Starting

Joshua Kilpatrick | December 2023

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The vacant silence has pushed me here. I write these inaugural words of
my life's work from the small apartment I share with my husband on the
Caribbean coast of Mexico. The mood in the room is boredom and the
color is the yellow hue cast by a small fire. I do not launch this mission
with enthusiasm but with the exhausted resignation of a man who has
tried to avoid painting the house till the last moment. The time has simply
come, and I must put pen to paper and accept what comes.

I believe the civilization of man making a hard turn in the curve of growth.
In the 47 years I've lived till now, the world has changed so drastically that
my memory can hardly cast me back into the world I knew as a child. It
has been the electronic computer and communication networks that have
most dramatically altered our world. Given the wealth of advancement in
medicine, manufacturing, and farming, fields that more strongly influence
our physical experience of the world, it's interesting that the technology of
information storage and communication would have most changed our
world.

Since the last 1990's personal computers and internet access have
dramatically changed how I consume information and communicate with
other humans. As our computers moved into our pockets, we began to
feel the influence even over how we engage with one another face to face.
Today's trend is to regularly intermingle your participating with the humans
in your presence with interaction in your digital universe - the invisible
cloud of information and live communication accessible to you on your
mobile device. Having a foot in one world and the other in another has
lead to drastic changes in how we experience one another and even with
our own minds.

I remember days as a young man where I could be engrossed in a book
for hours in my room. I enjoyed focusing in on one topic and learning as
much as I could. The limited nature of information access required me to
go to the library in search of sources. One magazine article might mention

a book which I'd need to search for and possibly purchase to access. The slower nature of following the links between information afforded more time to sit and visit each node of the information tree, and the relative scarcity (compared to our modern world), lead us to cherish and mull over the information before us before we sought more. In the modern age, I find this kind of learning more difficult. The temptation to jump to the next node, to skim what is before me in a rush to determine if it's the best or right source of information so that I can jump to the next node and keep evaluating. It's almost as if the search for the best information has replaced the goal of digesting and understanding the information you originally sought. I find that my mind is constantly searching for the "right information" and rarely satisfied to stop it's walk through the tree.

This has impacted my methods of learning, my ability to stay stable on one topic or theme, and even my ability to create. Rather than sitting down to brainstorm and write, I opt to search for articles on how to be a writer and then skim 10's of them looking for the best one's. Then I'll brainstorm about writing tools I might use and how to configure the tools to make online publishing better. Then I'll get the idea to look for courses I might take on writing. Finally, after boring of looking for courses, I'll have the idea to look for online discussion groups or communities. All of this running for information and after hours, I haven't written a word or even tried to be creative. I've been entertained by my own search for information.

So, at some point, as I have retired and faced the blank and open options of my future, I realize that in the manner, I am never going to write or create or synthesize any of the great things that I have seen and learned. I must start writing and trying to create my vision, a fantom I can hardly describe.

After much suffering looking for online publishing tools and then worrying about rights and privacy, I've decided to step back a little in time and use my computer the way I would have in the 90's - simply a typewriter with infinite paper and easy corrections. I will write in a simple word processor on my MacBook, store my final drafts as PDF, and save it all in Git Hub with an index page. That's it. There won't be any more frills to it than that.

I suppose initially, I will need to find a topic or theme to try. This has also been an endless quest of brainstorming and it just must end. I must write and get on with the process hoping the vision and goal will emerge. So,

this is my first entry, my first essay about what's happening and why. I hope I can stop stalling and make it happen.