

Orientation & Direction

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Having discovered a glimpse of what's possible in From Existential Angst to Existential Hope, how do we get there? In [Science: Making a Map](#) we'll start at the beginning, by making a map that we can use to make sense of the outside world, ourselves and the directions we want to head. Equipped with the map, we'll use [The Mind: Who's Looking Out?](#) to situate ourselves within it, and some may find [Psychedelics: Switching Filters](#) appealing to red-team those foundations. Having oriented ourselves, we can start to look ahead by finding out what a "better" future even means in [Ethics: Which Way is Forward?](#). With a moral compass guiding us into the right directions, we use [Rationality: Sharpening Our Best Tool](#) to figure out how to chart ahead. Naturally, we're not the only ones trying to go somewhere, so in [Coordination: Getting Unstuck](#) we review how to better coordinate with others, who are using different maps, to collectively get closer to our destinations.

Science: Making a Map

To find out where we want to go we need to orient ourselves, and to do that we need a map. Here are a few resources that are useful in creating one, mostly by taking apart the one we're already using.

Illuminating our constraints

- [On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense](#) - Friedrich Nietzsche. While P.C. Hodgell states *"that which can be destroyed by the truth should be"*, Nietzsche reminds us that *"we can destroy only as creators! But let us not forget this either: it is enough to create new names and valuations and probabilities in order in the long run to create new "things"*. Induces

skepticism about our current understanding of the world - after all, it's Nietzsche! - but is also a call to arms for the pursuit of truth within human constraints.

- [Flatland](#) - Edwin Abbott. Helps get a "feeling" for what it means that there are phenomena beyond our current ability to make sense of the world and what progress may look like.
- [Rejecting the Ideal of Value-Free Science](#) - Heather Douglas. What can we hope for when we claim that we know something objectively? Strips away layer after layer of value-ladenness that shapes our sense-making.
- [On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme](#) - Donald Davidson. Even when it seems like collective sense-making is hampered by completely incommensurable conceptual schemes, Davidson shows that we share one conceptual reality in which we can learn to better navigate.
- [The Structure of Scientific Revolutions](#) - Thomas Kuhn. A classic in philosophy of science that introduces the concept of a "Paradigm Shift" to make sense of how our understanding of the world advances. Rather than dripping along discovery by discovery, science jumps in paradigm shifts, each creating a new map from which to interpret the world, until the next one comes along that fits better.
- [Chaos: Making a New Science](#) - James Gleick. As if this wasn't complicated enough, here are a few factors that complicate our prudent attempts to bring order into the chaos of reality.
- Those who have superstitions to let go of should read [Cargo Cult Science](#) by Richard Feynman or [The Skeptic's Encyclopedia of Pseudoscience](#) by Michael Schermer.

Starting to make progress

- [The Philosopher's Toolkit - A Compendium of Philosophical Concepts and Methods](#) - Peter Fosl. Gives a brief overview of the different tools at our disposal when making sense of the world.
- [Opacity: Lindy Effect & Psychological Findings](#) - Nassim Nicholas Taleb. Traces major scientific heuristics back to their classical origins. A useful memory bridge.
- [The Meaning Of It All](#) - Richard Feynman. Collection of three lectures on the relationship between science and society, pointing out that while science has its limits, it is still wildly under-used in society, resulting in bad politics and worse.
- Want more? [Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences](#) by Lee McIntyre and [The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Social Science](#) by Harold Kindcaid are two wonderful resources to stand on thorough philosophical grounds.

How science informs our sense of identity, free will, meaning, and beauty:

- [The Ghost in the Quantum Turing machine](#) - Scott Aaronson. What physics can tell us about free will, chaos, the arrow of time, the holographic principle, Newcomb's paradox, algorithmic information theory, the Common Prior Assumption and more.
- [A Beautiful Question](#) - Frank Wilczek. Uses the history of science, from Plato to quantum physics to answer the question if the world embodies beautiful ideas and what, if anything, this means for reality.
- [The Vital Question](#) - Nick Lane. Explores the origin and history of life on earth, focusing on the link between energy and evolution.
- [Santa Fe Institute](#) - a research institute using complexity science to understand common patterns across frontiers of science, that has great workshops and a podcast on its

research. Great to see non-obvious relationships of artificially created scientific silos. [Scale](#) by Geoffrey West on the fractal-like scaling laws that govern anything from cells to cities is a great example of the type of research produced there.

- Did this awake your appetite for a deepdive into physics, maths, chemistry, biology et cetera? Creon Levit keeps a treasure trove of profound books [here](#). Still want more? Patrick Collins keeps a list of profound books [here](#) and a list of people [here](#).
 - For regularly updated introductory content on pop science, see: [WaitButWhy](#) - A popular long-form, stick-figure-illustrated blog about almost everything, that is the source of much Existential Hope content. [Kurz Gesagt](#) has a similar taste, but in short and video-format, explaining scientific questions of high importance for humanity. [After-On](#) is a neat introductory podcast on current and future science and technology topics.
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The Mind: Who's Looking Out?

Now that we have an idea of the maps we can use to make sense of the external world, a look inward quickly reveals that there's a lot to discover inside ourselves. Some of it has sweeping consequences for how to chart ahead. We won't solve the mystery of consciousness right here right now but the following resources give an overview of questions and answers you will stumble over when situating your personal experience on your map of reality:

The main problems and controversies in a nutshell:

- [The Free-Energy Principle: A Unified Brain Theory?](#) - Karl Friston. While 20th century neuroscience thought the brain to extract knowledge from sensations, he argues for an inversion by which the brain is an inference organ, minimizing average surprise from sensory experience of the world.
- [Goedel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid](#) - Douglas Hofstadter. A classic that uses principles like self-reference to show commonalities across consciousness, intelligence, maths, music, art, and language and how simple elements can make up "meaning".
- [The Illusion of Consciousness](#) - Daniel Dennett. In the TED talk and his 1991 book [Consciousness Explained](#) he discusses a "multiple drafts" model of consciousness, in which there is no central consciousness, but a bundle of agencies that make up the story in which the central character is one's self.
- Dennett and Hofstadter agree on much and edited [The Mind's I](#): an oldie but goldie!
- [Panpsychism & Protopanpsychism](#) - David Chalmers. Contra Dennett, panpsychism is the idea that all things have a mind-like quality. Chalmers also wrote [Moving Forward on the Problem of Consciousness](#), an updated take on his "hard problem of consciousness".
- [On Possible Minds: Philosophy and AI](#) - a conversation between Chalmers and Dennett, covering their disagreements about consciousness and what this means for AI. The comments even bring in Friston to differentiate the implications for AI, something that was taken on as well by this [Wired article on Friston and AI](#). The lecture discusses the book [Possible Minds](#), edited by John Brockman, a neat collection of essays on human and AI minds.

What philosophy of mind has to say about the problem of consciousness:

- For an intro into the philosophy of mind: [Anomalous Monism](#) - Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. A mind-body problem concept developed by Donald Davidson in [Mental Events](#) that attempts to reconcile the contradiction that mental events cannot be predicted by strict laws but seem to causally interact with predictable physical events.
- Another classic that is contested but worth a read in philosophy of mind: [What it's like to be a bat](#) - Thomas Nagel. Asserts that "*an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is like to be that organism*", doubting whether those phenomenological features of a subjective experience can be known by others.

On the more fun but speculative side:

- [Robert Anton Wilson Explains Everything](#) - Robert Anton Wilson (also: [Techniques of Consciousness Change](#)). While some of Wilson's claims can seem pseudo-scientific, he delivers an excellent satirical critique of our common (mis)-conceptions of ourselves.
- Other conceptions of the Ego from a non-western philosophical outlook without going all woo include [The Book Against the Taboo of Knowing Who You Are](#) by Alan Watts (or his [Meditations](#) and [Podcast](#)) and [The Ego Tunnel](#) by Thomas Metzinger.

Where to go from here?

- [Waking Up](#) - Sam Harris. A book on mind and meditation, that he turned into an app that is a good start for meditating but not free. His podcast [Making Sense with Sam Harris](#) is inspired by the book but not all consciousness-related, with great episodes including Looking for the Self (guided Meditation), Mindfulness Meditation (guided Meditation), The After On Interview, The Future of Intelligence, Landscapes of Mind, The Dawn of Artificial Intelligence, Finding our Way in the Cosmos, Surviving the Cosmos, The Multiverse & You (& You, & You), Drugs & The Meaning of Life, Culture & Biology.
- [Qualia Research Institute](#) - A non-profit well-worth checking out, that believes better philosophy should lead to better neuroscience, and better neuroscience should lead to better neurotechnology.

Psychedelics: Switching Filters

Described both as crucial doors to perception or mad-making reality dissolvers, the use of psychedelics has promises and major risks and is still mostly illegal. In the right set and setting, breakthrough experiences in care and understanding of oneself are possible, while medical predispositions, or the wrong set and setting risk traumatic experiences. If you're interested in using it to shake up your map and yourself within it, here is info to help you tread lightly.

Scientific attempts to make sense of the benefits of psychedelics:

- [REBUS and the Anarchic Brain: Toward a Unified Model of Brain Action of Psychedelics](#) - Robin Carhart-Harris and Karl Friston. A paper that combines Friston's work on free energy with recent studies on psychedelics to explain their therapeutic effect. There is also a [shorter summary](#) by the SSC Journal Club.

- [How To Change Your Mind](#) - Michael Pollan. A mainstream-compatible account of the benefits of psychedelics, both for mentally ill as well as healthy people.
- [David Pearce on Understanding Psychedelics](#) - Milan Griffes. An Effective Altruism post on the role of psychedelics in consciousness research. Also: [Cash prizes for the best arguments against psychedelics being an EA cause area](#) to test what, if any, objections there are against making psychedelic research part of effective philanthropy.

Narrational accounts of the psychedelic experience:

- [LSD - My Problem Child](#) - Albert Hoffman. On the promises and dangers of LSD. For a more intuitive account of the double-edged nature of LSD, listen to [Alan Watts on LSD](#).
- [The Psychedelic Experience](#) - Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, Richard Alpert. A guide that uses the Tibetan Book of the Dead (a Tibetan guide for death and rebirth) as metaphor for making sense of ego-death while undergoing the psychedelic experience.
- A historical account of the rise of psychedelics in the US as spearheaded by Ken Kesey can be found in [The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test](#) by Tom Wolfe. Other fun reads, mostly due to the quirkiness of the authors are [Doors of Perception](#) by Aldous Huxley, [Turn on, Tune in, Drop out](#), a radical account of the subversive potential of psychedelics recorded by Timothy Leary (who was prosecuted for his support of psychedelics), and [True Hallucinations](#) or [Food of the Gods](#) by Terence McKenna.

Support info and organizations

- [Erowid](#) - a non-profit that provides info about psychoactive plants and chemicals, and technologies that can produce altered states of consciousness.
- [The Manual of Psychedelic Support](#) and the [Psychedelic Integration List](#) has manuals for psychedelic sitters, as well as pointers to more experienced practitioners.
- [Shulgin Archive](#) - the archive of interactions of different substances produced by the Shulgins during their self-experiments. Has poetic trip reports, such as *"How long will this last, this delicious feeling of being alive, of having penetrated the veil which hides beauty and the wonders of celestial vistas? It doesn't matter, as there can be nothing but gratitude for even a glimpse of what exists for those who can become open to it."*
- [MAPS - Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies](#) - a non-profit that develops medical, legal, and cultural contexts to benefit from psychedelics. MAPS keeps track of psychedelic research in [this bibliography](#), and publishes their [conference videos](#).
- [Zendo Project](#) - Psychedelic harm Reduction and first aid for festivals & events.
- [Psychedelic Salons](#) - podcast series on psychedelics by the main thinkers in that space.

Ethics: Which Way is Forward?

Making progress toward futures of Existential Hope requires knowing which paths are better or worse. Even if we get the map of the world around us right and achieve a workable internal model of who we are, we still need a compass that tells us where to head. Here are a few promising candidates that help us explore which way is forward:

Getting started on what matters:

- [Meta Ethics Sequence](#) - Eliezer Yudkowsky. Start with The Moral Void, Whither Moral Progress, Existential Angst Factory, Morality as Fixed Computation, Value is Fragile, Could Anything Be Right, and especially [Changing Your Meta Ethics](#).
- [On What Matters](#) - Derek Parfit. The successor to Reasons and Persons provides an overview of classic moral theories, such as deontology, consequentialism, contractualism, and of major moral issues, such as free will and responsibility.
- [Report on Consciousness and Moral Personhood](#) - Luke Muehlhauser. For figuring out whether and which non-human consciousnesses you should include in your ethics.
- [Philosophy Bites](#) - an intro level podcast that's good for keeping up to date on "current topics" in ethics and philosophy.

How to deal with epistemic uncertainty in ethics:

- [Crucial Considerations](#) - Nick Bostrom. By thinking a little harder we may often come to opposite conclusions about the desirability of our actions, so it's worth thinking hard about which crucial considerations should be guiding our actions.
- [Facing the unknown](#), [Infinite Ethics](#) - Nick Bostrom. It turns out that our epistemic limitations about the (long-term) consequences of our actions are pretty problematic for making the right decision. In [Problems And Solutions In Infinite Ethics](#) Ben West lays out a few strategies that may help us counter some of those epistemic limitations.

How to deal with normative uncertainty in ethics:

- [Normative Uncertainty](#) - Will MacAskill. Argues that we should treat moral uncertainty and empirical uncertainty analogously, and use expected utility theory as framework to decide between our differing moral convictions. Similar to [The Moral Parliament](#) - by Nick Bostrom and Toby Ord. Proposes to approach moral uncertainty between mutually exclusive moral theories by assigning each of them some probability and letting the theories send a respective number of delegates to a moral parliament.
- [Reflective Equilibrium](#) - John Rawls. An alternative approach to handling normative uncertainty. It suggests continuously working back and forth among our moral intuitions about actions, the principles that govern them, and the theoretical considerations behind them, revising them when necessary to achieve coherence among them. The [Wide Reflective Equilibrium](#) by Norman Daniels adds that we should actively seek out objections that may refute our moral convictions.
- [In The Balance](#) - Scott Alexander. A tongue in cheek story on handling infinite regress in moral updating: *"And you will tell them the story of how once you found the Artifact that gave you mastery of the universe, and you refused to take more than about three minutes figuring out what to use it for, because that would have been annoying."*

Other beings holding other values, and what to do about that:

- [Fundamental Value Differences Are Not That Fundamental](#), [The Whole City is Center](#), [Value Differences as Differently Crystallized Metaphysical Heuristics](#) - Scott Alexander. Perhaps human value differences are more shallow than we commonly think and ultimately track the same human universal core values that could help us reconstruct a common crude human morality.

- [On Value Drift](#) - Robin Hanson. Shows just how much values drift over time, from our fish ancestors' values, to us, to what we may become in the future. In [Let Values Drift](#) G. Gordon Worley III argues that this is not a cause for concern but only to be expected under the correct (Friston-aligned) conception of valuing.
- [Three Worlds Collide](#) - Eliezer Yudkowsky. A great novella about how much values can differ across different mind-architectures.
- [Moral Trade](#) - Toby Ord. Argues that we can trade our values similar to how we exchange goods: Just like people with different tastes or needs can exchange goods or services such that they each feel they have been made better off, people with different moral views may be able to exchange those when trying to improve the world.
- [Artificial Intelligence, Values, and Alignment](#) - Iason Gabriel. On AI Alignment but discusses the problem of different people with different values, and how Contractualism, Rights, Rawls's Veil of Ignorance, or Social Choice Theory may help us out reach overlapping consensus.

Where our values come from and what this means for making progress:

- [Human Behavioral Biology](#) - Robert Sapolsky. Entertaining lectures, explaining why and how we make decisions that he expands on in [Behave](#) by dissecting human behavior from the factors that bear on a person's reaction in the moment the behavior occurs to factors in our evolutionary legacy.
- [The Structural Evolution of Morality](#) - Jason McKenzie. Explains the structural evolution of human-typical morals, such as fairness norms. He builds on Bryan Skyrms' [Evolution and the Social Contract](#) by not only taking natural selection into account but including cultural evolution as well. For more background info on Skyrms' evolutionary explanations of morality, see [Darwin Meets the Logic of Decision](#).
- [Game-theoretic Explanations and the Evolution of Justice](#) - Justin D'Arms. Uses game-theory to show how our justice norms evolved from evolutionary stable strategies in resource distribution problems. For an expansion on this account, see [Natural Justice](#) by Ken Binmore. [The Evolution of Cooperation](#) by Robert Axelrod is an analysis of the success of "tit for tat", based on his game theory tournament to test different strategies for cooperation were tested. [The Grammar of Society](#) by Cristina Bicchieri is a more detailed analysis on the evolution of reciprocity, fairness, and cooperation norms.
- [Sense And Nonsense](#) - Kevin Laland, Gilliam Brown. Introduction to five evolutionary psychology schools: sociobiology, human behavioural ecology, evolutionary psychology, cultural evolution, and gene-culture co-evolution. [The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology](#) - Leda Cosmides, John Tooby, Jerone Barkow. Slightly dated but very good primer of evolutionary psychology by the pioneers of the field. Especially good: [The Psychological Foundations of Culture](#). For more easily digestible bits on evolutionary psychology, see [Bret Weinstein's Interviews](#) and [Bret Weinstein's Youtube Channel](#). For a deep dive into an evolutionary explanation of the specific cultural invention of religion, see [Darwin's Cathedral: Evolution, Religion, and the Nature of Society](#) by David Wilson.
- [The Enigma of Reason](#) - Hugo Mercier. Argues that our shortcomings in thinking rationally are not surprising, because rather than having evolved as bayesian updaters, our reasoning evolved as an interactive tool to better cooperate in groups. [The Secret of Our Success](#) by Joseph Henrich makes a similar claim by arguing from the importance of

cultural evolution for human survival. Because the ability to think rationally may infringe on our ability to transmit cultural norms effectively it was selected against.

- [The Elephant in the Brain - Hidden Motives in Everyday Life](#) - Robin Hanson, Kevin Simler. Why the reasons we use to justify our actions to ourselves and others are not why we actually act in certain ways in areas like religion, health, politics, and education.
 - [The Righteous Mind](#) - Jonathan Haidt. Explains how our political differences can be explained by moral foundations that themselves have an evolutionarily adaptive origin. He also wrote [The Emotional Dog and its Rational Tail](#) on why moral reasoning does not cause moral judgment; rather, moral reasoning is usually a post hoc construction, generated after a judgment has been reached.
 - [The Strange Order of Things](#) - Antonio Damasio. Discusses how emotions are essential for all living organisms, the formation of our culture, and a powerful force toward life.
 - Slightly dated but still worth reading as background: In [The Selfish Gene](#) Richard Dawkins articulates a gene's eye view of evolution, in which organisms can be seen as vehicles for their replication. In [The Blank Slate](#) Steven Pinker shows the biological roots of human behavior and morality.
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Rationality: Sharpening Our Best Tool

In the previous section we have seen how much of our moral reasoning is confounded by genetic predispositions and cultural factors. Rationality is often understood as the pinnacle of human evolution, the feature that distinguishes us from other animals, and allows us to advance as a species. But there is a lot of room for improvement; we really don't know how to use our best tool reliably. Having seen how our reasoning evolved, what goes on in our bodies when we reason, and what the hell emotions have to do with it, let's get a better understanding of how to improve this tool. After all, it's our best shot at using our scientific map and moral compass to make progress toward futures of Existential Hope.

A basic introduction to rationality:

- [Rationality: From AI to Zombies](#) - Eliezer Yudkowsky. Extensive intro to rationality, divided into 6 books or as [podcast](#). Especially good are the chapters Twelve Virtues of Rationality, My Bayesian Enlightenment, Raising the Sanity Waterline, Three Levels of Rationality Verification, When Not To Use Rationality, The Real Prisoner's Dilemma. As taster, see [Heuristics & Biases](#) for a shorter talk or [Harry Potter And The Methods of Rationality](#) for a wildly successful fictional account of rationality.
- [Crony Beliefs](#) - Kevin Simler. A deepdive into why we find it so hard to let go of some beliefs, which goes well with [What You Can't Say](#) in which Paul Graham illuminates why it's bad if we can't say what we believe in.

- [Cognitive Biases in Catastrophic Risks Map](#) - Alexey Turchin. How our biases can influence the way we make sense of crucial risks to humanity. Other fun compilations of biases include [List of biases](#) by Rationalwiki and [Cognitive Bias Codex](#), a neat poster.
- [Incerto: Fooled by Randomness, The Black Swan, The Bed of Procrustes, Antifragile](#) - Nassim Taleb. The whole collection is worth reading but his most accessible books are Black Swan on how we tend to neglected highly improbable events with major consequences in our decisions, and Antifragile, on how the possibility of Black Swans and related risks should increase our focus on building systems that get stronger under pressure, become “antifragile”.
- [Thinking Fast & Slow](#) - Daniel Kahneman. A classic contrasting fast, instinctive, heuristic thinking with slow, reasoned thought, including why and when we use which one.
- For regularly updated commentary, visit [LessWrong](#), an online community dedicated to improving human reasoning and decision-making. A few other great blogs that are in the rationalist blogosphere but rather than being about the topic of rationality per se, apply rational thinking to a plethora of topics include [Gwern](#), [Overcoming Bias](#), [Second Enumerations](#), [Ribbonfarm](#), [Nintil](#), [MeltingAsphalt](#) and especially [Slate Star Codex](#), the source of much content on Existential Hope. In podcast form, [Rationally Speaking](#) has excellent rationalist interviews with a range of thinkers.

Tools to get better

- [Tools to Transform Our Thinking](#), a talk by Daniel Dennett on how to get better at reasoning, and [Arguably](#), an essay collection by Christopher Hitchens.
- [Superforecasting](#) - Philip Tetlock. Why we are bad at forecasting and how to get better. For more tips, see [The Art of Predicting](#), a podcast with Anthony Aguirre and Andrew Critch, and [Tetlock on Predicting](#), a podcast with Robert Wiblin and Philip Tetlock.
- A few projects that actively try to improve our ability to predict, forecast and estimate include [Metaculus](#), [Good Judgment](#), [Predictit.org](#), and [Guesstimate](#).
- [Betterthinking.org](#) - a project that offers mini-courses and provides tools using research about human behavior to improve our decision-making.
- [Center for Applied Rationality](#) - CFAR offers workshops to improve people’s thinking and has this [Rationality Reading List](#) on further introductory material to rationality.
- For more coursework-style info on how to update your thinking, see [Rational Choice in an Uncertain World](#) by Reid Hastie, Robin Dawes, [Probability Theory: The Logic of Science](#) by E.T. Jaynes, [Street-Fighting Mathematics: The Art of Educated Guessing and Opportunistic Problem Solving](#) (dropbox) and [The Art of Insight in Science and Engineering](#).

Coordination: Getting Unstuck

Thus far, we figured out possible destinations we’d like to navigate toward, how to make a map that encodes them, including a moral compass to point in the right directions, and sharpened the

tools we need to make rational progress. But we're not the only ones. There are others out there, wanting to go in different directions, using different maps, some maps are "wrong", and some people seem to use no map at all. How do we coordinate better with our fellow humans, especially from within a system that none of us has the manual to, that seems odd and old, but still ubiquitous in governing our interactions.

Why We're Stuck:

- [An Era of Stagnation and Universal Institutional Failure](#) - Peter Thiel, Eric Weinstein. Make the point that innovation and scientific progress are declining. In support of this point, in [What Intellectual Progress Did I Make in the 2010s](#), Scott Alexander reviews his shift in thinking positively to negatively about progress, including a host of great references: "In the 2000s, people debated Kurzweil's thesis that scientific progress was speeding up superexponentially. By the mid-2010s, the debate shifted to whether progress was actually slowing down. In [Promising The Moon](#), I wrote about my skepticism that technological progress is declining. A group of people including Patrick Collison and Tyler Cowen have since worked to strengthen the case that it is; in 2018 I wrote [Is Science Slowing Down?](#), and late last year I [conceded the point](#). Paul Christiano helped me synthesize the Kurzweillian and anti-Kurzweillian perspectives into [1960: The Year The Singularity Was Cancelled](#). In 2017, I synthesized some thoughts that had been bouncing around about rising prices into [Considerations On Cost Disease](#), still one of this blog's most popular posts. The first would-be-general-answer that made me sit up and take notice was Alex Tabarrok's book (link goes to my review) [The Prices Are Too Damn High](#) – but I explain there why I don't think it can be the full answer."
- [Seeing Like A State](#) - James Scott. A historical account why large-scale authoritarian attempts by states to structurally improve society can't succeed. Another systematic historical analysis of the failure of institutions is [Institutional Failure as Surprise](#) by Samo Burja.
- [Inadequate Equilibria](#) - Eliezer Yudkowsky. On the mechanisms by which we get stuck, especially via incentive misalignment for decision-makers, asymmetric information, and suboptimal Nash Equilibria.
- [The Listening Society](#) by Hanzi Freinacht, [The Case Against Education](#) by Bryan Caplan, and [Against News](#) by Robin Hanson all show why, no matter how stuck we look from the outside, it may be even worse when we look under the hood.

Reinventing the rules of the game

- [Antifragile](#) - Nassim Taleb. An appeal to design our systems such that they get stronger under pressure. One way to do that: Include incentive structures that make people have more [Skin in the Game](#), another book by Taleb.
- [Rules for a Flat World](#) - Gillian Hadfield. Because current legal rules are too slow, costly, and localized for increasingly complex advanced economies we need a new set of rules that enhance complex societies and economic interdependence. Dated but with a similar complaint about our legal system: [Simple Rules for a Complex World](#) by Richard Epstein.
- [Legal Systems Very Different From Ours](#) - David Friedman. Reviews exotic past and present legal systems that encourage experimentation with legal structures.
- [Nudge](#) - Cass Sunstein, Richard Thaler. On how decision-makers can invent architectures that help people make better decisions.

Spurring progress:

- [Enlightenment Now](#) - Steven Pinker. Doubts whether progress has declined and makes a case for using reason and science to continue spurring incremental progress.
- [Growth, Progress](#), and [Culture](#) - Patrick Collinson. Asks if they are they declining and what we can do about it.
- [Radical Markets](#) - Eric Posner, Glen Weyl. Rethinking the underlying dynamics of markets.
- [Futarchy](#) - Robin Hanson. A manifesto for a system in which representatives define and manage a measurement of national welfare, while market speculators would say which policies they expect to raise national welfare.
- [“Power Tools for Progress”](#) - Thomas Kalil. Identifies tools for progress with multiplier effects. Related, his [What ifs](#), which are ambitious but achievable goals for the US, and the [Innovation Toolkit](#) by The Obama Administration identified a number of different innovation approaches. A real-world attempt to incentivize innovation via Prizes is the [Incentive Prize on Incentives](#) - Yun Family Foundation Prize for creating better incentive mechanisms.
- Regularly updated commentary: [Marginal Revolution](#) - Tyler Cowen, Alex Tabarrok. Also as brilliant podcast as [Conversations with Tyler](#). A related podcast worth listening to [EconTalk](#) by the Society of Economics & Liberty.

Prototyping on the fringes:

- [Seasteading Institute](#) - empowers people to build floating startup societies with innovative governance models. The manifesto: [Seasteading](#) by Joe Quirk with Patri Friedman.
- [Startup Societies](#) - a foundation which studies and connects the industry of small experimental governments, or startup societies. The manifesto: [Founding Startup Societies](#) by Joseph McKinney, Mark Frazier.
- [Institute for Competitive Governance](#). A non-profit institution studying special jurisdictions across the world. The manifesto: [Your Next Government?](#) By Tom W. Bell.
- [Charter Cities Institute](#) - a non-profit institute dedicated to creating the ecosystem for charter cities.
- [Haight Street Commons](#) - Haight St. Commons is a network of not-for-profit co-ops and intentional communities in the heart of San Francisco.

What's Next?

A quick review of the journey so far:

We started by orienting ourselves, by making a map of the external world ([Science: Making a Map](#)) and our place within it ([The Mind: Who's Looking Out?](#) and [Psychedelics: Switching Filters](#)). Being less confused on the basics, helps answering questions about what a “better” future means ([Ethics: Which Way is Forward?](#)), how to make progress in the right directions

([Rationality: Sharpening Our Best Tool](#)), and what to do about others who are trying to go elsewhere ([Coordination: Getting Unstuck](#)).

This is a lot to digest and still barely touches the surface. Instead of diving deeper, let's move on to the surfaces of the crucial building blocks of positive futures.

Go back to the overview at Existentialhope.com or [join the mailing list](#)
