

# Insights

## Identities

An Empiricist self-identifies as a *snowflake*, individual and ephemeral;  
An Idealist self-identifies as a *ghost*, immanent and transcendent;  
An Activist self-identifies as an *ocean*, indomitable and irresistible;  
A Conformist self-identifies as a *droplet*, indispensable and insignificant;  
A Theorist self-identifies as a *memory*, insistent and evanescent;  
And each of these identities is a *model of the soul*, essential and elemental;  
But in each case it's only a model.

Empiricist: If you can fill the unforgiving minute | With sixty seconds' worth of distance run, |  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it, | And which is more: you'll be a Man, my son!<sup>1</sup>  
Idealist: Do not stand at my grave and weep; | I am not there. I do not sleep.<sup>2</sup>  
Activist: It matters not how strait the gate, | How charged with punishments the scroll, |  
I am the master of my fate: | I am the captain of my soul.<sup>3</sup>  
Conformist: The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.<sup>4</sup>  
Theorist: These are my words. As they are read, so shall I live. Quote me on that.<sup>5</sup>

## Perspectives

Through *panactivism* a society becomes a democracy;  
Through *populism* a democracy becomes an autocracy;  
Through *pragmatism* an autocracy becomes a tyranny;  
Through *paternalism* a tyranny becomes an oligarchy;  
Through *professionalism* an oligarchy becomes a bureaucracy;  
And through all of these interventions together – each in its own way, but none too much –  
a society acquires another *level of complexity*, for better or worse.

Empiricist: No man is an island, | Entire of itself; |  
Every man is a piece of the continent, | A part of the main.<sup>6</sup>  
Idealist: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,  
that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,  
that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.<sup>7</sup>  
Activist: I am a rock | I am an island |  
And a rock feels no pain | And an island never cries<sup>8</sup>  
Conformist: Everyone has duties to the community in which alone  
the free and full development of his personality is possible.<sup>9</sup>  
Theorist: In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king ... of the wilderness.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *If...*, <https://allpoetry.com/If...>

<sup>2</sup> Attributed to Mary Elizabeth Frye, *Do Not Stand At My Grave And Weep*,  
<https://allpoetry.com/Do-Not-Stand-At-My-Grave-And-Weep>

<sup>3</sup> William Ernest Henley, *Invictus: The Unconquerable*, <https://allpoetry.com/Invictus:-The-Unconquerable>

<sup>4</sup> Attributed to M K Gandhi, [https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Talk:Mahatma\\_Gandhi](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Talk:Mahatma_Gandhi)

<sup>5</sup> My radical reworking of Descartes' *Cogito, ergo sum*.

<sup>6</sup> John Donne, *No Man Is an Island*, <https://allpoetry.com/No-man-is-an-island>

<sup>7</sup> *United States Declaration of Independence*, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

<sup>8</sup> Paul Simon, *I Am A Rock*, <https://www.paulsimon.com/track/i-am-a-rock-2/>

<sup>9</sup> *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

<sup>10</sup> My radical reworking of a well-known epigram attributed to Erasmus.

## Aspirations

An Empiricist aims for the *excitement* of new experiences;  
An Idealist aims for the *purity* of one vision;  
An Activist aims for the *achievement* of great deeds;  
A Conformist aims for the *acknowledgment* of faithful service;  
A Theorist aims for the *originality* of novel ideas;  
And each of these aims is a *path to fulfilment*, a prospect of complete contentment;  
But each path is taken – or not taken – by one person alone.

*Data* are stored observations; *knowledge* is organised data; *wisdom* is appropriate knowledge;  
*virtue* is enacted wisdom; and *happiness* is recognised virtue.

*Lies* are alternative facts; *conspiracies* are correlated lies; *delusions* are believed conspiracies;  
*violence* is enacted delusion; and *happiness* is a warm gun.

Thus one can be happy; but as an *aim in life* this is quite meaningless.

## Values

An Empiricist sees fairness as *equality*;  
An Idealist sees fairness as *unity*;  
An Activist sees fairness as *autonomy*;  
A Conformist sees fairness as *justice*;  
A Theorist sees fairness as *diversity*;  
And each of these perspectives is a personal *Utopia*, a vision of Heaven on Earth;  
But one person's Utopia is another person's Hell.

An Empiricist judges truth as *correspondence* with verifiable evidence;  
An Idealist judges truth as *coherence* with a chosen world-view;  
An Activist judges truth as *consequence* with purpose;  
A Conformist judges truth as *conformance* with established teachings;  
A Theorist judges truth as *concurrence* with a defined method or model or theory;  
And through all of these judgments together – each in its own way, but none too much –  
a person establishes the *true truth*, for better or worse.

## Ideas

*Cognition* is 'The mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses.'<sup>11</sup> For all animals, including humans, cognition is essentially a matter of *pattern recognition*. Uniquely, however, humans have learnt to organise these perceived patterns through their use of *language*, and to enhance their language through their use of *writing*, and to clarify their writing through their use of a modular *alphabet*. Together, these practical innovations have opened up a boundless 'inner space' of *conceptual abstraction*, which in turn has facilitated the emergence of all of the higher-level cognitive traits and faculties that we associate with the human mind, or the human soul.

Help me, such a lonely soul, | In dreams to leave behind the world. |  
Mister Kingdom help me please, | To find the rainbow's end.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.lexico.com/definition/cognition>, also referenced in <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognition>

<sup>12</sup> Jeff Lynne, *Mister Kingdom*, <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/electriclightorchestra/mrkingdom.html>