

A nighttime photograph of a city skyline, likely Shanghai, featuring several illuminated skyscrapers. The Oriental Pearl Tower is prominent on the right, glowing with warm orange lights. Other buildings are lit with blue and purple lights. The lights reflect on the water in the foreground.

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MINDSET & PERSONAL GROWTH

THE LITTLE BOOK
FOR MY PERSONAL GROWTH

INDEPENDENTLY PUBLISHED

GIOVANNI CISMONDI PRAVISANI

A GIFT TO YOU
SOME SHORT REFLECTIONS
TAKEN FROM

MINDSET &
PERSONAL GROWTH

THE LITTLE BOOK
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INTRODUCTION

There are two quotes that I admire; they can serve as an excellent introduction to this text. The first is by George Orwell, who states, “The best books are precisely those that tell us what we already know.” The second is by Marcel Proust, who somewhat affirms the previous quote: “Every reader, when he reads, reads himself. The writer's work is merely an optical instrument offered to the reader to enable him to discern what, without a book, he perhaps would not have seen in himself.”

So, we are talking about something we already know **is** present in our unconscious: our potential. It is nothing extraordinary or magical. Nature has already considered it for us, and we should consider it more carefully and then concretely experience it in everyday life.

When I started writing these chapters, I let my words flow freely on the pages and finished them in a few months.

If you are reading this now, dear reader, it means you still have some aspects of your life that you want to overcome or improve.

So we understand why we are here together. You have probably already read numerous other books that are both challenging and substantial.

By addressing these beneficial issues, you have consequently become an expert. Therefore, out of respect for those who start reading a book, I must clarify that I do not promise miracles or anything extraordinary that might only serve to frustrate your expectations. Promises are inherently risky, even when they are easy to make.

This straightforward manual seeks to motivate readers to improve their lives, as it is within reach and exactly what we all need.

This brief essay can encourage readers to reflect on and reawaken their desire to be the protagonists of their own lives.

How?

With a positive MINDSET, or *Forma Mentis*, we shape our mental framework.

There are fundamentally two mindsets: the “*fixed mindset*” or fixed mentality, and the “*growth mindset*” or growth mentality. These represent two essential approaches that individuals adopt in assessing their self-image and potential.

Merely two perspectives on seeing things.

A fixed mindset is the belief that one's talents, abilities, and intelligence are inherent and unchangeable and, therefore, cannot be developed.

A dynamic or growth mindset encourages individuals to believe that intelligence and talent can be developed, enhanced, and enriched.

We can transform our habitual mindset and perceive everything from a different perspective, thus revealing countless new possibilities.

Improving oneself is not merely a hope but a responsibility. As we all recognise, this is attainable for anyone who desires it.

In these initial pages, before delving into more specific aspects, I would like to share some significant events from my life, as it feels appropriate to begin by providing some insight into myself.

Each of us has a personal story and a particular path.

If you know the author of a text, you can better understand the book itself.

Giovanni Cismondi Pravisani (Portsmouth, 2025)

LET'S GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER

I was born in Italy in a so-called “middle-class” family.

Like all children born in the last century, I grew up in a much simpler society than the one we have today. There wasn't much discussion of pollution, unemployment, or crime. Life was simpler and more prosperous, characterised by healthy physical labour akin to that of a farmer working in the field, under the sun, with a spade in hand and sweat on his brow. Such toil helps you understand what work truly is and appreciate everything, even a brief respite or a simple glass of water—a breath of fresh air that revitalises you, a gentle pat on the shoulder. A good morning expressed with sincerity. Even the language was more straightforward, precise, and free.

In our modern and advanced world today, however, language is often mandatory, one-way, especially for specific social communities where the so-called standards are imposed that you cannot escape.

Anyone kind enough to read these reflections will recognise how language and communication are the central themes that have always characterised me. These very words are a form of communication.

Communication has always been fundamental. Without language, we cannot express our thoughts and emotions; we would be prisoners of our own minds.

Instead, we know that humans have always sought different ways to communicate with each other.

But is it possible to speak openly with our family members? Is it feasible to communicate freely with colleagues at work? Or is dialogue often sidestepped because it feels impossible to express our true thoughts? Wouldn't they comprehend us regardless?

Let's go step by step.

The period in which I was born and raised, the last century, was markedly different from today. There were no computers, cell phones, internet or social media, and people had a very different relationship with everyday life. They were freer. Or rather, were we freer to use our imagination?

(...)

SEMIOLOGY

I am a semiologist.

What is it?

Don't worry. It's common for many people not to know what this is, and this chapter will address that question.

The definition found in dictionaries or encyclopaedias states that semiology, from the Greek *σημειον*, meaning "sign," is the *general science of signs, including their production, transmission, and interpretation*.

We are surrounded by signs and continuously generate them, both consciously and unconsciously.

Umberto Eco, one of the foremost experts on the subject, informs us that "It has been at least two thousand years since the Greeks that people have been contemplating a discipline that studies the variety of signs used by mankind, and that Semiotics or Semiology, terms of Greek origin, appeared etymologically for the first time among the scholars of the Hellenistic period, interested in understanding the origins of certain diseases or the manifestations of certain ailments through the signs on the face and skin. In 1600 in England, where research of this nature flourished, the terms semiology and semiotics were employed. A great thinker like John Locke proclaimed that there must be a science, semiotics, that addresses logic and all related issues. Recently, two strands of research have emerged: one of Latin origin, stemming from linguists such as Ferdinand de Saussure, and the other of a more philosophical nature, originating from American scholars. At a certain point, we realised that we could not make overly rigid distinctions, so let us say that, today, Semiology and Semiotics are synonymous."

Signs (signs, signals, symbols, numbers, notices, etc.) are ingrained in our habits, and like all habitual things, they do not always receive adequate attention. We encounter signs constantly, yet we do not always notice them. Signs are not self-evident or natural; rather, they are symbols created by their producers. Anything can serve as a sign, from an actor's facial expressions to a packet of spaghetti to telephone numbers.

(...)

The semiological approach I employ to investigate human beings encompasses all the described elements. It represents a comprehensive method as it utilises various tools to provide an overall view of the individual and their needs, consequently enabling the identification of a precise strategy to overcome any obstacles or difficulties. Moreover, I also integrate this semiological approach with a working method focused on personal growth. Today, this method is commonly referred to as Mindset.

(...)

We must never forget that we are the authors of our own lives; if we are not aware of this, it would be wise to take note and begin to reflect seriously. We need to decide what is truly positive for us and what is good, because perhaps we have never been able to take essential initiatives or make important decisions. We have allowed others to decide for us a grave mistake.

The time has come and it is always the right time to ask ourselves: What do I wish to do with my life? And, above all, what is my dream?

It is neither a rhetorical question nor a trivial one. This question can initiate a transformative process within each of us, facilitating growth, progress, and a way out of our current circumstances. Before proceeding with the reading, I would like to emphasise that the following considerations are

fundamental. They represent the central point on which we must focus our attention.

Everyone has a unique dream, and dreams are exactly what we need. Remember, there is no dream that is too big or impossible. If we genuinely wish to turn over a new leaf, we must communicate with the deepest part of ourselves just as we would with our closest friend. We must do so sincerely, for in this way, we will embark on the path essential for transforming everything. Many scholars, coaches and psychologists recommend engaging in something tangible and straightforward that might seem like a child's game, but it is not! The advice is to take a piece of paper and a pen and write down your dream. Bear in mind that it is not a game but something significant for our innermost self.

(...)

HOW TO TURN THE PAGE AND WHEN

Our lives are like a book, composed of pages that turn one after another, day by day.

But have those pages been written already – as some assert – or do we compose them each day?

If they had already been written or predetermined, we would merely be puppets in the hands of an unknown writer, who makes us dance at his discretion. Some might lead fortunate lives, while others may encounter obstacle after obstacle. Would that make sense?

Or do we want to say that everything is linked to chance?

Speaking of *chance*, I am reminded of an interesting meeting at the home of Margherita Hack, an astrophysicist and science communicator who claimed that everything could be traced back to chance. We discussed this for several hours in her living room, which was filled with books and science magazines from all over the world.

I also remember her many cats, who found it amusing to hide among those books. Her thinking was clear: for her, the universe, the stars, the planets, human beings, animals, and everything else is the result of chance.

But is it truly so?

Friedrich Schiller, a German poet, philosopher, playwright, physician and historian, wrote: “*Chance does not exist, and what seems random to us springs from the deepest sources*”. Carl Gustav Jung also reaches a similar conclusion when speaking of synchronicity rather than chance.

According to Jung, there exists a principle of causal connections. The term he employs, synchronicity, derives from the Greek words 'syn' (with) and 'Chronos' (time), and refers to the concept of the simultaneity of events or the temporal coincidence of two or more events without a causal link between them, sharing the same or similar meaning. Whether or not synchronicity is at play, we know that in nature, everything is governed by precise laws, and nothing is left to chance. The perfection of the universe attests to this fact. Even the rules that govern life are highly precise. Everything that happens holds meaning and is the consequence of an antecedent factor, even if we often fail to acknowledge it and remain unaware.

The pages of the book of our lives are not yet written; they do not pre-exist us; they are blank sheets that we can, and indeed must, fill every day. Why are we so often afraid to write exactly what we desire and believe is best for us? Why do we frequently abandon the decision-making process and ignore the instincts that could guide us towards a better life? Do we truly know how many pages our Book of Life contains? Five hundred? Three hundred? One hundred?

Life can be long, but it can also be very short, and we often foolishly neglect to think about it with the attention it deserves. We must never forget that we are the authors of our own lives; if we are not aware of this, it would be wise to take note and begin to reflect seriously. We need to decide what is truly positive for us and what is good, because perhaps we have never been able to take essential initiatives or make important decisions. We have allowed others to decide for us a grave mistake.

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CONCLUSIONS

We are so busy with commitments, deadlines, and schedules, and so immersed in continuous races that we risk not realising we are alive and that life is slipping past us, just as Marcus Aurelius noted. Reminding ourselves that we exist, that we are individuals, and that we are precious beings is the most important thing we can do. We must recognise our extraordinary nature and the magnificent machine that is our body.

When we understand our importance, when we realise that we need to pay more attention to ourselves, and when we acknowledge that life is a truly wonderful and unique experience, we will have finally discovered the way to establish a new existence where we can be who we genuinely are, with all our qualities and potential.

When you change your attitude, everything changes; you simply need to want it. Of course, it requires a determined action, but it is well worth it. So, change your perspective.

Now is the moment.

The journey will be enjoyable, and the transformation extraordinary.