

ION VALIS

Strategies for Acceleration and Reinvention

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Key Points

- **“Reality”**
- **This summer vacation, try going off the grid**
- ***Think too much?* Next time, ask “what”, not “why”**
- **Read *The Wealthy Renter* and listen to *Ear Hustle***
- **The life advice a second century Roman Emperor and a 21st century TV series have in common**

I’m experimenting with a format wrinkle this month. For the first time, all of the recommendations revolve around one theme. I’m tackling the idea of “reality” in many of its forms - from changing your (daily) reality to challenging and even reframing your conception of it. *Read on ...*

Acceleration

This Summer, Go off the Grid

In one week, I'm going off the grid. No, I'm not a black ops agent like Jason Bourne, nor am I fearing a Skynet-style rise of the robot overlords.

The truth is, I'm about to go on holiday. These days however, my vacations are increasingly about disconnecting; I need a break from the constant grind of an always-buzzing smart phone, an endless email inbox and a fragmented attention span. Sound familiar? That's because I just described the daily reality for almost everyone living in the Internet age. We live in a swirl of limitless distraction, but that is not a new story. The real insight I've taken from my previous "connectivity cleanses" is two-fold: **we need digital down time more than ever, and reaching that elusive state takes skill, practice and planning.** Simply put, we should force ourselves to disconnect regularly, but realize that it takes time to get good at it.

This is how I do it. *Read [more](#) (3 Minute Read)*

Conclusion: Change your (daily) reality - even if just for two weeks.

Thinking Tool

Think too much? I do. Recently I came across a really useful brain hack that will prevent you from getting wrapped around the axle of negative thoughts.

"Why" questions trap us in our past; "what" questions help us create a better future. So instead of berating yourself with some version of "why did I make that mistake again?", pivot to the more productive frame: "what can I do going forward to ensure I don't do that again?"

For more information on this idea, click [here](#):

Conclusion: "Reality" is actually negotiable - if you change the questions you ask.

Pair this with the following Chinese proverb: "The best time to have planted a tree was 25 years ago. The second best time is today."

Binge-Worthy

[The Wealthy Renter](#) | Alex Avery (2016)

You will find this book in the personal finance section of your local bookstore (or Amazon), and I'm sure you're wondering what this has to do with "reality." Pick it up for a few moments and you'll see why. Ostensibly, this is a methodical discussion of the merits of renting over buying real estate; in truth, it's a contrarian cri de coeur against the conventional wisdom that friends, parents, real estate agents and even governments make to buy into the American | Canadian | Western dream of owning a home.

The top take-away: Renting is not tantamount to setting your money on fire every month; in fact, **in many - if not most - instances it makes more financial sense to rent than to buy.** The constant message to purchase real estate is so pervasive because when people become homeowners, the community, the economy, the realtor industrial complex and even the country benefits. You, on the other hand - not so much.

Conclusion: Always question "conventional" reality.

Pair this with the following quote: "Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it's time to pause and reflect." (Mark Twain)

[Aural Stimulation: Ear Hustle Podcast](#) (2017)

This is unlike anything you've heard lately - I guarantee it. *Ear Hustle* takes you inside San Quentin Prison, where two inmates with life sentences get real about life behind bars. The podcast's title comes from prison slang for eavesdropping, and it delivers on that promise. In the first episode, you learn what it's like to have a cellie (cellmate) who despises you. In addition to putting your first world problems into perspective, this podcast is surprisingly humorous and even upbeat at times. **It will break your pre-conceived notions of what prison life is like while taking you on a lush sonic journey** (try to listen to it in a quiet spot; trust me).

Conclusion: One way to think differently about your reality is to experience a new one.

Pair this with: [Darwin's Nightmare](#) (2004). This documentary will not so much change your view of globalization as flip it upside down. On the surface, it describes how the introduction of an invasive species - the Nile Perch - into Lake Victoria in Tanzania

changed the entire ecological and economic system of the region. If that sounds boring, I can assure you that it isn't; the heart of the story is **the searing tale of the unintended consequences of those disruptions, and the larger lesson it teaches about globalization run amok**. This is not a cheery film (the title gives that away). It's dark, dystopian, disturbing ... but also vitally important. When you're in the right frame of mind, this is worth your time.

Philosophical Espresso Shots

“Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth.”

(Marcus Aurelius, 121 to 180 A.D.)

“Is any of it real? I mean, look at this. Look at it! A world built on fantasy. Synthetic emotions in the form of pills. Psychological warfare in the form of advertising. Mind-altering chemicals in the form of... food! Brainwashing seminars in the form of media. Controlled isolated bubbles in the form of social networks. Real? You want to talk about reality? We haven't lived in anything remotely close to it since the turn of the century. We turned it off, took out the batteries, snacked on a bag of GMOs while we tossed the remnants in the ever-expanding dumpster of the human condition. We live in branded houses trademarked by corporations built on bipolar numbers jumping up and down on digital displays, hypnotizing us into the biggest slumber mankind has ever seen. You have to dig pretty deep, kiddo, before you can find anything real. We live in a kingdom of bullshit. A kingdom you've lived in for far too long. So don't tell me about not being real. I'm no less real than the fucking beef patty in your Big Mac.”

(“Mr. Robot”, 2015)

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Cheers,

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