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FOREWORD BY DR. ARINDAM CHAUDHURI, AUTHOR OF THE
MONSTER BEST-SELLER *DISCOVER THE DIAMOND IN YOU*

DISCOVER THE SUPERHERO IN YOU CHE KABIR CHAUDHURI

DISCOVER THE SUPERHERO IN YOU

LESSONS FROM SUPERHEROES
TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS



CHE KABIR CHAUDHURI

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Also by Che Kabir Chaudhuri

WHAT MARX LEFT UNSAID

PRODUCTION OF SKILLS BY MEANS OF SKILLS*

A THEORY OF ECONOMIC JUSTICE

For you, Dadu and Thammi.

Dadu your thinking and our dinner table discussions have always left me in awe and taught me so much. You are the only superhero I know. I must also add, your current fight against all illnesses is also no less than that of a superhero. I look forward to learning from you constantly and will always carry your teachings with me for life.

Thammi, nothing would be possible without your constant love and affection— through your paintings of my favourite superheroes on my T-shirts. It is your creativity and insight that I carry with me at all times.

For you, Zak.

Watching you enjoy superheroes, I am inspired to write. I wrote this book so that, in the future, you can learn from them what I did.

FOREWORD

What an amazing 18 years these have been. The day Che was born changed my life forever. I had no idea ever that I had so much ability to be responsible and loving. When you have that little baby all dependent on you, in your arms, you do change. Then started the beautiful process of your world getting filled with happiness and excitement with that first smile, first turn, first word, first crawl, first sentence, first step and so on.

Then one day, as time passed, came the first superhero film. And like all children Che was fascinated. And slowly started loving them. By the time he was in 6th he was making terrific sketches of superheroes and began writing a superhero comic which he hoped would one day be made into a film. I asked what was the comic about. He said, it will be about a black superhero from Africa. It will be about all the traditional practices of Africa and how they give rise to the world's most powerful superhero. On trying to find out more, he explained that he was disturbed that colour of skin still played a large shameful role in the way students in school interacted with each other and nicknames like Kalu (Blackie) were prevalent. He said being dark skinned himself, he could relate more to the person being called that. Thus he decided that he needs to write about a black Superhero, so that people learn to respect even dark skinned people. And to imagine all this in India where the problem isn't as horrendous as in the USA.

This was when he was in 6th. The comic never got completed (though I do hope one day he does complete it) but his fascination with superheroes continued. Like most parents I couldn't relate much and tried to explain him that these unreal characters weren't what would make him sensitive to real problems, and, he should read and watch more of classics. He did that. But after every Superhero film or comic release he would come and try to explain to me in the most beautiful manner why the film/comic was actually good and how he had learnt a lot of good things. I used to love listening to him.

I had written a book called "Discover the Diamond in You" which he had read way back in class 5th itself. And one day, when he was in class 8th, he came and told me that he would write a sequel to my book called "Discover the Superhero in You". I was fascinated. I said you never completed your first comic book, but make sure you complete this. I believed he would do a good job. He would in his free time write, and then, take months of break. I remember him writing quite a bit of it during his class 10th boards, in fact!! Still, I thought he would never complete it. But last year when he got enrolled on his own into this Harvard Prof. Certified Program on "Power and Responsibility: Doing Philosophy with Superheroes", I realised that he was indeed serious.

Yesterday as he turned 18, I got the full draft of the book. The best return gift I could have ever dreamt of. I finished reading it in an hour. And I can boldly say that in the self help genre, apart from being undoubtedly one

of the best books, this is the world's most unique book I have ever read. This is an absolute classic. No it's not for kids. It's for everyone. And everyone who reads this would realize the same, I assure. Needless to say, its full of wonderful anecdotes and lessons. That he got them and developed the capability of trying to write about them got me completely stumped.

It's philosophical at one end and extremely practical on the other. It never leaves you bored for even one second. And even if you aren't aware of some of the characters he refers to (thankfully I was aware, as I always made it a point to be his partner everytime he went to watch a superhero film) you will understand the context. What's amazing is that he wrote this whole beauty without one minute's help ever from me or my wife, Rajita. And all this when he has his 12th boards around the corner!

But then that's Che. For as long as I can remember he has only done what he wished to. And we never tried to ask him to do anything else. And I am glad to see that he has found his calling.

As an extremely proud father, an ordinary reader, a superhero sceptic, I can guarantee that the 60 min you will take to read this book will be absolutely worth your time and I will be really surprised if you are able to take, even, a loo break in between!!

Cheers to Discovering the Superhero in You!!

Dr. Arindam Chaudhuri
07-10-2018

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PREFACE

WHY COMIC BOOKS?

The first question that everybody asked me was why superheroes? They are not real, they just live in comic books. That was my point exactly. Comic books have played an important role in shaping the imagination of a whole lot of people, especially the young readers. It is a misconception that comics are only meant for children. I think they are a very powerful medium of learning. In fact nowadays comics are even being seen as a very effective way of teaching subjects as complicated as Maths and Physics.

I believe in the 1950's people believed that comics were a form of entertainment and some even thought they were a bad influence on the youth. It was believed that comics were the cause of reading problems in children. Someone even went ahead and said children reading comics were bookworms without books, as comics made the reader focus more on the images and not the written word.

Fredric Wertham wrote very strongly against comics in his book ‘Seduction of the Innocent’. But that was back in 1954. Today it is the very popularity of comics that is being used to attract young people all around me to read. There was a time when comics were read hidden inside books in libraries and schools, today many librarians want a special section of graphic novels inside the libraries to make the place look cool and interesting. Academic publishers like Scholastic have a their own graphic novels division called Graphix, which came out with the very popular ‘Bone’ series. Pantheon Publishers have published comic books like ‘Persepolis’. To top it all in 1992 the Pulitzer Prize was won by the graphic novel written by Art Spiegelman named ‘Maus: A Survivor’s Tale- My Father Bleeds History’. The book talked about the Holocaust experience.

The award was a landmark event as it proved that comics have moved in from the sidelines to the mainstream. People have indeed begun to realise that comics are actually ‘multimodal texts’. With the inclusion of visuals and words learning happens at multiple levels as multiple literacies are engaged.

A research by Berkowitz & Packer in 2001 proved that comic books were an effective educational and motivational tool and could be used in various different places. Clark & Paivio’s dual coding theory of 1991 went on to prove that recall and recognition is enhanced when information is presented in both visual and verbal forms and hence comics could prove very useful in education.

So today a lot of top educators of the world are designing

“Superman didn’t become Superman. Superman was born Superman. When Superman wakes up in the morning, he’s Superman. His alter ego is Clark Kent. His outfit with the big red “S”, that’s the blanket he was wrapped in as a baby when the Kents found him. Those are his clothes. What Kent wears - the glasses, the business suit - that’s the costume. That’s the costume Superman wears to blend in with us. Clark Kent is how Superman views us. And what are the characteristics of Clark Kent. He’s weak... he’s unsure of himself... he’s a coward. Clark Kent is Superman’s critique on the whole human race.”

— *Quentin Tarantino*


and working out new ways of teaching through comics. Comics-supported curriculums have been made and are proving to be very successful too.

Come to think about it, the Greeks have been using comics to teach for a very long time. The comic series 'Adventures of Asterix' was a big hit. In fact, accepting the effectiveness of teaching through comics, when the European Union wanted to inform students about E.U. and it's efforts in fighting discrimination and racism it decided to publish a series of comics in all the official languages of the Union.

Amongst comic books the ones that have gained the maximum popularity are those about Superheroes. One of the reasons for this is Hollywood. In 2014 about 12 comic books were adapted into movies. This greatly helped increase the popularity of the comics and attracted lot of new readers. Earlier the core audience was the young male readers, but now males and females of almost every demography are reading them. A look at the audience at any of the comic conventions shall give one an idea of the popularity of the comics.

Not just Hollywood but the growth of digital has also been one of the main factors in increasing the popularity of comics. (It is not surprising that Amazon bought ComiXology.)

Pictures are what we all get attracted to first and comics with their use of pictures and words help build a strong emotional connect between the readers and the characters in the story. It also helps maintain the reader's interest in



If Shakespeare and Michelangelo were alive today, and if they decided to collaborate on a comic, Shakespeare would write the script and Michelangelo would draw it. How could anybody say that this wouldn't be as worthwhile an artform as anything on earth?

-Stan Lee

the plot.


I have been greatly influenced by comics and have learnt a lot by reading them. So when it came to writing down my thoughts the first thing that I did was go back to my comics and recollect all that I had learnt.

I chose graphic novels because they act as an effective and simple way of communicating messages that have been communicated previously in complex classics, without diluting the impact of the message.

THE RISE IN THE POPULARITY OF SUPERHEROES.

I believe, the reason why superheroes have become so popular is because in this chaotic and unpredictable world we all want a hero. It was in the 1930's that the world was most chaotic. Troubled times always call for a hero. It's a nice feeling to know that there is somebody out there who will protect the world and save it from destruction. In fact the word 'Hero' is derived from the Greek word 'heros' which means one who protects and serves.

Batman and Superman are both mythological characters that were created in the 1930's and they owe a lot of their success to the Great Depression. That was the time when America was coming out of the Depression and people were looking for ways to give them hope and happiness. They were looking for a way to escape the bad memories. Add to this the fact that the depression brought along with it a lot of unemployment and joblessness. People needed



*Some people will say,
“Why read a comic book?
It stifles the imagination.
If you read a novel you
imagine what people are
like. If you read a comic,
it’s showing you.” The
only answer I can give is,
“You can read a Shake-
speare play, but does that
mean you wouldn’t want
to see it on the stage?”*

-Stan Lee

to do something to fill up their time. It was a case of forced leisure. Since there was both lack of employment and lack of money people reached out for economically accessible and cheap forms of entertainment. Comic books were not just cheap but almost an equivalent of TV.

Comic books hardly cost a dime at that time so very often this phase is referred to as the ‘dime & nickle’ phase.

A superhero comic book became the cheapest source of entertainment. It did not just inspire people to do good but also to have faith and hope for a better future. These comics made them believe that these heroes could help them solve their problems. Interestingly, during the Great Depression all the stories were based on real world issues and they showed how the superheroes solved the problems and saved the world. The reader felt good that there was someone who could solve their problems too and make their world better.

When Superman first made his debut in Action Comics his motto was ‘the champion of the oppressed’. He used his powers to fight for justice.

Batman did not have any real ‘superpowers’ so to speak of. But he used his intelligence and will power to fight crime and injustice and many of the common folks got inspired. He made them believe that they too could become like Batman and use whatever they had to rise above the hopelessness of the times and overcome all obstacles.

The whole package proved to be just perfect, and the moment the comics were released in the market they started flying off the newsstands. Action Comics #1 was a huge

success and sold more than 2,50,000 copies. The first six of the Action Comics did not have Superman on the cover, but the seventh one had. It went on to sell about half a million copies. Soon there was a daily comic strip of Superman in newspapers. Superman even had his own radio show. Every Superman comic after that sold more than a million copies. It’s also important to keep in mind that those were the times when children used to very actively trade comic books, which would mean that readership was much much more than the sales of the comics.

By 1947, 95% of boys six to eleven years old, and 91% of girls that age were buying and reading comic books regularly. Between ages eighteen and thirty, 41% of men and 28% of women were steady comic book readers, a significant amount for the age.

SUPERHEROES RISE YET AGAIN

For the current generation, superheroes are everywhere. Be it movies or TV or comics. Their popularity is on the rise. Every movie with a super hero is a smash hit. Every TV serial with superheroes rises in popularity. It seems, when times are economically good superheroes die, but bad economic times act as a stimulus in increasing their popularity. According to Mark Millar, a highly acclaimed comic book writer, the recession that the world is facing today is probably going to last till the end of the decade. Till then people need hope and entertainment and superheroes will do the job.

While times are tough today, they are surely different from those of the Great Depression. One main differentiator is ‘technology’. Thanks to the huge advances in special effects and computer generated imagery, today each superhero character can be portrayed amazingly well. Anything that the director has in his head can today be re-created on the big screen. Add to that the fact that all the A-list actors of Hollywood have been roped in to play these Superhero characters, thus making the whole package much more attractive, and the movies popular across the world

REAL LIFE SUPERHEROES

What I find most fascinating is that superheroes actually show us how to make the world a better place. They inspire us to face the challenges of life with courage and conviction. Hulk and his story inspires us to never give in or give up. He is in constant struggle with his multiple personalities but he manages to overcome them every time. Wonder Woman shows us what a strong woman can achieve. Batman shows how if we humans exploit our full potential we can be as strong as any superhero. Superman, by always fighting for justice and trying to make the world a better place, shows us what an ideal human being should be like. It is through superheroes that we find inspiration.

German philosopher and cultural critic Friedrich Nietzsche had a theory, called the ‘Übermensch Theory’ or the ‘Superman Theory’, that he wrote about in his book

‘Thus Spoke Zarathustra’. He believed that there is a human, that has reached his apotheosis, that we must all strive to be like. He called this man the Superman. Though this was just an ideal, Nietzsche believed that it was imperative to have an ideal to look up to to avoid stagnation in your development; as this stagnation leads to the stagnation of the entire human race.

Comic books have achieved a way of representing these ideals as superheroes, as almost each and every superhero tries to address a challenge that modern day life imposes on us and shows a way to overcome those challenges.

And when we look around, we find around us are people, who are normal human beings, but their lives are as inspirational as those of any superhero. The creators of Superman were real life heroes themselves. For five long years they kept taking their comic book from one publisher to another only to be rejected repeatedly, but they never gave up. Finally the comic saw the light of day and the rest as they say is history.

Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster were sons of Jewish immigrants who became friends in high school in Cleveland, Ohio. Both the teenagers were short and wore glasses and neither could get a date easily. So Clark Kent was born out of their weaknesses. They decided Superman would be an extraordinary person who lived in the real world, unlike most other characters of that time who were humans living in extraordinary worlds (like Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers.) In fact, the creators of Spider-Man, Batman, and Captain America were also Jewish.

The truth also is while superheroes have inspired humans it's very often humans who have also inspired superheroes. In the beginning the characters were very simple and so were the stories. It was all about victory of good over evil. Then slowly writers like Stan Lee started to change the character of the superheroes and made them more interesting and more human. So Spider-Man was portrayed as a teenager with his own teenage problems, and Fantastic Four were shown to have their share of family problems like any other family.

While in the beginning superheroes were created more as motivational and god-like characters, over the years they have metamorphosed into more humane characters with emotions, troubles and flaws just like us. So if Batman inspired us then so did Bruce Wayne, and if Spiderman was awesome then Peter Parkers was admirable too. These very normal individuals and their superhero avatars while entertaining us with their escapades also teach us some very valuable life lessons.

Superheroes have become more human, but a lot of humans have become Superheroes who inspire us to live life to the fullest, to chase our dreams fearlessly much like Nietzsche had proposed.

Some of these super-humans that I have grown up admiring have lives that were filled with despair and yet they did not let that put them down. They used all their powers to overcome the hardships, make their dreams come true, and be truly successful. This is what we all must take away from comic books— the lessons they teach us— and

this is what has been explored in the following pages.

This book is about those lessons— 10 of them precisely. Lessons that I have definitely learnt personally and I believe can help everyone Discover a Superhero inside them.

I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed living this book.

PRINCIPLES

One of the things that fascinated me the most about the graphic novels I read was the characterisation of the heroes as well as the villains. They were a perfect match. The villains were sometimes even stronger than the heroes. There was a balance and yet the hero would always win. I thought it to be an inevitable cliché, except maybe in some rare cases like *The Watchmen*, where the villain would ‘win’ and there would be a very thin line between a hero and a villain. This just confused me more. What made heroes correct and the villains wrong? Are they not just different sides of the same coin?

Then I watched Christopher Nolan’s ‘*Batman : The Dark Night*’. I was as intrigued and amazed by the Joker’s character as I was with Batman’s, and actually I was more in love with Heath Ledger’s portrayal of Joker than I have been with any hero.

This is the first time I made a conscious effort to understand what morality meant. However, I wasn't the only one who loved the Joker. People all around the world would quote his lines and wear his t-shirts. My friends would talk about the Joker more than Batman.

The pallet of the Batman comics have always been different shades of grey. This also reflected to me the nature of the characters in the books themselves.

But the more I learnt about Psychology and the ways of thinking the more I realised that there was still so much to be learnt through comics. How could they be a potential way of teaching and showcasing to a large audience, thorough pictures and words, essential life lessons? How could they be used to encourage us to enquire into human nature to better understand ourselves?

The one thing all revered superheroes have in common is the clarity they have on what their purpose is and by what means they will achieve it.

Simply put, they all have a set of principles that act as the superstructure to the grand edifice that is their vision.

A crystal clear purpose that is pure. While the antagonists have a distorted sense of the world around them, they have no principles and the little morality they have is also corrupted.

See, Batman would always win as his principles

were in place and more rigid than the Joker's. The Joker's were based on chaos and mayhem and to destroy everything that Batman stood for. This made them a perfect pair but also gave Batman the upper hand.

Batman will remain stable as his actions are based on strong values that he has developed over the years.

The Joker, on the other hand, embodies everything wrong with Gotham. He is chaos and evil personified and he tests Batman the same way the environment in Gotham tests the citizens. The environment of Gotham forces people to become criminals. This is either due to blackmail by mob bosses or desperation of money. People in Gotham sacrifice their principles everyday to survive. It is an internal fight between good and evil. Batman's victory over Joker is a symbol of hope as he comes out on top after all the pain and suffering Joker puts him through. The triumph of the strong-willed and principled man.

Out of all the corrupt that are rich in Gotham City, Bruce Wayne stands out because he has inherited an empire that was built upon a vision and values. He inherited it from his parents who made constant efforts to make Gotham a better place, by making technologically advanced machines and transport, and investing millions into research to help build Gotham. Bruce uses these same values to build the legend of

Batman, to achieve his and his parents' vision for Gotham.

In the Christopher Nolan movies he had a strict 'no kill' policy which he followed which enabled him to make decisions without any hesitation. Though the Joker tested him multiple times and tried cornering him in an attempt to show the people of Gotham that Batman wasn't any different from the criminals of Gotham and was nothing special, Batman always stuck to his principles. This gives his achievements true meaning and depth, which enables his legacy to live even after he is dead. What he stood for will never fall. His shadow will never dim. While everything the Joker stands for will die and fade with time and his crimes will be looked at with hate and disgust.

"...some men aren't looking for anything logical, like money. They can't be bought, bullied, reasoned, or negotiated with. Some men just want to watch the world burn."

— Alfred, *The Dark Knight*

This is what showed me the importance of principles in ones life. It is the framework to everyone's personality and without it we are unstable and can topple at any time.

We act based on principles and we act to make

“

*The one thing all
revered superheroes
have in common
is the clarity they
have on what their
purpose is and by
what means they
will achieve it.*

”

our dreams come true. Batman has a spirit that will live forever. He is inspiring children and giving them hope. He stands for justice, alone in the dark, in a city full of crime and injustice. These virtues of Batman and other heroes is what we will be looking into in the following pages.

Principles are the basis for Action.

[Principles enable us to take actions with boldness.]

If one does not have a set of clear principles then one will be indecisive at all times and not do anything with boldness. This is a weakness and leads to a weak mind that is either easily swayed or remains completely ignorant. Having no principles or values that define you will ensure that no one takes you seriously. You automatically become incapable of being a leader as you will have nowhere to lead others. There is a charisma that attracts us to some villains and in recent years there has been a rise in love for the antagonists like the Joker, Bane, Two Face or Thanos. The quality that causes this charisma to ooze out of them is their principles. It is the same technique that caused Hitler to gather an army ready to do anything he says. Once you have your principles ready, it is up to you how you use your army. Hopefully you do good.

“It is not who you are underneath, it’s what you do that defines you.”

- Rachel, Bruce Wayne’s Ex Girlfriend

At first it seems like this was a lesson that Bruce Wayne had yet to learn. But on further analysis it is revealed that no one had known the meaning of this quote better than him. His life, personal and private, was built on this philosophy. He understood better than anyone the importance of action and the frivolousness of words.

Bruce Wayne sacrificed his social image to maintain the secrecy of his alternate identity — The Batman. This is revealed to Rachel later in the film when Batman saves her and she asks him who he is. He replied by repeating her words, “It is not who I am underneath, it’s what I do that defines me.”

The idea of justice— embodied by Batman— that meant more to him than his life itself. He wasn’t just a vigilante who fought bad guys. He was devoted to a concept — difficult to grasp yet, magnetic. The concept spoke louder than words. Batman never gave a single speech, something antagonists indulge in regularly. His actions, unlike words, were written in ink. His legacy—Batman— will live on and yet his body— Bruce Wayne— will decay. It is the ultimate sacrifice. He has attained immortality and yet will suffer the pain of death.

With every coming movie and comic book the characters are becoming increasingly complex; the antagonists and the heroes are not merely black and white, rather they are shades of grey like the moral landscape.

This conflict in ideas and morality is portrayed wonderfully in the movie Infinity War. Thanos is attempting to mitigate the problem of scarce resources by reducing the population of all living things in the universe to half of what it is. The selection of beings to be removed from the universe is completely random and hence, in a way, fair. From a utilitarian point of view this is a great course of action.

[Utilitarianism says that the most ethical thing to do is that which produces the greatest number of good for the greatest number of people. It is a form of consequentialism. On the other hand, Virtue is character based. It says that a right action is that which a virtuous person would take, in those same circumstances.]

A similar plan is made by the antagonist called Ozymandias in the movie Watchmen. In an alternate history, he wants to fake an attack by aliens — killing millions— to unite America and Soviet Russia during the Cold War to save billions and avoid the threat of nuclear war.

——— “ ———

***If one does not
have a set of clear
principles then one
will be indecisive
at all times and not
do anything with
boldness.***

“My intellect set me apart. Faced with difficult choices, I knew nobody whose advice might prove useful. Nobody living.”

—*Ozymandias*

Ozymandias has studied and learnt from the greatest minds in history. He has developed his intellect and is known as “the smartest man on the planet”.

Though this may be an unorthodox lesson as it's derived from the ‘bad guys’ however one of the primary reasons Ozymandias and Thanos have been successful in their schemes is because they both did not hesitate to carry out their plans. They had clear, well defined, and thought out principles. They had spent years thinking about a problem and came up with a solution that aligned with their principles.

The Unorthodox Patriot :Captain America.

Originally, Captain America was a very one dimensional character. He first appeared in March 1941 and grew in popularity during the Cold War period. The ideals were straight forward at that time. The people believed in a black and white morality or at least that is what the propaganda hoped to achieve. America versus Russia. Capitalism versus Communism. Good versus evil. And as society developed and as comics grew in complexity and the characters gained new dimensions, Captain America, among other heroes, also evolved. In

Virtue ethics is character based. It says that a right action is that which a virtuous person would take, in those same circumstances.

his evolution, however, the ideals he stood for never changed. In the movie ‘Captain America: Civil War’, for example, his ideals were just further interrogated and put on trial. He had to make harder choices and the choices were not in black and white anymore. He had to choose between the American Government’s direct orders and what he believed America and he himself stand for. He is set to the test and his mortality is questioned. And in the end he is victorious and through all the struggle he emerges as the leader and the hero that he always was.

In Captain America: Civil War, the United Nations are about to pass the Slovakia Accords that will enable the tracking of the Avengers and also reveal all their identities. This leads to contrasting reactions from Iron Man and Captain America. Iron Man is with the United Nations and the United States Government as he feels guilty for the deaths the Avenger’s cause when they are unregulated. Captain America is against it.

A lot of Captain America’s qualities are revealed in this story arc, such as, courage and loyalty.

Courage: He knows when to overcome fear, and using practical knowledge, overcomes it. He is not a fearless daredevil, rather a heroic man. He obeys the government when he needs to but he knows when to be fearless and stand up.

Loyalty: His loyalty towards Bucky, his best friend,

is unflinching throughout the movie.

He is willing to disobey the law and his country to fight for what he believes is right. Captain America disobeys the American Government. Going against what his friends tell him and questioning authority when required. He is willing to fight for his principles and this is what differentiates Captain America from others. He doesn’t just believe in something, he also acts in accordance to his beliefs. Though old fashioned, this is what makes him virtuous, heroic, and an ideal to strive for.

In Avengers, Phil Coulson Tells Captain America, “With everything that’s happening and the things that are about to come to light, people might just need a little old-fashioned.”

Acceptance.

[Know whose acceptance you seek]

Make your principles based on who you want to be. Take the best from your role models and the people around you and learn what makes them appealing to you. Finally, when you know who you are then you can seek acceptance of others without changing yourself. If you seek acceptance before you have spent time thinking deeply about yourself you will tend to be conscious, fake, afraid, and insecure.

“

**Make your principles based
on who you want to be.**

”

“Your need for acceptance can make you invisible in this world.”

— *Jim Carrey*

Principles— It’s something everyone craves. Everyone wants to be clear about what’s good and bad. The moment you have them in place, people will follow. This is what makes religion so popular. The human mind is always searching for meaning. That is what led me to write these words. The search of meaning in comics. This need to find meaning and restlessness to believe is satisfied by religion. What better way of avoiding thought than to follow a guide book that orders you how to behave. Of course, this is not how all religious people behave and there is a great deal to be learnt from religious texts. Though graphic novels can be an adequate replacement. As nothing is absolute there are grey areas, you can decide what you want to be and do.

You are inspired and guided by heroes and yet free to decide what you think is right and wrong. There’s no correct path that everyone must follow and I think that is the only absolute truth... That’s one of the most important life lessons I’ve learnt.

Create your own value structure, to the highest degree you are capable of. Great minds have complex value structures but they are simple at the core of it and can be described in few sentences. It’s not difficult

to comprehend as a great deal of thought was put into it through analysis of complex situations. And once you have a strong enough ethical structure, you will no longer feel the need to seek anyone's acceptance. It will be you, whose acceptance everyone will seek.

Moments of peer pressure can be scary, so be a leader and others will follow.

Kids face these situations very frequently, at parties or even in school itself, where a clear mindset could change their whole life.

Statistics on drugs shows that addiction usually starts in school years.

Initially, your principles can be as basic as no drinking and driving or no drinking at all, which seems easy to follow and understand, but if you don't have it engraved in your mind you tend to forget in the heat of the moment and in the company of friends. This can lead to serious harm to you and others.

Vision.

[A mission or objective]

A mission is necessary: When you are laying in your bed at the age of ninety seven, it is not the money you have made or the fame you have attained that will matter, instead, you will think about all those times you did something good and someone remembered. You will think about what you're leaving behind. Your

legacy.

There is an architectural relation between Principles and Visions.

Principles are the superstructure to your vision, which is the building.

Principles are also a guide or a road that leads you to your vision and helps you achieve it.

Professor X

Charles Xavier (a.k.a. Professor-X from the X-Men) had been treated as an outcast and watched mutants, like him, being discriminated against his whole life. His ability to read minds made sure he knew exactly what people thought about the mutants with superhuman capabilities. So he wanted to change the world for mutants and give them a normal life. He used his skills to start a school for the gifted mutants. His vision was equality and that is what grounded him, kept him focused, and helped him concentrate his powers. He wanted to help mutants, like himself, to secure their future so they do not stray off path and are not forced to resort to unethical or violent usage of their power. This is analogous to minorities in society and the discrimination they face. In the comics we see mutants fight for their rights and face the same segregation that people of colour face all around the globe.

If you have a vision of being an athlete, you will

have to be principled and avoid smoking and drinking. Similarly, no matter what your vision is, you will require a set of principles to guide you and keep you on track. The more principles you have, the more complex and elaborate your vision is. The more elaborate your vision is and the more clearly you define it, the more likely it is that you will achieve it.

A common trick athletes use to motivate themselves is to shut their eyes and imagine winning the race and kissing the gold medal. The clearer your imagination of you achieving your goal is, the higher the chances that you have what it takes to win the race.

Normal things we can do to master our principles.


1. Think deeply — read the greats and use your own logic.

Think about exactly where you want to be in the future if everything goes exactly how you want it to. In this reality— How healthy are you? What kind of relationships do you have? What have you achieved? This gives you meaning and purpose and a goal to strive for.


You may also think about the consequences of not following your vision and this will give you a reason not to become demotivated or give up on your vision.

2. Set standards — ‘I won’t smoke or drink’ or ‘I will set up a school for all the mutants of this world’

3. Be ready for change — our principles should be up for change in case they’re flawed. We should be



Moments of
peer pressure
can be scary, so
be a leader and
others will
follow.



open to change and allow room for error and a lapse of judgement. It is rigidity and arrogance that always leads to the downfall of any villain or even hero for that matter.

[Conclusion]

There is no intrinsic purpose to life and yet, it is essential to live a meaningful life. The meaning is what we make of life — it is formed by our values and the ideals we believe in. Meaning should not be dictated by an ancient book that your ancestors chose to worship. This intrinsic meaninglessness is not chaos, it is freedom. You are in control— free to mix and match, to create, and to think. Principles however will keep guiding you through life and this will be seen in the following chapters as we uncover the primary and most well illustrated principles and virtues of heroes from the realm of comics.

Philosophy is the one subject that requires no prerequisites or formal education. If you are a human you are a philosopher. It reminds me of a quote from ‘Ratatouille’: “anyone can cook” and its meaning is explained only in the end. It does not mean everyone can cook, or that everyone is a great cook. But if one truly desires to cook, nothing can stop him. No matter who he is, where he’s from, or what he does. Even if he’s a rat. Except in this case cooking refers to philosophising.

The Greek word for philosopher means the lover of knowledge. Philosophy does not always yield clear results, but that was never the purpose to begin with. The purpose of Philosophy is the search for truth.

“Philosophy is to catch a glimpse of the source of reality.”

These are the words of Karl Jaspers and they perfectly encapsulate the importance of seeking truth and knowledge and making that a way of life.

Philosophy is, therefore, as essential as life itself. Not concerning yourself with it is as good as not having experienced the essence of life itself.

Heroes and villains are not all different and have commonalities. The upcoming chapters aim to highlight the key differences and also explain the rule of good guys always winning and its exceptions; that is when the villains win. To understand why these outcomes take place and what we can take away from these supernatural situations and use in our super normal lives.

And one of the most important ingredients to maintain your vision is **[will power]**.

There is no intrinsic purpose to life and yet, it is essential to live a meaningful life.

WILL POWER

Through will power we can stick to our principles and through persistence and conviction to our morals. We improve and develop ourselves and lead a smarter and healthier life.

We can all be heroic and lead and have different personalities (Iron Man & Captain America), but what matters is making our reasons, our logic and the basis of our morals/codes strong and sticking to them. This way we can make our world and that of others a better place to live in.

What is your Bat?

Bruce Wayne has always faced his fears head-on. He had a phobia of bats since he was a child, yet, he chose that as the symbol for Batman. Batman is a version of Bruce that is not afraid. Batman is his apotheosis. There

is a scene in ‘Batman Begins’, where Bruce enters his Bat-Cave and is greeted by a swarm of bats flying past him, out of the cave. Initially as the bats brush past his face and body, he resists and covers his face. But he then learns that the only way he can begin this journey as Batman is by facing his fears. He puts his hands down, stands upright, and embraces the bats. Since that day the Bat is the symbol he uses to inject fear in his opponents and also uses it as a symbol of hope for the people of Gotham.

All of Batman’s enemies symbolise a part of himself that he fears.

The Penguin is symbolic of the greed for and misuse of extreme wealth, something Bruce was born into.

Scarecrow can induce fear through a serum he developed. This serum can be injected or sprayed in a gaseous form. So he represents the fear of fear itself.

Harvey Two-Face depicts the struggle Bruce faces in managing his two identities and the sacrifices that come with this lifestyle.

The Joker is Batman’s potential. What Batman could become if he crosses the line of sanity and loses his sense of ethics. This is his greatest fear and that is why his ‘no killing policy’ is so important. since this is his greatest fear, Joker is his strongest opponent.

This relation between Batman and his fears are a way of showing the triumph of the Will over Fear, every time Batman defeats one of his enemies.

Batman’s biggest super power has always been his extraordinary will power. When he was training under the Sufi masters he learnt to slow down his bleeding through the sheer force of his will.

In the comic book ‘Sword of Azrael’, despite being drugged he could resist the ‘most potent truth serum ever created’, just by the sheer use of his will power.

Once again in ‘Batman Confidential’ when he is poisoned by a venom that makes him see the world through Joker’s eyes he uses his strong will and control over his mind to shake off the effects of the venom and save a lot of lives, eventually bringing down the Joker.

Green Lantern.

This comic book series encapsulates the dynamic between Will power and Fear brilliantly.

The whole concept of the Lantern Corps is based on facing your fears. The Green Lantern Corps receives its strength from Will power, while the Sinestro Corps receives its strength from Fear.

Green Lanterns have a motto — “No Fear”. This has negative results as it is not possible to have no fears. You must overcome the necessary fears, but it is not advisable to fear nothing. Fear is helpful sometimes and keeps us ready and aware.

This “No Fear” motto resulted in two losses for the Green Lantern Corps.

Sinestro was the strongest of the Green Lanterns

and embodied the motto of no fear. His cold, logical mind had no room for fear, or so we thought. In reality he just hid his fears. Soon, when he could no longer hide them he became the leader of Sinestro Corps. The corps found strength from the yellow light of the emotional spectrum — fear.

Hal Jordan: The man without fear. Even Hal Jordan, one of the most prominent Green Lanterns, succumbed to fear. He became the embodiment of the Sinestro Corps itself— Parallax.

This teaches us that living without any fears is living a lie. Everyone has fears and must have them, as it is human nature. Courage is knowing what fears must be overcome and then overcoming them, and this is why will power is necessary. It is not about doing something to become fearless and it doesn't mean you should start being irrational.

Do not fear, fear. Embrace fear to dissolve it.

When you decide not to be afraid, you can find friends in super unexpected places.

— *Ms. Marvel*

A case for not being anxious and afraid.

People don't hate on failures, they hate on success. So if you want to be afraid of something be afraid of success or fame. People couldn't care less about you

“INITIALLY AS THE BATS BRUSH PAST HIS FACE AND BODY, HE RESISTS AND COVERS HIS FACE. BUT HE THEN LEARNS THAT THE ONLY WAY HE CAN BEGIN THIS JOURNEY AS BATMAN IS BY FACING HIS FEARS.”

failing, as they're too busy handling their own lives. They will instead relate with you and sympathise. When you actually fail you will see how little people care or react to it. Never be scared to fail, as when you do no one will care. Being anxious about failing is like having those 15 minute hypothetical arguments in the shower that never take place in real life. You will receive hate and criticism only when you succeed. So if you ever receive hate, criticism, ridicule you should know that you have succeeded. It's a win-win.

And you learn more from one failure than you do from a hundred successes. Most people that succeed early tend to fail later as they never got the opportunity to understand what caused their success and hence were never forced to think deep.

We are more often frightened than hurt; and we suffer more from imagination than from reality.

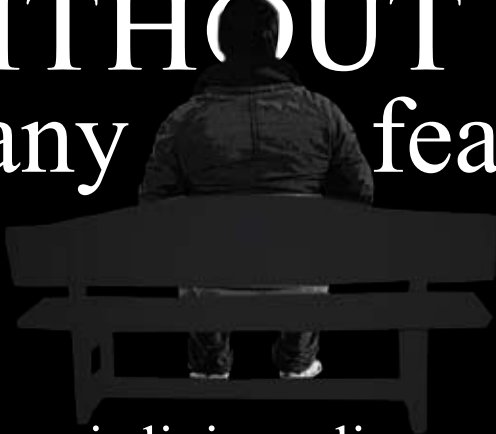
— Seneca the Younger

SELF DISCIPLINE.

People presume power lies in unleashing yourself and letting everything out, however, in reality the power to control and compose yourself is greater and more valuable. It reduces impulsive decision making and requires intelligence, patience, and self discipline.

Will power is the ability to control or reject the desire to indulge in the harmful unnecessary and useless

Living
WITHOUT
any fears
is living a lie.



habits. It allows one to arrive at a decision and follow through with perseverance.

Self Discipline is the companion of will power. It gives stamina to persevere, it also gives one the strength to withstand hardships and difficulties. Most importantly it enables one to reject immediate satisfaction.

While our principles are the fundamental units through which we can arrive at a conclusion on whether something is right or wrong, but each one of us is tested in sudden moments of an urge for euphoria or in moments of hysteria when most of us tend to make the wrong choices. Having strong principles can help in moments such as these as it is only will power and self discipline that can help you continue to follow through with your actions and make your actions align with your thoughts.

HOW TO DEVELOP WILL POWER

Will power is not an inherent quality that some people have and others don't. Everybody has will power, its just that some have more and others have less. However there are many ways that will power can be increased.

— Trying to remember what made you start or reasons why you think this is right might be too long to memorise. Instead simplify it, compress it and try to remember it as one word. This one word should be such that it brings back to your mind all or most of the reasons why you thought about not doing a certain

thing. At the heat of the moment it will help you to not give in to temptation.

The dictionary defines will power as 'control exerted to do something or resist impulse.' In the book 'The Intelligent Instinct' by Kelly McGonigal, a very popular Stanford University psychologist, will power is of 3 types

I won't power- it helps you identify which habits are hurting your health and happiness and try and avoid them.

I will power- it helps you identify what things are uncomfortable but need to be done to reach your goal.

I want power- it helps you remember your long-term goals and keep focused. It gives you a strong reason for delaying immediate gratification and focusing on the long term gains.

The book talks of a research where 4 year olds who could resist candy later on went on to achieve higher grades, had more successful careers and more fulfilling relationships. So the higher the will power the more successful the individual becomes.

Will power helps us to not quit.

In all superhero stories we see that the hero always wins because he does not give up till the end, while the villain does and that is one of the reasons he can never become a hero.

A hero is one who understands the value of hard work, determination, and not giving up no matter

“

*People presume power
lies in unleashing yourself
and letting everything out
how ever in reality the
power to control and
compose yourself
is greater and
more valu able*

”

what. While an evil mind might be as intelligent or as strong naturally but he is always tricking, scheming and looking for short-cuts which will eventually be the cause for his downfall. He is filled with lust, over confidence and tends to over estimate his worth and thinks he is better than the rest.

Will Power and Self Discipline

We see this again when the venom—a symbiotic alien— takes over Peter. Peter loses touch with reality as he feels power like never before. Yet, he has no will power and indulges in all sorts of wrong acts. He visits a bar where his ex-girlfriend works with his new girlfriend, with the sole intention of making his ex-girlfriend that he loved so dearly feel humiliated and jealous. In the process he loses respect from both the women. He loses touch with his future self and how his actions might affect him and others later. He is fascinated by vanity and motivated by hate and vengeance. People start disliking him and the quality of goodness that set him apart is gone. Only an act as pure as the one that follows could have redeemed him in the eyes of the readers.

The readers are symbolic of God, and Peter's removal of the symbiotic mask is actually him asking for forgiveness from the readers.

He learns that all his actions and lack thereof will most likely affect him in the future. This knowledge

gives him the will power he requires to always do the right thing no matter how tempting the alternative may be. He does not want to repeat the mistake that led to the death of his uncle. (He felt tempted to let the thief steal the money from his enemy; therefore, letting an evil occur for his personal satisfaction.) He shoulders his responsibility this time and rips the black layer of evil off his body. Through his experiences as a young hero he learns, grows, and realises the importance of will power. As it was his will that allowed him to sacrifice the extra power he felt when he was controlled by Venom but out of his senses. Venom can be seen as a metaphor for drug usage. The collateral damage heavily outweighs the temporary high one feels while using it. The story is one of hope, preaching that it is never too late to utilise will power to rid yourself of your bad habits, no matter how large or small they may be.

In the church he rips the venom off him after realising how harmful it his for him. though it may not seem so to others ordinary man would have kept the venom and used it for his benefit. Peter realised how toxic it was for him and had the strength to make himself weak by giving up the venom persona and the abilities that come with it and instead doing what he believed and knew to be right. You require the power of will to follow through on your principles.

“
*A hero is one
who understands
the the value
of hard work,
determination,
and not giving up
no matter what.*

“The world will always have dark corners, and black and white come in thousands of grey, but here are seven people, good and true, come what may. They have the power to enslave the world but work tirelessly to keep it free. They don’t succumb to envy, greed, or jealousy and their sense of purpose is driven by an unshakable faith in mankind’s basic good. They are in the best sense of the word childlike. It is the very essence of the word Superhero”

- Darmyn Cooke (reflecting on ‘The New Frontier’ comic series)

An unbreakable will gives you the ability to win against all odds and instills in you the virtue of [patience].

——— “ ———
*You require the
power of will to
follow through on
your principles.*
”

PATIENCE

Bruce Banner helps more in the scientific department than when he is the Hulk. This is partly because Hulks' real power is not that he turns into the Hulk. It is the fact that he can choose when to turn into the Hulk. Turning into the Hulk and smashing things isn't really a strength and has done him and people around him more harm than good. His real power which resonates with everyone is how he keeps composure and does not lose his temper based on sheer emotion and pain and instead has full control of his emotions and uses his powers only when extremely necessary and in rare cases.

When he loses his temper and becomes the Hulk he becomes dumber and hurts the ones on his team as well, which is drawing comparisons to human nature and how in moments of anger we act out of pure

sentiment with our logic getting foggy and we tend to make stupid and often self detrimental decisions.

It is easy to see the consequences of impatience. In Avengers Infinity War, when Iron Man and team have finally stopped Thanos using mind control and are trying to take the infinity Gauntlet off him, Thanos, in his sedated state, reveals that he has killed his daughter Gamora. Peter Quill, who was in love with Gamora, allows his emotions and impatience to get the better of him. He starts hitting Thanos and breaks the mind control that had kept Thanos immobile. Now Thanos is awake, he fastens his grip on the Gauntlet and later escapes.

Being calm, collected, and not letting your emotions trigger impulsive decisions is essential. It is only with patience can a vision be manifested.

“I’m not a comic book villain. Do you seriously think I’d explain my masterstroke to you if there were even the slightest possibility you could affect the outcome? I triggered it thirty-five minutes ago.”

— *Ozymandias*

In the final scenes of the movie Watchmen, Ozymandias pokes fun at the stereotypical super villains. He has triggered a number of bombs, and with that brings his masterplan to a successful end. He

has the patience to wait long enough to reveal his plan and is not arrogant or over confident. Unlike many super-villains, who cannot wait to reveal their master-plans till they have been implemented and hence give the heroes a great advantage, Ozymandias had learnt that patience is a virtue. That is how this anti-hero is successful.

But one can only be patient when one is at peace. This attainment of peace is sought after by the strongest and mightiest of the superheroes. Because sometimes you just have to be patient and peaceful to win a battle.

Peace.

There is another scene in Watchmen where the godlike Dr. Manhattan teleports to Mars. He does this as he believes that the radiation that emits due to his superpowers, is the reason a number of people close to him have got cancer. He also feels a detachment to humanity as a whole and decides to abandon it completely. He travels to Mars to seek solitude and peace of mind. This isolation helps him recollect his thoughts and remember why he loves humanity and feel the compassion that had been missing from his life.

Superman, another god-like being, has a Fortress of Solitude that he visits when he needs to allay the

troubles of his mind. The Fortress of Solitude is located in the arctic. It is in this isolation that Superman comes to think and find solace. It is here that he gets to know himself and this is where he wrote his memoirs.

The idea of Zen is popular in comics as well. Iron fist must develop his Chi through meditation and peace of mind. This Chi is used to heal himself and others and also enables him to access the powers that give him his glowing fist full of extreme power.

Meditation does not mean sitting down with your eyes closed, thinking about nothing. It can take any shape or form you desire, as long as it involves patience and concentration completely diverted toward one thing. It could be practising basketball, writing a memoir, or even reading comic books.

Though patience and perseverance have a lot of commonalities, perseverance is to do with never giving up even when everything is against you and struggle seems futile. On the other hand patience is more to do with not doing. Which may sound easy but is, in fact, what most people lack now days.

Everything has to be instant. Start start-ups. Sell them. They don't want to be patient and don't realise that they could end up getting benefitted much more in the long run if they waited a little more patiently. It's the fundamental flaw of our generation. Only if you attain the virtue of patience can you **[persevere]**.

“
*Being calm,
collected, and not
letting your
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”

PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance is a meta virtue as it is required for the other virtues to work. It is the ability to exercise one's virtues despite a lot of resistance.

“That which does not kill us, makes us stronger.”
— *Nietzsche*

The Joker has his own take on this saying. He says, “What doesn't kill you, only makes you stranger.”

The perfect analogy for this is a Japanese restoration process called 'Kintsugi'. It is a method to restore pottery and other similar damaged goods. The use of golden staples and other forms of repair make the ceramics more beautiful and in a sense stranger, more complex, and divergent from the basic form they had initially. Hence, growing strange of its original form

and morphing into something unique. As a philosophy, Kintsugi celebrates loss, destruction and rebirth. In Japan, the aristocracy would break their expensive ceramics so that they could get it repaired through the techniques of Kintsugi. Therefore, when you persevere through a tragedy and hurdle past obstacles that you face, you are only growing stronger and more unique, as compared to others that have not faced what you have. It also teaches us to change with the world and constantly re-innovate ourselves. Be mercurial, adaptable, and ready to change in today's volatile world.

In Thor: Ragnarok, Loki tries to deceive Thor, but this time Thor sees right through this and gives his brother the following invaluable advice.

While electrocuting Loki, Thor says, "Dear brother, you're becoming predictable. I trust you, you betray me, round and round in circles we go. See, Loki, life is about, it's about growth. It's about change. But you seem to just wanna stay the same. I guess what I'm trying to say is that you'll always be the God of Mischief, but you could be more."

Do not feel comfortable where you are as that is the first symptom of stagnation. Continuously challenge and redefine yourself.

"Life is locomotion... if you're not moving, you're not living. But there comes a time when you've got to stop running away from things... and you've got to start running towards something, you've got to forge ahead. Keep moving. Even if your path isn't lit... trust that you'll find your way."

— *The Flash*

Failure.

[If you make mistakes, learn from them]

Bruce Wayne: **"I wanted to save Gotham. I failed."**
Alfred Pennyworth: **"Why do we fall sir? So that we can learn to pick ourselves up."**

If you can identify why you have failed and figure out how to improve that flaw then you're bulletproof. If you constantly blame the external environment or matters not in your control for your failure then you will be perpetually hidden behind a veil of excuses, afraid to come out and fight.

Learning from mistakes.

This is something I've learned to value a lot over the years. This is what gives you experience beyond your age. Every time I went home and felt 'I messed that up' or 'I wish I could go back in time and just change that' I learned to take it as an opportunity to improve myself. I've had a lot of these moments

and comics/heroes subconsciously taught me to make the most of these situations.

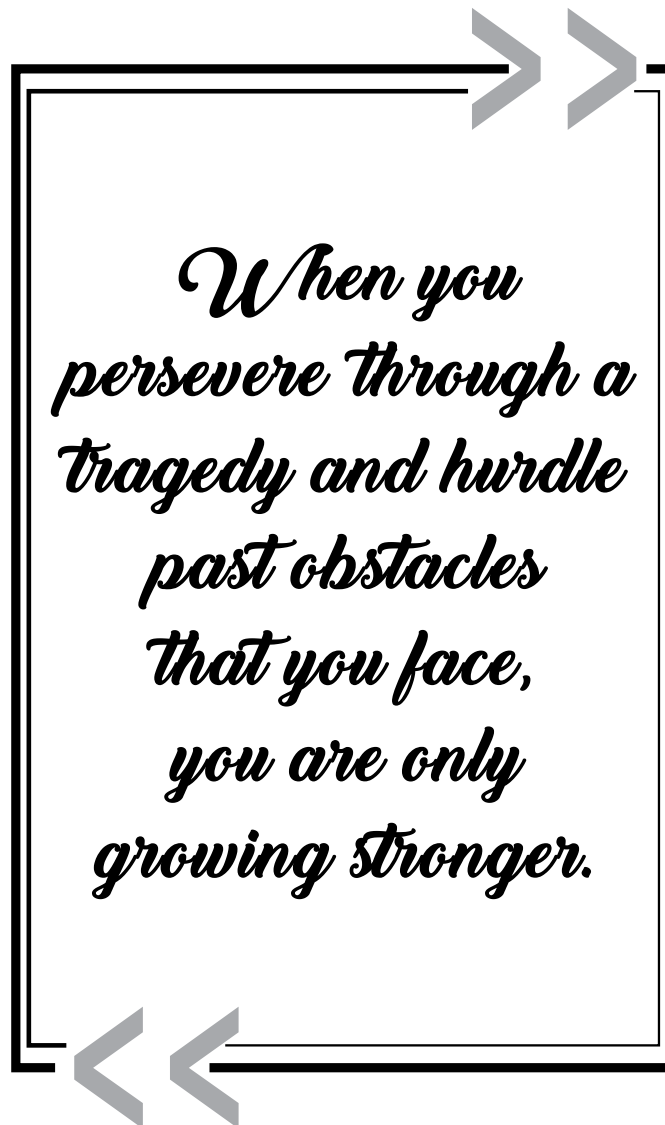
Dr. Manhattan and many such characters for whom time is not linear and not how we perceive it to be and those characters who can travel whenever in time are some of the wisest superheroes. This isn't a coincidence. The reason comics draw a large audience and the reason characters have gigantic fan-bases is due to their traits and character developments that ring so true to life.

Dr Manhattan understands true cause and effect and how to make better choices. Just by seeing how others have failed and learning from the past he has understood how to improve decision making and learnt from not only his own but experiences of multiple people.

The only problem with Dr. Manhattan is that we will never be able to do what he does and that's why it's not as hard hitting. But a perfect example of learning from mistakes in the most human manner possible is Peter Parker.

Spider-Man

Peter Parker is just a high school student who lives with his aunt, does his homework and in his free time he slings around the streets of Queens fighting crime. One of the main reasons why we love Peter Parker is



because he is flawed. He shows us how hard it is for him to not use his powers for the wrong things, after all he is just a teenager. The comics then take us through his life and show how he matures and encourages us to learn from his mistakes.


He makes mistakes all the time. He has lost a great deal due to these mistakes. So much so that his arrogance directly led to the death of his uncle as he refused to stop a thief, who stole from a man that disrespected Peter seconds ago.

Peter, blinded by his self esteem, let the thief rob the man as a form revenge and let wrong happen even when he was completely capable of stopping it.

While running away the same robber was stopped by Peter's uncle as he heard people yell "thief!" And that same robber that Peter refused to stop shot and killed his Uncle on the streets. This is why his uncle Ben's words, "With great power comes great responsibility" is so important. Peter Parker let hubris take control of him and though he was more than capable of stopping the thief, he chose not to.

Uncle Ben thought it was his responsibility to stop the thief as that is what a good citizen would do. He was the only one that took the responsibility on his shoulders and attempted to stop the robber. Though, he did get killed in the process he knew what was at stake all along.

This relation between authority and responsibly is



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also a well known principle of management proposed by Henri Fayol and is necessary to understand and implement in all aspects of your life. So stop blaming others and take responsibility.

“You see, Doctor, God didn’t kill that little girl. Fate didn’t butcher her and destiny didn’t feed her to those dogs. If God saw what any of us did that night he didn’t seem to mind. From then on I knew... God doesn’t make the world this way. We do.”

— The words of Rorschach after he witnessed the death of a little girl who had been kidnapped.

But that is not all Spider-Man teaches us. His greatest power is to relate to the audience and help them understand that it’s alright to fail, but it’s how you respond to failure and adversity that decides where you end up. Spider-Man has failed numerous times and though initially he may feel depressed, disheartened and blame himself, he will eventually come back to his path.

No one is born with perfect and precise morals and no one illustrated this to me better than Spider-Man. We follow his life as a young and new superhero and see how his failures taught him how to act and though he may have lost a lot it only made him wiser and allowed him to save more lives in the future.

The way this may help in today’s day and age is also by letting people know that bad things happen to good people and that tragedy and misfortune play a key role in that. Though you should take responsibility of your actions or inactions, you cannot take responsibility of things out of your control. This is a massive lesson to be learnt in a world where everyone portrays their life to be a string of wonderful moments. It may be easy to feel depressed and lose motivation after your first few failures but Spider-Man and a lot more heroes have helped me learn that no matter how much you try tragedy will strike and when it does one cannot let it affect them for too long and no matter how many time you are full of sorrow and grief you cannot allow that to be the end of your journey as life goes on and everything will pass.

But you must fill what you do with meaning and a purpose based on your principles and vision which will help you withstand the trashes and suffering that you may face. Peter Parker will always do what he does and put on the mask and sling across town no matter how much he suffers because he finds tremendous fulfilment in doing what he does and it is full of meaning for him. This also acts as a healing agent and helps him withstand tragedy, unlike anything else.

If you had control over the situation then learn from your mistakes.

If you did not have control over the situation then

understand that tragedy is unavoidable.

Take responsibility, but that does not mean every failure is your fault. Tragedy and misfortune are to blame in many cases and sometimes chance and luck play a key role in the outcome of things. This should not dishearten us or make our efforts seem any less successful.

To know this is specially important in today's world where everyone takes all the responsibility and when they fail they take it in a negative manner and tend to give up.

But you must fill what you do with meaning and a purpose based on your principles and vision which will help you withstand the suffering you may face. Therefore, the journey itself should be enough to give you fulfilment and that is true success.

The more you succeed and grow the more you will lose. This is because as you succeed the more you will have to risk and this inevitably increases the chances of loss. You cannot win all battles and so must direct your resources to the most important battles. Sacrifice battles to win wars.

No man can win every battle, but no man should fall without a struggle.

– *Peter Parker*

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FACE.**

Sacrifice.

If you must persevere, and you must, then with it also comes sacrifice. There are very few cases in which you will persevere and will not be required to make sacrifices.

These are small things. Like mentioned before athletes sacrifice parties, drinking, and smoking to be able to feel the fulfilment they do at the end of the finish line.

Without sacrifice there is no fulfilment and without feeling fulfilled you do not have purpose in your life.

Now let's assume you do not consume hard drugs on a regular basis. Do you consider not doing this a sacrifice? For most the answer will be no. It is just a way of ensuring your life goes on track and you remain healthy.

In a way the athlete is not sacrificing anything. In the path he has chosen, he doesn't see it as a sacrifice. Technically, by not doing hard drugs regularly you are making a sacrifice but it doesn't feel like one. Sacrifices are just indicators of how motivated you are to reach your desired goal. You become more motivated the more precise your vision is. These goals mustn't only be short term as this leads to a fragmented life. Multiple short term goals that are not tied together by a greater vision are useless. The beauty in the life of an athlete is that he or she is not looking at acing the

next training session as the end goal or even winning the next race as the end goal. The athlete is aiming for an Olympic medal and to beat the world record. This analogy is not exclusive to athletes it is true for anyone motivated. Be it an artist, a professor or a construction worker, they all must have a vision and must make sacrifices to achieve their goals.

“I believe there's a hero in all of us that keeps us steady, gives us strength, and finally allows us to die with pride. Even though sometimes we have to give up the things we want the most... even our dreams.”—
Aunt May

This applies to our everyday life as well. We often feel the need to do good but end up not doing it due to the fact that we must sacrifice leisure and pleasure. However, when we are older and look back at our life the only moments that will stand out are those full of compassion and love. You will not remember that time you sat and watched that extra hour of Netflix or even the amount of money you have made. It is only when sacrifice and responsibility are undertaken can one die with pride. Pleasure can be sacrificed to get an extra hour in the gym, or to paint, or to pursue **[knowledge]**.

**“ Without sacrifice
there is no fulfilment
and without feeling
fulfilled you do not
have purpose in
your life. ”**

KNOWLEDGE

Having spoken about the essential nature of principles and philosophy, we now move onto the importance of science and scientific thought.

Being well informed makes it easier to form principles and studying the philosophy of others allows you to think deeper.

The purpose of life is passing down knowledge to fine tune it. There is a scene in the movie ‘Lucy’, where a professor explains the purpose of life. He says that since the division of the first cell, the purpose of life has been to pass down information and knowledge. It is possibly the only purpose that nature directly points towards.

Our minds though are a product of evolution, they are not fixed by it. The functioning of our mind is dependent on those around us, and without intellectual stimulation evolution can be undone in a matter of one generation. Imagine if every child in the future

Since the division of the first cell, the purpose of life has been to pass down information and knowledge.



generation is born and left in the wild without parents. This would take human evolution back to the times of cavemen. However, if the same thing happens to snakes, for example, not much damage would be done. Snakes are primarily instinct based animals. Our extreme adaptability is volatile, and hence we must maintain it through proper flow of knowledge and education to ensure a steady and positive development in the human race.

The conventional superhero is regarded to have super strength or speed or flight. The idea of physical abilities is glorified and the development of the mind is left behind. The best way to survive in the world around you is to understand it to the best of your understanding. You do not need to become a scientific genius but to understand these concepts in simple terms is essential. Reading three books on a subject makes you more adept in that topic than 90% of the world. Most people have their own specialties and nowadays reading even one book on a particular subject is a great accomplishment.

When you envelope your conscious mind in ideas, your subconscious develops exponentially, as compared to reading and then regurgitating knowledge onto an examination paper in school.

“I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.” — a quote attributed to Mark Twain in 1907 still holds true.

What I've learnt in my school life is that knowledge from everywhere is valuable and may end up helping in ways you didn't imagine.

There should be no discrimination in acquiring knowledge as you will never know all there is to know about anything. Being humble in the quest for knowledge is the greatest tool to help you find it. Being open minded to the idea of knowledge and not closing any doors off the bat shows you how you can find invaluable information from even the strangest of sources.

A brilliant example of how art can be closely interrelated with science is science behind Van Gogh's Starry Night. It has illustrated Fluid Motion—a physical phenomena that was later observed by scientists. It shows how art inspires scientific discoveries.

It is not a coincidence that almost every superhero and every villain has a strong scientific background and though they all may not be scientific geniuses they do have immense capacity for learning and adapting to new environment by acquiring knowledge.

Embrace knowledge in all forms and it will work wonders no matter where it comes from— even if it's just a comic book. This use of knowledge in all forms is demonstrated in the film 'Avenger's Infinity War'. The following conversation takes place while Tony Stark and Peter Parker, in a spaceship, are trying to come up with a plan to beat The Maw who has captured Dr.

Strange.

Stark: "What's your plan?"

Peter: "Have you ever seen this really old movie, Aliens?"

Peter then devises a plan that is inspired from the movie Aliens. The plan is to break a hole in the spaceship that will suck The Maw into space. Following this Peter will cover the hole with his webs. This is what happens next

The Maw: "You saved nothing. Your powers are inconsequential compared to mine."

Stark: "Yeah, but the kid's seen more movies".

This is when he initiates the plan which is successful in the end. This is an example of how knowledge from all sources can be helpful and it is essential to absorb it from all sources without discrimination.

1. How science and knowledge is the greatest weapon if used well and how important knowledge is.

The only way to become a superhero in the real world is through knowledge.

But it's not just about having the knowledge it's about using it in a creative way and that can only be achieved by fully enveloping yourself in the subject of your choice and think about it day and night.

“When you know how to think, it empowers you far beyond those who know only what to think.”

-Neil deGrasse Tyson, Astrophysicist

Knowledge is just the basis you need to develop yourself and it is in no way an end in itself.

Superheroes stand for change, innovation, and leading the way into the future most desired. Comics themselves inspire us to gain knowledge harness our creativity. They lead us onto the path of scientific inquiry and general curiosity; this book is proof of that.

Comic books have always concerned themselves with science and technology and tried their best to justify the origins of their superheroes and villains.

For example, the graphic novel 'Crisis on Infinite Earths' revolves around the villain Anti-monitor which explores the possibilities of what Dark matter could be like, what potential does it have for damage and destruction.

There is even an anti-life equation, a fictional mathematical formula, which is a part of Darkseid's attempt to take over the mind of every sentient being.

Jack Kirby's New Gods series takes a look at mythology and delves deep into the subject and attempts to look into the future and predict new technology and findings, which may be a reality in our near future.

Case study #1 Tony Stark.

Tony Stark was captured by a terrorist group in Iraq. An explosion during the kidnapping cause shrapnel to

be stuck in Tony's chest however a battery is attached to his heart that keeps the shrapnel from entering his heart. Tony uses his scientific knowledge to miniaturise this battery and uses it to power a suit that he builds in a cave where he is kept prisoner. He escapes the terrorist base using nothing but his intelligence and creative thinking. This suit evolves into the suit he wears as Iron Man.

Elon Musk is what Tony Stark would be in the real world. Elon Musk uses his knowledge to help humanity. He is working on underground roads, trying to replace planes with the faster and more efficient rockets, and is a wildly successful entrepreneur with companies like Tesla and SpaceX. So, even though these characters in the comics may be unrealistic there are people in the real world who can be compared to them. It is this ideal that has led all geniuses to where they are and it is this ideal that must drive each and every individual.

Case Study #2 Bruce Banner.

Bruce Banner helps as much if not more when he is not the Hulk. When he is himself, he has control over his actions. This is commentary on how aggressive and violent (Hulk) people tend to act irrationally and how it is only when you use your intellect that you can act rationally. Banner is a man of science and everything

“
SUPER HEROES
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DESIRED.”

he does is tested and if done right it's bound to work. He finds the source of strength in Loki's weapon and basically creates Vision—the superhero.

In fact it is this scientific curiosity that he possessed that caused him to become the Hulk as he suffered radiation poisoning while studying gamma radiation.

Case study #3
Bruce Wayne.

He is a street-smart billionaire who dresses up and fights crime at night. He can take on aliens much stronger than him and in fact can defeat the entire justice league without the use of any super human abilities. He does it in the comic book JLA: Tower of Babel.

He is the world's best detective and uses his knowledge of forensics and science to stop crime. He uses his knowledge of physics to design the perfect suits and accessories, with the help of Lucius Fox of course. He is a master of technology and uses it to its maximum potential.

Case study #4
Lex Luther.

Though a villain he is successful. He uses his knowledge of programming to create upgrade Brainiac, his knowledge of biochemistry to give himself

superpowers, and his knowledge of engineering to design robots to kill Superman. He cures Cancer and AIDS in the comic books. This knowledge is what makes a human worthy of being a match for Superman— A laser-eyed, ice-breathing, nuclear-weapon-immune, flying alien with super strength.

The Ethics of Knowledge.

Science in the superhero world has given us so much good— Nuclear energy, Iron Man, and The Hulk. And at the same time so much bad—Nuclear weapons, Lex Luthor, and Doomsday.

This encourages us to dig deeper into the ethics of science to make more informed and deliberate choices and inventions. This can be seen through the AI debate and the battle between Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg. There will be an emergence of new jobs such as technical ethicists and hence it is essential to study and think about philosophy and its various theories. And this is how philosophy and principles tie into science and knowledge.

Premise 1: Knowledge is power.

Premise 2: With power comes responsibility.

Therefore, with knowledge comes responsibility.

Tony Stark teaches us this by stopping his production

of arms as it propagates the continuation of violence and war. Instead, he uses his company to make the Iron Man armours. Therefore, it is not only his responsibility to keep science away from the bad but also to use it for the good. This switch of his resources from the weapons that he created to the Iron Man suit continues to help people even after his weapons aren't a problem

Thanos says to Tony Stark in Avengers Infinity War, "I'm not the only one cursed with knowledge."

As both act based on their knowledge and understanding of the world and both believe what they're doing is for the greater good. Even if one is trying to save every life he can and the other wants to remove half of all sentient beings in one fell swoop snap.

In Spider-Man 2, Doctor Octopus is another victim of the power of science and knowledge. He has created a weapon that has taken control of his actions. Once Spider-Man explains the doctor what he is doing is evil and not what the old version of the doctor would want. Doc says, "I will not die a monster" and sacrifices himself.

This redeemed him and he learnt the power of knowledge and the importance of responsibility while harnessing it.

Use your principles to guide in the usage of knowledge. New jobs such as technology ethicists will start emerging and these jobs will be essential due

to the growth of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning.

Let these Superhero stories act as cautionary tales of the dangers and potential of science and the importance of wielding the weapon of wisdom and knowledge correctly.

It is this attitude that prepares us to constantly learn, and we must constantly learn.

Therefore, no matter how much you know, you must always know that you know nothing. You have everything yet to learn, everything is up for question. There's only one way of having a truly sponge like mind that absorbs everything it comes in contact with to the best of its ability and that is to be humble

Knowledge was defined by Plato as, 'Justified true belief'. It is this pursuit of truth that drives the procurement of knowledge. Therefore, the most important policy to follow while searching for and using knowledge is **[honesty]**.

“

PREMISE 1: KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.

PREMISE 2: WITH POWER COMES RESPONSIBILITY.

THEREFORE, WITH KNOWLEDGE COMES RESPONSIBILITY.

”

HONESTY

The ideal of truth is upheld by Wonder Woman through her use of the Lasso of Truth.

The Lasso of Truth is used to deliver justice, time and time again, in the comics. It is an attempt to portray the necessity of truth in maintaining justice.

It is easy to see the negatives of lying. Once caught, you will lose respect. If you are not caught, you will probably have to lie more to keep your story consistent and this is a wasteful use of energy. However, if you tell the truth you do not need to remember an elaborate web of lies.

This is something Tony Stark realises. When he is asked about his affiliations with Iron Man, Tony pauses and replies, “The truth is, I am Iron Man.” He is greeted with cheers and it is easy to see this as another narcissistic move made by Tony. However, he has realised the negatives of dishonesty as his own

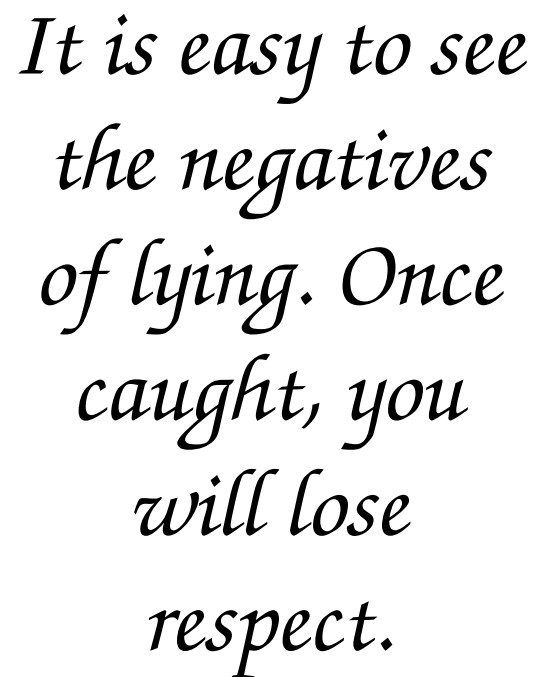
company was selling weapons that would reach the hands of terrorists. This happened only due to the secrecy and backhandedness of his organisation's officials. He has learnt the importance of honesty and embraces it and all its consequences.

The pursuit of truth is the purest manner of attainment of knowledge. One cannot conduct an experiment with the purpose of proving his/her hypothesis as this leads to biases. It is only when truth is sought can an experiment be successfully unbiased.

Having established that transfer of knowledge is probably the only meaning that nature points towards, we face the question — how should you go about seeking truth?

If you want to test your intellect and knowledge then you must speak the truth. There are two possible outcomes of speaking the truth. Either you are correct and your beliefs are given a validation, or you are incorrect and you learn something new and reform your knowledge.

This ability to be honest and accept being wrong at times can only be attained by being **[humble]**.



*It is easy to see
the negatives
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will lose
respect.*

HUMBLE

[down to earth]

Comics don't just teach us to take failure with a pinch of salt but also teaches us not to be overwhelmed by success. In an increasingly volatile world, arrogance should be avoided at all costs. Do not think you're indestructible as you are not omniscient and it is unlikely that you will maintain your summit of success your entire life. Be aware, be cautious, and be humble at all times. Don't be afraid of failure, but be wary of success— as it has the capacity to blind even the greatest visionaries.

“Success is a lousy teacher. It seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose.”

— *Bill Gates*

One of the greatest virtues of Superman is that he is so down to earth. This is paradoxical due to the fact that he can fly and he is not even from Earth. It is this nature of his that keeps him from enslaving all of humanity and instead protecting it. He does not believe he is above others, and is ready to uplift the oppressed. Though he may not be one, he has loved, lost, felt pain, and hence is as human as one can be.

“The world needs superman and the team needs Clark.” “He’s more human than I’ve ever been.”

— *Bruce Wayne, Justice League (2017)*

Arrogance.

“I trust the ones who doubt their actions more than the ones that don’t question themselves at all.”

— *Misty [to Jessica Jones]*

Thor’s hammer— Mjölfnir— can only be wielded by that being who is deemed worthy of it. In his self titled movie, Thor is deemed unworthy of wielding his hammer due to his arrogance as he disobeyed the orders of his father—Odin. This arrogance cost Asgard its peace with its rivals— the Frost Giants. Consequently Thor is banished, from his home of Asgard, to Earth. To be worthy of his powers he must

first learn that he is unworthy. He soon realises his mistake and becomes worthy again. He then says, ‘I’d rather be a good man than a great king’ and rejects the offer to be king of Asgard.

But Thor again lets his arrogance take over in the last scene of Avenger’s Infinity War.

In the beginning, Thanos kills Thors brother Loki in front of his eyes. Thor says that Thanos will die for this. In the end of the movie, Thor wields a new hammer, grander and stronger. This also illustrates Thor’s desire for grandeur and lack of humility. He then strikes Thanos’ chest with his hammer and says, “I told you you would die for that.”

Thanos replies, “You should have aimed for the head.” Thanos snaps his fingers, escapes, and his plan succeeds.

Thors arrogance and need to show Thanos his superiority trumped his desire to do good. As a result he lost everything, but hopefully, he finally learnt his lesson. Though it seems trite, it is a defining character arc and shows the importance of humility.

Enemies.

Don’t underestimate your opponents the way Thor did. Arrogance leads to misjudgment, which in turn leads to unexpected outcomes. Your opponents and enemies must be cherished as they are the ones that

keep you on the edge. Without your enemies you tend to loosen your grip on your sword and let your guard down. An enemy is always testing you and this competition leads to constant self improvement. Make enemies your strength by using them as a source to fuel your self as they always keep you on your toes. Use them by learning from their mistakes and ensuring you don't repeat them. "Keep your friends close and enemies closer."

I came across a similar quote in the Watchmen movie when The Comedian says to his arch-nemesis Moloch, "You are the closest thing to a friend I've got."

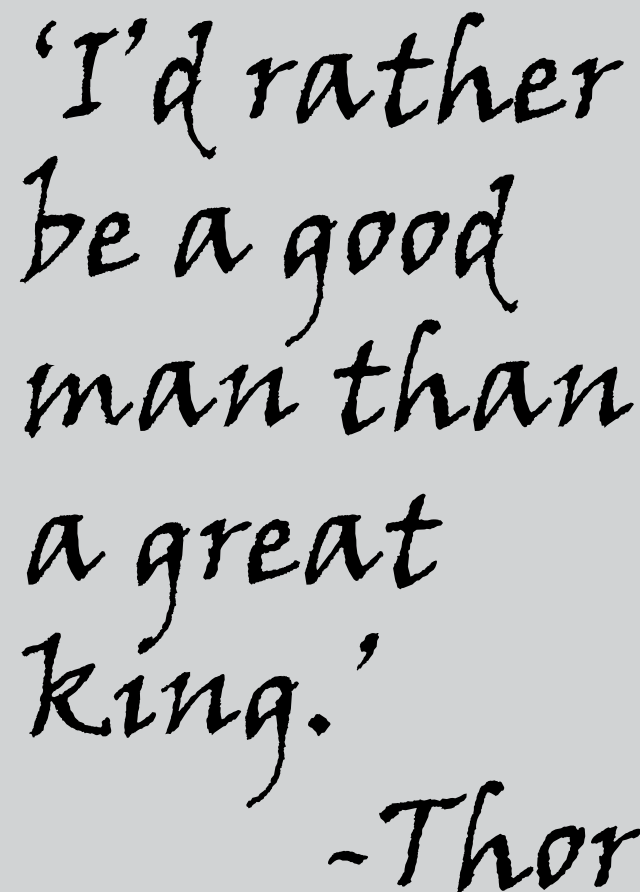
Enemies can also be used for mutual benefit. When you collaborate with an enemy you are always hyper-aware of your surroundings. An enemy cannot stab you in the back, that is a spot reserved for your closest friends. When facing a common enemy it is necessary to team up with someone you may consider a foe.

Initiative.

"Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do."

— *The Crazy Ones, Apple TV commercial*

Humility and failure go hand in hand. Fear of failure stems from the fear of being judged. But it is



'I'd rather
be a good
man than
a great
king.'
-Thor

narcissistic to assume that anyone cares about your failures enough to judge you for it, unless you're Elon Musk or Bill Gates. It is an inflated sense of self that allows you to be fearful of taking a great leap. There is comfort in knowing that every great revolutionary was initially called crazy. It is only if you possess the humility to accept being called crazy, will you ever change anything. Developing self confidence requires you to be humble, to risk it, and to take action.

Instead of complaining about how you want things to be, react and respond to how it is. The Avengers' initiative to help the world in the messed up state it's in is a good example of that. See the world for all its flaws and then try and sculpt it into what you want it to be. Sculpt not forge. There's a subtle and significant difference between the two.

“S.H.I.E.L.D. takes the world as it is, not as we'd like it to be.”

— *Nick Fury*

Don't wait for anyone to do anything for you. Go forward and take responsibility and start something without the fear of failing. This is how any great team or successful organisation is created. A leader must take initiative.

Greed.

Not to be greedy as greed is always related to the downfall of villains and their quest for power. The infinity stones are a great example of this. If one possesses these stones then it will grant them enormous power, yet, when Captain America is introduced to one of these stones — the Tesseract or Space stone— he does not for one second feel the urge to possess it. In fact, he risks his life by trying to drown the stone deep into the ocean.

The stone is later retrieved by S.H.I.E.L.D. and then stolen from them by Loki who wants to enslave humanity. When S.H.I.E.L.D. asks Captain America for help in fighting Loki and advice to get the stone back, he replies, “You should have left it in the ocean.”

It is the need for power that possesses, most often, the weak.

With great power comes responsibility. With the infinity stones there is an immense potential to do harm. None of the heroes make active quests for the stones as they do not believe they are worthy enough or responsible enough to yield such power. However, this is what makes them humble and worthy.

Mentorship: be humble enough to seek wisdom from others.

Our rationality and logic based reasoning can only



*Developing
self confidence
requires YOU to be
humble, to risk
it, and to take
action.*



help us in situations we've experienced and heard of before and that have become common enough for our brain to understand. We face different variations of the same problem and think our minds are equipped to face new situations and be spontaneous but that is an illusion. As it's just a similar situation in a different context and environment. Therefore, when we face truly new situations we don't know how to react and the correct way of reacting may not seem rational or logical or sensible as there are no previous precedents to help us.


But act on your intuition or the guidance of more experienced mentors and you'll slowly learn what to do and soon these new techniques will become part of your logic and it will make sense.

And maybe in the future you'll be able to help someone in need of this knowledge and you'll be able to explain how to act in a truly new situation and help impart knowledge.


The comic universe is filled with examples of the importance of mentorship. From Robin and Batman to Spider-Man and Iron Man.

Humility can be best learnt from Spider-Man. He is not greedy and does not resort to theft even when he is in desperate need. He earns money by working a regular job. He also has no problem in taking everyone's advice and this makes him a great learner. He takes orders and understands the logic behind

them and then uses that logic when he is on his own. This is how he quickly understood his uncle's advice on shouldering responsibility and his aunt's advice on sacrifice, often sacrificing his pleasure to help others through his **[service]**.



*Greed is
always related to the
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villains and their
quest for power.*



SERVICE

Historical sense is the sense of belonging as a part of the whole. The whole being history. According to this theory, a poet will only be able to express his individuality if he/she is able to see his/her role in the history of poetry and the poetry of her/his generation.

The term 'historical sense' was used widely by T. S. Eliot and Nietzsche.

It essentially means being a part of something greater than yourself— a piece in a jigsaw. Your motivation is no longer based purely on serving yourself.

Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman, and Iron Man have a strong 'historical sense'.

Superman is made aware of this through the message his parents left for him before his birth place Planet Krypton was destroyed. He knows it is his duty to be a symbol of hope and to use his talents with responsibility. Batman follows a similar legacy left

behind by his parents and their vision for Gotham.

Wonder Woman has been taught about her duty to lead the women of Themyscira by her mother and aunts.

Finally, Iron Man is made aware of his duty to use science with responsibility and to carry forward the torch handed over to him by his father when he sees a video message addressed to him left behind, in which his father says to him, “My greatest creation is you.” Before he saw this message he felt that he had been neglected by his father in his childhood. This knowledge of him being a part of a greater plan motivates him immensely and it is an extremely important moment in his character arc. Though he is still a narcissist, he is more willing to make sacrifices.

There are numerous other characters that have this same historical sense. It is a major contributor to their sense of purpose, their principles and their degree of self awareness.

Nietzsche said that the modern individual does not have the patience and vision to sow a seed that will finally mature into a tree with deep roots in a time after their own life.

It’s either heritage or a talent that would be remiss not to use to help the world that propels you.

This may be counter intuitive but ‘Service before Self’ can also be seen as selfish. This is true for many reasons. It makes your life more meaningful and

productive. Touches a human and emotional cord within you as it makes you feel compassion. It makes you understand what being a conscious human means. Making others satisfied gives you a sense of fulfilment as well. It gives your self esteem a boost.

Each of the super heroes work for the greater good and not for their personal gains. So should we as individuals and as organisations and make the world a better place. Every villain is self centred and only works for himself. Thus he can do only so much.

“Asgard is not a place, never was. Asgard is where our people stand.”

— *Odin*

Asking others for help leads to teamwork and cohesiveness, while helping others is service. Both are essential and go hand in hand. It is only if people are willing to provide services can honest teamwork be achieved. But to be truly useful to a team you must know the services you can provide and must deeply understand your[**self**].

Each of the super heroes work for the greater good and not for their personal gains. So should we as individuals and as organisations and make the world a better place.

SELF

Up until now we've spoken about harnessing qualities and techniques to enhance your life. These are general lessons that apply to everyone. But as the title suggests, the purpose is to discover the superhero in you.

Swiss Psychologist Carl Jung's idea of the shadow or the dark side refers to the unconscious segment of everyone's personality. It is not easily visible and yet it guides all your actions. The shadow has positive and negative aspects to it. It is fascinating and essential to explore both these aspects if you wish to truly understand yourself and the depths of your mind.

Know your flaws.

“Sometimes the only way to move forward is to revisit the things in your past that were holding you back. You have to deal with them head on, no matter how scary they may be. Because once you do, you will see that you can go further than you ever imagined.”

— Barry Allen “The Flash”

Hulk

Bruce Banner, a rational scientist, was afflicted with radiation poisoning. This gave him the ability to turn into an irrational giant green monster called the Hulk. Initially Bruce Banner had no control over this beast within him and he would turn into the Hulk whenever he felt any strong emotion. This was a major hindrance in the normality of his life. After numerous attempts to rid himself of his power, he starts trying to understand it. He uses meditation and other such techniques to keep himself calm. This works to some extent but he still finds himself fighting the Hulk. This inner battle must be removed. So instead of trying to never be angry, Bruce decides to completely accept all his emotions and lets them live right on the surface. This acceptance frees him and gives him great control over the Hulk. They are no longer two distinct entities.

In a popular moment in Marvel cinema he says to Captain America, “That’s my secret, Captain. I’m always angry.” as he transforms into the Hulk.

It is this integration of his irrational shadow by his rational self that allowed him to tame the monster within him and direct it toward doing good.

“

Carl Jung's idea of the shadow or the dark side refers to the unconscious segment of everyone's personality. ”

“Never forget what you are, for surely the world will not. Make it your strength. Then it can never be your weakness. Armour yourself in it, and it will never be used to hurt you.”

— *George R.R. Martin [through Tyrion Lannister]*

However, this does not mean you let the negative aspects of your personality free reign. True goodness and strength lies in being able to commit evil and choosing not to. Therefore, a psychopath without the strength to kill is not a good man just because he does not murder.

“I’m not you, I’m not my mother. I can control myself which means I’m stronger than you’ll ever be.”

— *Jessica Jones*

TITANS.

[The new Netflix show Titans, based on the Teen Titans comics, does a great job at addressing this journey of finding yourself.]

Face the Raven.

Rachel Roth a.k.a. Raven has an entity living inside her. This ‘soul-self’ is her dark side and it communicates with her when she looks into a mirror. This is also the source of all her powers. When in danger this entity is

released and it destroys the enemies. Though it protects her, it is full of negativity and there is constant conflict between Rachel and the Raven that rides within her. In the mirror this darkness will constantly degrade and demotivate her. This is analogous to the increasing number of depression and anxiety prone teenagers.

If you don’t realise what motivates you or what is it within you that is causing you pain and is the root of your problems, you will explode.

Dick Greyson gives Rachel invaluable advice by saying, “It’s a part of you, you’ve gotta stop being afraid of it.”

Dick Greyson a.k.a. Robin was Batman’s sidekick. He was adopted by Bruce Wayne after his parents died in a circus performance. However, Dick soon realised that being with Batman and putting on the mask of Robin turned him into a monster he didn’t recognise. So he ends up leaving Batman and starts a journey of self discovery.

Robin loses control once he puts on his costume. This is because he is hiding behind a mask and not acknowledging his aggression that stems from his childhood.

“Give a man a mask and he will become his true self.”

— *The Joker*

“
**TRUE GOODNESS AND
STRENGTH LIES IN BEING
ABLE TO COMMIT EVIL AND
CHOOSING NOT TO.**
”

Beast boy can transform into a tiger at will. When he bites a man for the first time as a tiger, a hidden part of him is revealed to him. He admits to Starfire later that he didn't hate the experience as he presumed he would. Starfire told him to embrace it and gives some very helpful advice. This advice on accepting who you are is unexpected coming from Starfire considering she has suffered memory loss and literally does not know who she is.

Throughout the show these characters are searching for themselves while fighting the bad guys. However there is one great example of a character who has been successful in integrating his shadow to do good.

Hank Hall a.k.a. Hawk is a superhero with no inherent super-powers.

When he was a young boy, his football coach sexually abused him. This was a memory that he tried to forget and deny. He had a reservoir of aggression within him whose source was this traumatic memory. He used football as a way of redirecting this energy productively. This was until he was expelled from college and had to give up on football. He then started punishing sexual assaulters that roamed free in his neighbourhood due to the ignorance of the police and the law.

This is a commonality between many superheroes. It is usually a trauma that motivates them. How you

interpret your emotions and utilise them' decide whether you become a hero or a villain. In Psychology there is a field dedicated to study this phenomenon called Post-traumatic Growth or Stress-induced growth. It is how heroes are able to make meaning of traumatic experiences and turn failure or loss into an everlasting source of motivation. Therefore, the aim is not to reject or mitigate these negative aspects of your personality, it is to integrate it with your conscious self and use it for what you find meaningful.

The villains are afraid of the deepest darkest parts of their minds. They cannot integrate it and hence lose themselves. It is the ability to accept the abyss of your mind that allows you to know who you are. Joker and Batman, both faced with traumatic events, chose to deal with it in two separate ways. Batman used it to fuel and motivate him, while the Joker ran away from it.

This monologue from the killing joke is a perfect example of Joker's character and his fundamental flaw.

“Memories can be vile, repulsive little brutes. Like children I suppose. HAHA.

But can we live without them? Memories are what reason is based upon. If we can't face them, we deny reason itself!

Although why not? We aren't contractually tied down to rationality. There is no sanity clause!

“
**If you don't
realise what
motivates you
or what is it
within you that is
causing you pain
and is the root of
your problems,
you will explode.**
”

So when you find yourself locked onto an unpleasant train of thought, heading for the places in your past where screaming is unbearable, remember there's always madness.

You can just step outside and close the door on all those dreadful things that happened. You can lock them away. Madness is an emergency exit...

— Alan Moore, *[Through the Joker]*

Titans demonstrate the utility of teamwork as well. You cannot become self aware on your own— you'll need help.

“We can't fight as a team till we don't know each other's moves.”

— Robin

And even once you know your flaws, you'll still need a team to compensate for each others weaknesses and to fill in each others gaps. The importance of collaboration is shown in the combined efforts of Starfire—Light and Raven—Dark. Similar to the Yin and Yang symbol and ideology.

**Find your Superpower.
[and work on that]**

**THE VILLAINS
ARE AFRAID OF
THE DEEPEST
DARKEST PARTS
OF THEIR MINDS.
THEY CANNOT
INTEGRATE IT
AND HENCE LOSE
THEMSELVES.**

Thor.

In Thor: Ragnarok, Thor's hammer is destroyed by Hella. He is left hammerless and hence powerless. This vacuum must be filled by something inside Thor, not external. In his attempt to stop Hella he loses an eye, as she slices right through it. This is symbolic for Thor's maturation as he becomes more like his father Odin, who also does not have an eye. Soon after this Thor meets his father and asks him how he can defeat Hella without his weapon. Odin in turn asks him whether he is the 'god of hammers' or the 'god of thunder'. Odin says, "Even with both your eyes you'd always see half the picture" and then tells him to find the power within him. That is exactly what Thor does.

He learns how to channel the energy and thunder into his body. He finds his superpower and it does not depend on anything external, it is all within him. He believes in his abilities without the hammer, something he has been dependent on forever, and in the end is victorious.

Ironman and Batman are both humans, yet, they beat villains who are objectively stronger than them. This is because they never spend time wishing they had the power of someone else. They embrace their humanity and vulnerability and choose to train twice as hard and revolutionise technology to improve themselves. They are aware of who they are and have

found their strength — technology and intellect.

Be yourself, unapologetically.

Self awareness gives you a huge kick-start in life. Rather than waiting for others' to tell you about your flaws when it's too late to change them, you can catch them at an early stage. So don't avoid self criticism and self analysis. Face it and be brave, it'll make the future less unpredictable.

Next time a movie is released make sure to look at it in a different perspective. Learn from it. See the characters' motives and traits. Ask yourself why they succeed why they fail?

To be self aware you must use all the previously mentioned virtues.

Be principled to know your flaws and have a clear understanding of who you want to be, but also humble enough to question yourself and spot your flaws. Then work on yourself. This is achieved by perseverance and pursuit of knowledge. Finally, believe in yourself and your abilities.

X-MEN

They are a group of mutants and in this alternate reality mutants are looked at with disgust. The X-Men know who they are and aren't ashamed of it no matter what anyone else says. This is an inspiration to all minorities and the discriminated sects of society. You must own

who you are and that is key to being comfortable in your own skin and having self respect.

“If you cage the beast, the beast will get angry.”

— *Wolverine*

“You want the society to accept you, but you can’t even accept yourself”

This is the advice Erik gives to Raven when she masks her original blue form and takes her human shape. This hits hard as it shows us not to change to fit in to society and to break free from its constraints. You must accept all your flaws, strengths and quirks and only then can anyone else accept you.

“Just because someone stumbles, loses their way doesn’t mean that they are lost forever. Sometimes we all need a little help”

— *Charles Xavier*

Many mutants, like Hulk, hate their powers at first. Raven even tries to get rid of her powers. But they’re all just in need of help. And it is important to note that they were all helped by a team. They were taught to take control and be confident about their body and powers. They were appreciated and loved. This was all possible due to the magic of **[teamwork]**.

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TEAM WORK

Team work — loyalty, trust, and compassion.

Lessons from almost all the previous chapters are required to understand teamwork and its importance.

A vision can only be carried out with the help of a team, never alone. There will always be other who will want to fight for the same cause as you, has persevered in the same situations as you, and has the same principles as you. Find them and work together.

Sacrifice of personal pleasure for service is required to be part of something greater than yourself.

You must be humble to ask for and accept help. Without humility teamwork is impossible. Yet, to know where you need help and to know your limitations, requires you to be self aware. Without being self aware nothing can help or at least not to the degree that is required. If you're clear about yourself it gives others clarity and makes it easier for them to reach you.

Trust is not possible without honesty and trust is the foundation of any team.

Teamwork requires patience. When you're alone you can make instant decisions, but in a team you must hear everyone out and only then can you proceed in a democratic manner.

TEAMS.

There are a huge number of teams and alliances in the comic-verse. The Justice League, The Avengers, Teen Titans, The Watchmen, Fantastic Four, The X-Men, and many more. Even the lone wolves have a team. Batman has Robin, Lucius Fox, Alfred Pennyworth, and The Oracle, while Deadpool has the X-Force.

In *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, when Hulk loses control and needs to be calmed down so he can switch back to Bruce Banner, Black Widow sings him a lullaby. This lullaby technique is something Bruce would never have been able to figure out on his own, and even if he did he would need another person to sing it to him when required. This is the importance of friendship and teamwork. Once you understand each other, you can use your strengths to help and fix your teammates' flaws.

Suicide Squad was a project in which a bunch of bad guys were put together and told to work as a team to do good. Because they were forced to work as a

team and had no scope of personal gain, they managed to be successful and even showed the more vulnerable and good side to them. Trust and teamwork can cure even the worst of minds.

LEADERS.

Charles Xavier a.k.a. Professor X understood that it is only when you look for the good in people, you bring out the best in them. He is a true leader and plays a key role in the development of all the X-Men. He takes them under his wing and teaches them how to live freely. He is a man with a vision and can unlock the potential in almost anyone.

But he is also humble enough to ask for help, and is ready to learn always.

“Lead me, guide me, be patient with me.”

— *Charles Xavier*

A villain does a great job at finding his own powers strengths and abilities but not so well at finding the same in others. They're lonely, vindictive, and cannot have long lasting relations. They are always scheming planning and cannot trust anyone. And what truly sets one apart from the other is their ability to find the spark in others, to see the positive in every situation, and to not let go of that positivity.

“

Once you understand each other, you can use your strengths to help and fix your teammates' flaws.

”

The first scene of *Batman: The Dark Knight*, shows a group of criminals rob a bank. Once the robbery is complete, the three survivors of this robbery meet at the lobby of the bank. One of them kills the other two and takes the money with himself. This man is The Joker.

This illustrated the disloyalty of the Joker and his view of his team as dispensable. He is incapable of trusting as he has never been trustworthy. He cannot see anything but deceit and treachery in himself and as a result he sees the same in others. Villains never have a team and this makes them paranoid and unstable. They have no home to come back to. They get no reassurance or love. Theirs is a life full of hatred and loneliness. Though Batman is no poster boy for teamwork, he has a team that always has his back. Even the lone wolf needs backup. It is this humility and togetherness that differentiates a hero from a villain.

WONDER WOMAN

Wonder Woman teaches us what feminism should look like in the 21st century. It is not about Women versus Men, it is about working together. There is no reason to hate any gender. Terms like toxic masculinity are outright useless and will lead to nothing but discord.

Wonder Woman lives in an island called Themyscira where there are no men, only women. Following this she leaves her island and meets men for the first time.

**“
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”**

She does not treat them with hostility, instead she treats them with compassion. She is often treated as an inferior and she is not offended by it, instead she proves her worth and gains their respect. The problem with the ‘I am offended’ way of thinking is that you are playing the victim card. This leads to shirking of responsibility and inaction. Wonder Woman instead shows the way by working with men as a team.

She is also warned not to fight Ares by her mother and still decides to leave her island and its protection to fight for what she knows is right. She is not the pretentious female rebel, who smokes and abuses a lot as a way of disobeying authority. Wonder Woman understands the importance of authority and knows only to rebel when it is extremely necessary and not just because she can or because it demonstrates power. She leaves the island into unknown land. Here she forms a small team, as she needs them to guide her in foreign lands. This team formation is essential and can be seen in business as well.

In a business, if you want to expand to new countries, you need to take help from the local people. Teamwork enables you to harness someone else’s expertise and to grow a market you wouldn’t be able to otherwise on your own. The team can tell you how to market a product successfully for this country, where to set up the company, and give other such advice.

**WONDER
WOMAN
TEACHES US
WHAT
FEMINISM
SHOULD
LOOK LIKE
IN THE 21ST
CENTURY.**

COMPASSION.

The one thing that differentiates two teams is the compassion they have for each other. It is this emotion that gives a team an edge over the other. In the last mile it is this extra push that can make or break a team. It can improve coordination. If you are compassionate and understanding you can empathise better and put yourself in the other person's shoes. This will improve coordination and the ability to make sacrifices for the team. As opposed to a selfish team whose fuel is greed and power, a compassionate team will function better as machinery.

In school, playing team sports can be an astounding way of adjusting and becoming more sociable. If you join a new school then playing football can be a great way of making new friends. As a team you learn to be compassionate and understand that each player is an integral part of it. Your team mates will be quick to take you in and make you one of their own. This can help in feeling a sense of belonging and in fulfilling the social needs every human has. So if you feel isolated or alone in school, play a sport; it will result in a positive outcome more often than not.

This is why in the final battle scenes of all movies we are shown imagery of a team standing together against all the odds. And if, as the heroic theme song starts to play, you feel adrenaline rush into your blood, then you have understood the essence of teamwork. It

is this compassion that makes us root for the heroes and this love that gets us attached to these characters. Because we know it will all be worth it in **[the end]**.