

Shallow Talk On The Secrets Of Life

This blog post was translated by Mistral

I'd like to share some thoughts on the secrets of life. It wasn't until after leaving school and working in society for a few years that I came to realize the secret of learning. I discovered it was actually a secret of life itself. Let me tell you about my journey of discovery.

What are the things we do while we're awake? How can we change our behavior to excel in learning? Today, I believe that rote memorization, taking exams, obtaining certificates, doing projects, and working seriously are just superficial behaviors. We're awake and using our brains, so only by cultivating the habit of frequently daydreaming and contemplating can we truly learn effectively.

In this internet age, we have access to a vast amount of information, with numerous self-media articles, media reports, network questions, and academic papers at our fingertips. However, humans have not become any smarter. Are we smarter than our ancestors? We may have mastered programming and other skills of the new era, but our knowledge of farming, carpentry, and electric work is still limited. If we were stranded on an island with our ancestors, I believe they would fare better. So, the new generation only possesses new-age skills and a heap of dead knowledge. Our learning ability has not improved, and we remain powerless in the face of new environments and new domains. I think, it's because we still lack thinking. Most of this information is just online, and the vast majority of us haven't seen it. In the information we encounter, it quickly passes through our heads, we recognize the characters and make simple literal interpretations, but we haven't thought. Our new generation can explore more of the world, go to more places, have more tech products to play with, and more things to buy. Yet we don't have observant eyes, we merely experience the richness of life without improving the various things in it, discerning their advantages and disadvantages.

Thinking is questioning, questioning the source and authenticity of information, the function and experience of life items. Thinking is comprehensive analysis, analyzing the possible reasons behind phenomena, the possible designs of objects. Thinking is mining essence, able to see the core essence of things behind them, able to grasp the main contradictions, able to find connections between seemingly unrelated things. Thinking is seeing the tip of the iceberg, able to discern the essence and development trend of things from small things, able to see the big picture in small things.

When I finished reading over 170 books on Douban, I put down the book. I realized that these books were all good books, but after reading them, I couldn't write a single book of my own. I could only talk about very little of the knowledge I had gained. A year later, I probably only remembered having read some book. I read them carefully word by word, but I didn't truly understand. Because when I faced new problems, I couldn't recall the knowledge from these books to help me. I would occasionally remember a phrase or two, or think of something and remember having read something similar. But the books didn't make my

brain any stronger. I probably read mostly for simple recognition after learning to read in elementary school. This description made me both shocked and enlightening. It was enlightening precisely because it was so accurate.

The same goes for life. After I learned to take the bus, cook, travel alone, use a computer, use a mobile phone, and program, most of my subsequent behavior was simple repetition. So despite appearing to have lived in this world for over 20 years, I hadn't learned much.

When I became aware of this, I started doing nothing but daydreaming. An entire day of daydreaming was grueling. I often became restless, but this also made me play with my phone, read books, and watch movies, didn't it? My fingers were constantly swiping through social media, but I rarely had the patience to finish reading. My fingers were constantly swiping on TikTok, but I soon grew tired of it. Swiping through social media took even less patience than reading books or watching movies. Long-term daydreaming made me restless, and the only way to calm my restlessness was with more thinking. I realized that if I couldn't be patient with the current book, I wouldn't be patient with any book. It's not that this book is dull, but my mind is restless. However, when my mind is calm, I find that any book is interesting if I read it slowly.

For years, the pressure of work and entrepreneurship made me increasingly anxious, wanting to finish everything urgently, leaving fewer and fewer things to enjoy and do slowly. Everything I did had a purpose. Yet, every time I did something with a purpose, I couldn't truly enjoy the process. Conversely, when I enjoyed the process, I often forgot the purpose and became willing to continue doing it, savoring the experience. Because I enjoyed it, I wished time could last longer and I could do it for a longer time.

The brain is so honest, it cooperates with your urgency when you're in a hurry; it cooperates with your calmness when you're taking your time. People, the hardest to deceive is your own brain. When you tell yourself to enjoy reading but don't truly enjoy it, the book won't keep your interest for long.

So I set three principles for myself to combat anxiety.

First, take care of myself now and provide for my family in the future. Two is that I only do things I particularly want to do during other times, otherwise I just daydream. Three is that after achieving one, I can accept spending the rest of my life daydreaming, doing nothing, my knowledge level can stay the same, I don't need to compare myself to anyone.

The anxiety formed over so many years is difficult to alleviate. The subconscious anxiety is everywhere, all I can do is fight it with reverse psychology.

When I find myself rushing to finish a book, I just stop reading it. When I find I can't learn a new skill, I give up. When I find I get bored with traveling without posting on social media, I stop going far places. When I can't do something slowly, I just don't do it.

When I like doing something, I keep doing it, regardless of its usefulness. I watched TikTok international

version for a week straight when I liked it. When I like to think, I lie in bed or on the couch, wandering and pondering for several days in a row. When I'm interested in banned books, I read several of them non-stop. When I feel lonely, I call old friends for hours at a time, one pot after another.

When I want to master English, I struggle with thick English books and a snail's reading speed. I gave up on them and started using foreign question-and-answer websites like Quora, reading topics that interest me such as "How foreigners see China," "What is a genius," "Betrayal experiences," etc. I found myself unable to sleep. I also started following interesting accounts on Twitter and Netflix-like platforms for English TV shows and documentaries, and B-type YouTube for various videos. Sometimes these are long and difficult to understand, so I just switch to TikTok international version and keep watching, now with over ten thousand videos and two thousand likes. I gradually discovered that I could understand and follow most English texts. I no longer fear encountering long English passages, and I actively seek various English information. I found that when we are especially relaxed and enjoying ourselves, our brains are highly active and receptive, so we absorb everything we hear and see, making learning quicker. High-quality books are definitely more comprehensive and valuable than fragmented Q&A or entertaining short videos. However, I had overlooked the brain's involvement and the importance of enjoyment. If my goal was to become proficient in English, why not choose enjoyable methods? Why not learn through play? If I enjoy it and am willing to continue, I will surely become proficient in English.

I no longer care if things are useful or not; I only care if they are fun. Because if they're not fun, their utility is irrelevant. For the past few years, I've been striving for excellence, but it hasn't made me exceptional. There are brilliant people in every field.

If we measure success in the world based on popular opinion, I managed to climb from the top 10 billion to the top 1 million through lifelong effort. These intense competitions for the past few decades are like the past ten years of studying and working, and what's the point of further success? Our genes are passed down from our ancestors, making our intelligence a random and arbitrary matter. We don't need to prove ourselves or overestimate ourselves. Ultimately, almost everything will disappear into the river of history.

Feynman, the scientist, once said something I liked. You don't have a duty to achieve the success others expect of you, and I don't have a duty to live up to their expectations. That's their mistake, not my failure.

After experiencing all this, I have a clearer understanding of my worth. I no longer need anyone's approval from companies, nor do I care about anyone's opinion. I'm happy if there is approval, and indifferent if there isn't. I know my strengths and weaknesses, my worth, and what I can and cannot do. I saw the limitations of money, saw too many companies with tens of millions or even billions in funding failing. Money, used to buy products or services, is nourishing and omnipotent. But when it comes to running a company, money's power becomes fragile. What matters most is thinking, knowledge, experience, and methods.

With a better understanding of economics, politics, and history, I have a completely different perspective on how to best navigate this world and live happily, freely, and comfortably. Some things, though they don't earn money or seem to waste time, are incredibly important and worth doing; and sometimes, even with a house or several hundred million in savings, one is still in danger if they lack the necessary awareness to avoid the pitfalls of the economy and politics. Look at today's wealthy business elites; they were penniless business failures ten years ago. Look at those with limitless charisma, in the face of the call for "mass entrepreneurship and innovation," lacking understanding of the true situation and the real cost of entrepreneurial success, even with billions in financing, they have still fallen.

As for time, there is high-quality and low-quality thinking and practice. It may seem that we have spent a lot of time doing a lot of things and earned some money, but have we really made things easier for the future or made progress? Conversely, it may seem that some people do nothing all year and just sit and think, but they have become much wiser. Warren Buffett's life was mostly spent reading and thinking. The older he got, the fewer things he did. It may seem that he didn't accomplish much, but he is one of the wealthiest and wisest people in the world.

When I think about how to spend my life, I often look back to the past for answers.

Looking back at my school days, my happiest memories are not of the exam and study hours, not of the days when I didn't want to work but pretended to, not of the days when I was afraid of falling behind and rushed to catch up, but of the relaxed, laughter-filled moments in the classroom, the times I pursued my hobbies in school, the times I was able to realize my ideas at work, the projects I did on a whim outside of work, the moments that didn't matter what the result was and followed my heart, and the moments of play and laughter with friends. With more and more meditation and contemplation, I gradually understood myself and the world, the past and history, and even saw a little of the future.

When I started my business with a live platform, I often thought about the gains and losses I experienced during operation, promotion, financing, hiring, layoffs, and closure.

At first, I attributed the reasons to my inexperience as a first-time entrepreneur, my limited capabilities and connections, and my inability to attract excellent talents. Hasty hiring after financing significantly increased operational costs. I also realized that I lacked communication with the team, and they were left to figure things out on their own after joining, with me often being too busy and seldom holding meetings to unify thoughts, build trust, and promote collaboration.

Next, I noticed that running an internet platform required a significant investment, and the remaining platforms all needed excellent teams and substantial capital. My live platform was limited to sharing live content through internet software technology. I failed to develop large product categories and lacked a clear path to becoming a large platform. Given my abilities, I would be better suited to contributing content or goods within a large platform and focusing on small team tasks.

Later, I realized that the industry environment played a significant role in the outcome. The direction of a startup, the user base and demand, the salary and employment market conditions, and the city's rental and business registration agency costs were all determined at the outset. Therefore, I began to see that there were many reasons beyond my control, including the failure of most companies in the industry. If most companies had succeeded, and I was the only one who failed, it would be my problem; but if most companies had failed, it was no longer a simple matter. I later discovered that most Chinese people, aside from maintaining their livelihoods, have most of their spare money invested in real estate or are paying off mortgages. The construction industry (real estate and infrastructure) is the backbone of China's economy, and many of the wealthy elites in the Forbes top 100 list are related to this industry. Profits in other industries are relatively thin in comparison.

China's true middle class is relatively rare. Consumer demand is weak and tired. Out of China's population of 1.4 billion, about 96% of people can only maintain a subsistence and lower-middle-class standard of living, while the population with significant purchasing power is only about 50 million, or around 4% of the total. These 50 million people prefer international brands and luxury goods, and China has become the world's largest market for outbound tourism consumption.

The main driving force behind Chinese consumption is the ordinary population. With so many businesses competing for their wallets, entrepreneurship is naturally challenging. Among these businesses are some long-established super enterprises, like Apple Inc., which have captured over 90% of the profits in the smartphone industry, leaving other brands struggling. We buy the latest Apple phones and headphones with our wages, but we block one ad after another from our friend circles on social media, even though they are familiar faces. This shows why personal or environmental factors make entrepreneurship so difficult.

There are also other reasons, personal and environmental. I continue to ponder these issues. I often compare myself to other successful enterprises, such as Apple and Tencent, or to my friends who have done well in their businesses. I compare the founders of these enterprises to myself, and I compare the environments of different eras and countries. I compare various entrepreneurial directions. Entrepreneurship is such a complex endeavor, with many factors contributing to both success and failure. I have seen many reflections from entrepreneurial friends, and I believe they will have different thoughts as time goes on.

I also often ponder other things, such as how to cooperate with people, how to distinguish the nature of relationships - whether they are liking, meeting, frequent contact, financial cooperation, or long-term collaboration - and how to find the right people and experiences for a project. Why do some people help me? Why do I help some people? Thinking about these things is necessary for doing something and finding the right people with the appropriate experiences and attitudes. Among all my projects, the reasons for both success and failure. I have pondered over my past experiences in college pursuing women. Due to my inability to discern who was interested in me, who shared mutual interest, who just wanted to be friends, and who could develop further, I ended up in many awkward, impulsive, and forced situations. Once we

established a stable relationship, I also pondered how to handle my object and how trust was built, why we kept arguing, and why we made up as if nothing had happened. I realized that if two people truly loved each other in the visible years of our lives, aside from infidelity, other things were insignificant, although there were times of intense arguments, they did not significantly affect our relationship.

I have pondered how my personal fate is connected to the country. At the age of 9 in 2004, I came from the countryside to Guangzhou suburbs, where my parents worked in this economic development zone, and I was introduced to the computer. I pondered over the things I did in my childhood and how they influenced my current character. I saw my stubborn and rebellious side, my desire to defy the crowd and be different, my persistent pursuit of freedom, and my concern for others' evaluations.

I find it difficult to predict my future, such as what my experiences might be like in the next 20 years and who I might encounter doing what. I cannot even fully understand myself, let alone others. Yet, I have been living with myself for over 20 years. Why don't I fully understand myself? It's because I have thought too little and pondered too little. I believe that everyone, regardless of their desire for success or happiness, faces confusion and dilemmas on their journey. We have lived long enough and have been exposed to an abundance of information, but we lack thinking.

Newton and Einstein, among other brilliant scientists, spent a great deal of time pondering. They discovered the underlying principles from simple phenomena. Only through extensive contemplation can one notice that the reason apples fall and the moon revolves around the earth is the same. We have all seen these phenomena, yet we have not given them any thought. We have experienced much and read extensively, yet we ponder little. Humanity's most precious asset is its brain. Some people have utilized it effectively, driving the world forward with reason and logic, enabling us to reach the moon, and making intelligent smartphones and the internet transform our lives in countless ways.

Gradually, we come to realize that contemplation is also addictive. We are elated with our unique thoughts, proud of our intelligence and cleverness, and through contemplation, we solve many mysteries. We begin to observe and scrutinize life and the world around us, discovering that seemingly insignificant things can lead to a wealth of contemplation. We begin to predict the future and imagine future worlds, writing down our predictions, and secretly delighting in the possibility of them coming true. Gradually, we cannot sleep because of our thoughts, and this is truly enjoyable. Besides the physical pleasures of eating, drinking, playing, and intimate relationships, the joy of contemplation is perhaps the greatest pleasure for the brain. I want to say that learning how to learn, how to succeed, or how to be happy, are all matters of contemplation. With a relaxed attitude, after work hours, let us put down our phones and daydream, slowly, a month or half a year later, we will notice a difference. We will start to think of things we never thought of before, see the overlooked sides of things, have more and more unique thoughts, and gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world.

With a relaxed attitude, I often find joy in contemplation, which is probably the secret to life.