

# Start with water. by Tom Asacker

All text below has been retrieved from: <https://unwindingwant.substack.com/>

Have you heard the “jar of life” story, with the rocks, pebbles, sand and water? Here’s a quick refresher. A philosophy professor was giving a lecture. In front of him was a big glass jar, a pile of rocks, a bag of pebbles, a tub of sand and a bottle of water.

He started by filling the jar with the rocks and when they reached the rim of the jar he held it up to the students and asked them if the jar was full. They all agreed, there was no more room, it was full.

He then picked up the bag of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar so that the pebbles filled the space around the rocks. “Is the jar full now?” he asked. The students all looked at each other and agreed that the jar was now completely full.

The professor then picked up the tub of sand. He poured the sand in between the pebbles and the rocks and once again he held up the jar to his class and asked if it was full. Once again the students agreed that the jar was full.

Finally, he picked up a bottle of water and poured the water into the jar until it soaked up all the remaining space in the sand. The students laughed. The professor went on to explain that the jar of rocks, pebbles, sand and water represents everything that is in one’s life.

The jar represents your life. The rocks represent the most important things that have real value—your health, your family, your partner. The pebbles represent the things in your life that matter, but that often come and go and that you could live without—your job, house, hobbies and

friendships. The sand and water represent everything else. The small stuff—material possessions, chores, pastimes.

The metaphor here is that if you start by putting sand into the jar, you will not have room for rocks or pebbles. And this holds true with the things you let into your life. If you spend all of your time on the small and insignificant things, you will run out of room for the things that are actually important. Ergo, take care of the rocks first.

Intuitively, this metaphor feels right. But after spending decades experimenting with the proverbial jar, I see it much differently.

Start with water.

Start by filling the empty jar two-thirds of the way up with water. The water is what’s most important in life. It’s your way of being in the world. It’s curiosity and love, compassion and creativity. That “way” will then flow around and saturate everything else that’s added to the jar—family, work, hobbies, friendships, etc.

Now start adding rocks, then pebbles, then sand. And, as you do, the water in the jar will begin to rise. And if, and when, the water begins to flow over the rim and out of the jar, stop!

Why? Because something is wrong. Either you’re doing too much, or you’re not giving yourself fully to what you are choosing to do. Doing should never come at the expense of being.

Stay passionate! Tom

# I don't think, therefore I am not.

“Reason enslaves all whose minds are not strong enough to master her.”

~ George Bernard Shaw

René Descartes, a 17th-century French mathematician, is considered one of the founding fathers of modern philosophy. His quote “I think, therefore I am” (cogito ergo sum in Latin) is the result of his search for a statement that could not be doubted. He found that he could not doubt that he himself existed, since he was the one doing the doubting in the first place. Of course it's not quite that simple (it never is).

So what do I mean by “I don't think, therefore I am not?” Well, it's not that simple either. Let's start by trying to understand the word “thinking.”

What is thinking?

The definition of thinking is “the action of using one's mind to produce thoughts,” which seems reasonable enough. But it's not, because in general it's not true. Most thinking is not an action. An action is an event that someone performs for a purpose, and which is guided by that person's intention. Most thinking is unintentional and useless.

I often hear from people who complain that they have a difficult time falling asleep, because they can't stop thinking (about this or that). I ask them if they want to think about whatever it is at that particular time, and the exasperated answer is always a rhetorical, “What do you think?”

What's going on?

Yes, their minds are producing those thoughts. But no, they are not using their minds to produce them. Instead, their minds are using them, despite their most salient intentions. And as a result, they think, therefore they are unsettled and sleepless

(do you see where I'm going with this?) I don't think, therefore I am not...unsettled.

Thinking also happens to people when they go for a walk or sit on the beach, or even when they're in the presence of children. They're distracted by their self-reflective thoughts, and so they miss the fullness of the moment. I don't think, so I am not distracted.

Thinking is not the enemy.

Our minds evolved to think, which enabled us to communicate, create tools, and cooperate with one another. These tools empowered us to make fire, clothing, weapons and shelter, and thus to survive in harsh environments with fierce predators.

Thinking is humanity's ultimate creative, collaborative, problem-solving tool. It produced electricity, refrigerators, air conditioning and penicillin. “To Kill a Mockingbird,” “Romeo and Juliet,” “Schindler's List,” and The Sydney Opera House.

So what's the problem?

The problem is that your mind thinks that life is a problem to be solved and so it is always on, compulsively accessing its memories and searching for solutions. It happens automatically, like a self-driving car. And so, without even being aware of it, your mind is driving you.

I don't think, therefore I am not on autopilot. Yes, my thoughts are me, just like my genetic heritage and my achy knee is me. But I don't go where my physical and mental conditioning try to take me. I take myself where I want to go and, like Siri, my mind sits

shotgun, typically in silence, waiting for me to ask it a question.

Beware of the box.

You've probably heard the phrase, "think outside the box." It's a business cliché, which means to approach a problem in an

innovative way. But your life is not a problem to be approached through thinking. It's a vast and amazing reality to wake up to and fully embrace.

All of life is innovation, eternal and endlessly creative.

And here are a few quotes from Tom's book "Business of Belief"

"We live in an age of distraction, of overwhelming amounts of conflicting information and competing priorities. And these complications can easily derail our progress on the bridge of belief. Belief requires focus. It demands that we follow the lead of our feeling mind, of our intuition and assumptions. Distractions and difficulties turn on our thinking mind, which undermines belief by overriding our instincts."

"Computers are incredibly fast, accurate and stupid. Human beings are incredibly slow, inaccurate and brilliant. Together they are powerful beyond imagination. Let us never confuse the two."

"Belief is a personal construct, an emotionally-colored fusion of imperfect mental processes like perception and memory."

"People are drawn across the bridge of belief by their anticipation of a better experience and a better life. Effective leaders ignite people's imaginations by painting vivid, compelling, and personally relevant pictures—ones that move them. As John Quincy Adams made clear, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

And a few other quotes that Tom has shared:

"You are a function of what the whole universe is doing in the same way that a wave is a function of what the whole ocean is doing." ~ Alan Watts

"The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper."  
~ W.B. Yeats

*"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."*  
~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ubuntu! ~ sue