - it is a gentle and subversive (but equally as powerful) psychological war. And despite common beliefs, a good psychological war is not won by intimidation or “defeat”, but by Saladin’s method [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Shlomif/Saladin\\_Style](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Shlomif/Saladin_Style)] of respecting your adversary, showing mercy towards him, even supporting him by what appear to be his mistakes, forgiving him and trying to reach a common ground.

Many people were easily indoctrinated into the Chuck Norris facts meme. I recall this conversation on Freenode’s #perl [<http://www.shlomifish.org/humour/fortunes/show.cgi?id=chuck-norris-and-perl-6>] in June 2006, shortly after Randal L. Schwartz [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Randal\\_L.\\_Schwartz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Randal_L._Schwartz)] told me about the Chuck Norris Facts Internet “meme” and I was quickly able to come out with my own fact. After collecting a few original facts like that, I set up a page for them [<http://www.shlomifish.org/humour/bits/facts/>] on the humour section of my homepage having figured out that even if I had a silly quirk of writing such factoids about people and things, then people will still take me more seriously due to my longer stories and screenplays and my longer and more serious essays.

But the reason why Chuck Norris/etc. facts are so powerful is **because** they are so accessible and easy to create, not in spite of it. Chuck Norris facts like “Guns don’t kill people. Chuck Norris kills people.” or “There is no theory of evolution - only species of animals that Chuck Norris allow to live.” or my own “Chuck Norris read the entire English Wikipedia in 24 hours. Twice.” or “A is A and A is not not-A — Unless Chuck Norris says so.” highlight some major problems and assumptions about our existence, and makes us think. They give us questions. A lot of questions.

## We all have a master, and should be humble

A Jewish tale tells of a mighty emperor, supposedly a “king of kings” who conquered so many nations and people, that he believed and proclaimed that he was unstoppable and not even God (the “King of the Kings of the Kings”) could stop him. God did not like him. So what did he do? He let a fly enter the emperor’s head and keep buzzing there. The emperor could not stand the fly buzzing in his head, and ended up being driven to insanity, and then committing suicide. So his Hubris [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hubris>] (= excessive human pride) caused him to be killed by a creature as insignificant as a fly.

While this is a folk tale, it illustrates the fact that we as humans are still at the mercy of forces beyond us. As the old thought experiment goes, tomorrow Linus Torvalds [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linus\\_Torvalds](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linus_Torvalds)], who created and still maintain the Linux kernel, and is the poster child of the open source movement (and a really smart hacker, and a father to three daughters), can get hit by a bus. I am almost certain the Linux kernel development, and the open source world in general will survive this shock, but a wonderful and beautiful life will be lost forever. I can also get hit by a motorcar, and so can Chuck Norris, who may now be old enough to have a heart attack or any other deteriorating health problems due to old age. We are all fragile, and must realize we should not succumb to Hubris, because even if God does not exist, then Hubris will make us undertake some really stupid actions, which will end up causing our downfall.

As surprising as it sounds, even God has a master: logic. Aristotle codified logic in his *Organon* [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organon>], which back then was not so taken for granted - "A is A, and A is not not-A? Of course A can be not-A. I want a little of what he is smoking!". After doing that, mathematicians, scientists, engineers and other scholars, have used his logic to construct greater and better technology - both physical and "concrete" (like the tall buildings in various cities around the world, land, air and space travel, and naturally - computer and computer networks) and mental (like the various philosophies, idea systems, and mythological systems, up to this very essay and this very word).

Despite all the benefits that the Aristotelian logic gave us, logicians have proved that some tasks are **impossible** to perform, and that true omnipotence [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omnipotence>] is not possible. Perhaps the most famous is "Can God create a stone so heavy that he would be unable to lift?". However, a more recent and more important one is the Halting problem [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halting\\_problem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halting_problem)], which specifies that one cannot write a program which will: **1.** finish within a finite time, and — **2.** will determine if any other arbitrary program will terminate (or alternatively run forever). While the formal proof is complex, there is a short and informal proof that most intelligent people can understand.

So the King of the Kings of the Kings, as mighty and wonderful as he is, also has a master - logic.

## “Put your faith in Allah, but tie your camel”

The tale (a Hadith) tells that Muhammad saw a shepherd going to pray, while keeping his Camel untied. He asked the shepherd why he kept his camel untied and the shepherd told him: "I put my faith in Allah, that the Camel won't escape". So Muhammad told him, and I paraphrase: "Dude, it doesn't work that way! Camels can escape due to nature's whims. So: put your faith in Allah, but, for the love of God - tie your Camel." (I am an Israeli, agnostic, non-religious, Jew but I think I can borrow useful memes from Islam, or whatever, if I think they have merit, right? See *Ad-hominem* [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ad\\_hominem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ad_hominem)].)

As much as I admire God for his wonderful creation, I still have to help myself, and help him help me. I also am not sure whether I will continue to live after I die, so I'd rather not risk it. God's creation is wonderful, but there's always a risk I'm being toyed by some evil genius [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evil\\_demon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evil_demon)] (or what Descartes called the "evil demon") and that reality is not what it seems to be (see Descartes' "I think therefore I am" [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cogito\\_ergo\\_sum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cogito_ergo_sum)] thought experiment, and naturally The Matrix concept from the first "The Matrix" film [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Matrix](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Matrix)]). Alternatively, it is possible that God does not exist, and reality is simply whimsical and random, but still enabled the creation of life, intelligence, and finally - human consciousness.

So it may sound far-fetched to you, but I don't want to die - not now, not in a thousand years - not ever. Maybe it's a scary thought, but I have accepted it now, and wish to enjoy youth rejuvenating biological immortality. And I don't want me or any of the living heroes I admire in the present, both those that I know and those that I have only heard about (including some people I have a feud with, but still know are mostly good people), to ever have to die due to old age, accidents, or misfortune.

## Hackers Own The World

Hackers like David are the true holders of power in the world. In the Jewish Bible, the myth of David is muddled by him later becoming a tragic hero, and that his only true love, the sexy, and likely minded, female hacker Michal [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michal>] becoming barren and supposedly jealous, but there are plenty of other hackers, both living and fictional, in the world whose story had a happy ending. And here's the thing: this is what an **Action Hero** is all about - he defies the rules, bends the rules, and eventually wins. A tragic hero on the other hand is bounded by many invisible rules, accept his fate, and cannot win. So Action is the exact opposite of Tragedy. (And to truly see why this is true, you should watch and listen to the 1m43s-long trailer for Shakespeare's Hamlet starring Arnold Schwarzenegger [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Z9Ismh1eIM>] from the excellent film *Last Action*

*Hero* [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last\\_Action\\_Hero](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Action_Hero).] I also guarantee you that this very essay is not perfect, and that's OK, because I'm a hacker and like to bend the rules, and while I care about quality, I also care about getting something - anything - out of the door quickly. With the help of editors, I can always fix the essay later, in case a prestigious publication such as Time Magazine or Playboy would want to publish it, but if I wait until it is letter-perfect before I publish and announce it, then it will be a big waste of time.

I also realised that even though I placed my stories and screenplays [<http://www.shlomifish.org/humour/stories/>] under the /humour/ section of my homepage, they were also almost always also stories of action. Many action films now contain a lot of humour, and humour films and even dramas are often action films in disguise (and that includes *Silver Linings Playbook*). Many people complained that each and every popular Hollywood film now contains a mixture of action, love and sex, humour, drama, and naturally - a happy ending. However, my stories also have all that, and during writing them, I wasn't trying to make their "ratings" higher - just to write what was on my mind, and to make the story as fun as possible. And as surprisingly as it sounds, some of the most ancient myths (e.g: the stories in the Hebrew Bible, or those of the Greek mythology) also contained all that in their own old, and now antiquated, way.

Many people will think I'm being blasphemous by paraphrasing the story of David and Goliath, or the Hadith about Muhammad, and spicing them up a little, but the thing is — it makes these stories something alive and dynamic because our times are different. Shakespeare's plays were narrated as they were during his times, but reading them now is boring. And that is because our times are different (and hopefully better).

## Hackers Make the Best Warriors

I once read a feature in an Israeli adolescents' magazine about the Navy SEALs [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_Navy\\_SEALs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Navy_SEALs)], who are the chief commando unit of the United States Navy, and they said there that while many very muscular young men (which they called "a Rambo and a half") approached them about joining, they didn't survive for too long in their training, and that those who did were those with a "high IQ" and a great character. The United States has an unnatural obsession with IQ [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intelligence\\_quotient](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intelligence_quotient)], which is not a good measurement for intelligence (for many reasons), but the point is that they are intelligent and competent.

And what is the recipe for such intelligence and competence? The answer is having a mostly happy childhood, being open-minded and knowledgeable about all sorts of small things, getting a lot of information, knowledge, understanding, and insights, and being a whole rounded person. The world's greatest warriors such as Chuck Norris or Bruce Lee were not overly muscular, and Chuck Norris had a happy and supposedly uneventful childhood. He also was aware that he has to stand for himself, and take decisive action ("The Gods help them that help themselves") instead of letting life lead him in its own way ("Go with the flow" or "Be a product of your environment"). So did most of the Navy SEALs.

A murderous villain can shoot to all directions and perform a lot of killing, but a good warrior requires precision, accuracy, intelligence and competence. This involves being a well-rounded, happy and benevolent person. Saladin [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saladin>] was the greatest physical warrior of his time, and he was extremely noble, and during his liberation of Palestine from the Christian Crusaders rule, spared the lives of the Knights Templar [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knights\\_Templar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knights_Templar)] (who were really crazy and violent people) and cared for them, to say nothing of that of innocent men, women and children who came in his way. Whenever I run into a moral dilemma, I think to myself "What would Saladin do?" and then do exactly that.

In my screenplay *Selina Mandrake - The Slayer* [<http://www.shlomifish.org/humour/Selina-Mandrake/>], the protagonist (Selina) runs into three vampire warriors ("The Three") dressed as Klingons, who tell her that "Every mighty Klingon warrior has watched Sesame Street" to which she exclaims: "Mighty Klingon vampire warriors who have watched Sesame Street... this decade royally sucks!!". However, most of the best American warriors of the relatively recent past (of all kinds) have watched Sesame Street, because they loved it as happy children (and later as adults).



And like I said, there are many other ways to wage war that do not involve bloodshed or even violence.

## The Generation is Not Diminishing

A lot of people believe that the children of today are unusual because they don't have the patience to read anything longer than a twitter utterance ( see Noise to Signal's "TL;DR" cartoon [<http://www.robcottingham.ca/cartoon/archive/tldr/>]), but I recall that most of the youth of my generation (I am 1977-born), also did not read any fiction books, or read most of the history and other textbooks of my class (like I did), and instead spent a lot of time playing with friends or watching television, and they turned out fine eventually. Nowadays, many kids are bound to do things that will make some of us as grown-ups think that "the generation is diminishing" but naturally, this is folly (see the Noise to Signal's "Fire" cartoon and the comments about it [<http://www.robcottingham.ca/cartoon/archive/this-brain-this-brain-fire/>]), and is just indicative that you are growing more cynical.

As a matter of fact, newer generations can build on the work, knowledge, and wisdom of older generations ("Standing on the shoulders of giants") and achieve dazzling new heights. During Hellenistic times [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic\\_period](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic_period)], many people probably believed that philosophy was a useless mind exercise, that philosophers were contaminating the youth, and that they were parasites who make problems where none exist. Philosophy at the time was considered a form of cheap entertainment, and philosophers were treated with the same amount of contempt as actors, comedians and models are today.

That was all well and nice, until the Romans had a very hard time and suffered many casualties, while conquering the island of Archimedes [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archimedes>] due to the many devices and inventions which he came up with, and which were utilised to protect it.

The author of Ecclesiastes [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesiastes>], wrote in Ecclesiastes 7:10 [<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/poly/ecc007.htm>] that "Don't say 'What happened to make the earlier days better than these,' for you ask this not in wisdom." and that was written around 300 B.C.

## The New Alexandrias

Alexandria [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandria>] used to be the "It city" of the Hellenistic period. While some inland cities like Jerusalem and Damascus had a good strategical position and were important religious centres, almost all the great philosophers lived and operated in Alexandria. Why Alexandria? Because it was a port city and close to the sea. It is well known that many of the peoples of the Near East lived by and loved the sea, such as the Greek, and the Phoenicians [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenicia>] (which the Israelites referred to as Canaan [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canaan>]). The Israelites (who are now the Jews) started as a kind of sub-culture and fashion on Canaan (and archaeologists witness a transition in Palestine and other parts of the Levant from the Canaanite period to the Israelite period). However, they later on were heavily influenced by both the Phoenicians and the Greek, by culture, ideals and even by blood. Even in the Bible, the Tribe of Dan [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribe\\_of\\_Dan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribe_of_Dan)] is described as "setting sail to ships".

Today there are many Alexandrias: New York City, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, London, Barcelona, Rome, Rio-de-Janeiro, Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai - even (and for us Israelis - especially) Tel Aviv [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel\\_Aviv](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Aviv)]. And even Alexandria, in its more modern form, after at least a single destruction, is the second largest city in Egypt, and probably more vibrant than Cairo, which is the inland capital.

Here's the thing about human life: it's not preserved automatically. It must be kept alive by effort. Often a lot of effort. You must fight death, irrationality and stagnation, from within and from without. Often it involves some pain, but usually fighting for your life is fun and rewarding, and gives you a lot of joy. It is well known that of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World [<https://en.wikipedia.org/>

wiki/Seven\_Wonders\_of\_the\_Ancient\_World] only the Pyramids of Giza still stand. But while the other wonders were marvels of aesthetic beauty, the Pyramids are just giant, non-aesthetic, graves, which no one would like to live in.

## My second biggest mistake: not accepting who I am.

Throughout most of my adulthood, I have been criticised for various things I believed in or liked: the fact I was an optimistic, self-sufficient, and non-cynical person (or Aristotelian); the fact that I liked ponies, Ewoks, and smurfs (so cute!); the fact that I hated being Mr. Macho in real life (and was instead a gentleman among females); the fact that I didn't have a relationship yet; the fact that I placed photos of scantily clad females on some of the wallpapers on my desktop at home (and people claimed I was treating females as sex objects); the fact that I got into hypomanias (literally "below-manias") [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypomania>]; the fact that I didn't consume caffeinated or alcoholic beverages at all ("You call yourself a geek?"); the fact that I found porn disgusting instead of arousing; the fact that I chat a lot on IRC, the fact that I listen to mostly pop music; and so on and so forth.

However, I now realise that these are some of the things that make me who I am, and I shouldn't try to be someone else. Geeks and hackers come in all shapes and sizes, and there is no need to try to fit better among fellow computer hackers, just due to the portrait of J. Random Hacker [<http://www.catb.org/jargon/html/appendixb.html>] in the Jargon file. I do not mind people who deviate from my preferences in some or all respects, but no two people (including no two identical twins) are alike. You should accept who you are too.

## Please all → Please none

The fable "The miller, his son and the donkey" [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_miller,\\_his\\_son\\_and\\_the\\_donkey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_miller,_his_son_and_the_donkey)] tells the story of an old man, his young son and a donkey, who walk from one city to another and no matter how they utilise the donkey (without anyone on it; putting only the son on the donkey; putting only the father on the donkey ; both riding the donkey; etc.), people criticise them for the situation. The conclusion was "Please all and you shall please none".

How is it important? Some people, especially those that are jealous or envious of you are **bound to berate** you. You smiled while performing a sad song? Someone will complain. You're wearing prescription glasses, like I do? Someone will label you as "half-blind" [<https://twitter.com/shlomif/status/480765130242662400>]. You wrote some Star Trek fan fiction? Someone will tell you it's lame. You wrote Chuck Norris facts or lolcats [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lolcat>]? Ditto.

You're thin? Fat? Chubby? Plump? Look too normal [<https://twitter.com/shlomif/status/307702411047350272>]? Someone is bound to complain.

So just be happy with who you are.

Naturally, if enough people complain, and/or you think their criticism has some merits, you can try to improve in some respects (without making a fuss about it). But be happy with what you have and who you are, despite all the haters.

## Don't Just Go with the Flow - Act Now!

I read somewhere, that while the survival mechanism of animals and plants operates automatically, the survival mechanism of humans operates **by choice**. We must choose to use our consciousness [<http://>

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consciousness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consciousness)] (which some people refer to as “sentience” to distinguish from simple “awareness”). “Going with the flow” (like only dead fish do!) or claiming you are just “a product of your environment” is not a good idea: act now, move something, make decisions, because the worst possible mistake is to not do anything at all. Initiate actions.

If I didn't take the time to work on my home site [<http://www.shlomifish.org>], it would have not grown to a tenth of the size it is today. And I started with some Spartan pages [<http://old-1998-site.shlomifish.org/>] written in very old HTML with some mathematical riddles, and a C.V.. Now my home site is positively huge and people can spend days on end reading everything I've placed there, and now - adding more and more text there is easier for me out of practice. A lot of people have been jealous (i.e: wishing what I created was created by them instead) or envious (i.e: wishing to destroy what I did) but I knew better than to be permanently set back by them.

You too can have a wonderful home page, or become a good martial artist, or write great fiction, or learn how to cook very well, or simply lead a happy life full of wonder, love, and happiness. But it means you have to lead your life by choosing to think, making decisions and acting - not let nature take you in its random ways the way it sees fit.

Even if consciousness is just an illusion, and we don't truly have free will, we should play by this illusion, because not playing by it will make matters much much worse. Those that don't think enough, become terminally ill with mysticism (= mental laziness) and become lazy (despite appearing to constantly work intensively in sedentary work), incompetent, lying, needy, envious and unhappy people who expect everyone to feel sorry for them and obey their orders blindly (up to actual genocide or killing 100 million of their own citizens). Like Adolf Hitler, or Benjamin “Bibi” Netanyahu. [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin\\_Netanyahu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Netanyahu)]

## What should be done now?

As you may have guessed, superb hackers are the true “Leaders of Leaders” (or what the ancient Hebrews would call “King of Kings”) and I am one of them, and not only that but the actual honest-to-God **Messiah** [<http://www.shlomifish.org/philosophy/the-eternal-jew/#reception>]! I am a bit disappointed by people not seeing beyond my words and understanding that they should become Messiahs too, and compete with me, but maybe that is the price I am paying for the fact that I had been playing the Invisible until now.

So what should be done now?

1. The Iranian government is at the risk of getting an atomic bomb and dropping it on Israel or wherever. They must be stopped. Send unmanned planes to bomb the site where the bombs are prepared and make sure that no one leaves or enters it in one piece.
2. Every Iranian soldier must proceed to: 1. Read my story *The Enemy and How I Helped to Fight it* [<http://www.shlomifish.org/humour/TheEnemy/>] or at least only its first chapter, or one of its translations [[http://shlomif.wikia.com/wiki/The\\_Enemy\\_-\\_Translations](http://shlomif.wikia.com/wiki/The_Enemy_-_Translations)] (which should be worked on), and: 2. Proceed to put the Iranian administrative buildings under siege. Disobey your commanders if necessary by telling them “No! I can think on my own, thank you.”

These are the pressing things. As you shall see below, there is much more. Orders from above! Orders from the mother fucking “Little Red Riding Hood” of Messiahs!

## Honesty

People who are into the Internet world have probably ran into the recent trend about “openness” - open source software (such as the Firefox and the Google Chromium browsers, the VLC video player, various

Peer-to-Peer programs, etc.), open and documented protocols and specifications, large-scale and small-scale open "content" collaborative projects (most notably the Wikipedias, many other Wikimedia projects, and many other wikis), and lots of other stuff. Yet, openness is also mostly a synonym for such things as "honesty" and "sincerity": not lying, being direct, and not hiding things. It also means not playing games with people and being happy for their happiness and success, rather than being consumed with jealousy or (God help me) envy (which means you wish to destroy these values, rather than coveting them for your own).

So why is it important? Because you should be honest in everything you do. Do you like a member-of-the-appropriate-sex (MOTAS) that already is in a relationship? Admit it to him or her, but be happy for them, and tell them you can be on the rebound or if they have any friends who are looking for a significant other. That put aside even the most noble gentlemen (and ladies) and those that are happily married and possibly even have children, are allowed to flirt with other MOTAS.

Did your friend, spouse, a celebrity of some sort, or a complete stranger you heard of, who seems nice, get a good opportunity? You can admit you are jealous, but try to keep it at bay, and be happy for them.

Here's what I wrote [<http://www.shlomifish.org/humour/fortunes/show.cgi?id=almost-worthy>] when two of my best friends - a great male software developer (and a great hacker) called Omer, and a wonderful female software developer (and a great hacker) called Chen (= a Hebrew first name meaning "grace" or "loveliness" which is common among both boys and girls) got married:

Hi Omer! Mazal Tov on Chen and yours marriage. It reminds me of a quote from Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre:

"At this period she married, removed with her husband (a clergyman, an excellent man, **almost worthy of such a wife**) to a distant county, and consequently was lost to me."

Well, in your case I can say that **both of you are almost worthy of each other**. Congrats again!

As much as I was attracted to Chen (and she likes a lot of the stuff I created too), I didn't try to break their relationship, and have her for myself, and wished them happiness. And I did it, because I knew there were plenty of wonderful female hackers (including those that are still not very good at computers, or even hate them) and I can eventually find a good one of my own. And I also knew that coming between Chen and Omer, will make both of them unhappy, and that's not what I want.

People may appear to not appreciate you being sincere with them, but believe me, that it will pay in spades later on, also because you'll feel better about yourself, and be happier, more peaceful, and more competent.

The same thing applies to jobs and work. You shouldn't lie on your job interview. Is the company developing in Java and you don't like Java a lot? Admit it. Say that you prefer not to work long hours because people are more productive working during sane hours [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erin\\_Hoffman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erin_Hoffman)]. If you contribute to the Wikipedia or to open source software, admit it, because workplaces that dislike such things about their employees, will likely not be places you'd like to work with. And yes, it means that you should be able to freely talk and admit everything about you (that you are an Israeli, a Jew, a Black person, a Catholic, a Muslim, straight, gay, anti-religious, homophobic, or whatever) instead of the silly laws that try to prevent discrimination and wish to "streamline" the interview while deliberately going against the liberty of speech.

Fact of the matter is, you are allowed to discriminate, even in accepting positions. I did not get many jobs despite feeling that I have done extremely well on the Interviews, yet I would not dream of suing the workplace for not accepting me. I accepted whatever reasons they had for deciding against me. Furthermore, sometimes I was fired or laid off based on various reasons, and I also accepted my fate

and moved on, because working for a certain workplace was not something I was entitled to — it was a privilege.

## The Importance of Seizing Opportunities

A good hacker knows better than to create imaginary problems. If an opportunity comes into your way - seize it, and don't read into the minds of those who offer it, and their motivations. You were invited to give a talk? Go for it! It doesn't matter if you were invited because you are female, black, Indian, Japanese, young, old or whatever. Were you offered to write a guest post on a weblog? Go for it! Again - it doesn't matter why. A member of the appropriate sex asked you on a date and you like them and find them attractive? Go for it!

The end result of being cynical and not seizing opportunities and not allowing people to open doors for you is becoming something like the pitiful and tragic character of Captain Nemo [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain\\_Nemo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain_Nemo)] in Jules Verne's excellent novel "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twenty\\_Thousand\\_Leagues\\_Under\\_the\\_Sea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twenty_Thousand_Leagues_Under_the_Sea)] who roams the seas, causing a lot of destruction of lives — all in the name of his own incompetence. The end result of seizing opportunities as you run into them is being happy, and eventually standing on your own. Perhaps up to the point of becoming a superhero such as Saladin, Sir Isaac Newton, Henry Ford, Walt Disney, Albert Einstein, or Aristotle Onassis [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle\\_Onassis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle_Onassis)], who despite their many faults (which were often quite common in their times) were incredibly noble, led a happy life, and died as accomplished and highly-admired people. I hope the living heroes and heroines I admire today will not have to die, or if they do, that their reputation won't be tarnished by many people who are jealous or envious of their success and competence.

## What the Departing Pope Taught me about Twitter/etc.

I am not a big fan of the Roman Catholic Church, or the Roman Catholic religion, but I think we may learn a few things from the departing Pope Benedict XVI [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope\\_Benedict\\_XVI](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Benedict_XVI)]. The first is that he decided to depart before his death, due to bad health, which I believe is an admission that Ethical egoism [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethical\\_egoism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethical_egoism)] has some merit, and that if he will continue to serve despite his health problems, it will be bad, not only for him, but for the Catholic church as well, because his bad health will prevent him to function properly as a pope and a leader.

But the more important anecdote about the departing pope, is the fact that he opened a Twitter [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter>] account which made many people laugh, because Twitter and similar forms of text-based communication mediums such as Facebook or Google Plus were then held in much contempt. But should they?

Throughout history, there has been a trend towards communication mediums that were quicker to write (had easier "on-ramps") and yet produced results that were of lesser quality. Back when the Alphabet [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alphabet>] was created for the Phoenician language [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenician\\_language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenician_language)], and later on adopted in various variations by languages of close proximity, including Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew (which started as a dialect of the proper Canaanite language), it seemed like a poor man and low-culture glyph system, that was used and abused for writing about some really low-life topics: drinking, being happy and jolly, spreading vicious rumours, erotica, depictions of violence, silly jokes, and even blatant descriptions of incest.

( If you don't believe me, then read the Jewish Bible (= the Tanakh) [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew\\_Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Bible)] with a critical eye, and you'll find all those things there and more. )

Some people were probably hoping that it will be a fad, and that Cuneiform will be used for years to come.

The same thing repeated itself thousands of years later with the Print, which as we know helped bring the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant\\_Reformation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_Reformation)], the end of the Earth-centred theories of the universe, and many other subsequent changes, including the fact that you now read these words, which were originally published on a web site. The Roman Catholic church has survived this change, but it is now very different than it was when Gutenberg invented the print was invented.

So: Cuneiform → Alphabet → The Printing Press → Early typesetting systems → Word Processors → Early HTML/Web 1.0 → blogs/wikis → “Social networks” such as Twitter, Facebook or Google Plus (which were inspired by the unadorned text that people have been writing in text-based Usenet posts and E-mail messages). Will the Roman Catholic Church survive in the “Twitter age”? Hard to tell, but Pope Benedict XVI understood that it should embrace such social networks and recent trends, if it intended to make the best of the situation. And since then, social networks have only become more mainstream.

We can see similar progressions in other forms of media (e.g: Comics → Web comics → Captioned images (e.g: lolcats)). All that put aside, newer media does not completely eliminate the need for an older one, and while cuneiform is no longer usable, Jewish scribes (Sofrey SeTam) [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sofer>] still write some religious manuscripts by hand, very slowly (and costly), because their quality cannot be high enough.

Nevertheless, it is important to embrace such technological changes, and this understanding is one thing I will always be grateful for the departing pope.

## How Technology is Empowering Youth

During the Middle Ages, the apprentices of craftsmen graduated to become masters, and started their own shops, at a much younger age than 18. Today, most people graduate from high school at that age, and are expected to remain disadvantaged until then. There isn't a good reason why the youth of today should not be able to make useful contributions to arts, sciences, philosophy, and entertainment, despite their young age and inexperience.

Here are some examples:

1. Dmitri Gaskin is a core developer of both jQuery and Drupal and gave a talk about jQuery on Google Tech Talks [[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mwKq7\\_JIS8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mwKq7_JIS8)], while being 12 years old.
2. Maria Aragon was 10 years old when she was recorded performing a cover [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xG0wi1m-89o>] of Lady Gaga's song “Born This Way”, which has received over 50 million views on YouTube as of April 2013 (and which I like better than the original).
3. Much previously, Samantha Smith [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samantha\\_Smith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samantha_Smith)] changed the fate of the cold war, when being 10 years old, by the simple act of writing a letter.
4. In the 18th century, Carl Friedrich Gauss [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl\\_Friedrich\\_Gauss](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Friedrich_Gauss)] started making important contributions to mathematics from a very early age.

Our contemporary culture expects kids (what Americans refer to as children, “pre-teens”, and “teenagers”) to remain “innocent”, naïve and inexperienced, and immature, and, as a result, most of them behave accordingly.

As I noted previously, Jennifer Lawrence was unusual in having received the Oscar's at the relatively young age of 22. ( Previously, Marlee Matlin [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marlee\\_Matlin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marlee_Matlin)] won it when she was 21 years old, back in 1986, but it was an isolated case. ). I anticipate, and hope, that Lawrence's

winning will bring forth an age where some even younger film makers, receive the Academy Awards. Perhaps as young as being 10 years old - perhaps younger.

The Internet and other modern technologies empower many other previously encumbered sections of the population aside from people of certain ages, but it's high time we recognise, that we enter a world where young people are more empowered.

## What I Learned from Role Playing Games

I used to play Tabletop role-playing games [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabletop\\_role-playing\\_game](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabletop_role-playing_game)] such as Dungeons & Dragons during the 8th and 9th grade until I quit, and it provided some important insights for me about real-life. The first one was about the importance of being **resourceful**: think outside the box, come up with creative solutions, don't think in terms of yes vs. no.

The second one is the D&D concept of experience points [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Experience\\_point](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Experience_point)] which the characters gain and later can invest in improving their skills or acquiring new ones. Real life has a similar concept: time. We can spend our time performing tasks, which in turn will enhance one or more of our skills. The time one spends writing an essay, a blog post or a story, will enhance their writing skills, and their personal philosophy, and will make it easier for them to write more in the future. The time invested cooking will make one a better cook, and will make it easier to cook in the future.

The more time we invest in honing a certain skill, the easier it is to become better and better in it.

One complication to all that is the sad phenomenon of "Psyche Death" or "Growth Death" [<http://shlomif.livejournal.com/44643.html>] where a person become more and more cynical and their mind deteriorates, while he continues to be alive. This makes the sum of his abilities and skills lesser and lesser. But a person can reverse their psyche death or growth death easily enough by first acknowledging it and then reversing it.

## "All Truth is God's Truth"

Larry Wall [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larry\\_Wall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larry_Wall)] ( a very talented and accomplished software developer and hacker) had this to say in his "Perl Culture" keynote [<http://cos.polyamory.org/text/T/lwall-keynote.txt>]:

I have a book on my bookshelf that I've never read, but that has a great title. It says, "All Truth is God's Truth." And I believe that. The most viable belief systems are those that can reach out and incorporate new ideas, new memes, new metaphors, new interfaces, new extensions, new ways of doing things. My goal this year is to try to get Perl to reach out and cooperate with Java. I know it may be difficult for some of you to swallow, but Java is not the enemy. Nor is Lisp, or Python, or Tcl. That is not to say that these languages don't have good and bad points. I am not a cultural relativist. Nor am I a linguistic relativist. In case you hadn't noticed. :-)

In my personal philosophy, which I have labelled "Rindolfism" [<http://www.shlomifish.org/me/rindolf/#rindolfism>], I mix and match elements, metaphors and memes, from Ayn Rand's Objectivism, from my knowledge of Judaism, from the open-source and open content movement, from the Star Trek franchise, from Buffy, from the Friends television show, and more. It is important for an idea system not to stagnate and accept external influences with different, better, and/or newer ideas.

Several idea systems made the mistake of thinking they were the "final word" or the "omega". Jesus claimed to have been the last prophet, and so did Muhammad (despite the fact that Jesus did that too). If you ask me, the only difference between idea systems that are still considered holy, and idea systems that

are no longer taken as gospel (including those that were fictional to begin with) is simply that: they are held as holy, and thought to be the final word.

Some people criticized me for not staying true to my Jewish roots and instead incorporating more recent elements in my stories [<http://www.shlomifish.org/humour/stories/>], but it is indicative of a healthy and inquiring mind, who still seeks a bigger and better Truth. Part of God's Truth.

Furthermore, as Neo-Tech notes, the word "Truth" denotes a static assertion and people constantly dispute its meaning, and the word "honesty" is indicative of an active and dynamic process for better perceiving reality.

## "Publish or Perish"

There is an old adage about the Academic life that reads: "Publish or Perish" [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Publish\\_or\\_perish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Publish_or_perish)]. Wikipedia reads:

"Publish or perish" is a phrase coined to describe the pressure in academia to rapidly and continuously publish academic work to sustain or further one's career.

Frequent publication is one of few methods at scholars' disposal to demonstrate academic talent. Successful publications bring attention to scholars and their sponsoring institutions, which can facilitate continued funding and an individual's progress through their field.

Let's go a little farther from the "frequent publishing" and just into publishing something in time, and it is evident that a man has two choices:

1. To **publish** everything he or she knows and thinks, in due time, and be completely honest and sincere (without lying, keeping secrets, or even speaking in riddles, but while still keeping some privacy and using tact and wisdom.). (= "**Publish**").
2. To keep things as **secrets** for himself or herself, **lie**, or use other forms of deceit or camouflage, thus resulting in him isolating himself from society and becoming paranoid. (= "**Perish**").

If we look at history, we will see that the most enduring and surviving idea systems were the ones that consistently published: the Greek philosophers [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient\\_Greek\\_philosophy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_philosophy)], the Jewish scholars, the Muslim scholars of medieval times, the post-Renaissance/post-Printing-press Europeans, the American mass-media / mass-publishing revolution of the 20th century, and the user-generated content [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User-generated\\_content](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User-generated_content)] Internet of today. Yes, there always was a lot of junk (see Sturgeon's Law [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sturgeon%27s\\_Law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sturgeon%27s_Law)] that says that "90% of everything is crap"), and that includes the content of the very Tanakh (= Jewish Bible) [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanakh>] that many people still consider holy. However, there is always a minority of exceptionally good stuff. For more insights about that, see Paul Graham's essays "What Business Can Learn from Open Source" [<http://www.paulgraham.com/opensource.html>] and "Web 2.0" [<http://www.paulgraham.com/web20.html>].

It is extremely unlikely that a single man called Aesop told all of the fables [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesop%27s\\_Fables](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesop%27s_Fables)] that have been attributed to him, and even if (King) David [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David>] existed, he has not taken all of the actions which the Jewish Bible reports he took, because many such tales were common in the ancient Near East. Instead, they were both ancient memes [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meme>], and people had no qualms to gradually improve upon them and spice them up.

So you should definitely publish, because keeping your "secrets" or "core competency" for yourself is not only dishonest, but a superbly bad strategy, because you will have little motivation to improve what you did, and other people won't be able to contribute to it, build upon it, or criticise it.



**Note:** I do not advocate making everything free/open in the Free and open source software [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free\\_and\\_open-source\\_software](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_and_open-source_software)] (FOSS or FLOSS) sense - just to make sure it is published and documented, and that people can build upon its ideas and improve upon them.

## Laziness vs. Productivity

A lot of people think that being productive is about working intensively for many hours without rest, but in fact it's quite the opposite. As the novel *Momo* [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Momo\\_%28novel%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Momo_%28novel%29)] illustrates, good productivity comes from having a lot of free time, from having many and different experiences, and from introspecting and reflecting.

Really productive people are not busy most of the time. In my screenplay, Star Trek: "We, the Living Dead" [<http://www.shlomifish.org/humour/Star-Trek/We-the-Living-Dead/>], Q2, who is the world's oldest living organism and a member of the Q continuum (a guild of organisms who are extremely advanced, technologically) has this to say:

**Q2:** No [I'm not too busy]. Busy people are unproductive. We are very productive and so we're almost never busy.

Katie Lucas wrote about why it is not a good idea to disable Internet access [<http://www.fysh.org/~katie/computing/no-net-access.txt>] for employees, to avoid distractions. Quoting from there:

"There would be no Internet connection to private workstations in offices... The real advantage is the removal of the Big Distraction from programmers."

You should probably put timelocks on the doors as well. You don't want employees wandering outside the building looking at trees or anything while they take a break.

I mean, seriously. I've noticed there's a strong correlation between environments which make these sorts of dumb decisions and suffer from crushing lack of imagination in what they do and environments that trust their staff to get on with the job.

Another illuminating story with respect to this, is that of "EA Spouse" [[http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Erin\\_Hoffman&oldid=528979572](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Erin_Hoffman&oldid=528979572)] who wrote a blog post [<http://ea-spouse.livejournal.com/274.html>] on livejournal.com titled "EA: The Human Story" where she discussed the long hours working for EA. In response, Evan Robinson wrote "Why Crunch Mode Doesn't Work?" [<http://developers.slashdot.org/story/05/06/08/1646234/Why-Crunch-Mode-Doesnt-Work>] where he explains why a 40 hour week yields the most productivity for humans.

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