

Main Guide



Life Itself Research Group: *The Second Renaissance*

A research collective specialising in exploring paths to awakening.

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/ The Purpose of this Collaborative Document

A Guide for Orienting Towards Fundamental Questions, Together

This document aims to distill, in a maximally broad and inclusive way, current understandings within the **Life Itself Research Community** of the core research questions associated with the **Second Renaissance (2R) initiative**.

It is intended as a *living* document, subject to amendment at any time.

It is not intended to restrict research goals for members of the community (see also the section '*Unique journeys*' below), but rather to define approximate expectations for the kinds of research the community undertakes, in a way that is especially designed to help *orient* potential and actual new members of the community.

/ **Second Renaissance Research**

The goal of the **Second Renaissance** initiative is to provide an accessible *entry-point* to and *map* of the emerging ecosystem of people, organisations and ideas responding to the current moment of civilizational crisis and awakening.

Research under the name of Second Renaissance serves this goal in 4 key ways

- Research supporting the core narrative and **theory of change** (as defined below)
- Research generating accessible summaries of key ideas
- Research involved in mapping the ecosystem
- Research as community-building

This research is included in the scope of the Life Itself Research Community.

/ **Core Narrative and 'Theory of Change'**

The core narrative of the civilizational crisis and theory of change behind a second renaissance must be underpinned by rigorous research in order to be credible and effective. The two [White Papers](#) suggest a focus on the following questions:

- How should we understand the current civilizational crisis?
- What is the role of personal growth, relationships, art and spirituality in addressing this crisis?
- What theories of change can help generate a 'second renaissance'

Addressing these questions is likely to involve combining insights from multiple disciplines, including: **see table on the next page below**

Discipline	Example
Social Sciences (e.g. Economics, Sociology, Political theory)	Studies of capitalism, liberalism, marxism, political metamodernism and social movement theory in relation to civilizational crisis.
Cognitive Sciences (e.g. Developmental psychology, social psychology, neuroscience)	Scientific understandings of personal growth, wisdom, relationships, and spiritual experiences
Complexity theory	Using theory of complex systems to model the dynamics of cultural change.
Literary and art theory	Understand of cultural products as symptoms of crisis and catalysts for change
History	Histories of major cultural shifts, cultural collapse, new social movements, intentional communities
Philosophy	The role of 'inner' factors in major cultural shifts has been a major topic in the history of philosophy (e.g. Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Frankfurt School) and in more recent work (e.g. Badiou, Zizek, Taylor)
<i>[Feel free to Suggest a Domain]</i>	
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/ Accessible Summaries

Accessible summaries of key ideas serve the goal of providing an entry-point for newcomers to the space. The [Second Renaissance Wiki](#) is currently the home for such summaries.

Research is needed to

- investigate what will make sense to our intended audiences, and how we can express our assembled knowledge at an appropriate level
- write relevant summaries, drawing connections to Second Renaissance themes.
- clarify the underlying methodology of a knowledge commons, and how it can best serve the goals of Second Renaissance.

/ Mapping the Ecosystem

Considerable progress has already been made in [mapping the ecosystem](#) of people and organisations aiming at inner-led, paradigmatic change.

Ongoing research is required to update such maps, to reflect ongoing changes within the ecosystem, such as new entrants.

Other research questions include:

- How ecosystem data can best be presented in a visual and accessible way to serve Second Renaissance goals
- Which data regarding the ecosystem is captured, updated and presented
- Whether and how differences between organisations within the ecosystem (e.g.scores on different dimensions) should be studied and presented
- How the boundaries of the ecosystem are demarcated

/ Research as Community-Building

In addition to offering an entry-point to the wider ecosystem, research is a way for individuals to join and contribute to a specific community within that ecosystem, namely the Life Itself Research community.

The research community is open to all individuals whose work intersects with the core research questions described in the previous sections.

The research principles outlined below serve in part to foster this community.

Questions around these and similar principles of community-building are among the research questions for the Second Renaissance initiative, [including](#)

- [What practices and structures serve to foster authentic community](#)
- [What governance structures \(e.g. Teal, sociocracy\) are consistent with the narrative and theory of change being explored by Life itself Research, and serve community goals](#)
- [What research methodologies and collaborative practices best serve community goals](#)

/ Community Principles

Open-mindedness

In the spirit of exploring alternatives to existing institutional structures, Life Itself Research is particularly open to researchers operating outside standard academic institutions, who feel they would benefit from being part of a wider research community.

This does not imply less rigorous standards; on the contrary the aim is to correct for some methodological weaknesses of academia (e.g. narrow specialisation, limited interdisciplinarity, distorted incentive structures) in order to improve the quality of research outputs.

Researchers with a solid background within academia (e.g. a postgraduate degree) are therefore especially welcome. [though researchers of all levels of experience are welcome too of course]

➤ *Methodological Reflexivity*

The core narrative and theory of change associated with Second Renaissance has potential implications for research methodology. Non-traditional research activity such as action research and cooperative inquiry are welcome, in addition to traditional methodologies.

➤ *Connection*

Life Itself values embodied connection as the basis of authentic community: researchers are encouraged to collaborate both one-to-one, and in small or large groups, including a regular weekly seminar.

While collaboration is valuable, 'groupthink' is not. Collaboration should involve not only embodied connection but also respectful criticism.

➤ *Wider engagement*

Life Itself Research seeks to engage with wider communities of interest and with mainstream society. Researchers are encouraged to belong to multiple communities and share or publish their work outside Second Renaissance.

However they are also expected to share or link to their work on Second Renaissance spaces, e.g. the [Wiki](#), and make it available for inclusion in curated lists of outputs.

➤ *Unique journeys*

Life Itself Research appreciates that everyone's path is unique, and researchers are encouraged to pursue their own research interests, even where these may depart from the core research questions listed above.

For example, researchers are welcome to maintain a research profile, e.g. on the [Wiki](#), that includes work that departs from core areas.

Researchers are asked to respect the fact that where their work departs from core Second Renaissance areas, it may not be picked out for collaborative activities and curated spaces.

/ Technology Infrastructure

The main platform currently is the [Wiki](#) which can be used for the following:

- 1) Statement of core research agenda
- 2) Statement of research principles
- 3) Central summary of current individual and shared research programmes
- 4) 'People' profiles for members of the research community, including individual research programmes
- 5) List of links to key outputs ('works') of the research team relating to the core research agenda

In addition we are exploring various approaches to dissemination of research:

 [Research Dissemination Ideas](#)

/ Appendix I: Past Life Itself Research Plans

- <https://lifeitself.org/research>
- <https://lifeitself.org/labs>
- <https://lifeitself.org/notes/research-at-life-itself-2023>
- <https://lifeitself.org/blog/2023/05/04/research-community-open-call-1-april-2023>

/ Appendix II: People Who have Worked on this Document

The content of this document also appears [on the wiki](#) and is referenced on the [Life Itself Research](#) page. It was approved by a Whatsapp poll on 22 January 2025.

The suggested process for making changes going forward is:

- Minor changes - may be made directly to the Wiki text via the normal process for editing a wiki.
- Major changes should be first flagged for discussion in this document, and transferred to the wiki if there are no objections.

The main author of this document to date was Jonah Wilberg, with amendments and contributions by [Simon Grant](#), [Catherine Tan](#), [Rufus Pollock](#) and others. Document Design and shared research-prompt pages have been added by [Max Ramsahoye](#).

/ Life Itself Research Group: Wiki Profiles

- [Simon Grant](#)
- [Sami Karadeniz](#)
- [James Baker](#)
- [Jonah Wilberg](#)

/ Max's Notes on the Design of this Document

***Note on the Three Shared Tabs:** the three shared tabs are similar and synergistic, but provide different mechanisms of creating intellectual cross-pollination between members of the research group and collaboratively seeding/steering directions for the group as a whole.

1. **Shared Materials:** is material-oriented (i.e core readings, podcasts, art etc)
2. **Shared Concepts:** is concept-oriented (i.e core ideas, frames, metaphors etc)
3. **Shared Questions:** is question-oriented (i.e core uncertainties, cruxes, uncharted waters etc)

According to this tripartite-division, deciding which page to add something to should be based around whether (1) a wider material, (2) a specific concept or (3) a framing question is the focus of the contribution.

Synergy example for (3): a question that particular materials or concepts may help to explain or approach an answer to.

I hope this clarifies my thinking on the function of the shared tabs and conveys the value I think they could offer. Any feedback, suggestions and improvements are welcome :)

— Max



Document Design by *Max Ramsahoye*

Shared Materials

Shared Readings

➤ [Max's List](#)

	Abstract	Reasoni
	'Although I'm not an EA, I think effective altruism is a useful blueprint for understanding a growing number of influential subcultures in tech right now, from progress studies to It's Time to Build to crypto public goods funding. EA is the strongest example of what I think of as an Idea Machine: a network of operators, thinkers, and funders, centered around an ideology, that's designed to turn ideas into outcomes.Effective altruism's strength lies in its infrastructure, which we can use to better understand how other idea machines work, what their impact will be, and what's needed to make them more effective'	
	'World-building is something we associate with authors, cinematographers and video game designers — we constrain our creativity to fictional universes that exist behind screens or in the pages of books... Real-life actions are the most powerful world-building medium we have, and appreciating the true scope of your influence is the first step in building a world you are proud and excited to be part of. This awareness led me to spend a lot of time joining, growing, and founding organizations and... social movements? Whatever you want to call "a group of people who come together to build a world better than the one we're currently in". This work often feels like being on the cutting edge of research — starting with a hypothesis of "the way things could be", casting that vision into a void, and persevering with nothing more than a belief in a version	

	of reality that doesn't exist yet.'	
ing	'How to live a meaningful life: Appreciate the beauty of existence. Add to the beauty of existence. Increase your ability to appreciate and add to the beauty of existence...Everything that is meaningful is one of these three. Engaging in all three consciously as a virtuous cycle leads to a maximally meaningful life. All three are ultimately inspired by love'	

our own]

	Abstract	Reasoning Behin

Shared Concepts

Shared Concepts

Personal Glossaries & Proto Wiki Entries

➤ [Max's List](#)

Explanation	Abstract & Reference
and beyond Marxism(s) (and critiques and updates Marxism for	Let's begin the process of reconstruction with a new term of "meta-Marxism," as in after, between, and beyond Marxism(s), which will help us to recover the term, but also move past it. To avoid accusations of just being Marxism rebranded, meta-Marxism necessarily includes a critique of Marxism itself; an autocritique. ...There is already some theorizing on what is called meta-Marxism, which attempts to transcend the political firefight and abstract the set of principles that defines the critique of capitalism. It is Marxism without Marx. This is necessary to transition from Marxism to a discourse that is accessible and relatable to everyone, and that respects the actual legacy of Marx's work (not communism). ...Meta-Marxism is thus the abstraction of Marxism, not to be reduced to the various reifications of the term Marxism. This is a grand project. It means that we re-define what the critique means in contemporary terms, retiring the antiquated terms such as 'proletariat' and 'bourgeoisie.' Of course those terms are still important for study, but they are anachronistic. One new term of import is the (global) 'precariat', which describes the growing masses with precarious working conditions. – Meta-Marxism The Abstract Critique of Late Capitalism in the Metamodern Age Brent Cooper <i>The Abs-Trac</i> <i>Organization</i> by Brent Cooper

holistic systemic accounting of direct (positive and negative externalities) system, institution, group or individual.

The concept of yellow teaming was inspired by the better-known practice of red teaming. The idea of the “red team” was developed by the military to evaluate strategy by simulating an adversary’s perspective and actions. Later, cybersecurity firms used the same approach to explore attack pathways against a client’s digital infrastructure and produce reports of security issues. In many cases, red teaming involves actively trying to break or corrupt a product to understand all the ways in which failure may occur.

The “yellow team” concept takes this idea in another direction, assessing a project and its implementation in the context of all other aspects of reality that it will touch over the full course of its lifetime. Where red teaming attempts to assure that a plan doesn’t fail, yellow teaming attempts to ensure it doesn’t cause unexpected harms or problems elsewhere. It aims to account for how our typical approaches to solution design tend to make problems worse in the long run, and provide guidance to address such issues in advance, thereby minimizing the risk of negative externalities’

– [Development in Progress](#) *The Consilience Project* Daniel Schmachtenberger et al 2024

Based on this idea, I thought it might be practical to consider it in line with a concept I heard Daniel Schmachtenberger speak about, called “Yellow Teaming”.

Yellow Teaming is a critical process that complements Red and Blue Teaming approaches. In product building, Blue Teaming usually focuses on how to ensure the success of a project or initiative. Red Teaming analyzes how a project could fail and identifies potential vulnerabilities.

In contrast, Daniel proposes that “Yellow Teaming” examines the potential negative consequences or externalities should the project succeed, especially if it’s really successful.

At its core, these three processes involve asking critical questions about your product to enhance its potential success outcomes. What sets Yellow Teaming apart is that it assumes the product will achieve absolute success and then asks; “What happens next? What impact will this success have?”

– See Also: [The Yellow Team](#) *Be Like Water* 2024

oment and (transitional) deployment technical ‘optimisation systems’* than intelligence (HI) and artificial operating in synergy towards ‘s’.**

cesses’ on a ‘process philosophy’ i.e a ology

objectives that do not externalise harm populations and axiologies

The current global system is already a general autopoietic superintelligence. It has an objective function which is to convert as much of the world – people’s creativity, ideas, labour, natural resources, everything – into capital’. ‘Humans are general intelligence [and] capitalism is running parallel process across a humans. Capitalism is a decentralised incentive system, incentivising all humans to both do novel search [exploration] – figure out new ways of making money – and exploitation - take the existing way and do the most of them that you can. That is basically the recursive upregulation of the algorithm. It’s getting more and more capable at financialising the world and the objective function is misaligned with the long-term wellbeing of the world’. ‘A nation-state or corporation is a cybernetic general intelligence that is already misaligned. Each of these cybernetic intelligences interacting with each other creates a meta-cybernetic superintelligence. The AI risk scenario is already there and it is our world-system. The

	existing CY-AI is driving the entire risk landscape. AI is simply accelerating it. If you add something as fastly recursive and powerful as increasingly generalised AI's to an already misaligned superintelligence that's a problem. We should figure out the alignment of the existing cybernetic intelligences first. misaligned context cannot develop aligned AI.' — 'Misalignment, AI & Moloch' Daniel Schmachtenberger in Dialogue with Liv Boree (2023, March)
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ideas of your own]

Question	Materials	Reasoning Behind

Shared Questions

Shared Questions

➤ [Max's List](#)

a of classical philosophy papers investigating the fundamental ontology and axiology of a map and/or a territory.
potential system 'referent')

thing) is Wrong with X?

	Possible Approaches & Answers (Theoretical Possibility Space)	Reasoning
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anything)		

Be? (if n tcs)?		
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	Abstract	Reasoning Behin

