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**THE CONCEPTS OF MODERN
WISDOM**

77 Philosophical Perspectives to Understand Nature and Humanity

Edited by J.M. Jakus

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Preface

Just as discovering ways of thinking yields richer experiences, exposure to new ideas can nourish our quality of life. As someone who avidly invests his time in **mental models** and **philosophical books**, I believe that the more open (and objective) we are to different ideologies, the closer we come to **understanding nature and human beings within it**.

The key I've found is to strive for objectivity. *Expose yourself to all ideas, but sell your soul to none.* With this mantra in mind, I wrote "**The Concepts of Modern Wisdom.**" Although I can't claim to have found all the answers, these writings mirror my explorations of the fundamental questions about the laws of nature and humankind within it. While the manuscript draws lessons from philosophers to the natural sciences, past to present, and east to west, it is my way to share this journey with others asking themselves the same question.

In its simplest form, the **modern wisdom concepts** outlined here are designed to unlock our capacity for awareness and unbind our perceptions. These are designed not to dictate your thought patterns but to expose you to wider ways of thinking. Collectively, these lessons can facilitate a better understanding of nature and the human beings within it. With that comes the capacity to make **more conscientious and better-quality decisions**. It can also empower us to take ownership, responsibility, and accountability for the lives we build. In addition, this content easily applies to people of all lifestyles and ages, from entrepreneurs to investors, students to teachers, employees to managers, athletes to coaches, artists to followers, lawyers to politicians. Part of this is owed to the sheer diversity of thinkers reviewed here.

The more experiences you have in this life, the more you will benefit from these concepts because it will be easier for you to form connections **in your mind** as you learn them. The "**mind**" is an important point here because *modern wisdom concepts* are directly related to having a **higher level of reasoning**. To illustrate this with inspiration from two great thinkers: Only in the dialogue created by literature might **Aristotle** and **Mohandas Gandhi** contribute (inadvertently) to the same conversation, particularly several landmark aspects of the mind/reasoning (depicted below).

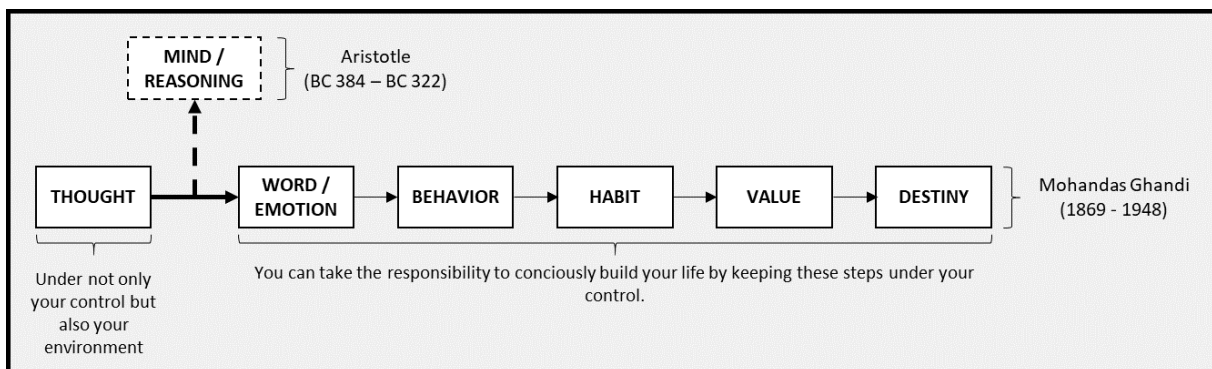


Figure 1: Evolution of the Debate on the Impact of Reasoning on Thoughts

Gandhi represented one thematic end of the spectrum when he said: ‘*Watch your thoughts; they become your words and emotions. Watch your words and emotions; they become a behavior. Watch your behaviors; they become your habits. Watch your habits; they become your values. Watch your values; they become your destiny.*’ Whereas Gandhi orients the importance of thought as catalytic, **Aristotle** surmises that one can think anything they wish. Still, the important thing is *to put a distance between oneself and one's thoughts* in order to decide which ideas should turn into words and emotions **with a high level of reasoning (consciously)**. Accordingly, I believe that **the mind is like a**

machine based on AI and we can build a sustainable and quality life by improving it via modern wisdom concepts.

A Brief Overview of “The Concepts of Modern Wisdom”

Through this manuscript, we’ll be discussing **77 modern wisdom concepts** across **eight different categories** for you to understand them in a simpler, categorical way. However, I ask you to read and understand the concepts by creating a relationship between them because I believe they are all connected. When it comes to why I named these categories like below, in a modern world where the speed of information diffusion is getting higher and higher, I observe from *my own perception of reality* that people are getting more concerned about these subjects. The categories:

1. Exploring Life’s Purpose and Meaning
2. Unraveling the Human Experience
3. Overcoming Prejudices
4. Mastering Quality Decision Making
5. Happiness and Life
6. The Minimalist and Sustainable Life
7. The Successful Life
8. Innovative and Creative Thinking

In each category, you will find approximately **ten modern wisdom concepts**, each linked to an aspect of competence. However, this does not mean you will be fully skilled with the competence since the concepts are not directly teaching about the competence. Still, they provide some profound tips/ideas/perspectives/awareness related to that competence. You might say that you could not create a link with a competence or category that I categorized but with another one. That is fine because the purpose here is –by questioning ourselves- to notice and discover that **we may give different meanings to similar/same things since we perceive the world from our own perceptions**. The competencies that I find essential for today’s people:

1. Ability to Collaborate, Compromise and Adapt
2. Analytical Thinking
3. Critical Thinking
4. Emotional Intelligence
5. Influence and Persuasion
6. Personal Motivation & Proactivity
7. Quality Decision Making
8. Self Awareness
9. Synthesis and Simplification
10. Understanding, Explaining, and Managing Change

How to get the most out of this book?

Because each concept is presented in summary format, you should be able to breeze through any given entry in about three minutes. Although they're divided into chapters and arranged with a logistic flow in mind, feel welcome to open the book anywhere and begin reading freely. The entries are designed to stand alone.

Likewise, the concepts presented here are intended to be thought-provoking. So, I'd invite you to take the insights and exercises you encounter here and see how they might apply to your business or social life. If you find that these *mental models* have prompted you to question your thoughts, emotions, decisions, behaviors, habits, and character, then I've done my job as an author successfully. Likewise, I should add that the *philosophical views* presented here are compiled for exposure. In other words, I intend to expose you to the broader ways of thinking – not to dictate what is (or isn't) subjectively “right” or “wrong.” Because my review of these works has paralleled my own exploration of what it means to be a conscious human being in life, I hope it also aids your journey toward self-discovery in some capacity.

Be aware that, while reading the book, you will encounter ideas you're both for and against. This will be inevitable if you engage with the content (as I hope you will). Whether the book challenges you to reflect on your convictions or validates your existing mindset, it's done its job. The intent is for you not to attach extreme importance to the information in this book but to see the different ways of thinking –*perspectives* – and benefit from them in a way that makes sense for you. Eventually, I believe this information –*notably different philosophical views*- gives substantial insights into **how great thinkers, past and present, engage with the world around them.**

Finally, if this book has fallen into your hands, you and I are likely on the same journey, striving to understand nature and humanity. If so, I hope this inspires a **positive impact** in your corner of the world.

“Wisdom is the basis of a sustainable and quality life.”

Uğur GÜRBÜZ

Acknowledgments

I believe that everything in life is interconnected. Although some connections may be too complex for us to grasp, I believe that everything affects each other, either directly or indirectly, to some extent. That is why I want to express my gratitude to all those who have been a part of my life, especially *my family, friends, and you, the reader of this book*, who will carry this dialogue forward.

Additionally, I would like to extend my special thanks to the book's editor, Julia Madison JAKUS. Her editing skills, as well as her perspective as a reader, have been instrumental in enhancing the book's quality and meaning.

1

Exploring Life's Purpose and Meaning

"It doesn't matter what we expect from life; What really matters is what life expects from us."

Man's Search For Meaning | Viktor E. Frankl

1.1 Every Time I Find the Meaning of Life, They Change It | Daniel Klein

Competence: Understanding, Explaining and Managing Change

Daniel Klein began to take notes from great philosophers' works to lead a better life. He later became a Philosopher at Harvard and dedicated his life to discovering the meaning of it. When he was in his seventies, he looked back at the notes he had collected over the last half-century. Klein decided to compile these notes in his book *Every Time I Find the Meaning of Life, They Change It*.

Through his work, Daniel Klein endeavored to spend his whole life consciously questioning and thinking. Although it would be impossible to summarize his entire life's work, the following ten notes offer some insights on **how to lead a more fulfilling life**.

1. **According to Epicurus, desiring what we do not currently have reduces or even destroys our enjoyment of what we currently have.** Also, when we pause to think that we have achieved something we desire right now, we realize that it will get us back to where we started, to the point of wanting something else again. The lesson from this is this: **Enjoy the now; it's already as good as it gets.** The American thinker and writer Ralph Waldo Emerson supports this with the following words: **We are constantly preparing for life, but we never live.**
2. If you try to acquire anything, even just a toy, you will miss the opportunity to live without worry. And for Epicurus, **a life free from worry is the only truly happy life.**
3. One of the memorable aphorisms of the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer: **Every day is a little life; Every awakening and getting out of bed is a small birth; every fresh morning a little youth, and every falling asleep in bed is a small death.**
4. The wonderful aphorism of Irish playwright Oscar Wilde: **We are all in the same swamp, but some of us are watching the stars.**
5. Busby (A character) may be content to lead a simple and comfortable life by following accepted rules and religious and social traditions. However, Nietzsche **describes him as a weak character for choosing such a life. In his view, Busby has not chosen his life but has accepted the scenario that society has given him and lives according to it. He cannot shake off his pack instinct because he is unaware that he's even a member.** He can't honestly come face to face with who he is and how he actually feels. Therefore, he is never fully alive, not living life to its fullest. So, do I really want to live my days like Busby?
6. The pursuit of happiness is a sure stalemate, but if you give up on trying to control an outcome, you can experience the depth and breadth of life in unimaginable ways.
7. These days, I too often think that **sitting on a bench and pondering the meaninglessness of everything is first-world spoils.** The child in the photograph will probably never think about the meaning of his life; he will think about finding enough food and water to survive. But even so, I do not condemn myself for the period of existential despair I am experiencing.
8. The eighteenth-century English Empiricist George Berkeley argues that all our knowledge of the world is filtered through our senses. Ultimately, all we have is a collection of sensory data compiled in our minds. Berkeley expresses this thought succinctly and strikingly: **To be is to be perceived.**
9. **There was an eternity not only after my life but also before. How could I forget?** That eternity doesn't seem to play a part in most people's horror at *nothingness*. I wish with all my heart that my life would last forever, but the fact that I missed the eternity before my birth does not interrupt my sleep for a moment. Is it simply a lack of imagination that I am not horrified by this "previous" eternity?
10. Contemporary psychoanalyst and philosopher Adam Phillips argues that modern people do not appreciate the life they lead because they are too preoccupied with the lives they have not lived. So, we think we know more about experiences we don't have than about experiences we have. This un-lived life, the product of our imagination, becomes more vivid and more

important than the life we lead. And the impossibilities of the past become the story of our lives... Indirectly, our lives become a never-ending trauma, ongoing mourning, about the lives we have lived and those we haven't.

As a result, we can say that **each philosopher tries to understand humans and life from their own perspective**. With that said, each of them has correct and refutable ideas. We need to listen to their thoughts with an open mind but without being dogmatically attached to one view in particular. Any fragments that might determine the meaning of our life are always open to change, according to ourselves, not others. Of course, at this point, we should not miss the message that all great philosophers are trying to convey: It's imperative to **live with as much awareness as we can muster at the moment**. Daniel Klein summarizes this situation as follows: **It is obvious that we humans have great difficulty living in the present and with awareness. Otherwise, why should so many philosophers feel compelled to deliver the same message?**

.... You can find more in the book. [Click here to access to book.](#)

2

Unraveling the Human Experience

“Any member of the human race can actively transform their contact with the outside world as required by their own nature. After all, a person's unique nature lies in what they perceive and how they do it. Perception is more than a physical process; it is a spiritual function, and it is possible to draw deep conclusions about a person's inner world from the way they perceive, and how and what they pe perceive.”

Understanding Human Nature | Alfred Adler

2.1 Adventures in Human Being | Gavin Francis

Competence: Self Awareness

The Scottish physician and writer Gavin Francis defines the medical profession **not only as a journey through parts of the body but also as an exploration of life's possibilities, a human adventure.**

Setting out from this point of view, Francis presents the stories of his patients to us in his book *Adventures in Human Being*. In it, he blends his patients' stories with the history of medicine, philosophy, and literature – all within the framework of confidentiality rules.

In this book, Francis discusses our bodies under the following headings:

- Brain (psychic surgery, seizures, holiness, and psychiatry)
- Head (eye, face, and inner ear)
- Chest (lung, heart, and breast)
- Upper limbs (Shoulder, wrist, hand)
- Abdomen (kidney, liver, large intestines, and rectum)
- Pelvis (genital organs, uterus, and placenta)
- Lower limbs (hips, feet, and toes)

The ten key takeaways below address the overlap between body and mind. Francis' writings are penned to enrich your comprehension of physical self-awareness and life as a whole:

- 1) **If you are reading this book in broad daylight, the photons reaching your retina emerged only eight and a half minutes ago by nuclear fusion in the sun's core.** The same photons were orbiting Mercury five minutes ago, leaving Venus two and a half minutes earlier. Those whose paths do not intersect with Earth will orbit Mars in about four minutes and Saturn in about an hour. After this journey through space, the sun's white light envelops the world around us and fractures into multicolored wavelengths, scattering for an unchanging period of time. (As Einstein put it, travel at the speed of light stops time). The scattered light passes through the transparent plate and lens and falls into the retina's safety net. **The energy released by the impact of this collision causes the proteins in the retina to curl, starting a chain reaction. This way, if a sufficient number of proteins are folded, it results in the firing of a single retinal nerve and sensing a single particle of light.**
- 2) We can taste what is in our mouth, touch an object within our reach, smell hundreds of meters away, and hear sounds from miles away. However, only our sense of sight **enables us to communicate with the sun and the stars.**
- 3) According to the English writer John Berger, **“We, as human beings, are in the light just as the fish are in the water in their natural environment.”** Likewise, if the doors of perception were cleaned, everything would appear to man as it is: **infinite.**
- 4) There were individual differences among cadavers. Although death had softened their expressions, the development of their facial muscles revealed their attitudes in life. Those that showed the most variability were the zygomaticus major and minor muscles, which allow us to smile by pulling the corners of the mouth to the side. For some, these muscles would be thick and prominent, like traces of life passed with laughter. Others displayed shriveled strings that were the spectacle of years of pain.
- 5) Leonardo da Vinci thought that **the muscles were in direct communication with the soul** and that the movements of the soul could only be understood by the evaluation of the body: **“The joints between the bones obey the orders of the nerves, obeying the orders of muscle, obeying the orders of the chord, following the common sense. And common sense is the seat of the soul.”**
- 6) The word **“vertigo”** is often used to describe a fear of heights, but for doctors, **vertigo means dizziness accompanied by nausea, which occurs when your balance organs and eyes give**

conflicting messages about whether you are moving or not. For example, if you are on a ship during a storm, your inner ear will tell you that you're moving, while your eyes will tell you the opposite. When a calm inner ear tells you that you are staying where you are, but your eyes are witnessing that it is not --- or, put differently when your inner ear informs your brain that you are returning while your eyes are telling you that you are not moving--- this can cause vertigo alongside terrible nausea.

- 7) Scottish poet and essayist Kathleen Jamie: **“To heal is not to be freed from mortality, but to be released back into mortality;** when we heal, we are returned to the wildlife, to the possibilities of aging and change.”
- 8) After the breath passes through the vocal cords, it advances 10-15 cm further and reaches the carina, and then the airflow is separated to go to the right and left lungs like the water surrounding the ship from below. **The right lung is larger than the left because it is not compressed by the heart.** Also, the airway passing through the right lung runs more vertically than the left; therefore, when a peanut or button gets into the windpipe, it is more likely to go to the right lung.
- 9) The word “ARMS” has two meanings in English: it can denote limbs or weapons. Vocabulary containing words such as “armed,” “armor,” and “army” is the witness of violence against the body in the language, and the attitude of humans towards killing is etched in our conversations and, subliminally, in our immediate spatial awareness. For soldiers fighting for a common cause, one might reference the term **“brothers in arms.”** The Latin *armus* means **“shoulder,”** the *coat of arms* means emblem, to *go to arms* means ready your weapons, and the origin of both means “fitting together.”
- 10) The liver is a respectively large organ responsible for detoxification, metabolism, and the production of bile. With extensive connections with the ventricles of the heart and the intestinal tract, the liver is the largest internal organ in the abdominal cavity. It’s no wonder it was once believed to contain the secret of life. Shakespeare, of all people, phrased it in far more visceral terms: “If he were opened and you find so much blood in his liver as will clog the foot of a flea, I’ll eat the rest of the anatomy.” Though obscure, he loosely implies that **the amount of blood in our liver was an expression of the life force within us—and one that should flow unobstructed. Otherwise, we are not a body but mere meat.**

Understanding how aspects of our bodily nature have permeated language can help us understand ourselves and others. Our physical functions can yield pivotal insights into how we form our perspectives and our understanding of nature to which we all belong. By thinking in this way, **we are more likely to generate mental alternatives prone to making our lives more meaningful.** To close this passage with a few words from Leonardo da Vinci, *“As man has a pool of blood in which the lungs rise and fall in breathing, so the body of the earth has its ocean tide which likewise rises and falls every six hours as if the world breathed.”*

.... You can find more in the book. [Click here to access to book.](#)

3

Overcoming Prejudices

“You build the best possible story from the information you can access; if it's a good story, you believe it. Paradoxically, it is easier to construct a coherent story when you know little, when there are fewer pieces to put in the puzzle. Our comforting belief that the world is meaningful is well-founded: our ability to ignore our ignorance is almost limitless.”

Thinking Fast and Slow | Daniel Kahneman

3.1 'Anchoring' Mental Model | Disengaging Cognitive Bias

Competence: Critical Thinking

An *anchoring mental model* is a type of cognitive bias. It claims that the "first knowledge" we acquire or encounter about a topic has a crucial influence on our decisions and perceptions toward this topic over time. In other words, the anchoring mental model acknowledges that most of us, instead of objectively evaluating new information when making a decision, will mainly refer to the first information we have. **Understanding the anchoring mental model helps us gauge how much we might be affected by the first information we receive; in doing so, we can reorient ourselves to new, incoming information in a more objective, rational way that aligns us to make better quality decisions.**

Daniel Kahneman, a Nobel Prize winner in Economics, who published an article on the anchoring effect with Cognitive Psychologist Amos Tversky in 1974, discusses this issue in his book *Thinking Fast and Slow*:

"Amos and I cheated once by toying with the tuning of a wheel of fortune. We set the wheel marked 0 to 100 to stop only at 10 or 65. We invited students from the University of Oregon to our experiment. One of us would stand in front of a small group of students, spin the wheel, and ask them to write down the number where the wheel stopped. Of course, that number was either 10 or 65. Then we asked them two questions:

- 1. Is the percentage of African nations among UN members less than or greater than the number you just wrote?*
- 2. What is your best estimate for the percentage of African nations in the UN?*

It is not overtly fraudulent in that **a spinning wheel provides no useful information about anything; those who participated in our experiment should have simply ignored it. But they didn't.** The average estimates of those who saw 10 and 65 were 25% and 45%, respectively.

As can be seen, any information we are exposed to before making a decision-- even if it is irrelevant-- can significantly influence our decisions. We can see the effects of this mental model in our daily life. For example:

- In the first minutes of your annual evaluation meeting with your manager, he might mention something about the financial hardship the company is going through, unknowingly instilling **an anchoring bias in you**. For the remainder of the meeting, you may be inclined to reduce the salary you intend to claim—or not ask for that raise after all. In some cases, simple awareness may be enough to navigate around the potential pitfalls of an anchoring bias. If you feel prone to subtle influences like this, you could perhaps express your desire for a raise in writing – and avoid creating any opportunities of being affected by your manager. Or, an even better alternative, **you could conduct market research on your position and participate in the interview with the right data, being aware of both your competencies and human tendencies toward anchoring bias.**
- When you want to buy a car, the dealer may say that the price has decreased from 100 thousand euros to 90 thousand euros, and first of all, he can anchor “100 thousand euros” in your mind and make you feel that the car is cheap. **When purchasing a product, you should research the product's features and real value in the market rather than the value and meaning that others attribute to that product, and you should decide whether or not to buy the product based on real data.**
- **The first impression** left by someone you just met creates a reference point for that person. The more vulnerable we are to the anchoring bias, the more we might evaluate our

relationship with a person based on our first impression. Therefore, you may (or may not) establish a healthier relationship by being aware of the impact of your first impressions and by considering the attitudes and behaviors of the person in general, not just for a moment.

Ultimately, **the anchoring mental model** reminds us that we tend to refer to the first information presented to us, **relevant or irrelevant**, about a topic and so open to making wrong decisions. **Being aware of this prejudice can help us direct our lives and make more conscious decisions.**

.... You can find more in the book. [Click here to access to book.](#)

References

Please note that the numbers written in parenthesis represent the number of pages of the notes I took from the relevant book. For example, if you see “Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 33rd ed., Istanbul, 2016 (1-21, 2-22...)”, this means that these are the page numbers of the quotes that I have numbered in the section of Albert Camus' the Myth of Sisyphus. More precisely, it indicates that quote #1 can be found on page 21 of the book, “The Myth of Sisyphus.”

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Author's Note

Hello, my name is Uğur Gürbüz, and I was born in Gaziantep, Turkey (1992). My father was a tailor, a skill he passed down to me along with many other life lessons that have shaped me not only as an author but as a person. After my hometown beginnings, I made my way to Istanbul in 2010 to pursue higher education. Boğaziçi University became my academic home from 2010 to 2015 and granted me a B.S. degree in Computer and Educational Technology. Later, at Bahçeşehir University, I found my passion for business further blossoming, culminating in a master's degree in business administration from 2017 to 2020.

Since 2015, I've been deeply involved in various business sectors, mainly focusing on e-learning and Human Resources (HR). As of February 2022, I moved to Paris to accept an opportunity with an international bank where I was entrusted with developing the leadership skills of talented individuals by increasing their level of wisdom.

When I'm not immersed in work, my personal interests reflect my enthusiasm for life and connecting with people—especially through new languages. Mastering English while pursuing French has been a phenomenal addition to my mother tongue, Turkish. Academic pursuits aside, I would never turn down an opportunity to be outside. Whether it's diving into a game of ultimate frisbee or a camping trip, I'm always seeking out new and unique experiences.

Last but not least, the joy of learning remains a constant through my avid reading habits and exploration of how timeless wisdom manifests in the modern era. My only goal is to share some of this enthusiasm with you no matter where you are in your journey.

“Bilgelik, sürdürülebilir ve kaliteli bir yaşamın temelidir.”

Uğur GÜRBÜZ